

MICROSOFT WORD



The  
Emerging Biblical Scholar's  
Step-by-Step Guide  
for  
Windows and MacOS

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## FOREWORD

Biblical scholarship begins with writing. Most fundamentally, that writing is the biblical text. Almost immediately after that, though, biblical scholarship turns into *writing about* the biblical text and the primary and secondary literature relevant for its interpretation.

Sure, biblical scholarship happens in oral modes like conference presentations or panel discussions. But these and other modes almost always derive from or move toward written prose. Day to day, biblical scholarship carries on its work primarily in writing.

For this reason, writing is a key skill for biblical scholars. And it makes sense, then, for your apprenticeship as an emerging biblical scholar undergo to help develop your craft as a writer.

This development can take any number of forms. Perhaps one of the most important forms it can take is to help you minimize or remove from your writing the various ticks, habits, or penchants we all have but that don't really serve the audience.

In addition to this kind of development and as with any craft, though, writing takes tools. Plumbers, electricians, and carpenters all have tools they train with as they hone their crafts. Writers should be no different, least of all biblical scholars.

Apprentices in the craft of biblical scholarship often train with any number of tools that are helpful in that craft. Those tools might include critical editions of the biblical text. They might include various interpretive methods or information particular to specific sub-fields within biblical studies.

But when it comes to writing up the results of all this scholarly effort, modern biblical studies requires this writing up to be done in a word processing software tool like Microsoft Word. Try mailing a handwritten paper to a professor, let alone a journal, and see how things go. You *might* fare a bit better if you've hammered out your prose on a typewriter, but you get the point.

As a standard for the guild, biblical scholarship requires not just writing but *digital* writing. And in order to produce digital writing, you need specific kind of tool to do the job—word processing software.

Beyond this requirement, there are more and less accepted ways of using such software to do the job of producing written biblical scholarship. (Sorry, frilly fonts and colored pages don't make this list.) In these ways, emerging biblical scholars like you get told often and ad nauseum *what* to do in their documents. But *how* to meet all these requirements is quite a different question.

It's also often one where specific guidance is sorely lacking. You might get great training on everything leading you up to the point of putting your research into a document. But at the point of producing the document that will communicate the results of all your work, you're likely to be left wondering, guessing, searching, trying, failing, fighting, searching again, and eventually just doing the best you can.

This frustrating cycle takes an incredible amount of time and effort to go through. But you didn't get into biblical studies to have the joy of fussing with your word processor. What attracted you was the opportunity to look more closely at the biblical text and its context.

Communicating the results of your work in digital writing is part and parcel to biblical scholarship. But you're not a computer scientist. And your college

class on Microsoft Office—if you had one—introduced you to Word only very generally.

Maybe you learned how to do some basic things (which you might have been able to figure out for yourself). But nothing came close to introducing you to how to use Word in the ways you now find you need to use it in academic biblical studies.

The combination of these different factors has generally left you with two options. First, you could move along at the level of expertise with Word that you got just by osmosis or from your computer applications class. Second, you spend hours culling through relevant books, help articles, and online tutorials in order to learn how to use Word better.

If you're committed to producing quality biblical scholarship, you need to use Word like a professional. The costs of forever being an amateur at Word are too high. They require too much manual working and reworking, and they place on you an even higher proofreading and editing burden than you'll already have.

But using Word like a professional isn't just a matter of getting your formatting in order. Plumbers, electricians, or carpenters can do their crafts better by becoming more adept with their tools. As they do, they can do more detailed work with greater proficiency. But the reason for developing this proficiency is that greater proficiency with the tools yields better and more consistent outcomes with less effort.

A cleaner cut on a pipe might be a nice thing in itself. But its real value shows when it helps avoid a leak. Better wiring might be good too, but the end game for it is in how it allows its circuit to perform better in getting current where it should go and not letting it go where it shouldn't. By the

same token, learning to use Word like a professional will help you perform the detailed work of your craft as writer of biblical scholarship.

In so doing, Word can help you handle a good many of the minutiae that kind of writing requires. That's one upside, and it's a significant one that you shouldn't overlook. But even this isn't its biggest advantage. Such improvements are on the level cutting pipe or doing wiring better.

The real payoff, then, is how improvements in these areas relate to the bigger picture of your craft. And in that perspective, they're key in taking things off your plate *so that you can focus more fully on the content of your work*. When you don't need to worry whether your cut is straight or your connection is strong, you can put your attention elsewhere. You can handle these minutiae better, quicker, and more consistently. And doing that frees you to focus on *what you're communicating*—not how it looks.

But where do you go for apprenticeship in Word? For a long time, there hasn't been a good answer. The curriculum was basically the self-study involved in spending hours poring over help guides written to address challenges *like yours*—but not exactly—and then trying to translate that advice for your situation.

