

# Top 10 Tips for Creating Briefs in Word 2007

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September 22, 2009

**Y**ou wouldn't meet a prospective client wearing a bathing suit. Once that client hires your firm, presentation remains important, including the briefs you file. In this TechnoFeature article, Microsoft Word expert Christel Burris discusses ten tips for smooth sailing when formatting your briefs. From generating the Table Contents and Table of Authorities to creating templates to researching court rules, these ten tips will enable you to spend most of your time crafting your arguments rather than trying to figure out how to indent a quote.

## INTRODUCTION

In a perfect world, a lawyer would spend most of their time researching and writing a brief. However, with specific filing requirements for every court, it's hard to keep track of all the formatting nuances mandated by each. The ten tips below should help you speed up formatting and Table of Contents/Table of Authorities production so you can concentrate on the substance of your brief.

## 1. RESEARCH THE COURT RULES

While this tip is not specific to Word, it is, in my opinion, the most important tip for creating briefs: Know the court rules for filing briefs. Does the court prefer Harvard Blue Book Rules of Citation or California style? Is there a page or word limit on the brief? What are the requirements for font size, line spacing, footnote size, margins, etc.? Does the court require numbered/lined paper? Never rely on memory as rules can change. [Review the rules every time.](#)

## 2. WORK IN PRINT LAYOUT VIEW

Print Layout View (on the Ribbon, View Tab > Document Views Group > Print Layout) offers an excellent visual for seeing where automatic page breaks lurk and how footnotes and page numbers display.

## 3. USE A TEMPLATE

Before you ever have to file a brief, prepare (or have someone prepare) a "brief" template for each court in which you're likely have cases. The template should include styles for all levels of headings, the Table of Contents, block quotes, etc.

Taking the time to create a template that corresponds to filing requirements will eliminate a lot of time working on the formatting aspects of a brief, especially when you're in "deadline" mode. Make sure your template includes all pages required in the brief (cover page, Table of Contents page, Table of Authorities page, etc.) and place the codes to generate the Table of Contents on the appropriate page.

Also, make sure that the page numbering is set up correctly in the template. Page numbering in Word is still not as flexible as in WordPerfect but setting it up correctly ahead of time will save you time when finalizing your brief.

Also, make sure that the Table of Authorities and Table of Contents styles have been edited to display those tables in the manner outlined by the court rules (i.e., should there be dot leaders between the last word of the heading/citation and the page number; should the

authorities be indented an inch from the margin, etc.).

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## 4. USE STYLES

Among other things, Styles (on the Ribbon, Home Tab > Styles Group) enable you to make global formatting changes in a couple of seconds. For instance, if you use a Style for block quotes and you find yourself in a position where you have gone over your page limit, you can modify the Style and change all block quotes with one click. Also, when you find you're not in compliance with court rules, Styles enable you make changes quickly.

Use Heading Styles when creating headings that will appear in your Table of Contents. Heading styles include automatic Table of Contents codes, making it a breeze to generate a Table of Contents.

If you find Styles too cumbersome to use, create keyboard shortcuts to your Styles.

## 5. USE CROSS-REFERENCING

If you reference other sections of your brief, use the cross-referencing function of Word (on the Ribbon, References Tab > Captions Group > Cross-reference) to save time updating references. For example, if you refer to "Section II.3."

in your brief, but, upon editing, that section ends up being “Section II,” strategic use of cross-referencing codes will eliminate the need to make those changes manually.

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**6. MARK YOUR CITATIONS**

To mark citations, select the text to be marked then on the Ribbon go to the References Tab > Table of Authorities Group > Mark Citation OR select the text to be marked and press Alt+Shift+I. This function will enable you to spend more time on the substance of the brief and less time creating Table of Authorities.

Also, it is a good idea to mark your citations when the brief is in nearly final. Waiting to mark your citations until you’re just about done means that you won’t inadvertently delete a citation but leave the code relating to it behind.

**7. ENABLE WORD COUNT DISPLAY**

To do this, right-click the status bar then click Word Count. If the brief you are working on has a word limit, turning this feature on

will display the total word count (including footnotes and endnotes) of your brief as you work.

**8. SET UP TABLE OF CONTENTS AND TABLE OF AUTHORITIES PAGES**

You can find this function on the Ribbon > References Tab > Table of Contents Group > Table of Contents Button AND on the Ribbon > References Tab > Table of Authorities Group > Insert Table of Authorities. Once you have formatted headings and marked authorities, use these features to position the Table of Contents and Table of Authorities appropriately.

As mentioned previously, you should have the Table of Contents page and code set up in a template, but if doing so is not possible, then you’ll need to insert the coding for these tables on their respective pages.

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**9. GENERATE, GENERATE, GENERATE**

While Generate functions exist on

the References Tab of the Ribbon, the easiest method is to select the entire text of the brief (Alt+A) and press the F9 key. Not only will this command generate/re-generate the Table of Contents and Table of Authorities, but it will also update any cross-references.

When regenerating (or updating) the Table of Contents, a dialog box will present two options: Update Page Numbers Only or Update Entire Table. Update the entire table — provided you have not manually formatted the Table of Contents.

**10. USE SHOW/HIDE P**

Don’t generate Tables of Contents and Tables of Authorities with the Table of Authorities citation fields displayed (on the Ribbon, Home Tab > Paragraph Group > P). Once you mark a citation, the code for that citation will display. If you generate the Table of Contents and/or Table of Authorities with these codes displayed, the page numbers in the Tables will be incorrect.

**CONCLUSION**

A brief can pave the way to victory for your client. Don’t let incorrect formatting or an incorrect Table of Contents and Table of Authorities get in the way of your arguments. Following the above tips will give your brief the chance it deserves.

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