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Answer Box: Print mailing labels in Word

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You have all your customer addresses in a data file. Now what you want to do is get those addresses onto a set of mailing labels. Here's the best way to go about doing that, with some neat tips thrown in along the way.

Applies to

Microsoft Office Word 2003
 Microsoft Word 2002

[See all Answer Box columns](#)[See all Office columns](#)**See Also**

- [Add electronic postage envelope or label](#)
- [Answer Box: Common problems when using e contacts in Word mail merge](#)
- [Create and print labels single item or address](#)
- [Data sources you can use for a mail merge](#)
- [Include a POSTNET bar code or FIM-A code on envelopes or labels](#)
- [Use mail merge for mailings and more](#)

A question from your comments

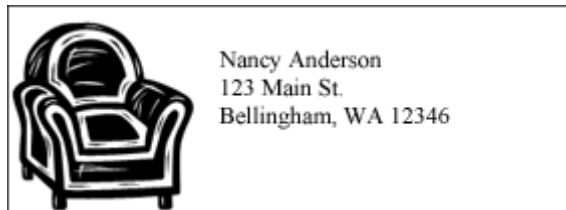
I just want to print a set of mailing labels so that I can mail some information to my customers. I keep running into problems. Why is this so hard?

Advice from the Answer Box

You can watch my demos first, or [start reading](#) about the finer details of this process.

Demos:[Set up the label main document](#)[Connect the label main document to a data file](#)[Add placeholders and information that stays the same](#)[Preview the labels](#)[Print the labels](#)

The number of labels that you want to create determines how complicated it is to create them.



It's pretty easy to:

- Print one label or a set of labels all addressed exactly the same way. To learn how, click a link in the See Also box.

- Type a few different labels on one label sheet and print them. To do this, you have a couple of different options:
 - Consider downloading one of the label templates from the [Templates on Microsoft Office Online](#) Web site.
 - Use the **Envelopes and Labels** dialog box to create a page of labels.
 1. On the **Tools** menu, point to **Letters and Mailings**, and then click **Envelopes and Labels**.
 2. Click the **Labels** tab, and then click **Options**.
 3. Choose the type of printer and the supplier of the label sheets that you'll print your labels on. Under **Product Number**, select the number that corresponds to the number listed on your package of label sheets, and then click **OK**.
 4. In the **Envelopes and Labels** dialog box, click **New Document**. A new label document opens.
 5. Type the information on the labels that you want to use.
 6. On the **File** menu, click **Print** to print the labels.

When you want to create and print more than one sheet of labels, things can get a little gnarly. Creating more than one sheet of labels involves using a mail-merge process. After you get the process down, it isn't all that difficult — but it is a process. And, at each step in the process, you face potential pitfalls.

In this column, we're going to dissect the mail-merge label process and go through it step by detailed step. As part of each step, we'll look at the potential pitfalls and discuss how to avoid or recover from them.

The mail merge label process

Creating a set of labels involves five major steps:

1. First, you [set up](#) the label main document. The label main document is the page of labels that you start with. It's the model for the size and shape of all the labels that you eventually print.
2. Then, you [connect](#) the label main document that you just set up to a data file that contains the names and addresses you want to add to the labels. More about data files later.
3. Next, you [add placeholders](#) (officially called **fields**) to the label main document for the information (such as names and addresses) that will be different on each label. At this step, you also add any information, such as a return address or a logo or other picture, that will be the same on every label.
4. Then, you [preview](#) the labels to make sure that information from the data file merged correctly. When you're happy with the results, you complete the merge.
5. Finally, you [print](#) the labels.

Step 1: Set up the label main document

 [Watch the demo](#)

[Next demo](#)

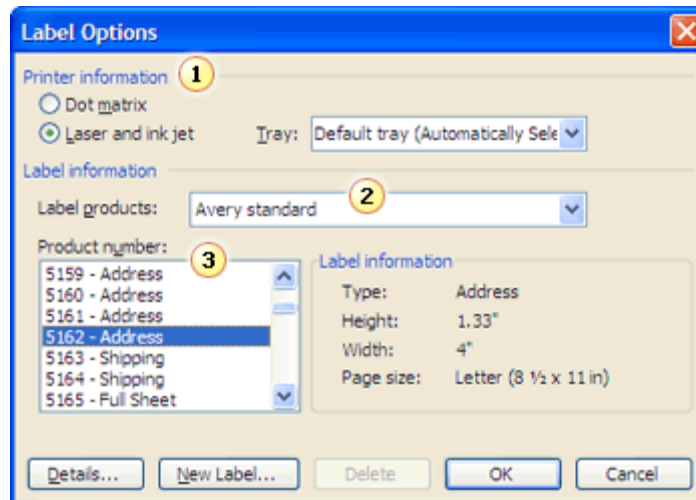
You knew you were going to be creating labels, so you've probably already been to the office supply store. You bought a package of label sheets from one of the label sheet suppliers, such as Avery, AOne, or Formtec. Each sheet is a certain size and contains a certain number of labels with specific dimensions.

