Simon James's Coursework Presentation Tips & Hacks for students

Wow your readers (and markers)! Top tips and hot hacks:

- Underlining is for amateurs!
- Save shedloads of time with custom templates & autocorrect!
- White space is your friend!

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Document presentation: first impressions matter

When someone opens a document, on screen or paper, the first thing they notice is presentation—and this affects the attitude they bring to what you have to say. While some students may already know much of what follows, long marking experience indicates many don’t, so I have written this guide.

Academic markers are now trained to be aware of unconscious bias, but once you leave university people will subliminally or consciously start judging your work on first appearance before you start arguing your case. No matter how persuasive your written arguments, a badly presented document will suggest that you haven’t thought about, or don’t care, what readers are going to think when they pick it up. Sad but true!

So, just as you should carefully consider your dress and appearance for a job interview to make a good impression as you enter the room, you need to pay attention to layout and appearance of documents you want people to engage with, whether an essay or dissertation, a poster or PowerPoint.

This stuff is important, but not difficult! Doing it says ‘this person cares about their work, they go the extra mile.’ If you talk the talk, and walk the walk—so your work both is good, and looks good—you give yourself an edge over those who don’t bother with presentation...

Invest a little time now (and thereby save a lot more time later) to learn some tips and hacks for your University coursework—and future endeavours.

Designed primarily with University of Leicester Archaeology and Ancient History students in mind, but largely applicable to any arts and humanities course, the following introduces you to the basics, through the example of essays, but much of this comprises transferable, generic knowledge and skills applicable to any kind of document or presentation.

NB The following assumes you are using MS Word for PC (specifically Word 2010 available from the University).

Tip: Print this PDF out as well as viewing it on screen, to see how things look on paper too, at higher resolution.

Above, opening pages of a fieldwork report for state agencies: cover, contents list, and introduction.
What are the aims??

What are assignments like essays for?

Essays, and other pieces of written work you are asked to present during your course, are intended to do more than one thing:

- Of course they are supposed to show how much you have learned, and how well you can think about it.
- They are also about **how well you can communicate** your knowledge and ideas.

Written communication itself consists of two components:

1. **Content and writing style.** What follows is not about these aspects, which you should be discussing with your tutors.
2. **Presentation skills which everyone needs** in the ‘Real World’.

What are the objectives of presentation?

There are two main objectives:

1. **Ease of use.** Your document must be simple to follow and to find your way around, the text easy to read, and any visuals must be comprehensible too.
2. **Attractive appearance.** Your objective is to get your reader to **want** to open your document! It is important to match the style to circumstances. With essays and similar documents, this is easy enough. You are aiming at a clean, perhaps elegant appearance, definitely without frills*.

*Of course, if you are writing other kinds of documents for different audiences, such as brochures for commercial companies or exhibition panels for the general public or materials for school children, you would do things differently...

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**The Romans in Spain**

*Description of the page content related to the Romans in Spain, as mentioned in the text.*
Basics of document layout

You have to make a number of basic choices affecting the appearance of your document. Here we will look at:

- **Choosing fonts**: the kinds of typeface and point sizes you are going to use.
- **The typing space**: margins
- **The arrangement of text** on the page:
  - Text alignment (to justify, or not?)
  - Line spacing (to allow for markers’ or editors’ comments)
- **Paragraphs**: their use & style. The value of white space!

Right: varied fonts and layouts in past School dissertations (low-resolution to anonymise them!)

First, choose your font...

Types of type

You need to select a 'font' for your main text ('body text').

Basically, a font consists of a ‘typeface’ (a style of lettering) reproduced at a particular ‘point size’.

This is Times New Roman, a standard but (IMHO) overused and dull default typeface
This is Palatino, which is my own preferred typeface for body text
This is Old English Text, fine for Xmas cards but hard to read!
This is Lucida Handwriting, quite unsuitable for essays
This is Calibri, a widely used typeface

Incidentally, **all the above examples are 12-point** text, showing how variable fonts can be...

**Tip**: You only need to do this process once; you don’t need to reinvent it for every assignment, as I explain later....
Choosing a typeface

Don’t be tempted to use exotic typefaces! If you look at books and magazines, while all sorts of typefaces are used for headings, for the main text (‘body text’) most will use fairly plain ‘serifed’ fonts, that is, typefaces with tiny expansions at the ends of the letter strokes. (Hip magazines use all sorts of weird fonts and graphic effects to catch your attention, and can look cool. But can you read them easily?)

