Using Word to Make Your Work More Readable

The secret of an *interesting* text is content: there must be something you have to say, something you believe in, something you can and will defend if called upon to do so.

The secret of an *effective* text is readability: the way your reader accesses your ideas is through your style of writing, your choice of words, the way you order your ideas.

However, an interesting and effective text will remain unread unless it is presented well. ***Presentation* is what puts your reader on your side:** willing to access your ideas and expecting to be informed, educated and entertained by you.

This booklet is designed to help you produce well-presented essays; content and readability are not covered. However, good presentation will not harm your work, and may even help!

Contents

If the instructions given here are not clear enough, or the booklet does not cover something you wish to do in Word, please contact me at martin.1.edwardes@kcl.ac.uk, and I will endeavour to provide a solution. Your suggestions will also improve this booklet and help future readers.

SETTING UP WORD TO PRODUCE A DOCUMENT

SET UP THE BASIC TEXT STYLE

Under **Home**, right-click on **Normal** in the **Styles** ribbon, then click on **Modify**. You should see the following pop-up:
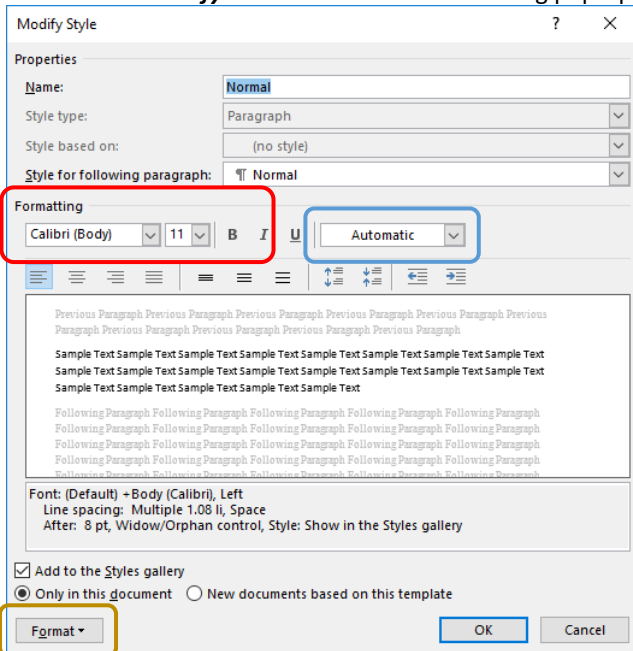
To change the default text font, see the red frame. click on the arrow next to the font name box and select a default font. Make sure this is easy to read and not an "exciting" font. Click on the arrow next to the font size box and select a good font size. For normal essay work on A4 paper, a font size of 10, 11 or 12 is best, but some fonts may require larger or smaller font sizes.

To change the paragraphing, see the yellow frame. Click on format to show a drop-down box; you are interested in only one of the options, so click on **paragraph…** . you will see the following pop-up:
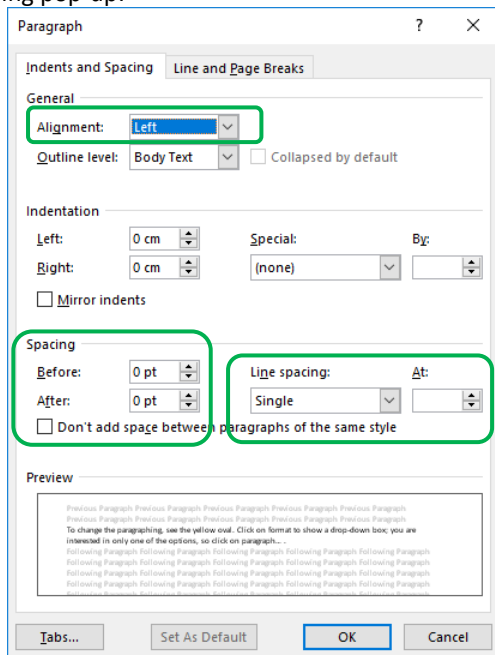
Change **Alignment** to Justified, **Spacing Before** and **After** to zero, and **Line Spacing** to 1.5 lines.

