

Cut and Paste

The easiest way to corrupt your Word document

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not dissing the usefulness and importance of Cut and Paste, far from it. After all, CTRL+C – CTRL+V are probably the most widely used shortcuts in any software. But, there is a dark side to it that you should be aware of. You may not just be pasting what you think you are.



Andrea's Blog Series

When you copy something from a Word document (or indeed another source) and paste it into another document, it may not just be the text or an image that is being pasted in, but all sorts of unseen flags and metadata as well. Much of this is benign, but some of it can lead to unexpected behaviour, corruption of documents and the infamous – being unable to save your document anymore!

Paste text unformatted

When using Word with templates and styles, as is best practice, unless the document you are cutting from has been created using the same template, with the same naming convention for all the styles, you should paste text unformatted. Even then, you should be absolutely certain of the provenience of the document; did the person who created it know what they were doing!

If you are copying text from other software or a web browser, you should definitely paste as unformatted text. There could be all sorts of stuff lurking in there, none of it useful to correct formatting in Word.

Re-applying styles to unformatted text may seem like an unnecessary and tedious step, but believe me, it will save you lots of heartache in the long run. It's a pretty simple task and there are tools available to make it even quicker and easier.

Make sure images are just that

Images can be placed within documents in many different ways, and they can come from many different sources and applications.

Ideally, images will already be saved as image files on your computer or network. In this case, you should use Insert Picture and choose the image file you need.

If you do have to cut and paste an image into a document, you should always use paste special, and insert as a bitmap, jpg, png or gif – a format that is just an image and not an object, or something with metadata behind it.

If you end up with a document that won't save anymore, it is very likely that the cause is one of the images in the document. The problem, and I know from personal experience, is that if you've got 50 images in a document and you don't know which one is the culprit, going through and removing them one at a time is an arduous process and best avoided.

So, be careful what you paste – you might get more than you bargained for!