Designers have long thought that for body text, the densest part of a page, **serifed type is generally easier to read**, e.g. Times, New Century, Garamond, Plantin, etc.

**BUT san-serif (without serifs) type may be better for many people:** remember, about 10% of the population, and so your readership, is likely to be dyslexic! This is why I have chosen a san-serif font, Calibri, for this document (it also works well on both computer screen and on paper). Other popular san-serif typefaces include Arial and Helvetica.

**Tip!** Don’t use more than two typefaces in a document, i.e. at most one for headings, and one body text. **Avoid the ‘ransom note effect’!**

Size is everything! Point size

For your main text font, you also need to choose the size of the lettering. This is called the ‘point size’. For legibility, in most typefaces 10 point is pretty small, especially for those with imperfect eyesight (like venerable academics marking your work!). 13 point is getting too big. For body text, 11 points is often best, but it depends on the typeface.

This is Calibri, 9 point
This is Calibri, 10 point
This is Calibri, 11 point
This is Calibri, 12 point
This is Calibri, 13 point
This is Calibri, 14 point

Chosen your preferred main font? Now make it the ‘Normal’ style

**Tip:** Try out different fonts on a paragraph of text, on screen but also in print. Once you decide which one to use:

**Hack:** select your chosen text style. At the top of the Word screen, look at the ‘styles’ panel. It will likely identify your selected text as ‘Normal’; if not, find it in the window of styles. Right-click on ‘Normal’ and hit ‘update Normal to match selection’. All of the body text in your document should now appear in your chosen font.

**Tip:** below we will look at making a custom document template so that you don’t have to repeat all this for each assignment!
The typing space: margins

There should be a margin at least an inch (25mm) wide down each side of the page, partly to allow space for annotations of printouts by markers or editors, but also because excessively long strings of characters are hard to read; your eye tends to start flicking between lines and you lose track. Unreadably long lines are a common mistake in academic poster designs. This is why newspapers and larger books have text arranged in multiple columns—not to be used for essays, but likely to be necessary for posters.

NB if your document (not least, your dissertation) will be a bound, single-sided hard copy, allow a considerably wider left margin to allow for the binding.

It is best to have a rather deeper margin at the bottom of the page. For some reason, on pages with margins equal all around the text appears to be ‘sliding down the page’.

NB If you decide to put text in the header or footer (below) you will need to allow extra space for them.

To justify or not to justify? ‘Text alignment’

There are several ways of arranging main text (‘body text’):

- **Aligned left** (‘ranged left’, or ‘ragged right edge’) is plain and simple to read. It’s what I have chosen to use for this guide
- **Justified text** means that both the right and left edges of the text are straight, as in standard printed books
- **Centred text** Never use this for body text! Or even for multi-line captions. Fairly obviously, the irregular starting points of each line make it all but impossible to read. Centring can, however be very effective for short headings (see below)
Line spacing

Like many academic departments, the School requires text to be double-spaced so that there is room to annotate assignments, by hand or in e.g. Grademark.

**Tip:** When typing on screen, you may prefer single line-spacing to see as much as possible in one screenful. You can then double-space the text just before final print-out, or perhaps earlier, so that you can edit and annotate a hard copy by hand before completing the assignment for final submission. It’s for things like this that a to do list (below) can be really useful. You can include a reminder to change the line spacing before submission.

Paragraphs

Dividing your text into paragraphs (below) helps you to structure your argument, and again helps the reader.

Paragraphs can break up intimidating ‘tomb-slabs’ of dull, grey text (right) so that, subliminally, starting to read a new page feels much less of a chore.

**Tip:** Paragraphing is a good example of how simple aspects of layout can influence the attitude of your reader (or marker); it’s in your interests to make their job as easy and pleasant as possible, through a little TLC!

Indented first lines (below left) are one way of defining paragraphs. However, an actual space between them (below right) also has advantages; some white space on the page is always a good idea.