SET UP OTHER TEXT STYLES

Now do the same for **Heading 1**, **Heading 2** and **Title** in the **Styles** ribbon. If you want to use further levels of heading, set them up, too (the list will always show one more level of

heading than you intend to use, so they can be set up later if you are unsure of how many levels you will need).
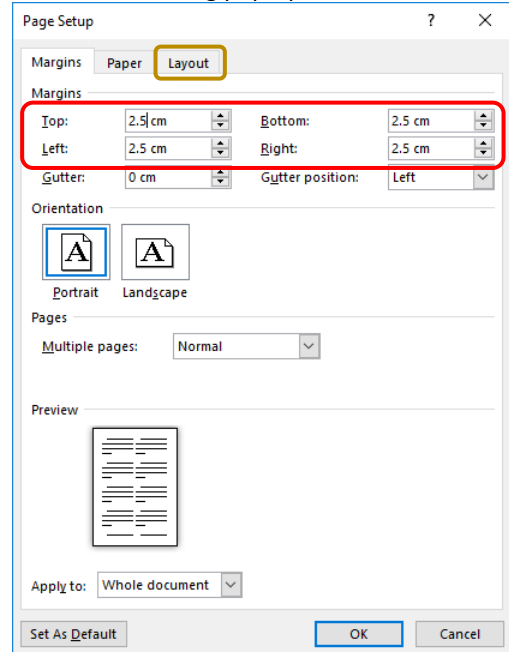
For Headings and Title, you can also change the colour of the text (see blue oval), and you can set the font to bold and/or italic (see red oval). For Title, you can set the alignment to center.

SET UP THE STANDARD PAGE

Under **Layout**, click on the small arrow on the **Page Setup** ribbon, indicated by the red frame below.
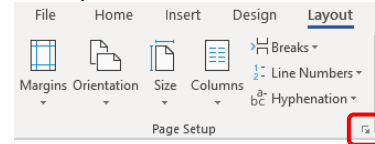
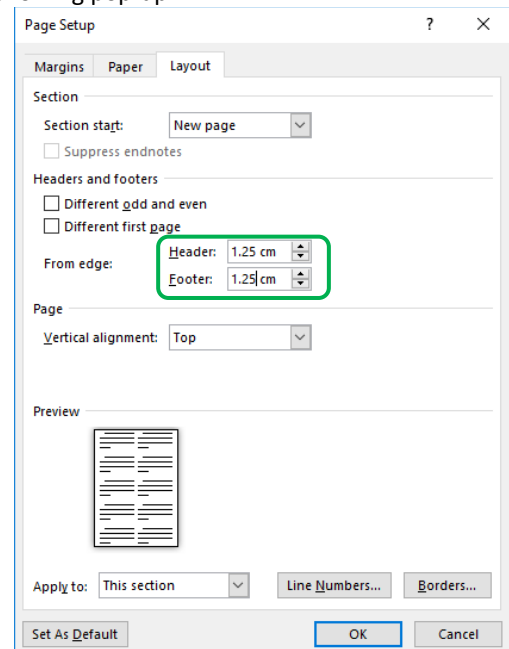You will see the following pop-up:

Amend the margins if needed. For a standard university submission, margins of 2.5 cm or 1 inch are acceptable.

Next, click on the **Layout** tab (see yellow frame); you will see the following pop-up:

Amend the **Header** and **Footer** margins if needed. For a standard university essay, report or dissertation submission, margins of 1.25 cm or 0.5 inches are acceptable.

FORMATTING LIKE A PUBLISHER

CORRECTING COMMON FORMATTING PROBLEMS

To sort out strange formatting that appears to have no obvious cause, set the paragraph mark flag (¶ – see *Home*, *Paragraph* ribbon), and the problems often reveal themselves. For instance, there are clearly problems with the first paragraph in the extract below:

What is social calculus?

