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3 handy techniques to make your important tasks really stand out

Application: Microsoft Outlook 2000/2002/2003

Outlook's Tasks may sound like a glorified to-do list, but it's actually an incredibly useful tool to help you keep your day in order—if, that is, you know how to make it work for you. We have three different ways to organize and sort your tasks so you're one step ahead of what you need to do next. Once you have your priorities straight, you can use Outlook to record and view your tasks, as shown in **Figure A**, so you don't forget a thing.

Organize your tasks to suit your style

After you enter your tasks into Outlook, you'll want to sort and organize them so you can see exactly what your next step is. The simplest method is to click on a column header in any Tasks view to sort the tasks by that column. Click once to sort in ascending order and again to sort in descending order. For an even more organized to-do list, try our three methods: sorting, grouping, and color-coding.

To sort tasks by priority:

1. For each task, open it and choose an option from the Priority dropdown list,

as shown in **Figure B**. Click Save And Close to dismiss the dialog box.

2. In Tasks view, select the Detailed List view from the My Tasks pane or View menu. (View | Arrange By | Current View | Detailed List in 2003 and View | Current View | Detailed Lists in 2000/2002.)
3. Click on the Exclamation point in the header of the Tasks window to sort the tasks by priority, as shown in **Figure C**.

As you can see in the figure, Outlook represents high-priority tasks with an exclamation point, low-priority tasks with a down arrow, and normal tasks with no icon.

Related Courses

- Outlook 2000, 2002, 2003 & 2007
- 4006 Time and Task Management Using Microsoft Office Outlook 2003

We suggest you create a category for each priority level, as shown in **Figure D**. By doing so, you can easily sort your tasks in Category view, and even color-code them to tell you what's important at a glance.

To group tasks by Category:

1. For each task, open it and categorize it according to its importance. For instance, we used Priority 1–5 for our immediate tasks, Priority W for tasks due by week's end, and Priority M for tasks due by month's-end.
2. Click Save And Close.
3. Change to Categories view by selecting View | Arrange By | Categories in

Microsoft Office Productivity

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Help Desk

Don't cage your legacy users! Support Wi-Fi on any OS

Business Skills

Writing a business letter? Choose the appropriate style for maximum impact

From the Editor

I know your work day is full of tasks that keep you busy. Keeping track of those tasks and prioritizing them is a job in itself. That's why my Microsoft Productivity article covers how you can organize and prioritize your tasks in Outlook.

Wireless support is important for any business and it's inevitable that your users will request help from remote locations. To help you help them, I included my Help Desk article this month. Read it to find out how to support Wi-Fi on any operating system.

Finally, I know you've written a business letter before, but did you use Word's business letter styles? Did you know that Word offers different types? Check out my Business Skills article to get the lowdown.

So many items, so many ways to create tasks

To create a new blank task, you already know how to use the File | New | Task menu choice, but we bet you aren't familiar with all of the options to create pre-filled task forms:

- Drag an Outlook item (meeting, mail, journal entry) onto the Task bar in the Navigation Pane or onto the Tasks folder in the Folder List in 2000/2002.
- Select an item (meeting, email, journal entry) and choose Edit | Copy To Folder. In the Copy Items dialog box, select the Tasks folder.
- Right-click on an existing task and drag it to the bottom of the task list. When you release the mouse button, select Copy from the resulting menu. Outlook creates a duplicate task; double-click on it to edit its data.

Each of these methods creates a task form with the associated information already entered. All you have to do is add the missing details and click the Save And Close button.

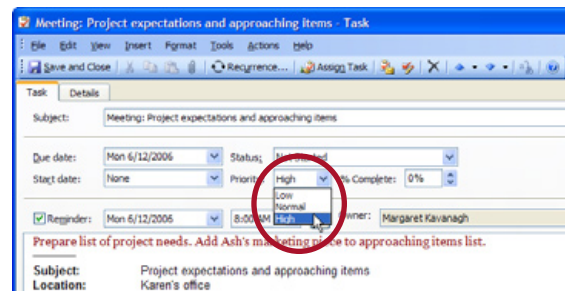
2003 or View | Current View | By Category in 2000/2002.

When you do so, your tasks immediately group together according to the categories you chose or created, as shown in **Figure E**.

Of course, you can use Categories for items other than priority. If you categorize your tasks by type, that is, meeting versus phone call, for instance, your Categories view would look quite different.