**Tip:** Things like a line space after each paragraph rest the reader’s eye a little.

**Hack:** You can set things like white space between paragraphs automatically in Word, using the paragraph menu. Select a paragraph, and then use the menu to set e.g. a 6pt or 12pt space after it. You can then right-click on ‘Normal’ style to change paras globally.
Emphasising text: or, underlining is for amateurs!

You want ‘navigational aids’ like headings to stand out on the page. It is also standard to emphasise certain things within body-text, e.g. foreign words and technical terms such as biological species names (like *Ascaris lumbricoides*), plus titles of books.

When writing by hand, use of capitals or underlining are easy ways to emphasise particular words. However, Word processors allow much better alternatives:

- **CAPITALS** (‘upper case text’*) should generally be avoided, since they do not stand out very well, and are actually difficult to read, especially if used for more than a few words.
- **Underlined text** draws attention but is more difficult to read. If you have produced an elegant ‘looks-like-a-book’ page style, underlining also looks out of place: you hardly ever see it in books or magazines.
- **Bold text** is the strongest way to make words stand out, as you can see in this bullet list. In essays it should only be used for headings and subheadings.
- **Italic text** is used in professional document design for emphasis within body text. Use italics for foreign words and titles of books.
- **Just using larger letters** does not work well, and neither does *spacing out*.

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* Capital letters are referred to as ‘upper-case text’, and small letters like these are called ‘lower case’. This goes back to original movable lead type, when compositors made up pages by picking individual letters from large subdivided wooden cases (left, from an 18th-century engraving of a print shop; Wikipedia, public domain)

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**Tip:** Word may not spell-check all-caps text unless told to! (See next page.)

**Tip:** Underlining looks amateurish, and makes your work look like a primary school project. Keep it for URLs and other hyperlinks only!

**Tip:** A common mistake is to use multiple ways to emphasise text (see headings, below). Simple bold text for headings, or Italics for in-text emphasis, are usually best.
Titles, headings and subheadings

The main title obviously sets up your document, while subheadings help the reader to form an overview of its structure, and to navigate around it. As we will see, they can also be a valuable aid to composing longer documents like dissertations.

**Tip:** Headings should be clearly distinguishable, and should stand out, from body text.* If you use more than one level of heading, they should form a clear hierarchy of distinct fonts, in this document enhanced by colour.

**Heading 1**
**Heading 2**
**Heading 3**

* Duh! Obvious? But I quite often mark essays with ‘stealth’ titles and subheads in the same font as the main text...

**Heading alignments**

People often ‘centre’ headings like essay titles. This can look classy or classic: e.g. some publishers may centre titles of books or journal articles. It can work well so long as headings are short. But for multi-line texts, the resulting ‘ragged left edge’ makes them very hard to read.

For longer title headings (and many short ones too!), professional designers often opt for sophisticated asymmetric layouts, like this title page from one of my books (right). Note all the white space! But the key **Tip** here is the ranged-left text. It is easy to read. Note that it is not all-caps, but just lower-case text, emphasised by making it bold and a larger point-size.

**Using capitals in headings: careful now!**

Many students are tempted to use capitals for assignment headings. These can indeed look great, especially for very short phrases.

However, for multi-line texts like essay titles consisting of long set questions, **all-caps are a bad idea**, because they are harder to read, and for another reason:

**Tip:** Many people don’t know that **Word may not automatically spellcheck all-capital text**! I have examined a PhD thesis with a typo in the all-caps title which spellcheck ignored and the student didn’t spot—an embarrassing howler on the cover of the thesis!

**Tip:** if you do opt for capitals, consider using ‘small caps’ (select ‘ctrl-D’ for this):

**TEXT IN SMALL CAPITALS: A CLASSY-LOOKING TITLING OPTION!**

**Tip:** A clean and reliable titling option is simply using bold text.

**Tip:** Don’t rely on spell-check! Always carefully examine your work, not least its layout.
Some examples of heading formats

The Romans in Spain

**Tip:** For a short title, lower case, but a slightly larger point-size can look great. Here centring works fine too.

**Tip:** Note here also judicious use of a little white space above and below the title to avoid a cramped look.

**Tip:** For long titles, keep layout and emphasis simple. Which of the two examples below would you rather have to read, at the top of an essay? (Read through the heading of each.)

