

# > five modern myths of typing

**Typesetting has changed a lot since the invention of desktop publishing software. We left our typewriters behind but not the way we used them. What we were taught came from the limitations of typewriters, yet we continue to teach them to students who grew up with advanced software like Microsoft Word and Adobe InDesign. Times have changed and so must we. Below are some common misconceptions that are easily remedied.**

## **MYTH 1:**

### **Use two spaces after punctuation.**

Typewriters were monospaced, meaning each character occupied the same space due to the uniform width of the metal keys. The period, the smallest of all characters, was centered on the metal key. One space did not visually separate sentences effectively enough. You were taught to compensate for this by adding an extra space.

Today's software takes this into consideration with advanced kerning (spacing between letter pairs) settings. Extra space is automatically placed after a period, meaning one space after punctuation is all you ever need.

## **MYTH 2:**

### **Use two Returns between paragraphs.**

Most students are not even familiar with the term "Return" since most keyboards have used the word "Enter" for many years. Nevertheless, using this technique (often incorporated with body text that does not use indents) creates overly large, awkward gaps between paragraphs. It becomes even more awkward when a gap falls at the bottom of a page or the top of the next. Learn how to use "Paragraph Space After" and "Paragraph Space Before" to determine exactly how much space you want between paragraphs or after headlines.

## **MYTH 3:**

### **Use half-inch indents.**

Lines of type generally progress the entire width of the page. Typewriters were commonly set to Tab every half inch. This led to a Tab being used to indent paragraphs. Today, most teachers tell students to indent five spaces.

But, this technique can create problems when using Justified text (when text is flush on the left and right margins). Justification is accomplished by changing the distances between letters and spaces. It calculates this adjustment custom for each line. This may cause indents to appear inconsistent, even though the exact number of spaces each time.

Instead, use "Indentation: First Line" or "First Line Left Indent" to set an exact distance regardless of text alignment. A standard today is 12 points (0.1667 in), or simply use 0.2" to keep things more simple.

## **MYTH 4:**

### **Underline titles.**

We used to underline text because typewriters were not capable of typing italics or bold face. There are many ways to emphasize words with today's software. Today, the standard is to use italics for published full-length works, titles of publications (newspapers, magazines, etc.) and titles of movies and shows. Quotations are generally used for short works or pieces of larger works that are not published separately. The only thing that really receives an underline today is a hyperlink to a website.

## **MYTH 5:**

### **Use 12-point type.**

After all, it is the default right? Twelve points is almost always too big for body copy. The professional standard is size 10 (though 10.5 and 11 are also commonly used). Microsoft Word 2007 finally caught on, changing their default to size 11.

Think size 10 sounds too small? Print out a document that uses size 12, then hold it next to virtually any novel, textbook, magazine or newspaper. What you read every day is size 10. Besides, think of all the paper you will save. Size 10 uses approximately one-third less space than size 12. It saves both money and the environment.