Subject	Status	Due Date	% Complete	Categories
Award: Ash for 4 years service	Not Started	Fri 6/30/2006	0%	Priority H
Award: Teena for 6 years service	Not Started	Fri 6/30/2006	0%	Priority H
Bank deposit	Completed	Fri 6/16/2006	100%	Priority W
Copy and send tax docs to Terry	Waiting on som...	Mon 6/12/2006	75%	Priority 4
Fill in supply sheet for expense report	In Progress	Mon 6/12/2006	30%	Priority 5
Meetings: Budget Dept for new bldg allowances	Completed	Mon 6/12/2006	100%	Priority H
Meetings: Ash - assign a marketing piece	Completed	Mon 6/12/2006	100%	Priority H
Meeting: Project expectations and approaching it...	Not Started	Mon 6/12/2006	0%	Priority 1
Meeting: Teena - update call list	Not Started	Fri 6/16/2006	0%	Priority W
Organize Tanner file	Deferred	Fri 6/16/2006	0%	Priority W
Phonecall: Contractor for gym estimates	Deferred	Fri 6/30/2006	0%	Priority H
Phonecall: Real Estate agent for new location	Not Started	Fri 6/30/2006	0%	Priority M
Phonecall: Teena. Check project status.	Not Started	Mon 6/12/2006	0%	Priority 2
Review employees for quarterly bonus	In Progress	Fri 6/16/2006	50%	Priority W
Update website with corrections	Not Started	Fri 6/16/2006	0%	Priority W

A This customized Tasks view allows you to organize your to-do items in a way that best fits your working style.



B Choose Low, Normal, or High from the Priority dropdown list to assign an importance level to your task.

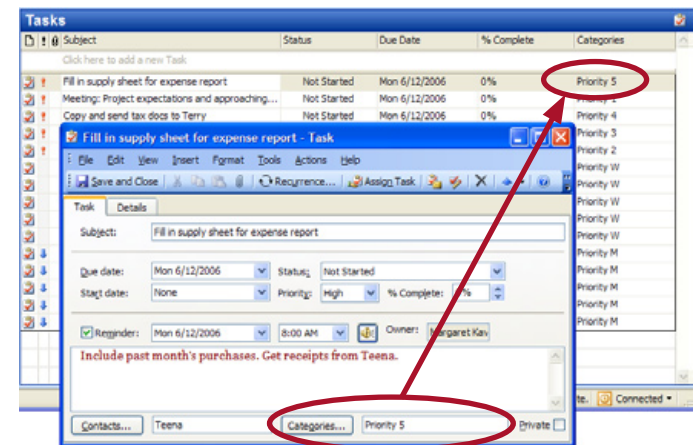
A category refresher course: To add an item to a category, click the Categories button in the item's form and select a category from the list. To create a new category, enter it in the Item(s) Belong To These Categories text box and click the Add To List button. Click OK when you've finished. You can use multiple categories per item.

To color-code tasks by criteria:

1. In a Tasks view, right-click on the column headers at the top of the window and select Customize Current View.
2. Click the Automatic Formatting button in the Customize View dialog box.

Subject	Status	Due Date	% Complete	Categories
Fill in supply sheet for expense report	Not Started	Mon 6/12/2006	0%	Priority 5
Meeting: Project expectations and approaching...	Not Started	Mon 6/12/2006	0%	Priority 4
Copy and send tax docs to Terry	Not Started	Mon 6/12/2006	0%	Priority 2
Bank deposit	Completed	Fri 6/16/2006	100%	Priority W
Meeting: Ash - assign a marketing piece	Completed	Mon 6/12/2006	100%	Priority H
Phonecall: Teena. Check project status.	Not Started	Mon 6/12/2006	0%	Priority H
Organize Tanner file	Deferred	Fri 6/16/2006	0%	Priority W
Update website with corrections	Not Started	Fri 6/16/2006	0%	Priority W
Bank deposit	Completed	Fri 6/16/2006	100%	Priority W
Review employees for quarterly bonus	Not Started	Fri 6/16/2006	0%	Priority W
Meeting: Teena - update call list	Not Started	Fri 6/16/2006	0%	Priority W
Award: Teena for 6 years service	Not Started	Fri 6/30/2006	0%	Priority H
Award: Ash for 4 years service	Not Started	Fri 6/30/2006	0%	Priority H
Meeting: Budget Dept for new bldg allowances	Not Started	Fri 6/30/2006	0%	Priority H
Phonecall: Real Estate agent for new location	Not Started	Fri 6/30/2006	0%	Priority M
Phonecall: Contractor for gym estimates	Not Started	Fri 6/30/2006	0%	Priority H

C High-priority tasks zip to the top of the list when you sort by the Priority field in Detailed List view.



