

When Microsoft released Office 2007, the new “ribbon” caused a fair amount of consternation

The ribbon is the band at the top of the screen that contains icons grouped by function. Depending on the program (Word, Excel, PowerPoint etc), there are several sets of these bands, collected into named “Tabs” (eg Insert, View).

I remember several of my own clients feeling quite overwhelmed by the amount of “stuff” on these ribbons. My general advice at the time – and it is still the same today – was to say “don’t worry too much about the stuff you don’t understand on the ribbon. Try instead to concentrate on finding the stuff that you DO want. Move from the known to the unknown.”



The Quick Styles Menu on the Word 2007 ribbon

One area that seems to cause particular consternation is the Styles Group on the right-hand side of the Home tab of the Word program.

The reason for this minor apoplexy is fairly clear. As soon as you move your mouse over any of the “Quick Style” icons in the Styles Group, your eye is caught by changes immediately happening to your document. This tends to cause minor panic but, in fact, the document hasn’t been changed at all. The preview is just showing how the document WOULD look if the new style were to be applied (achieved by clicking, rather than just hovering over, the Quick Style icon). When you get used to the fact that these changes are just previews and not actual changes then minor panic gives way to mere confusion. ..

What are these “Quick Style icons”?



Quick Style Elements

All of the visible icons are part of one single cohesive style that is intended to cover all the different parts of the document you are currently working on. The “quick style” icons do not

represent different styles. Rather, they are definitions of the style of different parts of the same document (eg headings, the main body of the document, tables, lists). If you click on the button marked by the line and downward triangle (to the right of the Quick Style icons) then all of these formatting elements are revealed.

To apply the style for a particular element, you just click anywhere in the paragraph to be changed and then click on the relevant style icon. The style of the selected paragraph is then immediately changed.



Styles Box

There is also a refinement to this in that some style aspects are applied to paragraphs, whereas others are applied to specific words. You can see which style aspect is applied to which part of the document by expanding the Style box as shown. The style aspects accompanied by “a” affect individual words, whereas the paragraph marker (that looks like a backward letter “p”) indicates that the entire paragraph will be affected.

What Are Style Sets?

The next thing to know is that there are several inbuilt style sets that are each complete sets of the definitions of headings, the main body of the document, tables, lists etc, that look good together. These predefined sets are called Style Sets. They are accessed by clicking on the “Change Styles” button, then clicking on “Style Set” and choosing a different set.

Also, there are different sets of colours that look good together when applied to different styles. You can also choose different combinations of fonts used for headings and the body of documents. If you add the definition of a style with the definition of a set of colours and definition of the fonts that are all used together, then you get what Microsoft call a “Theme”. Themes can be applied using the relevant option on the “Page Layout” tab.

As well as using these styles and themes “as is”, we can also use them as the basis for our own tweaked versions. We can modify any aspect we wish and save the results.

If you want or need to produce documents with a professional look, then the effort required to get to grips with “Styles and Themes” will probably be recouped fairly quickly. A standard “look” and “house style” can be generated for all of an individual’s or organisation’s documents.

If that’s all too much for your needs, then just ignore the Styles Group entirely. If your mouse happens to stray over a “Quick Styles” icon and your document seems to change alarmingly, just move your mouse away. No harm will have been done.

Click on the link for a detailed article from Microsoft called [Style Basics in Word](#).

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