



Period Space, Space vs. Period Space

Anyone who took typing in high school learned that you always put two spaces after a period, colons, questions marks, and exclamation points. Well, times have changed, and the two-space rule is dead!

Believe it or not, using two spaces after punctuation is incorrect these days! Before the existence of computers, printing presses and typewriters used letters that were all the same width (called monospaced). All the characters took up the same amount of space, which looked very cluttered to the reader – which is why two spaces after punctuation was used. To help readers see that a new sentence was starting, we inserted two spaces.

Today, computers use proportional fonts which compensate for the varying widths of letters. A letter “i” doesn’t require the same amount of white space as a “w”. Thanks to proportional fonts, we no longer need to type period space, space!

This little known fact is noted in the Chicago Manual of Style:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/CMS_FAQ/OneSpaceorTwo/OneSpaceorTwo_questions01.html

Want to go back to old documents and quickly make the period space correction? Utilize Microsoft Word’s “FIND AND REPLACE”:

- Click the replace button
- Click in the “Find What” box and type a period, followed by two spaces
- Click in the “Replace with” box and type a period, followed by one space
- Click the “Replace All” button

You may have to repeat the process for other punctuation and colons. Think of all the extra key strokes you are saving and give your thumbs a break!

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