D Although Categories display in the Detailed List view, you can't sort them here; instead, you must change to Category view.

- Click the Add button to create a new formatting rule and name it in the Name text box.
- Click the Font button and change the text properties to make your task stand out. For example, we chose a larger, blue, bold, italic font for our Priority 1 task, as shown in **Figure A**. Click OK.
- Click the Condition button and set the terms that determine whether the task is formatted. For instance, we chose Priority 1 for our category on the More Choices tab. By doing so, any task categorized as Priority 1 is affected.

- Click OK three times to exit the dialog boxes.

The task immediately takes on the custom formatting you chose. Repeat these steps for each task category.

Where did your task's color go?

Because you apply Automatic Formatting when you customize the current view, you won't see that special formatting when you switch to another view (for example, from Detailed View to the By Category view).

Use the Automatic Formatting option to format tasks based on any criteria. For instance, format all tasks involving your manager with bold font so they stand out. You can also use the Automatic

Formatting dialog box to turn off Outlook's default formatting rules by deselecting them in the Rules For This View list box.

Once you've applied all your rules, your finished task list should appear similar to ours in **Figure A**. Now, you should be able to easily distinguish

one task from another and see which item is next on your priority list.

Rules of order: Keep in mind that when you're creating rules, those higher on the list take precedence. You can use the Move Up or Move Down buttons to reorder your formatting rules so the most important items stand out. 🌐

3 ways to remind yourself that you've got things to do

Listing all your tasks in Outlook won't help you a bit if you don't remember that they're waiting for you. There are several ways to make sure your tasks are "in your face" every day so you don't forget your to-do list.

- Reminders.** When you enter a task, select the Reminder check box on the Task form and adjust the associated settings so Outlook reminds you with a pop-up dialog box. You can set them to appear as far in advance as you wish. To automatically set a reminder for all new tasks, select Tools | Options and click Task Options. Ensure the check box for Set Reminders On Tasks With Due Dates is selected.
- Outlook Today.** You can easily turn on Outlook Today (if it isn't visible) by clicking on your Mailbox or PST file in your folder list. Outlook Today lists your upcoming tasks and you can customize how they appear by clicking on the Customize Outlook Today hyperlink.
- View the Tasks folder at startup.** When you start Outlook each day, you can ensure that your tasks are the first thing you see. To do so, simply select Tools | Options from the main menu. Click on the Other tab, and then click the Advanced Options button. In the General Settings panel, click the Browse button, navigate to and select the Tasks folder, and click OK. Click OK twice more to exit all dialog boxes.

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Subject	Status	Due Date	% Complete	Categories
Click here to add a new Task				
Categories: Priority 1 (1 item)				
Meeting: Project expectations and approaching it...	Not Started	Mon 6/12/2006	0%	Priority 1
Categories: Priority 2 (1 item)				
Phoncall: Teena. Check project status.	Not Started	Mon 6/12/2006	0%	Priority 2
Categories: Priority 3 (1 item)				
Meeting: Ash - assign a marketing piece.	Not Started	Mon 6/12/2006	0%	Priority 3
Categories: Priority 4 (1 item)				
Copy and send tax docs to Terry	Not Started	Mon 6/12/2006	0%	Priority 4
Categories: Priority 5 (1 item)				
Fill in supply sheet for expense report	Not Started	Mon 6/12/2006	0%	Priority 5
Categories: Priority M (5 items)				
Award: Teena for 6 years service	Not Started	Fri 6/30/2006	0%	Priority M
Award: Ash for 4 years service	Not Started	Fri 6/30/2006	0%	Priority M
Meeting: Budget Dept for new bldg allowances	Not Started	Fri 6/30/2006	0%	Priority M
Phoncall: Real Estate agent for new location	Not Started	Fri 6/30/2006	0%	Priority M
Phoncall: Contractor for gym estimates	Not Started	Fri 6/30/2006	0%	Priority M
Categories: Priority W (5 items)				
Organize Tanner file	Not Started	Fri 6/16/2006	0%	Priority W
Update website with corrections	Not Started	Fri 6/16/2006	0%	Priority W
Bank deposit	Not Started	Fri 6/16/2006	0%	Priority W
Review employees for quarterly bonus	Not Started	Fri 6/16/2006	0%	Priority W
Meeting: Teena - update call list	Not Started	Fri 6/16/2006	0%	Priority W

E Categories allow you to prioritize your tasks with more flexibility than the High, Normal, and Low priority option does.