**Tip:** Presenting assignment titles, especially long ones, is an excellent example of the importance of the ‘K.I.S.S. rule’!
Subheadings

As well as being very useful for making a document easier to navigate around by clarifying its structure, like paragraph spaces subheads can also break up ‘walls’ of text—though don’t use too many of them!

Tip: In an essay up to about 3,000 words, you may not need subheads at all. If you use them, you probably don’t need more than one level. However, for longer projects (4-5,000 words) and dissertations (10,000, or more at MA level), two or, if really needed, three levels of headings and subheads can be very helpful to you in composing your work, and to your reader/marker for navigating it. (If you get to four levels deep in undergraduate work, you are almost certainly overdoing it!)

Subhead styles: a powerful tool for presentation—& writing

Especially for longer documents like dissertations, using chosen (and maybe customised) subhead ‘Styles’ can be a godsend, not just for clear final presentation, but also for:

- Writing and organising your document
- Automatically creating a paginated Table of Contents at the beginning

Tip: if you use ‘Outline view’ in Word (an example from my recent book draft at right), you can display just the subheads—which you can then click and drag up and down to reorder your document, as all dependent text moves with them. This can be a huge help in getting long, complicated documents into the best sequence.

Hack: once your document is finished, you can click at the appropriate place near the start and tell Word to insert a Table of Contents like the one at the start of this guide. It will automatically list all subheads (at least to second level), with their page numbers, like in a proper published book. You can also update the table as you edit. Just click in it, and an update tab appears at the top.
Make a custom assignment template—a big timesaver!

**Uber-hack:** Don’t reinvent the wheel with all those steps every time you start a new assignment. You only need to work through all the foregoing once, and then create your own Word document template for your coursework assignments.* Then, every time you start a new essay or project, your template gives you a new document ready to go, with all your preferences for fonts, paragraphing, margins and line spacing, etc. etc. already set! * (NB there are thousands of templates available online in Word, but most are too fancy, and none will provide all you need to fulfil the requirements for your University assignments. It’s best to create your own custom version.)

To create your template, first create a master Word document with all the features you need, with placeholders for things like the title, a subhead, and first body-text paragraph, as in the example above. Once you are finished, just save it as a Word document template file (.dotx format). And keep it somewhere handy! I keep a shortcut to it on my desktop. ➔

When you click on your .dotx file (or your shortcut), it opens a fresh, unnamed .docx copy for you. You just save this with a suitable file-name, and start over-typing the placeholders...

← Here are screen-grabs of the top and bottom of my own basic document template, which I just call ‘paper.dotx’. I use this to start drafting academic papers, lecture outlines, reports, etc. It also formed the basis for this guide document.

It has place-holders for the document title, subheads, body text, and a range of other handy things (below).
Other handy template elements: pagination etc...

There are other elements you are supposed to include in your assignments, such as your student number for anonymous marking, and page numbering. Yet some final-year students still forget to include either!

**Hack:** If you add these items to the header of your template, they will be included in your assignment files automatically.

**Tip:** If you look at my template above, I additionally have in the footer the filename complete with path, and the date the file was last saved (look at the footer of this page to see these in use). Both can be useful if, for instance, you end up with various in-progress versions of your dissertation, perhaps printed out to mark up by hand (making a change from staring at the screen). This way, even if you find a loose printed sheet kicking around on the floor, you immediately know where it comes from.

**Hack:** things like the filename and date are added as ‘fields’ in the template. If you tell Word to ‘insert a field’ at the chosen point, you should get a menu to select from. These should update automatically when you rename or resave your file, but if not you can right-click on them and tell Word to update them.

Other obvious elements you might include in your template are a heading and a text style for your bibliography, although if you are using bibliographical software like Endnote or RefWorks (and anyone thinking of graduate study should seriously consider this), then those programs will automatically generate your bibliography for you.

**Hack:** Either way, there is a neat Word trick I learned from Graham Shipley to make your bibliography look good and more legible, by ‘out-denting’ the author names. Just highlight the whole list and hit ctrl-T. See right for before (top) and after (bottom) →


Getting images into your coursework

Archaeology in particular is a highly visual discipline. Much of its evidence comprises photographs and drawings of artefacts, artworks and structures, plus maps and graphical representations of data, like pie charts and histograms. Ancient historians and others in the arts and humanities similarly use visuals of various kinds. Often you will need to include drawings or photographs in your coursework.

