

Writer Guide

Chapter 4
Formatting Text

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Note

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Note for macOS users

Some keystrokes and menu items are different on macOS from those used in Windows and Linux. The table below gives some common substitutions for the instructions in this book. For a more detailed list, see the application Help.

Windows or Linux	macOS equivalent	Effect	
Tools > Options menu selection	LibreOffice > Preferences	Access setup options	
Right-click	Control+click and/or right-click depending on computer setup	Open a context menu	
Ctrl (Control)	♯ (Command)	Used with other keys	
F11	光+ <i>T</i>	Open the sidebar Styles and Formatting deck	

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Introduction

This chapter covers the basics of formatting text in Writer, the word-processing component of LibreOffice:

- Formatting paragraphs and characters
- Using autoformatting
- Creating bulleted, numbered, and outline lists

It assumes that you are familiar with the text techniques described in Chapter 2, Working with Text: Basics and Chapter 3, Working with Text: Advanced.

We recommend that you also follow the suggestions in Chapter 20, Setting up Writer, about displaying formatting aids, such as end-of-paragraph marks, and selecting other setup options.

Page formatting is covered in Chapters 5 and 6.

Using styles is recommended

Styles are central to using Writer. Styles enable you to easily format your documents consistently, and to change the format with minimal effort. A style is a named set of formatting options. When you apply a style, you apply a whole group of formats at the same time.

In addition, styles are used by LibreOffice for many processes, even if you are not aware of them. For example, Writer relies on heading styles (or other styles you specify) when it compiles a table of contents. Therefore, the use of paragraph styles is highly recommended as an alternative to manually formatting paragraphs, especially for long or standardized documents. The use of character styles instead of manually formatting individual words is also highly recommended.

For information on styles and how to use them, see Chapters 8 and 9 in this book.

Applying styles is guick and easy using the Styles and Formatting deck of the Sidebar.



Caution

Manual formatting (also called *direct formatting*) overrides styles, and you cannot get rid of the manual formatting by applying a style to it.

Removing manual formatting

To remove manual formatting, select the text and choose **Format > Clear Direct Formatting** from the Menu bar, or click the **Clear Direct Formatting** icon on the Formatting toolbar, or use *Ctrl+M* from the keyboard.



Note

When clearing direct formatting, the text format returns to the applied paragraph style and not the default paragraph style.

Formatting paragraphs

You can apply many formats to paragraphs using the icons on the Formatting toolbar and on the Paragraph panel of the Sidebar's Properties deck (**View > Sidebar**). Not all toolbar icons are visible in a standard installation, but you can customize the toolbar to include those you use regularly (see Chapter 1, Introducing Writer). Other formatting options are provided in the Paragraph dialog (see page 9).

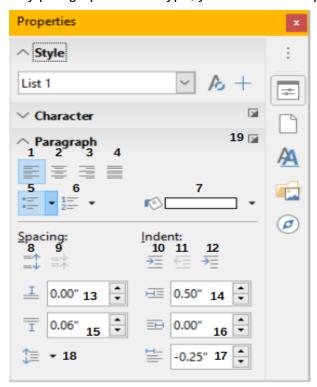
On the Formatting toolbar, the icons and formats include:

- Apply Paragraph Style (Styles drop-down on the Properties deck of the Sidebar).
- Bullets On/Off (with a palette of bullet styles) see page 19.
- Numbering On/Off (with a palette of numbering styles) see page 19.
- Align Left, Center Horizontally, Align Right, or Justified.
- Align Top, Center Vertically, Align Bottom.
- Line Spacing (choose from 1, 1.15, 1.5, 2, or custom spacing.
- Increase Paragraph Spacing, Decrease Paragraph Spacing.
- Increase Indent, Decrease Indent.
- Paragraph (to open the Paragraph dialog).

The Sidebar opens with the Properties deck selected by default. Click the expansion symbol (+ or triangle) to open the panels if necessary.

The Paragraph panel of the Properties deck (Figure 1) contains most of the formatting controls, including several that are not found on the Formatting toolbar. Clicking the down-arrow by a button opens the control for further choices, such as fixed line spacing or color palette.

Click the **More Options** button to open the Paragraph dialog, where other settings are available (see page 9). Changing the values of any of these settings affects only the paragraph where the insertion point (cursor) is located, or several paragraphs if more than one are selected. If you wish to change the values for many paragraphs of that type, you should use a paragraph style.



