

Use Paste Special

to clean-up text



Moving text with the cut and paste commands, either from one application to another, or within the same application, is one of the most powerful features of Windows. It can also be one of the most frustrating features, especially when the pasted text doesn't appear as you had expected.

In many programs you can control how Windows pastes data with the Paste Special command. This column reviews how this command works in Microsoft Word. At one time or another, all Word users will have had problems pasting data. Many lawyers will have experienced this when moving text from WordPerfect to Word. Often the alignment and spacing of pasted text make it difficult to read.

Here's how you can use the Paste Special command to control the format of pasted text. First, highlight the text that you want to copy, click Edit, then Copy (or Ctrl+C if you prefer using this keyboard shortcut). This puts the highlighted data into the Clipboard. The Clipboard is a temporary place for holding text that is being moved or copied from one location to another.

Next, click on the location you want to paste the copied data. Click on the Edit menu, and select Paste Special (not Paste, which would be your usual selection). This opens the Paste Special dialog box. It gives you several different options for the format of text you are pasting. The "Unformatted text" option is the one that will clean up your pasted text. Select it, and then click OK to paste the data.

The Unformatted text option will paste bare, unformatted text only. All other formatting information will be stripped out, including bold, underlining, italics, indents, bullets etc. If the text you are pasting had various fonts or complex formatting, you will have to manually change fonts and recreate all formatting. Although doing this can be time-consuming, it will often be easier than trying to fix a document that has problems due to formats that did not convert properly when moved from WordPerfect to Word.

Note that you can use the Paste Special Unformatted text option to paste text copied from a PDF file. Note also that in some cases



text pasted with the Unformatted text option will have a hard return at the end of every line. You will have to manually remove these returns.

Many Windows programs have a Paste Special command, and some have other format options that will help you. Excel for example, has about a dozen different options for reformatting pasted text. Next time you need to clean up text, remember the Paste Special command.

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