Don't cage your legacy users! Support Wi-Fi on any OS

Operating Systems: Microsoft Windows 98 SE/2000/XP Professional

With wireless networks appearing everywhere from Starbucks to McDonald's, it's no wonder that many companies and their employees have a keen interest in harnessing the mobility afforded by the technology. Although you can easily set up a wireless network, your users inevitably encounter frustrating problems and then call you from remote locations for support. You can troubleshoot wireless issues on legacy operating systems when you know which problems to watch out for.

Eliminate driver conflicts

Running an older driver might cause a problem with getting a wireless adapter running. Be sure to download the latest driver for the OS from the manufacturer's website and install it.

Streamline on any XP service pack

With Windows XP Gold and its subsequent service packs, Microsoft significantly improved the wireless management capabilities in Windows. So much so, in fact, that you don't always need to use the management software that comes with your wireless network adapter.

The new service, the Wireless Zero Configuration Utility, allows you to eliminate third-party tools, which offers two main benefits. First, when you troubleshoot wireless problems,

you needn't consider a third-party tool as the problem. Second, you streamline your operating system and PC maintenance.

To start the Wireless Zero Configuration service:

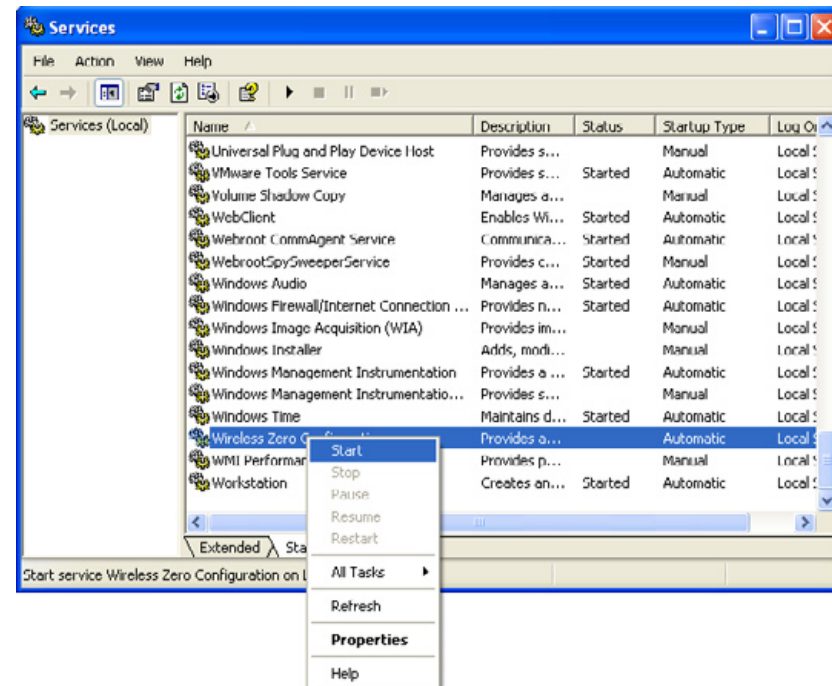
1. Open the Services Control Panel applet by selecting Start | (Settings) | Control Panel | Administrative Tools | Services.
2. Right-click on Wireless Zero Configuration and choose Start, as shown in **Figure A**. By default, the service will start automatically each time you start Windows.

Connect to the right wireless network

Another common wireless connection problem results when a computer connects to the wrong network. To connect to the correct network, your computer

Related Courses

- Certified Wireless Network Administrator



A Once you start the Wireless Zero Configuration service, Windows XP can manage almost all your wireless networking configuration, which means you don't have to rely on third-party tools.

uses the Service-Set Identifier (SSID), which is a name (of up to 32 characters) that identifies a wireless network. Commonly, a wireless network's SSID and network name match. If network names overlap, your computer may connect to the wrong network.