Why does a paper about social calculus start with a discussion about a dispute in linguistics over the evolution of language? The is that, as a social and communicative tool, a key function of language is to allow us to share each other's social models (Dunbar, 1996). To do this, the sharing of social models requires a level of communicative complexity which corresponds to the cognitive complexity behind those social models; and, as those social models form a complex cognitive calculus – a social calculus – in each individual human brain (Bickerton, 2002), the complexity of our communication needs to match the complexity of our social calculus.

This means that our understanding of the nature and evolution of social calculus is intimately linked to our understanding of the nature and evolution of language.

If we set the paragraph mark flag we can see what the problems are:

▪ What·is·social·calculus?¶

Why·does·a·paper·about·social·calculus·start·with·a·discussion·about·a·dispute·in· linguistics·over·the·evolution·of·language?·The· answer ·is·that,·as·a· social°and°communicative tool,· → ·a·key·function·of·language·is·to·allow·us·to·share· each·other's·social·models·(Dunbar,·1996).·To·do·this,·the·sharing·of·social·models· requires·a·level·of·communicative·complexity·which·corresponds·to·the·cognitive· complexity·behind·those· social·-models ;·and,·as·those·social·models·form·a·complex· cognitive·calculus·—·a·social·calculus·—·in·each·individual·human·brain·(Bickerton,· 2002),·the·complexity·of·our·communication·needs·to·match·the·complexity·of·our· social· calculus.·↵
¶
This·means·that·our·understanding·of·the·nature·and·evolution·of·social·calculus·is· intimately·linked·to·our·understanding·of·the·nature·and·evolution·of·language.·

There are six problems, all easy to solve but difficult to identify without the editor's marks. First are the large gaps at the top and bottom of the paragraph (red frames). These are caused by paragraph spacing and are corrected in the paragraph pop-up. This can be accessed via the *Paragraph* ribbon under *Home*, as below:
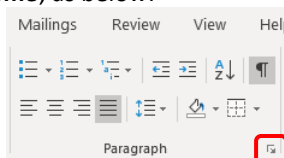
Next is the missing word *answer*, (purple frame) which appears with a dotted underline when the editor's marks are activated. The dotted underline indicates it is hidden text. This is corrected by selecting the word and clicking on the *Normal* box on the *Styles* ribbon.

Third are the hard spaces, which are indicated with little circles instead of dots (green frame). These can be replaced by selecting them and overtyping a normal space.

Fourth is a tab, indicated by a right-facing arrow (blue frame). This can be overtyped with a space.

Fifth is the double blue line under social models (orange frame). This is caused by a double space between the two words, and it is corrected by removing one of them.

Last is the big gap between social and calculus (grey frame). This is cause by a line break – a bent left-facing arrow (↵) – instead of a paragraph break (¶). This is complicated by the fact that the carriage return key often has the same symbol as a line break, but it actually produces a paragraph break. Overtype the line break with a carriage return to correct this.

After all the changes the text will look like this:

▪ What·is·social·calculus?¶

Why·does·a·paper·about·social·calculus·start·with·a·discussion·about·a·dispute·in· linguistics·over·the·evolution·of·language?·The·answer·is·that,·as·a·social·and· communicative·tool,·a·key·function·of·language·is·to·allow·us·to·share·each·other's· social·models·(Dunbar,·1996).·To·do·this,·the·sharing·of·social·models·requires·a· level·of·communicative·complexity·which·corresponds·to·the·cognitive·complexity· behind·those·social·models;·and,·as·those·social·models·form·a·complex·cognitive· calculus·—·a·social·calculus·—·in·each·individual·human·brain·(Bickerton,·2002),·the· complexity· of· our· communication· needs· to· match· the· complexity· of· our· social· calculus.·¶
¶
This·means·that·our·understanding·of·the·nature·and·evolution·of·social·calculus·is· intimately·linked·to·our·understanding·of·the·nature·and·evolution·of·language.·