To set up the label main document, you need to match the dimensions of that document with the dimensions of the labels on the sheets that you brought home from the office supply store.

Here's how you set up the label main document:

1. Start Word.
2. On the **Tools** menu, point to **Letters and Mailings**, and then click **Mail Merge** to open the **Mail Merge** task pane.
3. In the task pane, under **Select document type**, click **Labels**. Under **Step 1 of 6** at the bottom of the task pane, click **Next: Starting document**.

4. To set up a new label main document, click **Change document layout**.
Why **Change document layout**? When you open Word, a blank document opens by default. That default document does not have a label layout. If you're going to create labels, you need to change the layout of that default document to a label layout.
5. Under **Change document layout** in the task pane, click **Label options**.
6. In the **Label Options** dialog box, you have several choices to make:



- 1 The type of printer that you're using to print labels.
- 2 The supplier that produced your label sheets.
- 3 The number that corresponds to the product number listed on your package of label sheets.

Note What if the product number for the label sheets that you bought doesn't match any of the choices in the **Label Options** dialog box? You can still print your labels; you just have to do some customizing. First, carefully measure the labels on the sheet you have and take note of the measurements and how many labels fit on a single sheet. Next, follow the process described in [Create custom-sized labels](#), beginning with step 4.

7. When you've made all your label choices, click **OK**.
A label document opens with the insertion point blinking away in the first label, and you're ready for the next step.
Note If what you see on the screen just looks like a regular document instead of labels, you may have the option for hiding gridlines turned on. On the **Table** menu, click **Show Gridlines** to show lines that indicate the label boundaries.
8. Under **Step 2 of 6** at the bottom of the task pane, click **Next: Select recipients**.

Step 2: Connect to the data file

 [Watch the demo](#)

[Next demo](#)

If you're creating mailing labels, you must be planning a mailing. If you're planning a mailing, you probably have a mailing list somewhere that contains the names and addresses of customers, employees, or other intended recipients. This mailing list is what we mean by "data file." The purpose of this step in the process is to connect to that mailing list data file so that you can get the names and addresses from your list onto your labels.

Note If you don't already have a mailing list data file set up, keep reading. You can set one up from within Word, as you'll see.

Word can connect to a lot of different types of data files (to see a complete list, click a link in the See Also box), so the mailing list that you have will most likely work just fine. For example, you might have your recipient names and addresses in a Microsoft Excel worksheet, a Microsoft Access database table, or a table that

you set up in Word. Or maybe you keep your Microsoft Outlook® Contacts file up to date especially for this purpose. Any of those options (and many others) will work just fine.

To learn a lot more about data files and how to use them in a mail merge, click a link in the See Also box.

Notes

- Check to see how recipient names are set up in the mailing list data file. Merging names from the data file onto your labels will work best if you have first names and last names in two different columns.
- Postal codes that start with a zero won't merge correctly from an Excel worksheet unless you type an apostrophe before the initial zero. The apostrophe won't show up in the worksheet cell or on your label; it just makes the zero behave.

To establish a connection between your label mail document and your data file

In the **Mail Merge** task pane, under **Select recipients**, you have three options:

- **Use an existing list** Click this option if you already have a data file, such as an Excel spreadsheet, Access database table, or Word table, that contains your recipients' names and addresses.
- **Select from Outlook Contacts** Click this option if you want to use names and addresses from your Outlook Contacts list.
- **Type a new list** Click this option if you don't have a data file yet that contains recipients' names and addresses.

Click one of the following options to find out what to do next.

▼ [Use an existing list](#)

1. Under **Use an existing list**, click **Browse** to locate your mailing list data file.
2. In the **Select Data Source** dialog box, locate the file, select it, and then click **Open**.
3. If you see the **Select Table** dialog box, click the table or worksheet that contains your recipient names and addresses.
4. The **Mail Merge Recipients** dialog box opens.

