

Paragraph and Line Spacing: Best Practice

60 minutes

ICT Specialism 1: Word processing

Outcome M1.U2.1

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Adjust line and paragraph spacing in your word processor to improve document readability. Learn to choose between left and justified alignment while avoiding issues like rivers of white space. Apply these techniques to enhance your project document without changing any text.

CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Outcome	What the specification asks for
M1.U2.1	Apply a variety of formatting options such as paragraphing, alignment and orientation to a document.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Set line spacing and paragraph spacing (before/after) for readability
- Judge when justified alignment helps and when it creates rivers
- Improve a project document through spacing alone

BEFORE THE BELL

- Prepare a before-and-after spacing demo on screen (cramped justified text with rivers versus 1.15 left-aligned with space after).
- Nothing to share or pre-create: the three practice paragraphs are printed on the step-by-step task for students to copy and paste, and anyone missing 09_specialism/sm1/01_drafts makes it in a few seconds.
- Confirm students can reach 09_specialism/sm1/ and can create 03_finished if missing.
- Have a short before/after spacing demo ready on screen. Confirm students can locate their project file in 09_specialism/sm1/ (v2 preferred) without opening it yet.
- No prep needed beyond the on-screen before/after sample used in the introduction.
- Nothing to share: the three practice paragraphs are printed on the step for students to paste. Anyone missing 01_drafts makes it inside sm1 in a few seconds. Students need Word Online or Google Docs and access to Project_Portfolio.
- Students need their project document from the template/formatting sequence (v2 preferred). Confirm 03_finished exists or can be created under 09_specialism/sm1.

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HOW THE LESSON RUNS

5 min	introduction	Introduction
6 min	content	Key concepts
16 min	activity	Step-by-step task
2 min	content	Common issues
21 min	activity	Independent practice
5 min	content	Reflection
5 min	summary	Lesson summary

TEACHING MOVES

- In the intro, only confirm the project file exists, do not open it for editing until independent practice, so the class practises on a file that does not matter first.
- Model spacing settings on the classroom screen before students start their task.
- Demo a 120% zoom body scan on a real student section under the visualiser before independent practice (body blocks only, headings left alone).
- Circulate during independent practice to observe alignment choices and spot rivers.
- Facilitate a brief whole-class discussion on when justified alignment is suitable.
- Remind students to edit their actual project document during the practice session.
- Spot-check sm1_doc1_from_template_v3 in 03_finished before the end of the double and keep it as the finished evidence for their vocational work.
- Offer the early-finisher side-by-side left-versus-justified test to individual students only after their v3 is saved and checked, because announcing it to the room pulls students off the main task.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Pressing Enter twice between paragraphs: delete extra blank lines and set space after to about 8 pt.
- Line spacing not changing: check for conflicting style settings and reapply the spacing.
- Failing to notice rivers: zoom in or narrow the window, then compare alignments directly on screen.
- Applying 1.15 or justify to headings: select body paragraphs only under each heading.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Support: Provide a quick reference card with the exact steps for setting spacing.
- Extension for early finishers: ask them to run the side-by-side left versus justified test on one short section once their v3 has been checked.
- Support: Allow paired work for the alignment comparison activity to discuss choices.