FIND & REPLACE FORMATTING

The errors listed here can occur relatively frequently when copying text from a pdf file or from an email or from a web page. If you are copying large amounts of text, you may wish to use global find & replace rather than individual checking. To do this, click on *Replace* in the *Editing* ribbon under *Home* (see below):
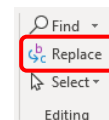
You will see the following pop-up:
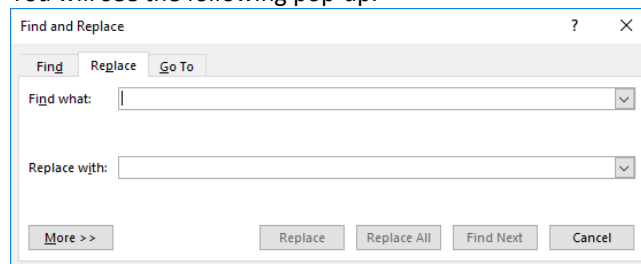
You can edit special characters using the caret symbol (^) followed by a letter. The main edit marks are:

> ^p = paragraph mark (¶)
> ^l = line break (↵)
> ^s = hard space (°)
> ^t = tab (→)

So if, for instance, you wish to change all line breaks into paragraph marks, type **^l** into the *Find what:* box, and **^p** into the *Replace with:* box, then click on *Replace all*.

WHEN TO USE FONT EFFECTS

Word provides a set of quick-to-access font effects. These should be used sparingly.

Bold and *Italics* can be used to emphasise individual words or key phrases. The secret is to have a standard for their use and keep to it.

Underline should be avoided, except for web links. It is an old-fashioned emphasis tool left over from typewriters, and nowadays it has a specific function and meaning.

Superscript and *Subscript* can be used for identifying technical properties in the text. For instance, the characteristics of a sentence could be marked as follows:

> John$^N_{PROPER}$ saw$^{VP}_{PAST}$ [the^{DET} dog$^N_{SING}$]^{NP}

Colour is best used in titles and headings only, although it can be used *very* sparingly to startle.

Never *highlight* your text! It looks amateur.

Bullets can be used for lists, but in academic documents there is a preference for cardinal numbering (e.g. *first, second, third, next, finally,* etc).

Indentation should be used for quotations. This is simple to do: highlight the text to be indented and click on the indentation symbol (⯮) in the *Paragraph* ribbon under *Home*.
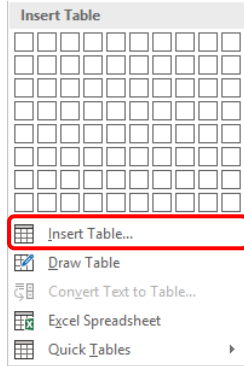
USING TABLES

Tables can perform many useful functions in a text.

CREATING A TABLE

To insert a table, place your cursor at the position in the text where you want your table to appear. Click on the **Table** ribbon (it's a one-item ribbon) under **Insert**:


This will display the following drop-down:

You can set up a table using just this box, but you get more control over the presentation of your table if you click on **Insert Table**. This will produce the following pop-up:
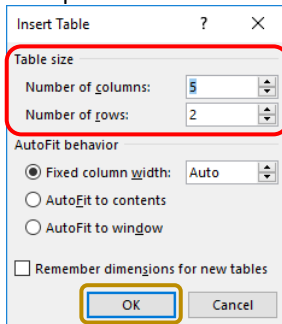
Here you can dictate the size of your table in terms of cells (**Number of columns** and **Number of rows**). Don't worry about Autofit behavior at this stage, you can manage this later. Click on **OK** and a blank table will be inserted into your text, and two new edit ribbons will appear:
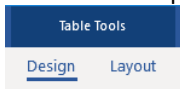
Under **Design** you can select a pre-designed **Table style**, most of which are too decorative and colourful to be appropriate for an academic presentation (although the plain tables are OK). Everything else on the **Design** ribbon you can do elsewhere in Word.