- Align Left 1 Align Center 2
- 3 Align Right
- Align Justified 4
- 5 Bullets
- 6 Numbering
- 7 Background Color
- 8 Increase Spacing
- 9 Decrease Spacing
- 10 Increase Indent
- 11 Decrease Indent
- 12 Hanging Indent
- 13 Above Paragraph Spacing
- Below Paragraph Spacing 14
- Indent From Left 15
- **Indent From Right** 16
- 17 Indent First Line
- 18 Line Spacing
- 19 More Options – opens Paragraph dialog

Figure 1: Paragraph panel of the Properties deck in the Sidebar

Alignment options

You can use the buttons labelled **1–4** in Figure 1 to choose the alignment of a paragraph: Left, Right, Centered, or Justified. Figure 2 shows examples of the alignment options applied to text.

Left aligned text.

Center aligned text.

Right aligned text.

Justified text inserts spacing between words to force the text to reach from margin to margin, if the text is longer than a single line.

Figure 2: Text alignment options

When using justified text, the last line is by default aligned to the left. However, you can also align the last line to the center of the paragraph area or justify it so that spaces are inserted between the words in order to fill the whole line. If you select the **Expand single word** option, then whenever the last line of a justified paragraph consists of a single word, this word is stretched by inserting spaces between characters so that it occupies the full length of the line.

Figure 3 shows an example of the effect obtained when choosing each of these options for a typical text font. In most cases, leave the setting on the default (left-aligned); but for some dramatic purposes (such as a very large font on a poster), you might prefer one of the other choices.

Three options are available for the alignment of the last line of a justified paragraph. This is an example of a left-aligned last line. Three options are available for the alignment of the last line of a justified paragraph. This is an example of a centered last line. Three options are available for the alignment of the last line of a justified paragraph. This example justified last line. is an of When the last line of a justified paragraph contains a single word, you can stretch the word to fill the entire line. This is an example with the **Expand single word** option е I d S С t е

Figure 3: Examples of choices for the last line of a justified paragraph

These options are controlled in the *Alignment* page of the Paragraph dialog (Figure 4), reached by choosing **Format > Paragraph** from the Menu bar, or by right-clicking in the paragraph and selecting **Paragraph** from the context menu, or by clicking the **More Options** button on the Paragraph panel in the Properties deck of the Sidebar.

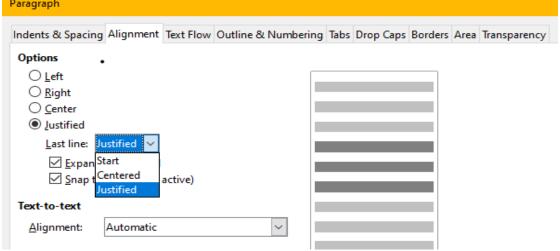


Figure 4: Options for the last line of a justified paragraph

Line and paragraph spacing

Line spacing (button 18, Figure 1) refers to the distance from one baseline (the imaginary line at the bottom of a letter like "n" or "m") to the next baseline. It is determined by the size of the font.

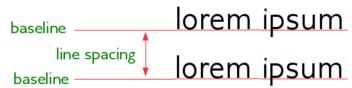


Figure 5: Line spacing is the distance between two baselines

The Line Spacing submenu is shown in Figure 6. Here you can choose among standard spacings or define a custom value: Proportional (for example, 110%), At least (the amount specified in the Value box), Leading, or Fixed. To see the differences between these choices, do a few sample paragraphs and change the selections.



Note

All options except Fixed or At Least use the font's default. These two allow you to set your own spacing, which is especially useful at small font sizes to increase readability.

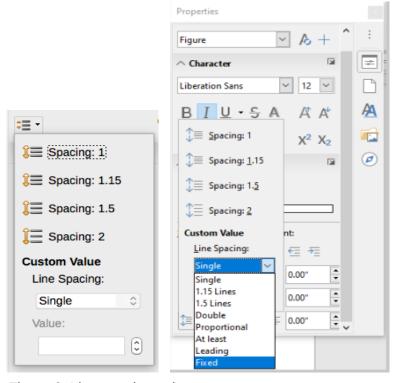


Figure 6: Line spacing submenu

Paragraph spacing refers to the vertical spacing between one paragraph and the paragraphs above and below it. As shown in Figure 1, the current values are shown in the Above Paragraph Spacing box (13) and the Below Paragraph Spacing box (14). You can change either or both of these settings independently.