This guide is designed to fill that gap. It gives you the guidance you need for fulfilling common requirements for using Word as a biblical scholar—especially with SBL style.

The principles here are also readily adaptable if you need instead to put your research into the slightly different shape required by another common style (e.g., *Chicago Manual of Style*, Turabian's *Manual for Writers*). And they're the kinds of things you'll need to continue doing in varying ways, combinations, and forms even when you're not writing as a student in a degree program.

In short, working through this guide will show you, step-by-step how to use Word and make the most out of it for your work. It will help free you to focus on the content of your writing and research, rather than spending endless hours drifting through vaguely helpful comments and then fighting through the frustrations with adapting those comments to your needs. It will make your apprenticeship in the craft of biblical scholarship be just that—not a self-study going it alone but a *guided* process of developing skill that, over time, yields increasingly better results.

### A Word about Word

Before moving into how to use Word, it's worth pausing over a couple notes about the program itself. Word is certainly not the only word processor on the market.

If you're a MacOS user, you were probably also less likely than a Windows user to get a Word license thrown in with your computer purchase. So, for you, access to Word might be even more likely to involve an additional expense and, therefore, the serious question: Is it worth it?

*Note: If you are a student or faculty member, your institution may have an arrangement with Microsoft that gives you access to Microsoft 365 (including the latest version of Word) either for free or at a substantial discount. You can [look into your options for an education license](#) on Microsoft's website.*

### A Rationale for Word

Do you really need to use *Word*? Won't another word processor do the job (e.g., LibreOffice, Pages)?

On this issue, there is liable to be some amount of difference in opinion. And if I'm honest, part of me really wants to like and use another word processor that's available both for MacOS and for Windows.

But in the end, I think the best answer is that, yes, as a biblical scholar, you need to learn and use Word. And every time I start becoming inclined to doubt this answer, I'm reminded of the various reasons it still has force.

So, to encourage you in the investment that you're making in learning Word better, I want to share a few thoughts about why Word is the best tool for word processing as a biblical scholar.

In short, there are different formats for saving documents. Word's default DOCX format has been made more transparent in recent years. But even now, you still won't find DOCX files created with Word to be 100% compatible with other word processors—despite what they advertise and even if they're able to open and work with DOCX files to some extent.

This lack of 100% compatibility means that the more complex your document is the more likely something is to break if you

- 1) Create and save a DOCX file in Word,
- 2) Open that file in another word processor that supports DOCX,
- 3) Make some changes,
- 4) Resave the file in the same DOCX format, and
- 5) Reopen the file in Word.

Depending on what edits you made, what word processor you made them in, and various other factors, the document you reopen in Word will be—in varying degrees—different from what you would have if you had simply made those edits in Word.

All of this starts weighing quite heavily in favor of using Word as your preferred word processor when combined with the fact that—for better or worse—the DOCX standard is entrenched in biblical studies as the most widely accepted digital format for communicating your research.

If you're a student, your learning management system or your institution might have a specific requirement for the type of file you can submit. More than likely, that requirement will be for a DOCX file. Even if other file types are also allowed, is pretty sure to be on the list.

If you're sending an article or book manuscript to a prospective publisher, the publisher will certainly have file type requirements. And in that case, it's even more likely that you'll be asked to submit a DOCX file.

Your professor might not dock your grade for submitting a DOCX file that doesn't quite jive with Word. Or your article might not get rejected for the same reason. And a journal's copy editor might even be kind enough to fix some things for you.

But if you don't use Word, you're still more likely to make more editorial work for others—and *yourself*. This might just be by avoiding some of the things in Word that can tend to break more easily when DOCX files are opened in other Word processors. But whenever you allow yourself to make more of that kind of work and however you do it, you necessarily reduce the time and attention you have available to focus on the content of your work, the people in your life, or whatever else.

Overall, then, the main argument for using Word as a biblical scholar is that DOCX files are the stock and trade of written biblical scholarship. They're likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. And Word gives you the most definitive and broadly accessible method of working with DOCX files.

So, the effort you put into honing your skill with DOCX files in Word will come back to you, your professors, your collaborators, and your publishers many times over. Honing this skill does take effort. But the effort is a good investment. And like any other good investment, its benefits over time only compound.

## Word and Its Versions

Over the years, Word itself has undergone significant evolution. This guide is geared exclusively toward providing a guide to Word's version 16. At the time of this writing, that's the version that's currently available via Microsoft 365.

Older versions of Word will work in some ways that are like what I walk through here. But the older that the version of Word that you're using is, the more likely you'll be to find some more significant differences between how you need to use that version and the step-by-step guidance I provide below.

A similar question is the relationship—or lack thereof—between Word's version 16 for Windows and version 16 for MacOS. The way Word works on the two operating systems is identical or nearly so in many ways. But sometimes, there are differences in functionality that are *just big enough* to leave you hanging if you're a MacOS user and trying to follow a guide to Word for Windows.