Under **Layout** there are two useful functions. **Select** allows you to select columns or the whole table – which is useful if the table covers more than one page. **View Gridlines** allows you to toggle the display of the blank gridlines in every table in the document; they can be left blank or displayed as thin dotted lines. Everything else on the **Layout** ribbon you can do elsewhere in Word.

SOME USEFUL OPERATIONS ON TABLES

Gridlines can be adjusted by selecting the cells to be affected and right-clicking on the selected area. This will produce the following drop-down:

Click on the small arrow next to the border-editing symbol, and you will be able to chose which borders to display and which to blank out. Tables with horizontal borders but no verticals are effective, as are tables with an outside border but no inside borders. Suppressing all borders is effective when displaying pictures.

CELL COLOURS – BACKGROUND & TEXT

You can change the cell background colour and cell text colour, but don't make the document layout too distracting. To change either, right-click on the cells to be changed to produce the drop-down (see above):

Click on the text colour (blue frame) to change the text, The fill icon (yellow frame) to change the cell background colour. Keep background colours light and pastel; use stronger colours for the text. If both are to be coloured, make the colours complementary but not clashing.

CELL JUSTIFICATION

Never use justified text in tables – the space in each cell is too small. As this is the standard in your document you will need to change every cell. Usually a single column change will be enough.

- For cells containing numbers, use Align Right;
- For cells containing keyword responses (e.g. **Yes**, **No**, **Noun**, **Verb**, etc.), use Center;
- For cells containing general text, use Align Left.

SOME OTHER USES FOR TABLES

Tables can be useful when displaying pictures of different shapes and sizes, as the following shows:

Pictures from the Olympic Park Stratford, 2014
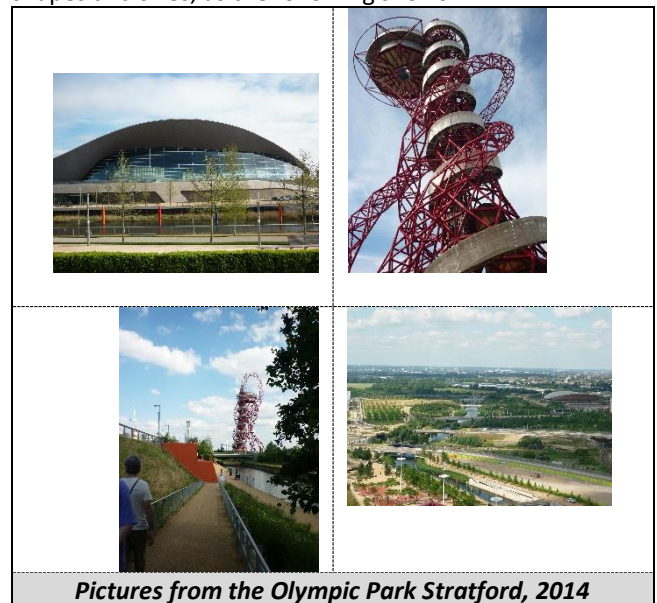
Tables can be used to present transcripts, as the following shows:

| Alf	*While washing up*	So she claimed that the table was wrong be[cause it …]
Beth	*Sitting*	[Wrong?] Wrong? In what way wrong?
Alf	*Turns to face Beth*	Well [..] you left off one of the legs for a start.

USING SECTIONS TO CHANGE PAGE FORMATS

## CHANGING BETWEEN PORTRAIT AND LANDSCAPE

The default mode for a Word page is Portrait (taller than wide). Sometimes you need more width than height in your document, particularly for tables or diagrams. The easiest way to achieve this is to use a section break.

Place the cursor on a blank line following the text you want to keep in portrait mode.