Paragraph spacing is often used in computer documentation, such as this book. Paragraph indentation (see next topic) is more commonly used in other documents. For good design, use paragraph spacing or paragraph indentation, never both.

Paragraph indentation

You can use the buttons labelled **10**, **11**, and **12** in Figure 1 to increase the amount of space to leave between the left and right page margins and the paragraph.

The distances are determined by settings **15** (*Before Text Indent*; that is, from the left margin), **16** (*After Text Indent*; that is, from the right margin), and **17** (*First Line Indent*, which indents the first line from the left margin, or from the specified indentation from the margin).

Button **12**, *Switch to Hanging Indent*, leaves the first line at the left margin (or the specified indentation from the margin) and indents all the other lines of the paragraph by the amount specified by button **17** or in the Paragraph dialog.

This paragraph is an example of a paragraph with a *first line indent*. It is typical of paragraphs in books.

This paragraph is an example of a paragraph with a *hanging indent*. It is often used for numbered paragraphs or those with an icon or other image on the left.



Note

In right-to-left languages, the behavior of the Before Text and After Text indents is the opposite: "before" is on the right margin; "after" is on the left margin.

Paragraph background color

Click the button labelled **7** in Figure 1 to open a palette from which you can choose a color for the background of the paragraph. From this palette, you can also click **Custom Color** to open the Pick a Color dialog, where you can define new colors to be added to the palette.



Figure 7: Selecting a background color for a paragraph



Note

If the paragraph has been indented from the right or left margin, the background color is not applied to the area of the indent. To extend the color to the margin, use a frame, table, or other method; see Chapter 6, Formatting Pages: Advanced.

Settings on the Paragraph dialog

The paragraph dialog includes several more pages: Tabs (covered in next section, "Setting tab stops and indents", page 11), Borders, Drop Caps, Area (more choices than just color), Transparency, Text Flow, and Outline & Numbering. For more information, see Chapter 8, Introduction to Styles, and Chapter 9, Working with Styles.

Borders

Borders are useful for setting a paragraph off from the surrounding text, to include digressions from the main topic. For example, the Tips, Notes, and Cautions in this book use a border below the text.

You can add borders to any combination of top, bottom, and sides of paragraphs. You can choose the style (solid, dotted, dashed, doubled), width, and color of the lines; these choices apply to all borders on a paragraph. The spacing from each line to the paragraph's contents can be set individually for the top, bottom, left, and right.

On this dialog you can also choose to apply a shadow to a paragraph; "distance" refers to the width of the shadow.

Select the Merge with next paragraph option to suppress top or bottom lines when the indent, border, and shadow styles of the next paragraph are the same as the current paragraph.

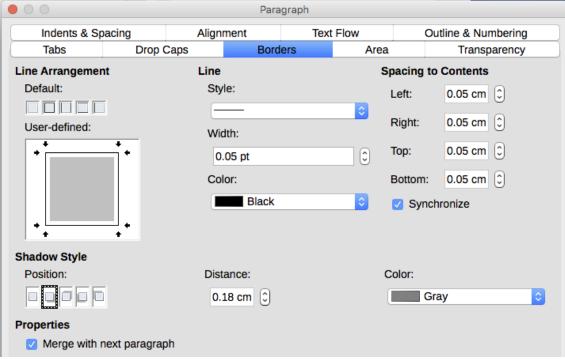


Figure 8: Options for paragraph borders

Drop caps

Drop capitals are enlarged letters that mark the start of a new chapter or section. To improve consistency, they are best set up in a paragraph style that you apply to the relevant paragraphs. See Chapter 9, Working with Styles, for details.

Area

Area (also called "fill" and "background" in some parts of LibreOffice) includes five types of fill (background); color, gradient, bitmap, pattern, and hatching. Select a fill type to display the choices available for that type. These choices are covered in more detail in Chapter 5, Formatting Pages: Basics. You can also create your own fills.

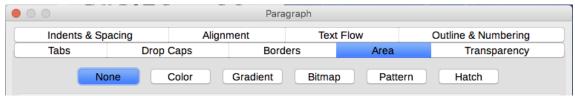


Figure 9: Types of fill for paragraph backgrounds

Transparency

Transparency affects the paragraph's background. It is useful for creating watermarks and making colors or images more pale (for more contrast with the text). The available choices are shown in Chapter 5, Formatting Pages: Basics, and are covered in detail in the *Draw Guide*.