In addition, even Word for Windows users have a hard time finding exact guidance about how to use the application to get done what they need as biblical scholars. If you're a MacOS user, that dearth of specific guidance is even more severe. If you go in search of detailed support for Word that's specific to MacOS, you'll have an even harder time in some cases than your Windows-using colleagues with finding the help you need.

To help bridge this gap for MacOS users as well—especially MacOS users in biblical studies—I’ve crafted this guide to address Word’s functionality on both operating systems. As aids in the pages that below, I’ve included copious annotated screenshots to help you follow along and reproduce the steps you can take to hone your skill with Word.

Where Word’s functionality is identical or obvious between Word’s Windows and MacOS interfaces, the annotated screenshots simply illustrate from Word for Windows. But wherever differences in the interfaces could prove confusing, I’ve included corresponding instructions and illustrations both for Windows and for MacOS users. Whichever operating system you use, you don’t need to spend time getting tripped up by or sorting through the differences between Word for Windows and Word for MacOS.

By using Word for Windows as a default where the two interfaces are comparable, I hope to have avoided multiplying instructions and annotations that would prove needlessly confusing. But by including careful notes about the ways in which Word for MacOS differs, I also hope to have comprehensively addressed the serious lack of guidance available for using Word as a biblical scholar—whether your preference is to use Word on Windows or on MacOS.

*Note: If you use Word on Linux or another similarly open source operating system, you’ll be running either the Windows or MacOS version of Word through an emulator or a virtual machine. In this instance then, you’ll simply follow along in this guide with the steps that correspond to whatever version of Word you’ve installed in that way.*

## The Structure of This Guide

In organizing this guide, I've arranged the material from beginning to end according to two principles:

- 1) The order of elements in an academic research paper composed according to the requirements of the style of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL)<sup>1</sup> and
- 2) The sequence of steps to meet this style's requirements that is most optimal for minimizing the number of steps necessary for meeting these requirements.

The requirements your writing is subject to may be a bit different from this. For example, if you're preparing to submit a journal article, you probably won't include a title page.

Because of this fact, I've structured the content so that you can dip into and out of various sections as needed to get guidance on particular points. To help you refer to related sections, I've included copious links within this guide to other sections in it at different points where these other sections might be helpful.

By the same token, SBL style falls within the broader Chicago family of writing styles. Consequently, if you're writing in another Chicago-family style besides SBL, some of that style's requirements may be a bit different.

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<sup>1</sup> SBL presents the core of this style in *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: SBL, 2014). But a complete picture of the requirements of SBL style requires consultation of several other authorities as well. For a discussion of these authorities, see J. David Stark, *Secrets of SBL Style: What You Need to Know That Hides in Plain Sight* (J. David Stark, 2019), <https://www.jdavidstark.com/secretsofsblstyle/>.

Still, the step-by-step guidance given here should prove helpful to illustrate principles you can easily apply to meet the requirements of other similar styles (e.g., Turabian's *Manual for Writers* or the *Chicago Manual of Style* itself).

## AFTERWORD

In the pages of this guide, I've only just scratched the surface. There's much more that can be said about Word and its use as a tool for producing written biblical scholarship.

But if you take one thing away from this guide, I hope it will be the principle that formatting your research isn't really something you need to bother with a whole lot. Instead, it's largely something that Word is quite capable of taking off your plate and handling for you—if you know how to ask.

In your apprenticeship in the craft of biblical scholarship, learning how to use this tool—and use it well—will pay significant dividends over time. It will help you produce better work. From Word's side, that better work involves more consistent and precise formatting. From your side, that's definitely a benefit too.

But even more important is the time and attention you get back to plough into things *besides* formatting your research. That might be the content in the document you're working on. It might be another project. It might be something else entirely.

The point is Word is there to help you craft your writing. And learning to use this tool to its fullest will prove hugely helpful in your apprenticeship to the craft of biblical scholarship.

If you've enjoyed this guide but think there's something that would be significantly helpful to you that I've missed, I'd encourage you to [reach out by email](#). I'll definitely take that input under advisement in considering future possible revisions of this guide.

Similarly, if you know others who would benefit from this guide, please [consider sharing with them how they can get a copy too](#). A rising tide lifts all boats, and you honing your craft *along with those you know* is likely to be helpful to you in ways that neither you nor I can foresee at present.

Finally, if you're interested in other ways of honing your craft as a biblical scholar, I regularly release other resources—most entirely free—that are geared toward helping emerging biblical scholars hone their craft, especially in ways that academic training often passes over.

If you'd like to receive these resources automatically as they become available (usually once a week), [be sure to let me know](#). I'd be delighted to have the opportunity to help you continue honing your craft in other areas as well.