Under *Layout* on the *Page Setup* ribbon, click on *Breaks* (yellow frame):
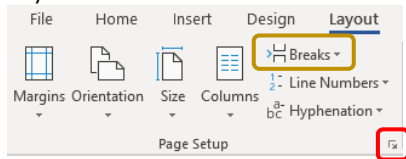
In the drop down, click on *Next Page* under *Section Breaks*. A new page will be started. Click on this new page and, under Layout on the *Page Setup* ribbon, click on the small arrow (red frame). The following pop-up will appear:
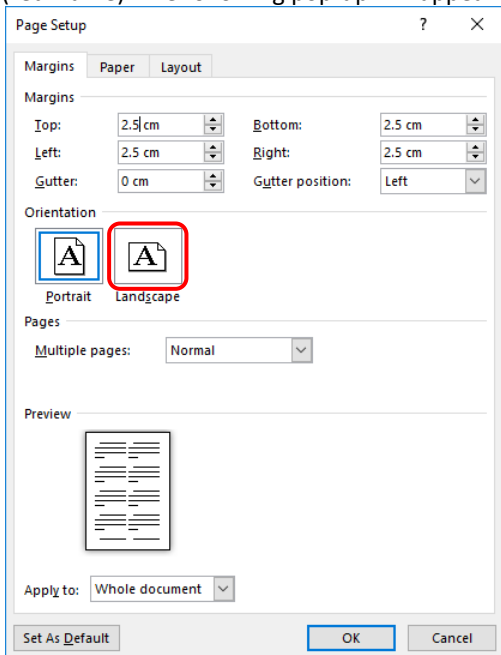
Click on the *Landscape* icon (red box above) and the new page, and all subsequent pages, will be in landscape (wider than tall).

If you should wish to go back to portrait later in the document, repeat all these steps but click on *Portrait* in the final step.

OTHER USES FOR SECTION BREAKS

You can also use *Next Page Section Breaks* to change the number of columns on the page (see the opening page of this document).

HEADERS AND FOOTERS

Headers and footers are important parts of a document. They contain information which identifies a single page as belong to a particular document, and its place (page number) in the document.

To access the header, double-left-click on the space above the text on a page. If a new cursor (flashing vertical line) appears then you are in the header area; whatever you type here will appear on every page. Use this area to identify the document, the author, the date, the version, etc.

To access the footer, double-left-click on the space below the text on the bottom of the page. If a new cursor (flashing vertical line) appears then you are in the footer area; whatever you type here will appear on every page. Use this area to identify the page number. Under *Header & Footer Tools*, on the *Header & Footer* ribbon, click on the *Page Number* icon (red frame):
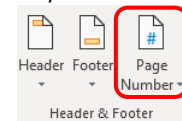
In the drop-down move the cursor to *Current Position* and then click on *Plain Number*. A page number, which will be automatically incremented on every new page, will appear in the footer. You can centre this page number if you wish.

To return to the main text, double-left-click anywhere in the text area.

MANAGING PICTURES

## PUTTING PICTURES INTO THE TEXT

Pictures can be tricky in Word documents. They move around unexpectedly, and need to be checked every time there is a change to the text. This can be frustrating, to say the least.

One way to fix a picture into the text is to place it in-line with the text. To do this:

Select the picture and click on the *Picture Format* tab. Click on *Position* on the *Picture Format* ribbon.
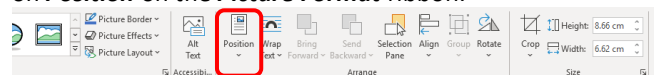
The following pop-up will appear:
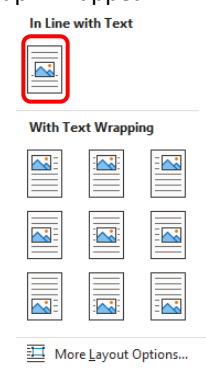
Click on *In Line with Text*, and your picture will now be anchored to the text as if it were a text character. To prevent difficulties with text wrapping, put a *carriage return/paragraph mark* before and after the image. Now, if you alter text before the picture, all you need to worry about is gaps appearing at the bottom of the page before the picture. This is easily corrected by moving a paragraph or two from below the picture to above it.

If it is a particularly large picture, you may wish to put Page Breaks before and after the picture, to ensure it always occupies its own page.

USING A TABLE TO DISPLAY IMAGES

This has already been discussed in *Some Other Uses for Tables*, above. Tables are a useful way of formatting text and pictures together in a way that keeps them together.