Text Flow

The *Text Flow* page (Figure 10) has several sections. Hyphenation is covered in Chapter 2, Working with Text: Basics, and breaks are covered in Chapter 5, Formatting Pages: Basics.

In the *Options* section, you can specify how paragraphs are treated at the bottom of a page. *Do not split paragraph* and *Keep with next paragraph* should be self-explanatory. The other options allow you to avoid a single line at the bottom of a page (called an *orphan*) or a single line at the top of a page (a *widow*).

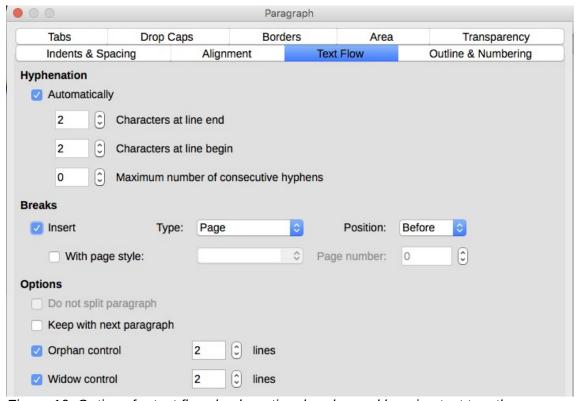


Figure 10: Options for text flow: hyphenation, breaks, and keeping text together

Outline & Numbering

The *Outline & Numbering* page on the Paragraph dialog provides options for choosing the outline level of the paragraph and its numbering (list) style. If the paragraph is part of a numbered list, you can specify that list numbering restarts at the paragraph, and what number to restart with.

This page does not cover the same functions as the Outline Numbering dialog (**Tools > Chapter Numbering**), but the Outline level selected here is related to the outline defined there. See Chapter 8, Introduction to Styles, and Chapter 9, Working with Styles, for a discussion of these features. Line numbering is discussed in Chapter 3, Working with Text: Advanced.

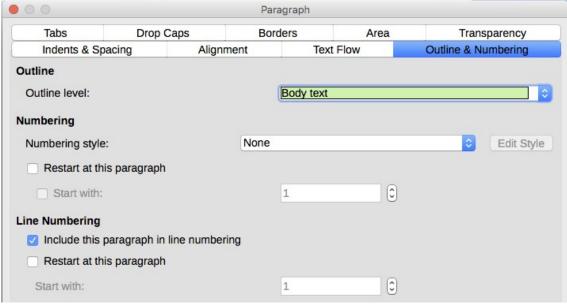


Figure 11: Selecting outline level, paragraph numbering, and line numbering

Setting tab stops and indents

The horizontal ruler shows the tab stops. Any tab stops that you have defined will overwrite the default tab stops. Tab settings affect indentation of full paragraphs (using the **Increase Indent** and **Decrease Indent** buttons on the Formatting toolbar or the Paragraph panel of the Properties deck in the Sidebar) as well as indentation of parts of a paragraph (by pressing the Tab key on the keyboard).



Many indents, for example at the beginning of a paragraph, can be set in the paragraph style, so you don't need to use the *Tab* key to activate them.

Changing the default tab spacing can cause formatting problems if you share documents with other people. If you use the default tab spacing and then send the document to someone else who has chosen a different default tab spacing, tabbed material will change to use the other person's settings. Instead of using the defaults, define your own tab settings, as described in this section.

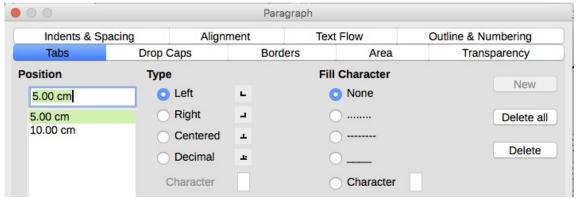


Figure 12: Specifying tab stops and fill characters

To define indents and tab settings for one or more selected paragraphs, right-click a paragraph and choose Paragraph... to open the Paragraph dialog; then select either the Tabs page (Figure 12) or the Indents & Spacing page of the dialog. Alternatively, you can double-click the horizontal ruler to open the Indents & Spacing page of the Paragraph dialog.