If you have time, talent, and opportunity, you may well take your own photographs of sites and monuments, or create your own drawings and other graphics. However, most students will need to capture and reproduce existing images, from the Internet or library books.

**Tip:** when you capture an image, always record its source: you will need to cite this if you use it in your coursework. (The examples photographed from a book below are taken from Alcock, S.E. and R. Osborne, Eds. 2007. Classical Archaeology, Oxford, Blackwell.)

*Above, an ‘excavation in action’ shot—actually a ‘live’ snapshot, not a posed scene—which I took on my Cyprus field project. This was used on the cover of the interim report shown at the start of this document.*

**Tip:** it is proverbial that ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’. Well-chosen images can indeed save you a lot of precious word-count, as well as bringing variety and visual interest to your document layout.
Capturing images from books without a costly DSLR...

Hack: If you don’t own a high-spec DSLR, tripod and lighting array or a flatbed scanner, don’t own a copy of Photoshop or similar photo editing software, or have the skills to use them, you almost certainly will have a smart phone or tablet with a perfectly capable camera. This*—oh, and also a sheet of black paper— is all the kit you need to produce fairly reasonable images from paper publications to go in your coursework, which you can then edit just using tools in your word processor (here I am again using Word 2010).

Left, what I actually used to capture the images from a book which feature below: my iPhone and the black cover of a plastic folder which was to hand on my desk. (Plus a window for daylight...)

* Tip: For major projects like your dissertation, though, you would be advised to try to get access to that DSLR or flatbed scanner for top results!

Left, my Digital SLR and a smaller but still very capable compact camera. Nice to have, but you can still do a decent job without such specialist kit...
What can possibly go wrong?

➡ When people start putting images into Word documents, sometimes the result can be like this (yes, really!): out of focus, too dark with white paper rendered a muddy grey, uneven lighting, the book not lying flat or aligned with the camera, and the text on the next page ‘grinning’ through... Images like this will not make your work look good!

➡ What about images taken from the internet? Here is a small one taken from the web (one of my own photographs). Copied and pasted into a Word document like this, it is too small to see.

➡ But if you try to enlarge it (left), it is blurred because it does not contain enough pixels. It is only 128 pixels wide.

➡ Here is another web version of the same photograph at 400 pixels wide—just about usable at this size in Word viewed on screen, but if printed out it would look blurry. To look sharp on a standard page, I need a version with a lot more pixels.

Tip: Web images are normally 72 dpi (dots [pixels] per inch), but for Word documents intended to be printed out, images of at least 300dpi are required (600 or even 1200dpi are demanded by publishers).
Tip: Higher-resolution images suitable for printing out at a decent size can be hard to find on the Internet, except on e.g. Flickr, or unless you can find suitable online photographic archives.

Another common beginner’s mistake is **distorting images**—squashing or stretching them. This can look horrible (and some examples in essays are as bad as these simulations!), but can also be a real problem for things like maps and plans, where dimensional proportion is critical.

Tip: To avoid distortion, when selecting images to resize them, be sure to **drag a corner marker**, not a centre-edge one!
Capturing images from books with a phone camera

Here is another go to at capturing that drawing of a house plan shown above, the lower picture on the page. This time the lighting is much more even, the page is kept flatter (by holding up the other side of the book). The image was also shot from rather further away so is less distorted, and easier for the camera to focus on.

There is still a problem though: the text on the next page shows through. This is where you need your sheet of black paper!

Just slip the black paper behind the page, and the ghost text virtually vanishes.

Take your shot, and transfer it to your computer by, e.g., emailing it to yourself. It will probably be saved as a JPEG file, which is OK for this purpose.
Making pictures presentable: simple Word photo editing

Next, paste your image file into your Word document for some basic editing.

→ In Word, right-click on the image and this menu will appear. Select ‘crop’, to trim your picture.

↑ Getting there, but not done yet. The white paper looks a grubby grey. We need to fix this.

Select the image, and on the menu bar at top of screen click ‘Format’ and go to ‘corrections’. At the bottom of the window, ‘picture correction options’ gives you brightness and contrast sliders, to help make the background white, and the drawn features black.