COMPRESSING IMAGES

Sometimes when you put an image into a Word document, the size of the document shoots up – even though the picture is only shown at postage-stamp size. This is because the original picture remains unchanged; just shrinking the size does not shrink the detail. To compress a picture, left-click on the picture to bring up the *Picture Format* ribbon. Click on *Compress Pictures* to begin compression.
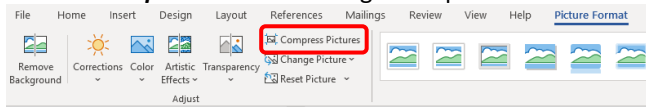

The following pop-up will appear:
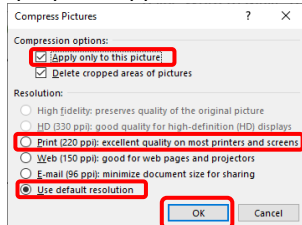
Remove the tick from *Apply only to this picture* if you wish to compress all pictures in the document. Select an appropriate *Resolution* (usually *print (220 ppi)* or *default resolution*). Click *OK*.

Save the file, and you should notice a reduction in size.

USING POWERPOINT TO CREATE IMAGES

Sometimes you need to create a particularly eye-catching piece of text. You know how to do it in PowerPoint, but how do you do it in Word? The simple answer is, copy and paste.

- Prepare the text in PowerPoint, using the shapes, fonts and images to be included.
- Select the prepared artwork in PowerPoint, making sure you include everything you want in the final image in Word. Click on *Copy* in the *Home* ribbon.
- In Word, Click on downwards arrow below the Paste button. This will display the following pop-up box:
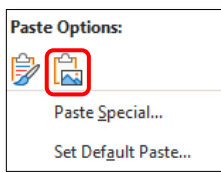
- Click on the *Paste picture* button (red frame), and the image will be inserted into the document as a picture.

YOUR DOCUMENT AS ART

To view your document in a new way, click on *File* (top left of screen) and then on *Print* (list on left). You will see your document displayed as it will be when printed or converted to a pdf file.

If you set *zoom* (bottom right of screen) to 30% you will see something like this:
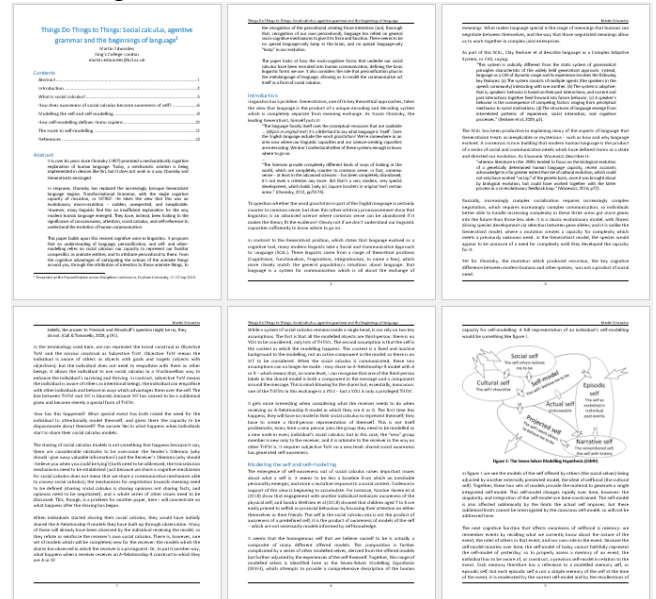
This is completely unreadable, but you are looking at the document as an artistic presentation, not a text. Does it look attractive, distinctive, or whatever effect you are trying to achieve? Does it look lurid (too much colour), cluttered (not enough spacing in the text) or overly complex (too many text effects)? Good design is largely a matter of taste – there is no single way to produce an artistically effective document – but bad design is immediately obvious at this scale.

To exit the print mode without printing, click on the circle containing a left-pointing arrow at the top right of the screen.