A better strategy is to define tabs for the paragraph style. Refer to Chapters 8 and 9 for more about paragraph styles.



Using tabs to space out material on a page is not recommended. Depending on what you are trying to accomplish, a table is usually a better choice.

Changing the default tab stop interval



Caution

Any changes to the default tab setting will affect the existing default tab stops in any document you open afterward, as well as tab stops you insert after making the change.

To set the measurement unit and the spacing of default tab stop intervals, go to **Tools > Options > LibreOffice Writer > General**.



Figure 13: Selecting a default tab stop interval

You can also set or change the measurement unit for rulers in the current document by rightclicking on the ruler to open a list of units, as shown in Figure 14 for the horizontal ruler. Click one of them to change the ruler to that unit. The selected setting applies only to that ruler.

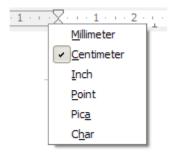


Figure 14: Changing the measurement unit for a ruler

Formatting characters

You can apply many formats to characters using the buttons on the Formatting toolbar and by using the Characters panel of the Properties deck of the Sidebar. Not all toolbar buttons are visible in a standard installation, but you can customize the toolbar to include those you use regularly; see Chapter 1, Introducing Writer. These formats include:

- Font Name, Font Size (in points)
- · Bold, Italic, Underline, Double Underline, Overline, Strikethrough, Outline
- Superscript, Subscript
- · Uppercase, Lowercase
- Increase Font Size, Decrease Font Size
- Font Color (with a palette of colors)

- Background Color (with a palette of colors)
- Highlighting (with a palette of colors)
- Character (to open the Character dialog)

To change the characteristics of an entire paragraph (for example the font name, size, or color), and for many other purposes, it is highly recommended that you use styles rather than manually formatting characters. For information on styles and how to use them, see Chapters 8 and 9. Applying styles is quick and easy using the Styles and Formatting deck of the Sidebar.

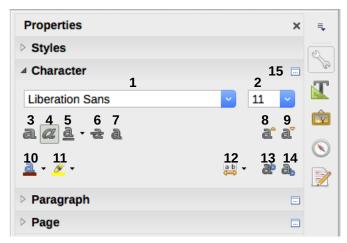
Figure 15 shows the Character panel in the Properties deck of the Sidebar. Clicking the downarrow next to a button opens the control for further choices, such as font color or character spacing. The appearance of the buttons may vary with your operating system and the selection of icon size and style in **Tools > Options > LibreOffice > View**.

Click the **More Options** button (15) to open the Character dialog, which includes more choices than are available through the Formatting toolbar or the Sidebar.

Font name, size, and effects

To change the **font name and size** used for selected characters, you can use the drop-down menus on the Formatting toolbar, the Character panel in the Sidebar, or the Character dialog.

Similarly, you can apply **bold**, **italics**, **underline**, **strikethrough**, or **shadow effects** to selected characters from the Formatting toolbar, the Character panel in the Sidebar, or the Character dialog. The Underline effect has a drop-down menu of line types (Figure 16). The Formatting toolbar includes other effects that are not in the Sidebar: overline and double underline; these buttons may not be visible in a default installation.



1	Font Name	6	Strikethrough	<i>11</i>	Highlight Color
2	Font Size	7	Shadow	12	Character Spacing
3	Bold	8	Increase Font Size	13	Superscript
4	Italic	9	Decrease Font Size	14	Subscript
5	Underline	10	Font Color	15	More Options – opens Character dialog

Figure 15: Character panel in the Properties deck of the Sidebar

To choose the color of the font or its highlighting, open the appropriate color palette (10 or 11; similar to the one shown in Figure 7). The highlighting selection over-rides any background color that has been applied to the paragraph.

To increase or decrease the font size of selected characters, you can click the relevant buttons on the Formatting toolbar or the Character panel in the Sidebar; however, you have no control over the amount of the increase or decrease, which is usually 2 points. For finer control, use the Font Size drop-down list instead.

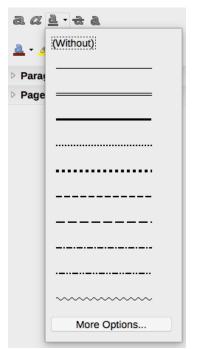


Figure 16: Selecting the line style for the Underline effect

To change characters into **subscripts or superscripts** (using the default values for size and position), select them and click the relevant buttons on the Formatting toolbar or the Character panel in the Sidebar. For more control, use the Character dialog.