▶ [Select from Outlook Contacts](#)

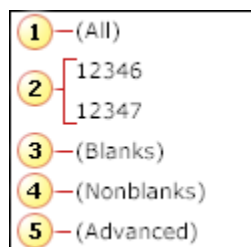
▶ [Type a new list](#)

The **Mail Merge Recipients** dialog box gives you the opportunity to filter or sort the entries in the data file. For example, you might want to do a mailing only to customers in a certain postal code or city. Or, you might want to create labels for a mailing to employees who joined the company within the past year.

If you want to create labels for all the recipients in your data file and you don't need to do any sorting or filtering, just click **OK** to move on.

If you don't want to print labels for all the recipients in your data file, you can do some or all of these things before you click **OK**:

- To eliminate one recipient, click the check box at the beginning of the recipient's row to clear it.
- To sort the rows according to the ascending or descending order of information in a particular column (for example, if you want to create the labels in alphabetical order by last name), click the column heading.
- To filter the list according to specific criteria (for example, all the people who live in a certain postal code), click the arrow next to a column heading. When you click the arrow, you see a list that looks similar to this one:



- 1 Click **(All)** if you previously filtered the list and now want to include all the

entries again.

2 Click the value by which you want to filter the list. In this example, the Postal Code column contains only two unique codes. In the case of your data file, the list of unique entries would most likely be much longer.

3 Click **(Blanks)** to filter the list to only those entries in this column that are blank.

4 Click **(Nonblanks)** to filter the list to only those entries in this column that have content.

5 Click **(Advanced)** to open the **Filter and Sort** dialog box, where you can narrow according to more complex criteria. For example, you can narrow the list to three postal codes or two cities.

Note Any filtering and sorting changes that you make in the **Mail Merge Recipients** dialog box don't affect the original data file.

After you close the **Mail Merge Recipients** dialog box, you'll see «Next Record» fields on all the labels in your starting document. Don't delete them. They won't show up on your printed labels and they're important in the next step of the process. Under **Step 3 of 6** at the bottom of the task pane, click **Next: Arrange your labels** to move to the next step.

Step 3: Add placeholders and information that stays the same

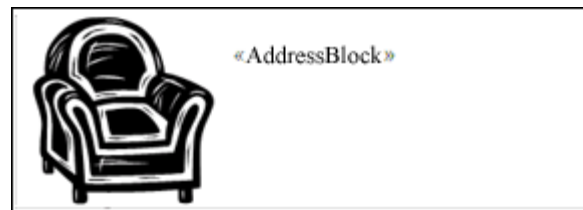
 [Watch the demo](#)

[Next demo](#)

At this step in the process, you add content to the label main document. This content includes:

- **Information that will be the same on each label** For example, you might want a company logo on each label. You can just type or place this information right on the label main document.
- **Information, such as the recipient address, that is unique to each label** You can't type information unique to each label on one label main document. Instead, you add placeholders, or fields, to the label main document. These fields correspond to categories (columns) in your mailing address data file. When you complete the mail merge in the next step of the process, information from each row in the data file replaces the fields to create a set of unique labels.

Here's how a label main document might look with a picture and a field on it:



Click one of the following options to find out what to do next.

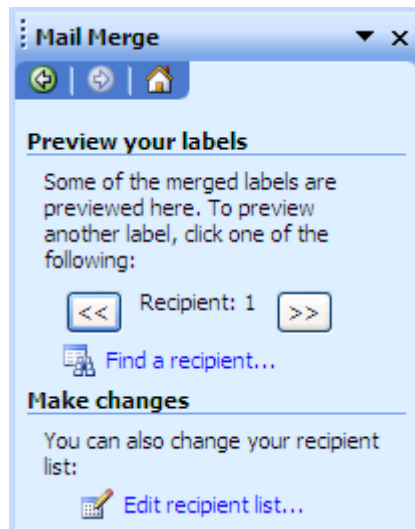
- ▶ [Add a picture](#)
- ▶ [Add placeholder fields](#)

Step 4: Preview the merged labels and complete the merge

(This information is covered in the next demo.)

[Next demo](#)

When you click **Next: Preview your labels** at the bottom of the **Mail Merge** task pane, information from the data file replaces the placeholder fields on the labels. You'll be able to see right away if the addresses are being displayed properly. You can also click the double-arrow buttons in the task pane to page through the labels, or you can click **Find a recipient** to locate a specific label.