→ That is a lot better.

But it is a bit small on the page. It will be hard to read the labels and scale. We need to enlarge it.
Select the image, and drag a **corner** marker. This will allow you to resize the picture without stretching it out of shape (‘scaling’). That’s now big enough on the page for the reader to see properly. →

But it’s not quite straight. Right click on it, and from the menu select ‘size and position’. You will find a ‘rotation’ option which gives fine control. 1° will do it!

← OK, that’s about as good as it gets without a flatbed scanner and Photoshop! And it’s presentable enough for an essay.

← Here is another phone-camera shot, this time of a photo in the same book, captured and edited in the same way as above.

**Tip:** black-and-white (‘grey-scale’) photos in books can often look flat and ‘muddy’ even before you re-photograph them! It is important to adjust brightness and contrast for maximum clarity.

**Tip:** especially if they have a lot of mid-tones between black and white, or are in colour, pictures may look very different on screen and on paper (and between different screens and printers). **Especially for your dissertation, do test prints,** if possible on the machine you’ll use for the final print-out, to be sure they will come out as you planned.
Tip: don’t be afraid to make pictures big enough for your reader to see the point you are making—or they are a waste of space!

Making pictures too small on the page is another common beginner’s mistake. It’s as though they are hesitant about including pictures at all—and don’t want them to intrude too much upon the text. Students are trained to focus on writing—at least, on how to present information and express themselves through text, if not on its appearance! But use of illustrations is another, potentially equally powerful tool, and a skill with its own rules.

What point are we making with this image of a Greek pot? If it is just about its overall shape, then it can be reproduced quite small. But if you are discussing details of its decoration, it needs to be full page-width, like this. Plans of complex buildings, or maps of cities or regions, may need to be full-page to be legible. As a rule of thumb, unless an image is extremely simple, on an A4 (or US 9”x11”) page it should be at least half-page-width, and probably full page-width. It may also add helpful white space.

Remember, the ‘thousand words’ expressed in each picture doesn’t affect your word count!
Deploying images and captions in your assignment

Getting images into your assignment in a satisfactory way takes practice, and still takes a bit of time, but the results can be well worth it, making your text into a really attractive—and effective—document.

All images in formal assignments:
- **Must** be accompanied by a **figure number** with at least one reference in the text
- **May** also be accompanied by a **text caption** as necessary (preferably brief—part of the word count anyway!)
- **Must** also be provided with a **source credit** (this can be with the figure itself, or grouped by fig. number in a separate list of image credits at the end).

The bottom line: every image must be accompanied by at least a figure number. In Word, this presents challenges!

The simplest way to deploy your figures and captions is just to group them all altogether in order at the end of the essay. However, this means the reader has to keep flicking backwards and forwards between text and figures.

It is much more effective to position your image as near as possible to the most relevant point in your text, i.e. where the first or main ‘callout’ (reference to the figure) will be. →

**Tip:** Putting your figures into the best positions is fiddly. So:

- Do work on your figures as you write your essay: **don’t leave figures to the last minute**, as like your text, **getting images right takes time!**
- As you prepare your **figures and captions**, I suggest you **temporarily ‘park’ them all at the end** (or in a separate Word file) until your text is finished—especially if you leave double-spacing your body text to the last minute. This will radically alter the pagination!
There is a simple way to group your image and its caption together as a unit, which you can then position and adjust in your essay document: **Insert → Text box.** You can paste your picture inside the text box, and write or paste your caption beneath.

You can reshape and resize the text box, though you may have to resize the image separately too, or it may get accidentally cropped. You need to experiment!

Your textbox will probably have a default black line round it. This will look clunky in your essay. To get rid of it, select the text box (not its contents!), and **right click on the edge of the box for a menu including outline options.**

**Tip:** until you have positioned all figures in your document, perhaps keep the outlines, as they help you find the textbox edge for selecting and moving it. Removing the outlines could be a final item for your ‘to do’ list!

You can paste your figure textboxes into the appropriate positions on your pages, and select and drag to adjust them.

Next you need to decide how your figures should interact with your text.