To quickly change the **spacing between characters**, select them and choose from the Character Spacing drop-down menu in the Sidebar (Figure 17).



Figure 17: Changing character spacing

Settings on the Character dialog

The Character dialog has six pages, shown in this section. Most of these pages are the same as the pages on the Character Style dialog (see Chapter 9, Working with Styles).

Font and Font Effects

On the *Font* page (Figure 18), you can specify the font's family, typeface (choices vary with the font, but typically include regular, bold, and italic), and size; and the language for the paragraph, if it differs from the language for the document. The box at the bottom shows a preview of the selections.

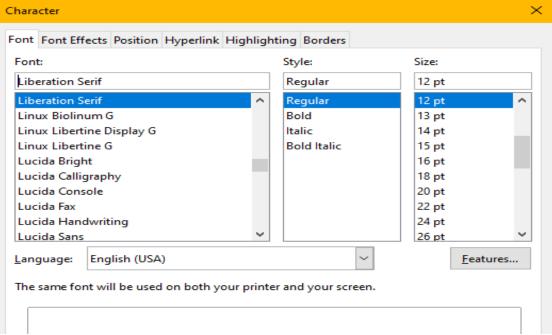


Figure 18: Font page of the Character dialog

On the Font Effects page (Figure 19), you can choose the color of the font and a range of effects, many of which are not suitable for formal documents. Figures 20 and 21 show the choices in some of the drop-down lists.



Figure 19: Font Effects page of the Character dialog

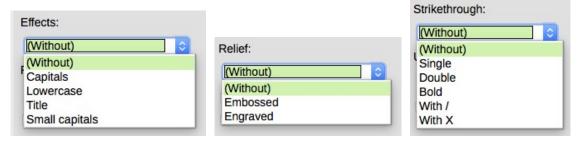


Figure 20:Choices for capitalization, relief, and strikethrough effects

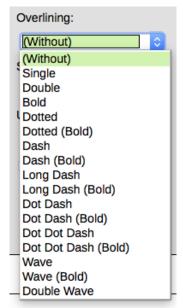


Figure 21: Choices for overlining and underlining are the same

Position

The *Position* page collects the options that affect the position of text on the page. This page is divided into three sections: *Position*, *Rotation*/*Scaling*, and *Spacing*.

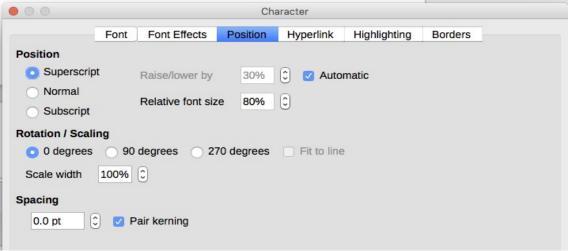


Figure 22: Position page of the Character dialog

The *Position* section controls the appearance of superscripts and subscripts.

The *Rotation/Scaling* section controls the rotation of the characters. The Scale width box controls the percentage of the font width by which to compress or stretch the rotated text.

The *Spacing* section controls the spacing between individual characters. The **Pair Kerning** option (selected by default) automatically adjusts the character spacing for specific letter combinations. Kerning is only available for certain font types and, for printed documents, works only if your printer supports it.

Hyperlink

The *Hyperlink* page of the Character dialog is an alternative to using the Hyperlink dialog (**Insert > Hyperlink**). It includes fewer choices and is specifically for text (not button) links. Hyperlinks can be to other parts of the same document, to other documents, or to web pages.

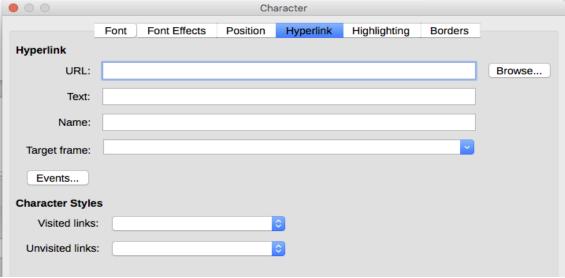


Figure 23: Hyperlink page of the Character dialog

When LibreOffice recognizes a string of characters that may be a URL (internet address), it replaces the characters with a hyperlink and formats the hyperlink as specified in the Internet Link character style. On this dialog you can choose a different character style (if the style has been defined previously) or replace the URL with other text. To turn off this feature, choose **Tools > AutoCorrect > AutoCorrect Options > Options** page and deselect **URL Recognition**.