Note As you page through the labels to preview them, what happens on the screen can be a little disorienting. Let's say that you're starting from the first label in the upper-left corner of the page. When you click the right double-arrow button, you move across the page horizontally until you reach the label at the right edge of the page. Then you move down a row to the label at the left edge of the page, and so on. On the screen, though, the label that you're currently previewing always ends up looking like it's at the top-left corner of the page. This is just a previewing convenience. The labels haven't actually shifted around on the page or anything spooky like that.

Some things that might need fixing

- Missing address elements** If you don't see all the elements of an address, you might need to match a column heading from your data file with an element from the address block. Click the **Previous** link at the bottom of the **Mail Merge** task pane. Right-click the «Address Block» field in the first label, and then click **Edit Address Block** on the shortcut menu. In the **Insert Address Block** dialog box, click **Match Fields**. In the **Match Fields** dialog box, be sure that each element you're using from the list on the left has a matching column heading on the right. If **(not matched)** appears opposite any important elements, click the arrow in the box that says **(not matched)**, and then click the correct column name in the list that appears. Click **OK**, and then click **OK** again.
- Unintended recipients** If labels have been created for some recipients whom you don't want to include in this mailing, click **Edit recipient list** in the **Mail Merge** task pane to open the **Mail Merge Recipients** dialog box, and then [filter](#) the list of recipients.
- Missing recipients** If only a subset of the records (rows) in your data file merged onto the labels, click **Edit recipient list** in the **Mail Merge** task pane to open the **Mail Merge Recipients** dialog box. Make sure that you haven't inadvertently [filtered](#) the list of recipients. Click the arrow in the column heading for each category that you don't want to filter, and then click **(All)** in the list. If you haven't filtered the list of recipients in any way, check your data file to be sure that it is organized correctly.
- Most of the labels are blank** If you only see one label with an address in it and the rest of the labels are blank, you probably forgot one little step when you were arranging content on your label main document. At the bottom of the **Mail Merge** task pane, click **Previous: Arrange your labels**. In the task pane, under **Replicate labels**, click **Update all labels** to copy the fields that you added to the first label onto all the other labels on the sheet. Then click **Next: Preview your labels** to return to the preview step.

When you're satisfied with the way your labels look, click **Next: Complete the merge** at the bottom of the **Mail Merge** task pane.

Step 5: Print the labels

 [Watch the demo](#)

At the **Complete the merge** step in the process, you're ready to print your labels. You have two choices. You can:

- Click **Print** in the **Mail Merge** task pane to print the labels.
Do this if you are satisfied with the previews and ready to print the final labels.
- Click **Edit individual labels** in the **Mail Merge** task pane to create a new document with all the merged labels in it.
Do this if you want to review the labels more thoroughly before you print the final labels, or if you want to make custom changes to specific labels. When you're satisfied with the labels, you can print them right from this document.

▶ [Print the labels](#)

▶ [Create a new label document and then print the labels](#)

Some problems you might encounter when you print

- **Fields are printed instead of information** If you see fields in your printed labels (such as «Address Block») rather than values for those fields, you might need to change a setting. On the **Tools** menu, click **Options**. On the **Print** tab, make sure that the **Field Codes** check box under **Include with document** is cleared.
- **Printed results don't match the preview** If the printed result doesn't match what you saw in the preview, most likely you are using an outdated or damaged printer driver. You can download the latest printer drivers from your printer manufacturer's Web site.

Before you close the label main document

You've just gone to all the trouble to set up a label main document and connect it to a mailing list data file. By saving the label main document, you can preserve the effort that you've put in and make it easier and faster to create a set of labels the next time you need one. When you save a label main document, you save the document's connection to the data file.

The next time you open the document, you'll see a message that information from a data file will be placed in the document. Click **Yes** to continue. If you used an Outlook Contacts list as your data file, you'll also see the **Select Contact List** dialog box. Select the Contacts list folder that you connected to originally, and then click **OK**. On the **Tools** menu, point to **Letters and Mailings**, and then click **Mail Merge**. The **Mail Merge** task pane opens at the **Select recipients** step, where you can choose the data file that you want to connect to.

- If you want to use the same data file without any filtering or sorting, just click **Next: Arrange your labels**, and continue through the mail-merge process.
- If you want to filter or sort the list of recipients from the data file to create a new set of labels, click **Edit recipient list**.
- If you want to merge recipient information from a different data file, click **Select a different list**.

Wishing you much happy labelling,

Connie, the Answer Box monitor

About the author

Connie Miller, a writer on the Microsoft Office User Assistance team, collects and responds to issues that come to the attention of the Word Answer Box. To submit a detailed question of your own that we may be able to respond to, send [feedback](#).

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