If you're troubleshooting an initial setup, be aware that when you first install a new wireless adapter on a Windows 98 or 2000 machine, your computer automatically connects to the strongest unsecured network. Windows XP's management tools usually prevent this from happening.

To combat SSID conflicts, you can change the SSID on your router. Still, you may need to manually connect your computer to the right wireless network. Manual connections are essential for Windows 98 or 2000 if you connect in an area with multiple wireless networks.

To connect to a specific wireless network in Windows XP:

1. Right-click on your wireless network icon in the system tray and choose View Available Wireless Networks.
2. In the resulting dialog box, select the desired network and click Connect.
3. If you connect to an unsecured wireless network, Windows displays a warning message. Click Connect Anyway to continue.

Important: We recommend you don't use an unsecured wireless network. If you do, you risk allowing access to your network to unknown parties.

4. If you connect to a secured network, Windows prompts you for the network key (password). Enter it in the Network Key text box and click Connect.

Connect to a specific wireless network in Windows 98 or 2000

Since Windows 98 and 2000 lack real wireless network management capabilities, you need to rely on the tools included with your wireless network adapter in order to make a connection to a wireless network. To do so:

1. Start the management tool that came with your adapter, such as the Linksys management tool shown in **Figure B**
2. Click on the Site Survey tab to display a list of all wireless networks available.

Tip: Some wireless management utilities call the available network list an "AP list."

3. Select the wireless network to which you'd like to connect and click Connect.

4. If the network is unsecured, the tool connects to the network automatically. Otherwise, enter the required security information in the resulting window.

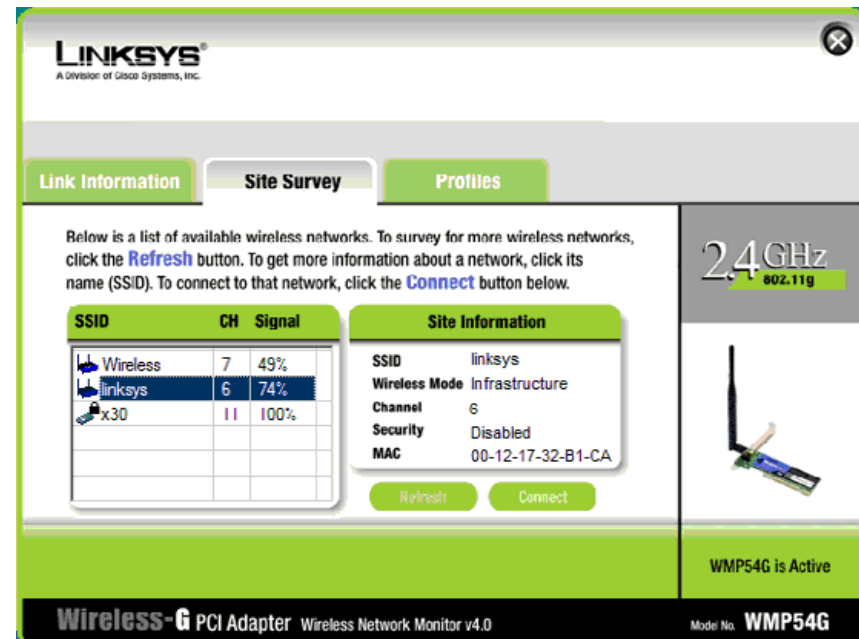
Rule out an incorrect IP address configuration

Incorrectly configured IP addresses can result in your computer's inability to access any network resources, including the internet. If your company uses a DHCP server, you must remember to also configure the wireless computer for DHCP. If your network doesn't use DHCP, you need to manually configure

the computer with this critical addressing information.

To verify or change IP address settings in Windows XP or 2000:

1. Open the Network Control Panel applet by selecting Start | (Settings) | Control Panel | Network Connections (Network And Dial-up Connections in 2000).
2. Right-click on your wireless network and choose Properties.
3. Double-click on Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) to open its Properties dialog box.



B The vendor tool usually provides onscreen directions for connecting to a wireless network

Match end-to-end encryption and passwords

If you support users in an urban or suburban area, you'll probably see open wireless networks operating. An open network can be an invitation for people to steal your users' files or use your company's internet connection for illegal activity. You can help prevent this kind of behavior by using encryption on your wireless network.