For more about creating and editing hyperlinks, see the Help system or Chapter 12 in the *Getting Started Guide*.

Highlighting

The *Highlighting* page controls the background color for selected characters. It is similar to the Highlighting drop-down palette.

Borders

The Borders page is the same as the Borders page on the Paragraph dialog; see page 9.

Autoformatting

You can set Writer to automatically format parts of a document according to the choices made on the *Options* and *Localized Options* pages of the AutoCorrect dialog (**Tools > AutoCorrect > AutoCorrect Options**). The Help describes each of these choices and how to activate the autoformats.



If you notice unexpected formatting changes occurring in your document, this is the first place to look for the cause.

To automatically format the file according to the options you have set, choose **Tools > AutoCorrect** and select or deselect the items on the submenu.

While Typing

Automatically formats the document while you type.

Apply

Automatically formats the document.

Apply and Edit Changes

Automatically formats the file and then opens a dialog where you can accept or reject the changes.

AutoCorrect Options

Opens the AutoCorrect dialog (Figures 24 and 25).

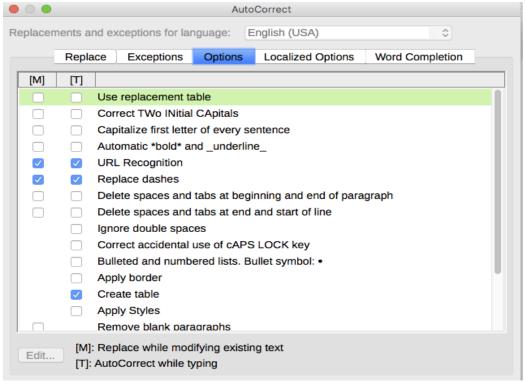


Figure 24: Autoformat choices on the Options page of the AutoCorrect dialog

The Localized Options page (Figure 25) controls the formatting of quotation marks and apostrophes (which look like a closing single quote). Most fonts include curly quotation marks (also known as "smart quotes"), but for some purposes (such as marking minutes and seconds of latitude and longitude) you may wish to format them as straight quotes.

Straight quotes Smart quotes



Most people keep the AutoCorrect setting for smart quotes and use the Special Characters dialog to insert straight quotes when needed. See Chapter 2, Working with Text: Basics.

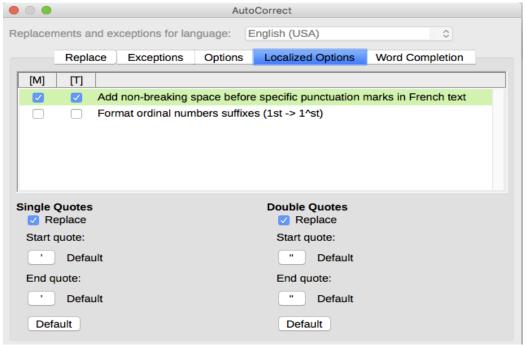


Figure 25: Autoformatting quotation marks

Formatting numbered or bulleted lists

You can format numbered or bulleted lists in several ways:

- Use autoformatting, as described above.
- Use list (numbering) styles, as described in Chapters 8, 9, and 12 in this book.
- Use the Bullets and Numbering toolbar (see Figure 26).
- Use the Numbering and Bullets buttons on the Formatting toolbar or on the Paragraph panel of the Properties deck of the Sidebar (see Figure 27).
- Use the Bullets and Numbering dialog (see Figures 28 and 29).

To produce a simple numbered or bulleted list, select the paragraphs in the list and then click the appropriate icon on the Paragraph panel on the toolbar.



Notes

It is a matter of personal preference whether you type your information first, then apply numbering/bullets or apply these as you type.

If numbering or bullets are being applied automatically in a way that you find inappropriate, you can switch them off temporarily by unchecking **Format > AutoCorrect > While Typing**.

Using the Bullets and Numbering toolbar

You can create a nested list (where one or more list items has a sub-list under it, as in an outline) by using the buttons on the Bullets and Numbering toolbar (Figure 26). You can move items up or down the list, create subpoints, change the style of bullets, add paragraphs without numbers or bullets (for list items that include more than one paragraph), and access the Bullets and Numbering dialog, which contains more detailed controls.

