



Microsoft Word's "Track Changes" function (2007 version)

So Much Red in my Manuscript!

"Track Changes" is a handy function of Microsoft Word, and The Pen uses it when editing electronic documents. Track Changes tracks *every* change: every space inserted, every word deleted, every change in formatting. It allows your editor to make comments about specific parts of the text. It even allows multiple editors/authors to make changes to a document, tracking different editors' changes in different colors.

To turn on Track Changes: At the very top of your Word program, you'll see a list of tabs, starting with "Home," "Insert," etc. Click on "Review." This will give you a whole tool bar of related functions. Look for the icon that says "Track Changes" (it's in the middle and slightly to the left of the toolbar). Click on the "Track Changes" icon, and you'll see the lower half of the icon turn orange (sometimes for reasons unknown, you have to click twice). You've done it—Track Changes is on!

To turn off Track Changes, click on the bottom half of the icon and choose the "Track Changes" option again. Any changes you make now—whether additions or deletions—will not be tracked.

Format/View. After turning the function on, look for a long, narrow pull-down menu; if you click on the little black arrow on the right, you'll see several options: Final, Final Showing Markup, Original Showing Markup, and Original. These options will show you the manuscript as it was, is, and would be if you implemented all the changes. The option you choose will not change the manuscript in any way—all of your information and changes are there...do you choose to see them (Final Showing Markup), or, if the changes are distracting, do you chose to hide them (Final)?

Any additions or insertions you make in the document will appear in underlined red text. (The text color may vary depending on options you specify and which user makes the change, if there are multiple editors/authors. Your changes may also show up in blue.)

If you delete a portion of the document, you'll see text with a red (or blue) line through it. This is true of each and every change, whether you've added or deleted a paragraph or a period.

Try hovering your cursor over a deleted or added piece of text. A balloon pops up with the name of the person who made the change, the time the change was made, and the word/s deleted or added. Pretty cool, huh? Now right click. You'll notice an option of accepting or rejecting the insertion/deletion. This is why Track Changes works so well for: if you, the author, disagree with a change the editor made, you can simply click "reject." If you agree, accept it.



This can get time-consuming for a book-length manuscript, and—you guessed it!—there is a short cut. Among the icons at the top of your screen in the “Track Changes” tool bar is a grouping called “changes” with such icons as “Accept,” “Reject,” “Previous,” and “Next.” These allow you to skip directly to the next change made by the editor without having to scroll through a lengthy manuscript and take the chance of missing something.

Click “Accept.” You’ve just agreed to keep the change, and automatically moved on to the next one. Click “Reject.” You’ve just decided to keep the text as it was originally, rejecting the change. Click “Previous.” Now, you’ve just gone back to the previous change without actually accepting or rejecting anything. “Next” will take you to the next change, again, without changing anything.

All this accepting or rejecting can be time-consuming. If you look at the “Accept change” icon, you’ll notice a small arrow on the bottom. Clicking on this will reveal a pull-down menu with the option of “Accept all Changes in Document.” Ditto for the “Reject” icon. If you trust that your editor makes good choices and feel comfortable accepting each and every one of them, accepting all changes in the document is a fast way to remove the colored flotsam.

You must either accept or reject all changes to get truly rid of the tracked changes.

To make a comment, simply highlight the text in question with your cursor, and click on the icon showing a yellow file (on the top left hand side of your tool bar). A column appears at the left (or bottom) side of the screen, and you’re able to type a comment in there. If you’d like to respond to a comment that has already been made (something that I find to be a nice way of communicating about specific text), simply click on the highlighted text, right click, choose “Edit Comment,” and type what you like.

Comments may be deleted manually, by hovering your cursor over them, right-clicking, and choosing to “delete comment.” The “Comments” icon grouping gives you the option of deleting all comments in the document, skipping to the next comment, or going back to the last comment. I encourage authors not to delete comments until all editing, rewriting, etc. is complete.

If you don’t like the way comments or changes are laid out, there are plenty of formatting options. Click on “Balloons” in the middle of the tool bar to change the presentation of the changes. Click “Reviewing Pane” to make your comments column at the bottom of the page, or, if you prefer, the side. Click “Show Mark-up” to show some things but not others.