You choose from the varying encryption levels available for wireless networks, ranging from Wired Equivalent Protocol (WEP) to Wi-Fi Protected Access (WPA2), and between the multiple encryption levels in each option. If you configure your wireless access point for a specific encryption level, you must also configure your clients to use that same encryption level.

In Windows XP, use the Wireless Network Connection utility to configure the necessary encryption information. For Windows 98 and 2000, you must configure encryption using the third-party management tool.

- For DHCP, select the Obtain An IP Address Automatically option button and then select the Obtain DNS Server Address Automatically option button.
- If you use static IP addresses on your network, select the Use The Following DNS Server Addresses option button, and then enter the Preferred DNS Server and Alternate DNS Server addresses in the corresponding text boxes.

To verify or change IP address settings in Windows 98:

- Right-click on Network Neighborhood and choose Properties from the pop-up menu. All of the networking properties for your computer open in the resulting window.
- Scroll down toward the bottom of the list and double-click on the TCP/IP option associated with your wireless network adapter.
- If you're using DHCP, select the Obtain An IP Address Automatically option button.
- If you use static IP addresses on your network, on the IP Address tab, select the Specify An IP Address option button, and then specify your default

gateway on the Gateway tab and your DNS servers on the DNS Configuration tab.

Correct range and interference problems

Wi-Fi networks, particularly those that run in the 2.4 GHz range (B & G), are particularly prone to interference from other devices, as well as from other wireless networks. Because of the way that 2.4 GHz wireless networks operate, although there are 11 usable channels, to reduce channel overlap, only three at a time are actually usable in a given location. Multiple networks can share channels, but the more traffic there is on a particular channel, the more likely you are to suffer from interference problems that degrade performance. For Windows 2000 and 98, the utility you use to connect to a wireless

network usually indicates on which channel each network communicates.

Unfortunately, in this case, Windows XP's utility falls short, since it doesn't provide you with a tabled channel list. For XP, use the wireless network card manufacturer's utility to view this information.

Change the wireless channel

If your users suffer from a burdened wireless channel, you can't do anything about it from the client side. You must fix this problem at the wireless router, and then you need to reconnect the clients to the wireless network.

Range

Another major factor in the success or failure of a wireless network is range. Within an appropriate radius—generally published specifications indicate a

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range of up to 150–200 feet for best performance—a wireless network performs extremely well. If a user can't connect to your network, ask him to relocate into that range.

Combat slow wireless connections

Your wireless users will certainly complain about their equipment's speed if it isn't up to par, especially if the company required them to purchase their own adapters. If you buy equipment locally or your users make the purchase, be wary of the advertised

speeds on network adapter and wireless router packaging.

Wireless-B network specifications rate the equipment for a maximum theoretical speed of 11 Mbps, or about three to four times as fast as the typical broadband internet connection. Even with this 11 Mbps rating, however, you won't generally see more than about 5 or 6 Mbps of actual data throughput. Wireless networks require significant overhead to actually make the connection work.

Wireless-G, on the other hand, sports a theoretical speed of up to

54 Mbps, with 20–30 Mbps being the generally achieved real-world maximum. Again, manufacturers don't take great pains to indicate on their packaging the overhead requirements necessary for a wireless network's operation.

You might have another hardware-related problem, though. Suppose you have a non-working USB wireless-G network adapter; or, it works, but runs *very* slowly. To achieve speeds greater than the 12 Mbps upper limit for USB 1.1, use a USB 2.0 port (high speed with a 480 Mbps upper

limit) for your wireless-G network adapter.

In fact, if you plug a backward-compatible, Hi-Speed USB 2.0 device into a USB 1.1 port, Windows XP gives you a message like the one shown in **Figure C** indicating that your USB device will operate, but not at its normal speed. 🚫

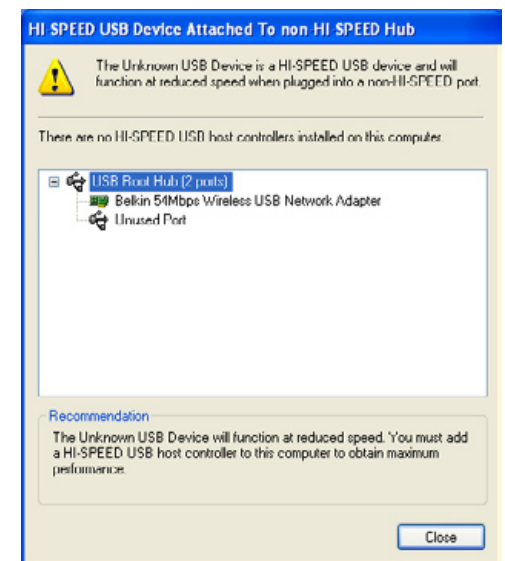


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C The vendor tool usually provides onscreen directions for connecting to a wireless network