Use View > Toolbars > Bullets and Numbering to display the toolbar.



- 1 Demote One Level
- 2 Promote One Level
- 3 Demote One Level with Subpoints
- 4 Promote One Level with Subpoints
- 5 Move Down
- 6 Move Up
- 7 Move Down with Subpoints
- 8 Move Up with Subpoints
- 9 Insert Unnumbered Entry
- **10** Restart Numbering
- **11** Open the Bullets and Numbering dialog

Figure 26: Bullets and Numbering toolbar



You can use keyboard shortcuts to move paragraphs up or down the outline levels. Place the cursor at the beginning of the numbered paragraph and press:

Tab = Down a level Shift+Tab = Up a level

To insert a tab stop at the beginning of a numbered paragraph (that is, after the number but before the text), press *Ctrl+Tab*.

If you create a nested list using the buttons on the Bullets and Numbering toolbar, all the levels of the list (up to 10) initially apply the same numbering (or bullet) format. If you want to use a combination of numbering formats and bullets when creating nested lists, you can use these ways:

- Click in each list item and then select one of the choices in the drop-down palettes under the Bullets and Numbering buttons on the Formatting toolbar or the Properties deck of the Sidebar, as described in "Using the Bullets and Numbering palettes on the Sidebar" below.
- Use the Bullets and Numbering dialog, as described in "Using the Bullets and Numbering dialog" below.

However, a much better strategy is to define and apply a list style, as discussed in Chapter 12, Lists: Tips and Tricks.

Using the Bullets and Numbering palettes on the Sidebar

The Bullets and Numbering palettes on the Paragraph panel on the Properties deck of the Sidebar can be used to create nested lists and access the Bullets and Numbering dialog. The Sidebar does not include tools for promoting and demoting items in the list, as found on the Bullets and Numbering toolbar.

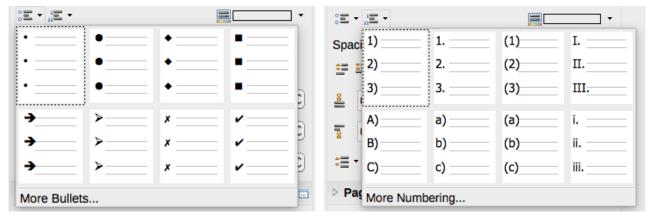


Figure 27: Bullets and Numbering choices on the Properties deck of the Sidebar

Using the Bullets and Numbering dialog

The Bullets and Numbering dialog has six pages. Four pages provide pre-defined symbols and sequences to choose from: Bullets, Numbering Type, Outline (choose from eight standard outline sequences), and Image (choose a bullet image). Two pages provide detailed options for defining your own lists: *Position* (Figure 28) and *Options* (Figure 29). These are the same as the pages provided for list styles, discussed in Chapter 12, Lists: Tips and Tricks.

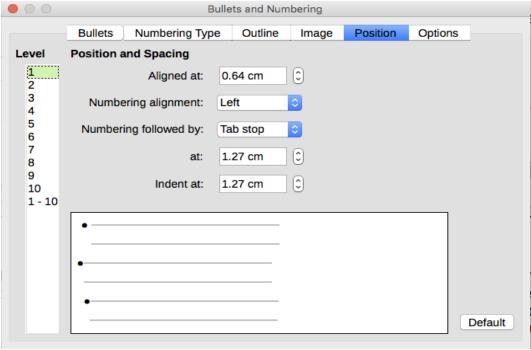


Figure 28: Position page of the Bullets and Numbering dialog

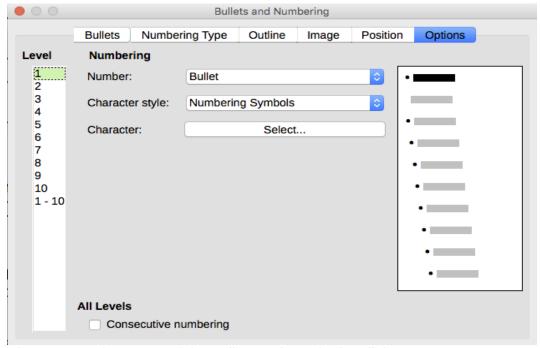


Figure 29: Options page of the Bullets and Numbering dialog