With the text box selected, at the top right-hand corner an icon to the **layout options** menu appears. →

I suggest you select **with-text wrapping → top and bottom.** The text parts above and below the figure \( \text{\textcopyright} \), which is clear—and adds white space. **With-text wrapping → square** will make text flow round the box \( \text{\textcopyright} \), which can work for smaller figures. Just so long as your essay lines aren’t then too short, or it can end up looking rather a mess, rather like this bit of text!
The other choice to make under Layout options is ‘move with text’ or ‘fix position on page’. These labels are self-explanatory. However:

**Warning:** with either selection, if you do edit your text after positioning your figures, especially if you start to add or cut paragraph-sized chunks, images can flip from one page to the next, and leave large empty gaps on the previous one.

**Tip:** While you should have your figures ready to go, this is a key reason to make final positioning of images one of the very last steps before submission!

**Tip:** Keep an eye on the size of your Word file—especially your dissertation. Heavily-illustrated documents can become very large. This guide is 17Mb in Word, too big to email to some recipients. (Fortunately, saving as a PDF makes it a much handier 4Mb). **You really, really don’t want to discover on deadline day that your beautifully-finished dissertation is too big to submit to Turnitin! Maximum file size for Turnitin is 40Mb.**

And talking of files...

**BTW, do you back up properly?**

Especially for preparing and storing important and/or complicated documents, very regular backups are critical.

I have automatic Cloud backup, and also back up files manually after every work session. I needed it with this document, when once I found a critical page of complex layout had mysteriously vanished—but I restored it from the local backup (phew!)

Your work on Uni servers is backed up for you, but if you work off-campus, ensure you have back-ups beyond the reach of theft, dropped laptop, lost USB stick, a burst pipe in the roof... (I have known students who lost data to all of these causes!)
And finally: general **hot hacks**, saving more time & grief...

### Customise autocorrect: much faster & more accurate writing!

**Hack:** Exploiting the Word **autocorrect** function can be a huge time-saver. Go to **File → Options → Proofing.** This is customizable, and designed to help you avoid particular typos (e.g. I routinely mis-key ‘research’ as ‘reserach’, ‘use’ as ‘sue’ etc.). Never forget to capitalise words like ‘Roman’ again, because Word will do it for you! Because you can leverage autocorrect to **develop your own shorthand**! For example, if I type the string ‘saah’ then ‘School of Archaeology & Ancient History’ appears on screen: four key strokes generate forty characters! I do the same with many other words and phrases I commonly use, e.g. typing ‘czn’ produces ‘civilization’, ‘rn’ → ‘Roman’, ‘g-r’ → ‘Greco-Roman’, and ‘lt’ → ‘La Tène’, complete with that fiddly accent. See other examples at right, for those long and easily-mistyped ‘archaeolog-’ words. I have perhaps a couple of hundred ‘autocorrects’ like these.

**Warning:** This is a bit more advanced, and can bite you back! For example, I use ‘c1’ to produce ‘first century’, ‘c2’ for ‘second century’ and so on, but for archaeologists having ‘c14’ always coming out as ‘fourteenth century’ would be a pain. You need to experiment to see what works for you.

### Automate fiddly typing tasks by writing macros

**Hack:** Similarly, you can use Word **macros** to pre-set an operation triggered by a simple key combo. E.g. if I key alt-8, then the computer turns on bold, types my ‘***’ something-still-needs-doing-here string (see below), turns bold off again, inserts a space, and then parks the cursor after the last asterisk. The macro has then finished, and I can type a quick bold-text comment on what needs doing at this point (see examples below).

Other macros I have made insert markers for cross-references to other parts of my text which I will need to add, or to images: so alt-6 generates ‘(p. ***’) and alt-7 produces ‘(Fig. ***)’
And finally: create a ‘specific task here’ marker

**Hack:** Invent and use your own prominent ‘there’s still something I need to do here!’ marker. → As you work on your document, you will spot or remember things you still need to do, check or look up, but can’t or don’t want to deal with now. Invent for yourself some simple group of characters you won’t use for anything else (this is critical) which you can insert in your text as a marker, maybe with a typed comment. I simply use thee bold asterisks in a row – *** — as my marker. As you finish your document, you can then just search your draft for your character string and go straight to the outstanding tasks, deleting the markers as they are dealt with. When search finds no more examples, you’re done!

Happy writing—and image editing!