Writing a business letter? Choose the appropriate style for maximum impact

Application: Microsoft Word 2000/2002/2003

Though email is great for getting a message to someone quickly, well-typed letters printed on quality paper still have their place. Receiving a letter in the mail is more noteworthy than receiving email, and the better your letter looks, the more likely its recipient will read it. Following are the three basic styles for business letters:

- Block
- Modified Block
- Semi-Block

In addition to knowing the characteristics of these styles, it's important to know which letter style to use for which occasions. We'll explain each style so you can choose the style that will send the right message in all of your written correspondence.

Related Courses

- Business Writing
- 4008 Building Better Microsoft Office Word 2003 Documents in Less Time

Block style

In this style, every line begins at the left margin, as shown in **Figure A**. This style is the most formal of the three styles we're discussing; it's also, however, the easiest to create, because there are no horizontal alignment variations.

Modified Block style

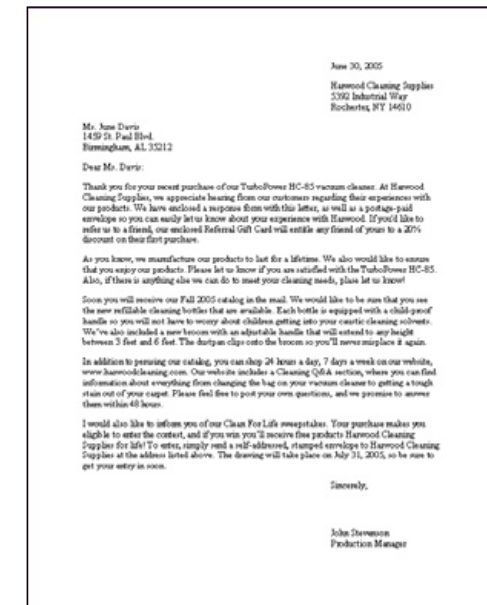
Modified Block style is the same as Block style except for the date, sender's address (if using), closing line, and signature. These elements begin at the center of the line, as shown in **Figure B**. Modified Block style is a bit less formal than Block style. Its indented elements aren't difficult to format.

To indent Modified Block style elements:

1. Select the elements you want to indent. (In Word 2002 and 2003, you can press and hold [Ctrl] to select nonconsecutive elements. In Word 97 and 2000, you'll need to highlight each section separately.)
2. If you can't see the rulers, select View | Ruler to display them.
3. Click on the horizontal ruler to create a tab stop at about 4.5".
4. Place the insertion point at the beginning of the first line you'd like to indent and press the [Tab] key to indent the line.
5. Repeat step 4 until you've indented each element.



A Your most formal business letters will look best in Block style.



B With a few quick adjustments, you can give Block style letters a more personal feel by switching them to Modified Block.

Semi-Block style

Semi-Block style is the same as Modified Block style except that the first line of each paragraph in the letter's body is indented, as shown in **Figure C**. This style is even less formal than the Modified Block style. It's less widely used, probably because Semi-Block letters are

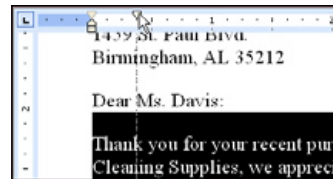


C *Semi-Block style uses extra indents to evoke a less-formal feel.*

more difficult to create than Block and Modified Block letters. However, in Word, the first-line indents on body paragraphs are fairly straightforward.

To create first-line indents:

1. Select the paragraph(s) you'd like to indent.



D *Use the First Line indent marker to indent paragraphs and see the results immediately.*

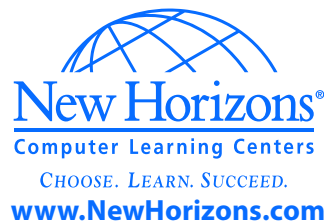
2. If you can't see the rulers, select View | Ruler to display them.
3. On the horizontal toolbar, click and drag the First Line Indent marker to the position you want, as shown in **Figure D**.

Business skills for the new world of work

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