Alignment in Microsoft Word

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Alignment refers to where and how the text lines up. Default settings in Microsoft Word will left-align your text, but there are many other ways to format a document's alignment. This tutorial outlines two ways to modify alignment: using keyboard commands and using the Ruler bar.

(Note: for instructions on how to change alignment using the Paragraph dialog box, please see the "Paragraph Dialog Box" tutorial, which also explains how to set tabs.)

Adjusting Alignment: Keyboard Commands

Probably the quickest method to adjust alignment is to use keyboard shortcuts:

Ctrl + L	=	Left alignment
Ctrl + E	=	Center alignment
Ctrl + R	=	Right alignment
Ctrl + J	=	Justified alignment

You can apply these alignment options to a specific section by first highlighting the text and then entering the desired keyboard command.

Adjusting Alignment: Using the Ruler

A second way to adjust text alignment is by clicking and dragging on the alignment tabs, which are found on the Ruler bar.

The Ruler bar may or may not automatically display in Word. To display the Ruler bar, go to the View tab and select the Ruler checkbox.
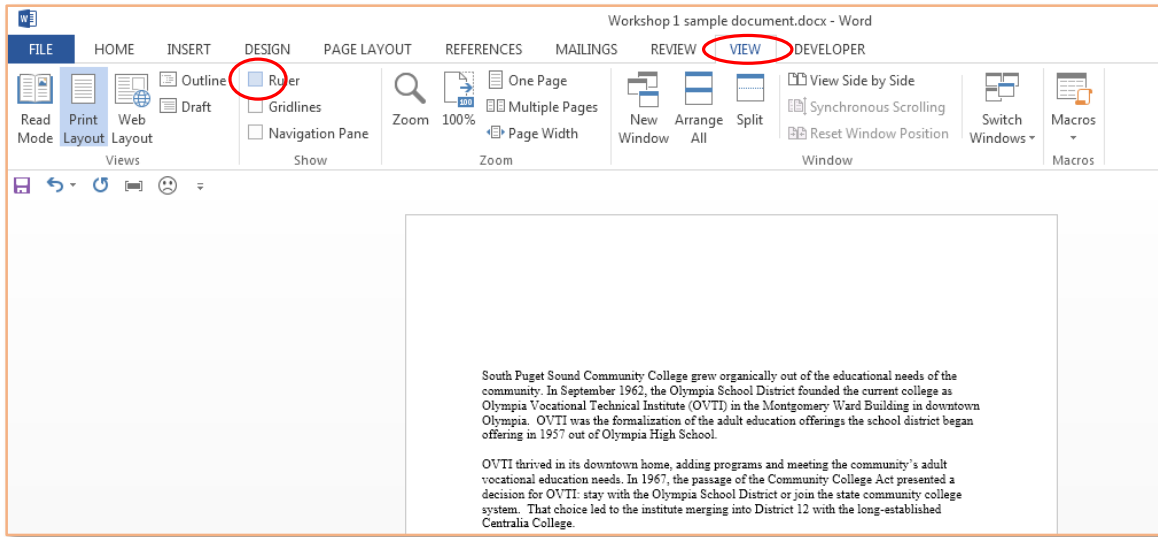
Checking the Ruler checkbox makes a ruler appear on the top and left side of the document.
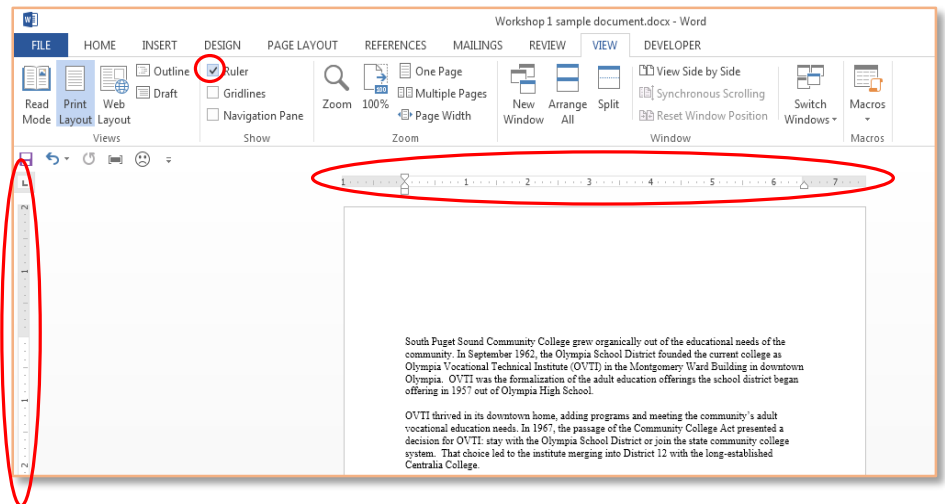
If you look closely at the horizontal Ruler bar, there are four tabs, which are labeled below:

First Line Indent Tab

Right Indent Tab

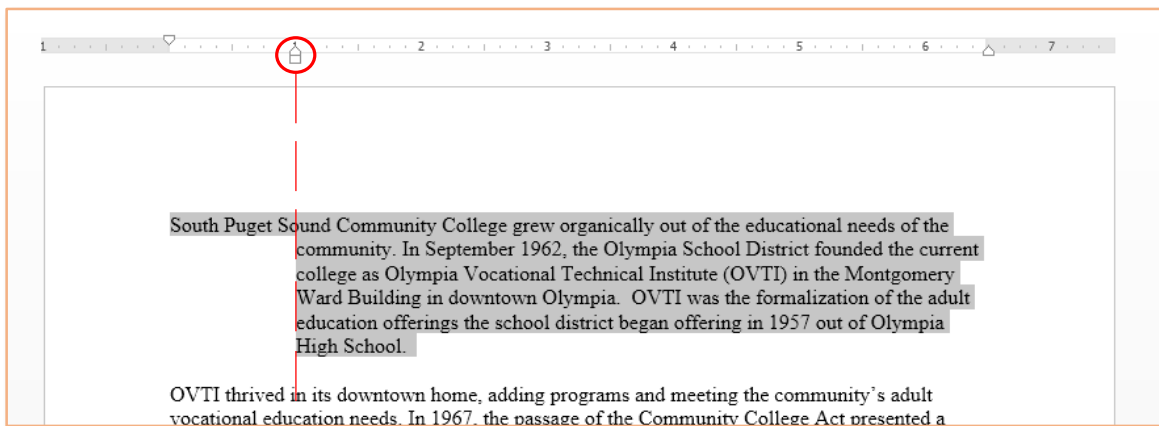Hanging Indent Tab

Left Indent Tab
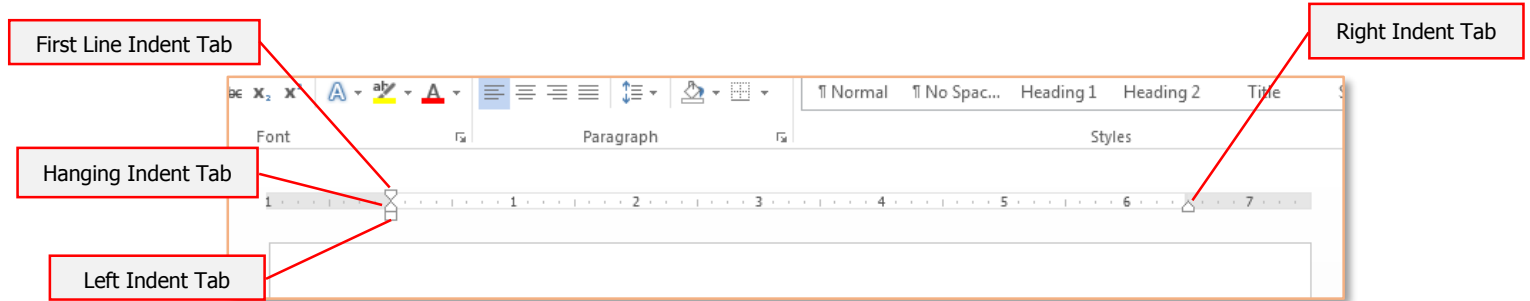
From here, to modify the alignment:

1. Highlight the section of text that you want to manipulate.
2. Click on the desired alignment tab.
3. Drag that tab to change that text's alignment.

The advantage of this method is that you can see the text move as you move the tab.

Let's say you want a 1-inch hanging indent in your first paragraph. You would 1) highlight the first paragraph, 2) click on the hanging indent tab, and 3) drag it one inch to the right on the Ruler bar.

South Puget Sound Community College grew organically out of the educational needs of the community. In September 1962, the Olympia School District founded the current college as Olympia Vocational Technical Institute (OVTI) in the Montgomery Ward Building in downtown Olympia. OVTI was the formalization of the adult education offerings the school district began offering in 1957 out of Olympia High School.

OVTI thrived in its downtown home, adding programs and meeting the community's adult vocational education needs. In 1967, the passage of the Community College Act presented a

Then, if you want the first line to begin farther in towards the right, you can click on the First Line Indent tab and drag it to the desired position.
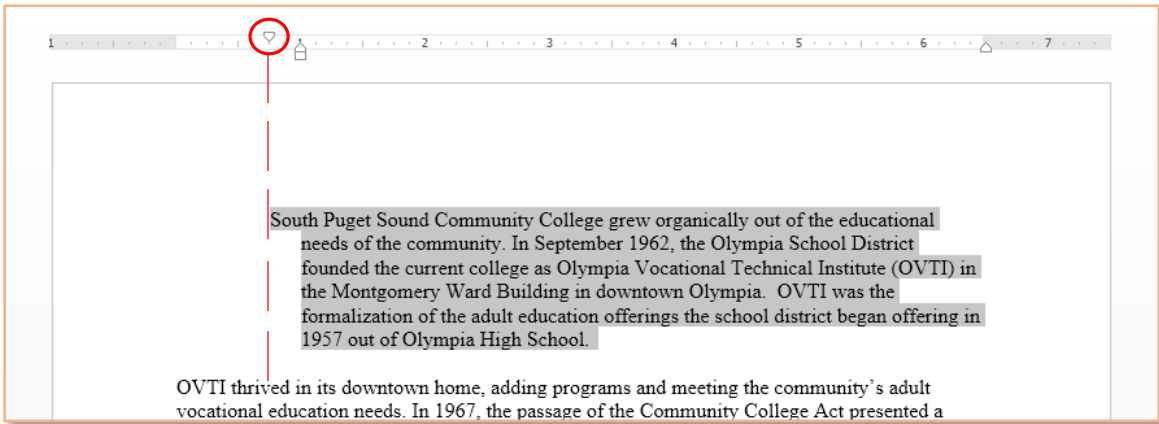
Also note that if you select the Left Indent tab – which is the small rectangle beneath the Hanging Indent tab – both the Hanging Indent and the First Line Indent tabs will move in unison. This is useful for when you want to move a block of text together, as in the example below: