# Inserting Captions

Word can automatically number the captions of your tables, figures and equations. The format of those captions is controlled by the Caption Style, and later in this section we describe how to modify that style to match the formatting requirements of your particular Style Guide (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc...).

The following video will show you how to insert objects such as pictures (figures) and charts. At the 1:40 point of the video, it discusses how to add captions to those objects. Despite the references to Word 2010, the information is still accurate.

To add a caption to a figure, table, or other object:

1. Right-click the object you wish to caption and select *Insert Caption…* from the pop-up menu. To get this option for tables, you can hover your cursor over the table and right-click the ⊞ crosshair icon that appears at the top-left corner of the table.
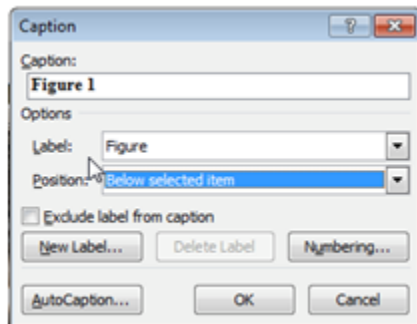
2. In the window that appears, select the label that applies to the object you have selected (e.g. "Figure" or "Table") and select the positioning of the caption (e.g. above or below the object). You can click the "New Label..." button if you wish to create a different label (such as "Maps" or "Appendix Figures")
3. Type your text in the *Caption:* field. This field has a 250-character limit, so if your caption is longer than that, you should refrain from adding it here, and instead add it after you've inserted the caption – Step 6)
4. To include the chapter number in your caption (e.g. "Figure 3-2" or "Table 2.1"), you need to have set up your Heading 1 style **first** (see Automatic Chapter and Subsection Numbering), as we've done in our template. This is the only way Word understands where each chapter starts; otherwise, you will get an error. If you've done that, then in the *Caption* window,
    o   Click the *Numbering…* button and check the *Include Chapter Number* box.
    o   Select the separator (hyphen, comma, etc...) you wish to have between your chapter number and the caption number and click **OK**.
5. Click **OK** to exit the dialog box.
6. If you waited to enter a long caption, now you can type it in.

Word will renumber your captions appropriately if you insert a new figure before other figures in your document.

Sometimes, Word *won't* renumber your captions right away. It will renumber them eventually, but you can force it by selecting the incorrect number, right-clicking on it, and selecting "Update Field". Or -- our favorite technique -- you can *trick* Word into thinking you're going to print by selecting Print (or Ctrl-P, or Command-P, etc...). This will force Word to update all the fields throughout your document, including the ToC, Lists of Figures, and caption numberings. Then Cancel without printing.

All the captions in your document are styled with the **Caption** style, and that may not match what your Style Guide (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc...) calls for. If you do not like the appearance/formatting of your caption text, *do not* edit them one-by-one, but modify the Caption style instead (see Modifying a Style for more details). Word's default Caption style, for example, sets the captions to be a slate blue color, which you would likely prefer to be black. Also note that if you want your label & number to be Bold and the caption text to be Regular (e.g. "**Figure 2.1:** This is my caption"), then you will have to leave the Caption style set to Regular and then manually format the label & number as Bold yourself -- Word can't mix font settings within a caption, unfortunately.

List of Figures/Tables/Equations

At some point after you've added a number of Figure or Table captions, you'll need to add a List of Figures or List of Tables to your frontmatter. Please refer to the Automatic Table of Contents and Lists section of this Guide to learn how to create those.

Long Captions in the List of Figures/Tables

In some disciplines, it's not uncommon for many of your captions to be quite long. By default, the List of Figures/Tables tool will pull in the entire caption, making your List many pages long. Rackham doesn't care how long your Lists are (we've seen Lists of Figures as long as 30 pages, due to those long captions!), but nevertheless, it may make sense to trim down excessive captions in the List.

How you do this depends on whether your computer is a Mac or a Windows machine. In both cases, we'll insert a character between the part of the long caption we want to have in the List of Figures and the part we don't.

First, we'll set Word to hide "hidden text" when showing "non-printing characters".

On a Mac:	On Windows:
1. At the top left of the screen, open the **Word** menu and select **Preferences** (or use this keyboard shortcut: Command-Comma). 2. Select **View**	1. On the top left, click on **File** to open the File 2. Click on **Options** 3. In the Word Options window that appears, sel 4. Make sure that the **Hidden text** checkbox is N

3. Under **Show Non-Printing Characters**, make sure that the **Hidden text** checkbox is **NOT** checked.
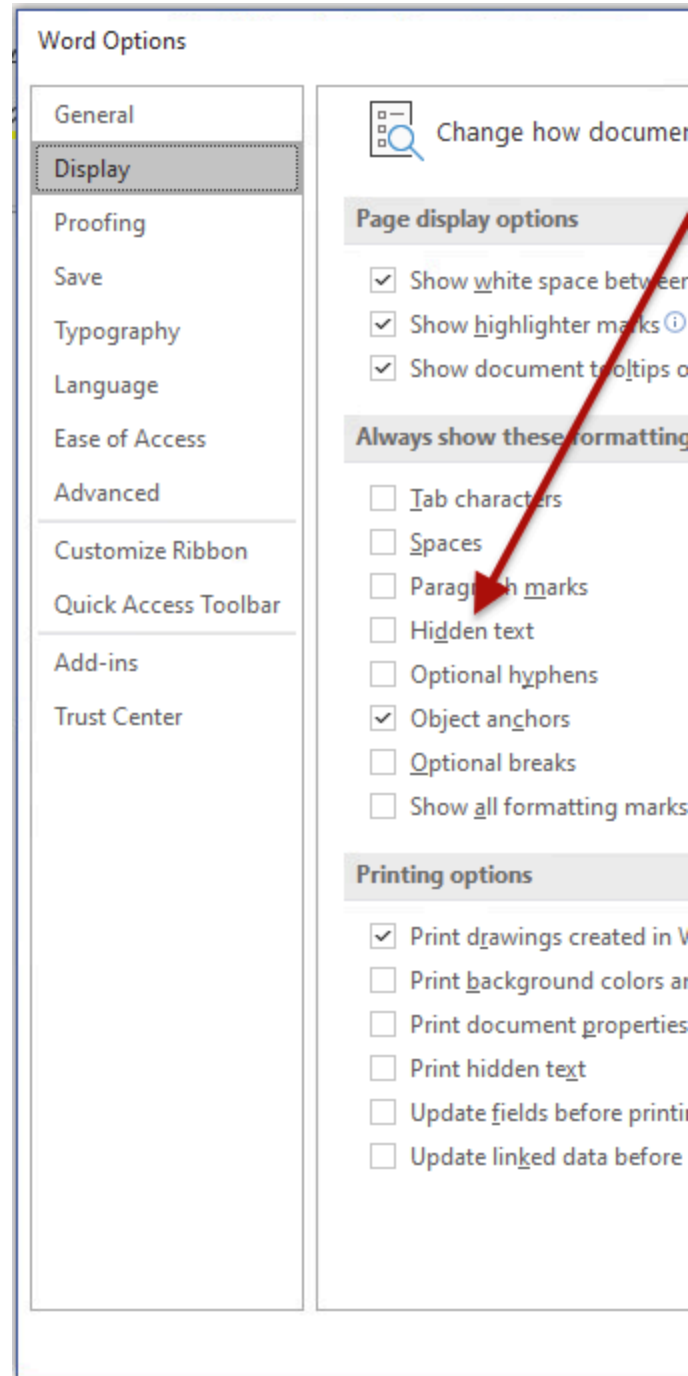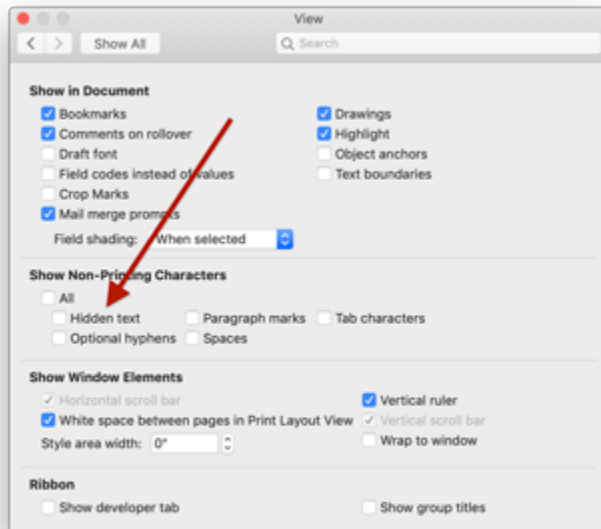
Click **OK** or close the window to continue.

Make sure that you've toggled on the invisible characters (Home tab: ¶) to show all the non-printing characters in your document.

Next, we'll place a hidden paragraph character between the part of the caption you wish to include in the List of Figures and the part you don't:

1. In your caption, place your cursor just before the text you don't wish to have in your List of Figures.
2. Press **Enter** or **Return** on the keyboard, to put the text on a new paragraph
3. Carefully click and drag to select/highlight that new paragraph character you just inserted
4. (Mac) From the **Format** menu, select **Font…**
   (Win) Right-click on the selected paragraph character and choose **Font...**
5. In the window that appears, check the **Hidden** checkbox
6. Click **OK**.

Now try toggling the invisibles off and on. The caption will display as two separate paragraphs while the invisible characters are visible but will appear as a single paragraph when they're hidden. More importantly, the second paragraph will no longer be included when you generate or update your List of Figures.

Important Note: Notice that when the paragraph marker is visible, it pushes the following text down a line as if it's a new paragraph. If you have several of these throughout a chapter, the cumulative effect could possibly push things onto different pages than they're on when those characters are hidden. With this in mind, it's wise to toggle the invisibles (¶) to HIDE the non-printing characters before updating your Table of Contents or List of Figures/Tables/etc..., to be sure they are updated with the correct pages.

How to create automatic numbers and captions for figures: images, pictures, and other illustrations

https://www.officetooltips.com/word/tips/how_to_create_automatic_numbers_and_captions_for_figures__images__pictures__and_other_illustrations.html

Microsoft Word offers functionality to create automatically updated numbers for figures, tables, and equations. You can define descriptions (captions) for figures in your document and reference them from the document content using the **Captions** feature. The numbering and links can be automatically updated on adding, moving, or deleting a figure.

In Microsoft Word, **figures** mean all visual objects other than tables and equations. You can add or create figures using:

- The **Illustrations** group of the **Insert** tab: pictures, images, drawings, charts, diagrams, screenshots, schemas, etc.,
- The **Media** group of the **Insert** tab: **Online Video**,
- The **Text** group of the **Insert** tab: text boxes, PowerPoint slides, Excel charts, diagrams, etc.

Note: Some publishers don't use the term figure for maps (e.g., *Chicago* style).

Figures normally have the label **Figure** and a number followed by a caption. A **caption** is a short block of text that provides quick information about the figure:

Figure 1 Masha on a tricycle   and   Figure 7 Masha in a new outfit

Usually, figures have captions instead of titles. See how to create automatic numbers and titles for tables if you need to create titles instead of captions. See also:

- How to create captions and cross-references for equations,
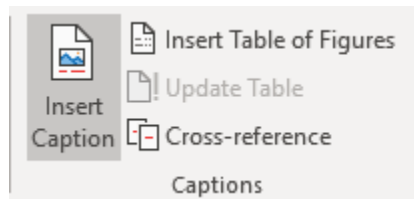- How to insert numbers, captions, and cutlines for photographs.

Note: You can create a custom label for some types of visual objects. See below how to do that. Remember that each type of object you label will be numbered sequentially within its group.

Attention! We highly recommend checking the formatting requirements, accepted by your college, university, company, or established on the project, etc.
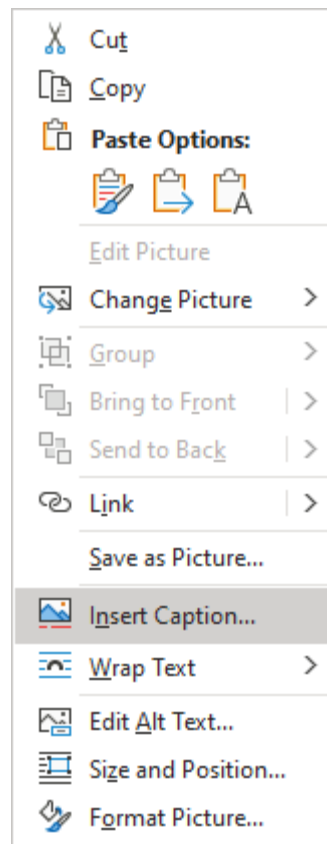
Insert a caption for figures

To *add* automatically updated numbers and a short description (caption) for an object, select the object and do one of the following:

- On the **References** tab, in the **Captions** group, click the **Insert Caption** button:

- Right-click on the selection and select the **Insert Caption...** in the popup menu:

	Cut				Cut	
	Copy				Copy	
	Paste Options:				**Paste Options:**	
	Edit Picture				Edit Text	
	Change Picture	>			Edit Points	
	Group	>			Group	>
	Bring to Front	>			Bring to Front	>
	Send to Back	>			Send to Back	>
	Link	>			Link	>
	Save as Picture...				Save as Picture...	
	Insert Caption...				Insert Caption...	
	Wrap Text	>			Wrap Text	>
	Edit Alt Text...				Edit Alt Text...	
	Size and Position...				Set as Default Text Box	
	Format Picture...				More Layout Options...	
					Format Shape...	

or   or

In the **Caption** dialog box:
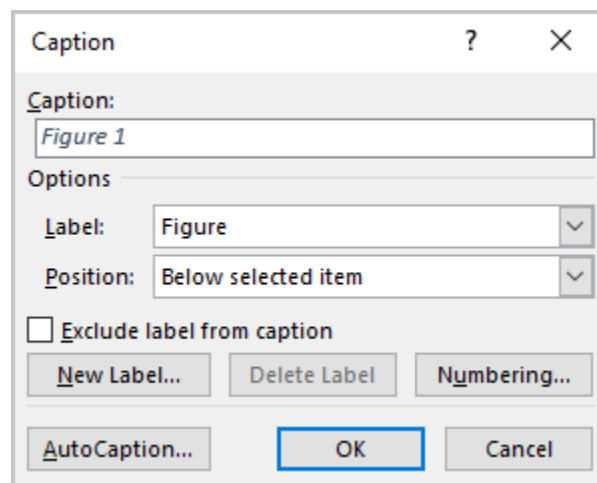
If you are satisfied with the selected options, click the **OK** button. Otherwise, make any of the following optional actions:

Select the label and its position

- Under **Options**:
  - From the **Label** dropdown list, select the item type you need:
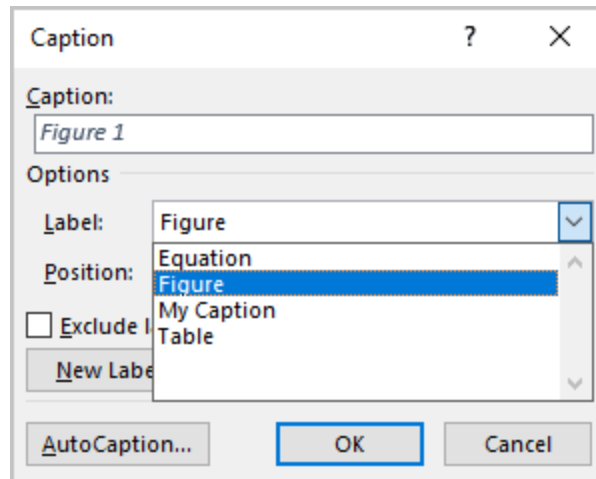
- **Figure** (selected by default),

- **Equation** – see how to create captions for equations,

- **Table** – see how to create captions for tables,

- Another label (in this example, *My Caption*) was created using the **New Label...** button (see how to create a new label below).

Note: You may need to create a custom label according to the requirements. Some examples:

0.   If you have to follow the requirements such as the **MLA** (**Modern Language Association**) style, you need to use an abbreviation *Fig.* instead of a pre-defined *Figure* (e.g., *"As shown in Fig. 7"*).

1.   The **Chicago** style uses the word *Example* rather than *Figure* to identify samples of written music in a text (e.g., *"As shown in Example 7"*).

Remember, each type of object you label will be numbered sequentially within its group.

o   From the **Position** dropdown list, select one of the options:
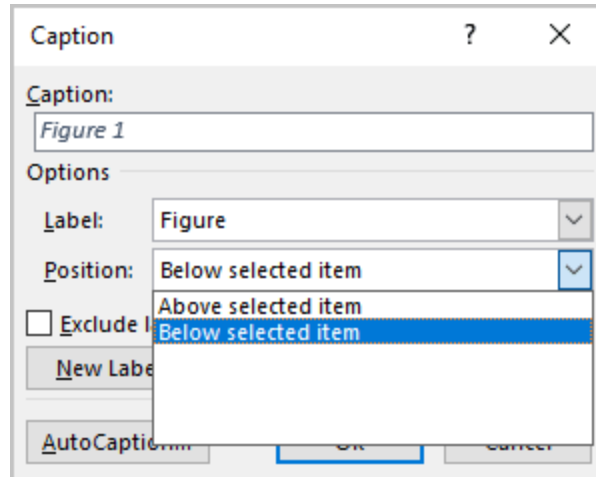
0. **Below selected item** (selected by default for the **Figure** label), or
1. **Above selected item** (selected by default for the **Table** label).

Notes:

0. The captions are usually located under the figures.
1. Some requirements, such as the **APA** (**American Psychological Association**) style, recommend placing captions above figures.

Exclude label from caption

● Select the **Exclude label from caption** check box if you don't need to add the label to the caption:
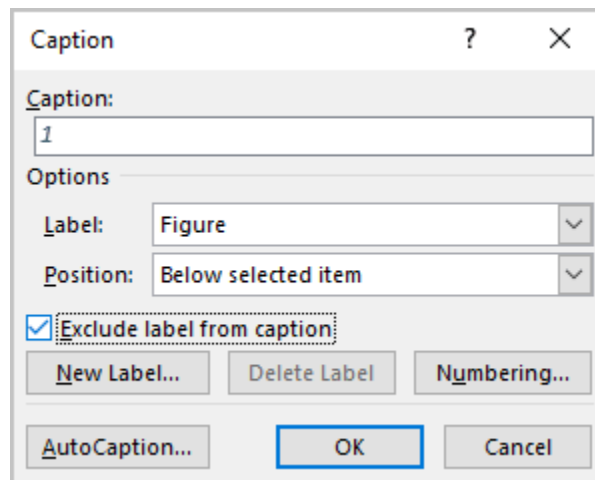
Some requirements (**MLA** and **Chicago** styles) recommend using the lowercase word *figure* (if it is not the first word in the sentence) instead of the automatically added *Figure* in Word cross-references.

When you insert a cross-reference in the text using the option **Entire caption** or **Only label and number** (see how to use cross-references in Word for more details), Word adds the capitalized label and number. You can see it in the Caption field of the **Caption** dialog box. E.g., *"As shown in Figure 7"* or *"As shown in Figure 7 Masha in a new outfit"*.

If the **Exclude label from caption** option is checked, Word adds the number without the label to the cross-reference. So, you need to type the word *figure* in the text (as required) and insert a cross-reference without the label (e.g., *"As shown in figure 7"*).

Add a new label

- Click the **New Label...** button to create a new label:
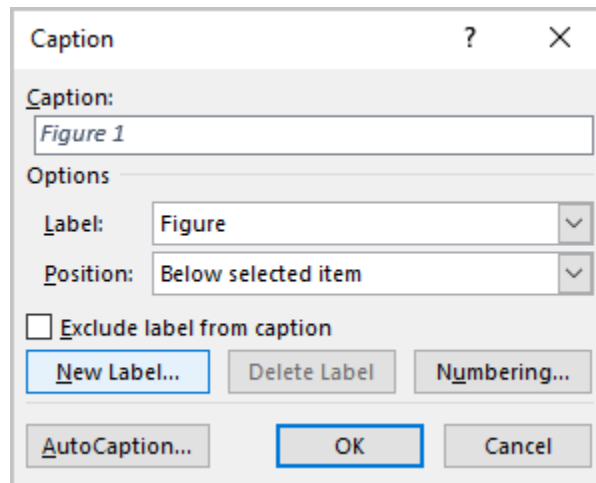
In the **New Label** dialog box, type a new label name:
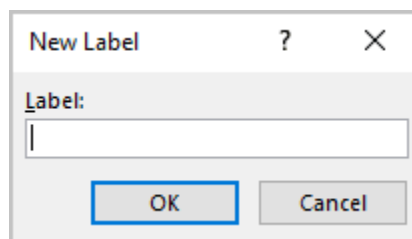
Note: See also how to delete a custom label.

Modify caption numbering

- Click the **Numbering...** button if you want to change any of the numbering options:
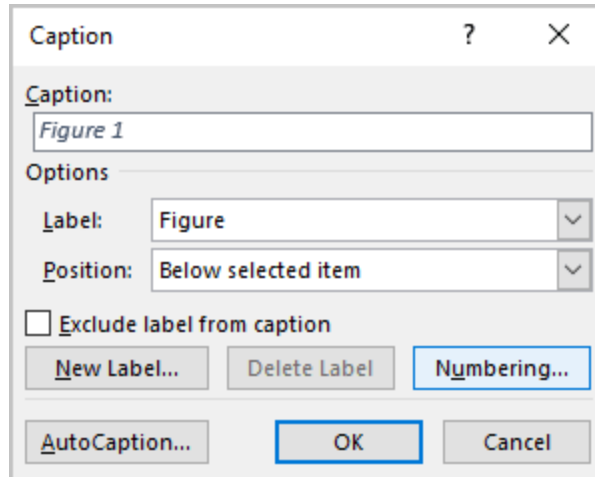
In the **Caption Numbering** dialog box:
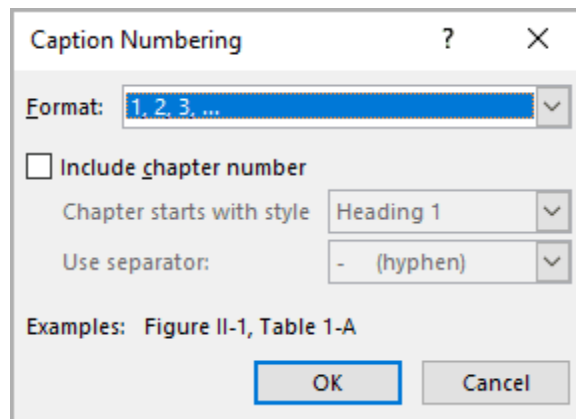
- o In the **Format** dropdown list, select the numbering format you prefer:
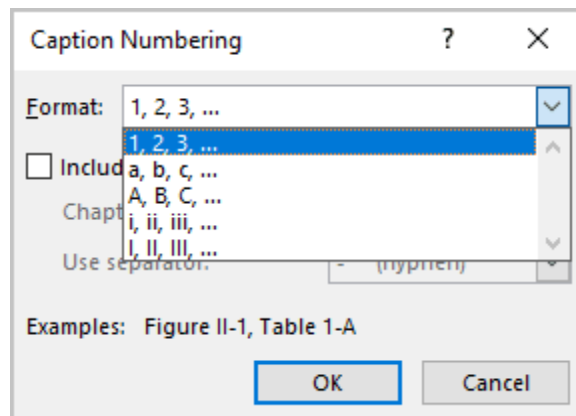
- o Select the **Include chapter number** check box to include the chapter number in the figure caption number. If you select this option, two more options will appear:

- From the **Chapter starts with style** dropdown list, select the heading level you need to include in the caption:
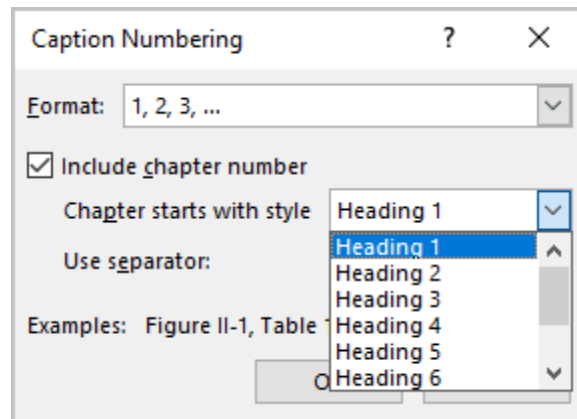

- In the **Use separator** dropdown list, select the punctuation you want to insert between the chapter number and the figure number:
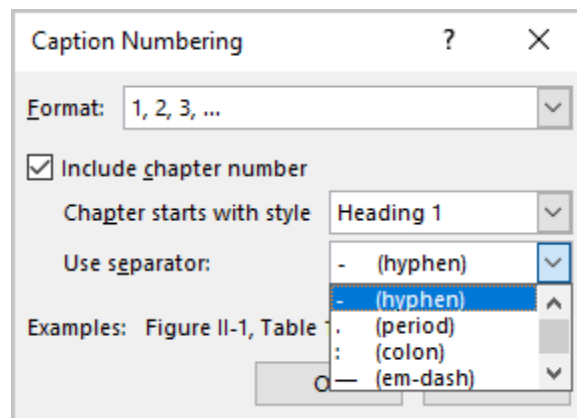
- At the bottom of the dialog box, see how your choices will look in the **Examples** section. E.g., *"Figure 2.7"* means the seventh figure in chapter 2.
- Click the **OK** button.

Add a description

- To add the text of your caption, click after the figure number and enter your text. E.g.:
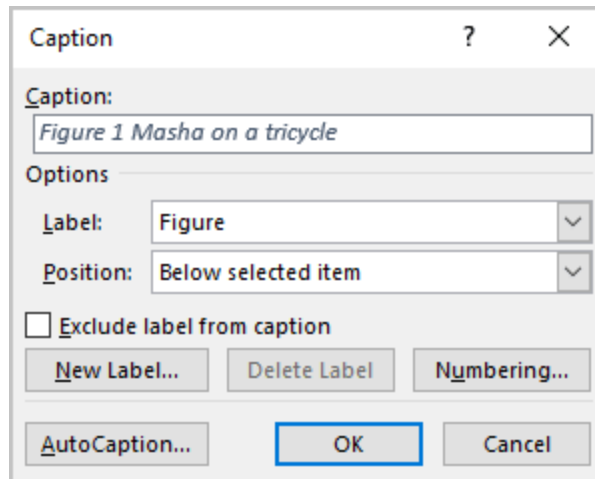
Notes:

1. The caption is a short description of the object, indicating what it illustrates without reading anything else in the text.
2. There is no official guideline for the length of this description. It may include additional information such as definitions of symbols, source citations, copyright statements, explanations of measurement units, etc.
3. According to most requirements, if the caption for figures contains a complete sentence, it should end with a period. The period after the number is optional.

Using an AutoCaption

See Adding captions with AutoCaption.

Group a figure and its caption

According to all requirements, a figure and its caption should appear on the same page. Unfortunately, Word inserts captions without linking them to specific objects. A caption is like a separate paragraph that you can format to keep lines and paragraphs together, but this doesn't help if you move an object. If you have a floating picture (pictures with the wrapping text options), you can see that paragraph with a caption moves separately from the picture.

To move objects with their caption as a single block, you need to *group* them. To group a figure and its caption, do the following:

1. Select the figure.

2. Make sure one of the **With Text Wrapping** choices is selected (see Text wrapping in the Word document):
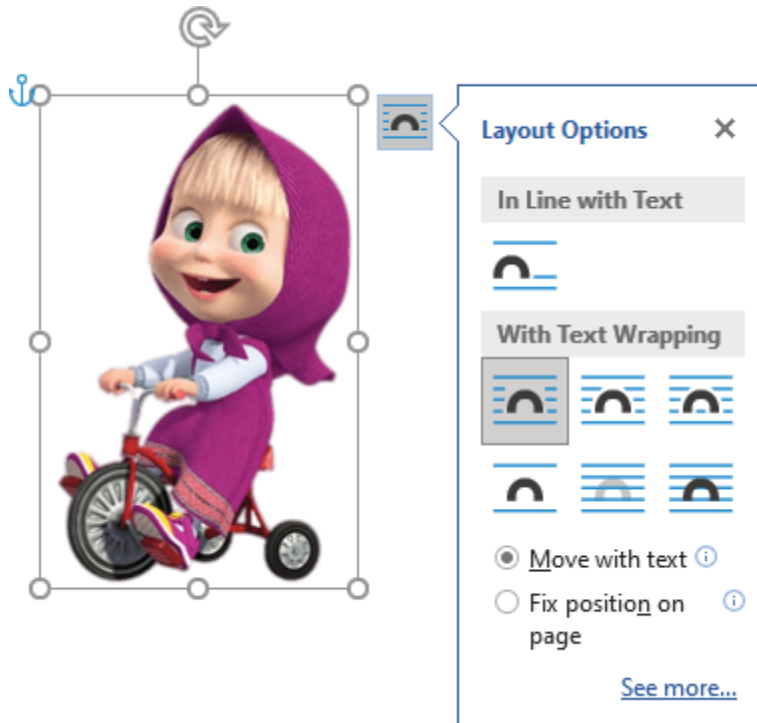
Note: Word groups with text only floating objects. So, you should do this step before you insert your caption. If you have a caption already, copy its text to the **Clipboard**, delete it, do this step, then re-add a caption.

3. Add a caption using the steps of the section Insert a caption for figures above.

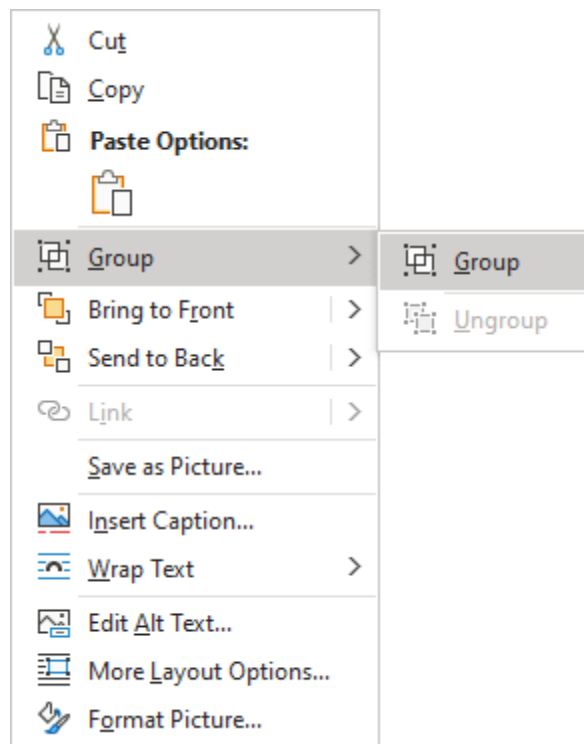4. Select a caption, then hold down the **Shift** key and select the figure:

Figure 1 Masha on a tricycle

5. Do one of the following:

- On the **Shape Format** tab, in the **Arrange** group, click the **Group** command:

- Right-click one of the objects and choose **Group -> Group** from the popup menu:

Word puts a single box around the objects instead of separate boxes around each object:

Figure 1 Masha on a tricycle

After these steps, a text should flow around the figure and its caption, like one block. Also, the figure and its caption will stay together if you move them elsewhere on the page or document.

Edit or modify a caption

Microsoft Word creates caption numbers as [fields](#).

Figure { SEQ Figure * ARABIC } Masha in a new outfit

See [how to turn on or turn off highlighting of fields in a Word document](#) to display all fields in a document with a gray background.

- **Labels**:

  You can change the label if necessary. **Be careful!** Word for Microsoft 365 will:

    o   Update the reference if available,
    o   Not create a separate numbering since it does not perceive changes as a new label.
- **Numbers**:

  DO NOT edit caption numbers! If you change a number:

    o   For non-critical changes, Word will update it, and you will lose your changes,
    o   Otherwise, the caption number may stop updating automatically.

- **Text**:

    To *add* or *modify* a caption text, click on it and change what you need, like in a regular paragraph.

Do not forget to format a caption according to the requirements you use!

Delete a caption and an unnecessary label

If you need to remove some caption, select the full caption (full line or several lines) and press **Delete**. **Do not forget to [update fields](#) in the document!**

To *remove* the unnecessary label, do the following:

1. Open the **Caption** dialog box.

2. In the **Label** dropdown list, select the label you want to remove.

3. Click the **Delete Label** to remove a custom label:
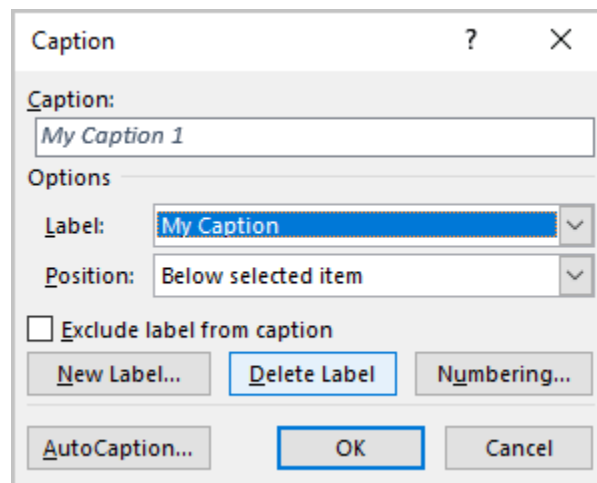
Note: You can't delete pre-defined labels: *Equation*, *Figure*, and *Table*.

Update caption numbering

Word doesn't always keep up with changes in a document. Word automatically updates the caption numbers when you insert a new caption. After deleting or moving a caption, you should manually update a captions numbering.

To *update fields* in the document, select the **entire** document by clicking **Ctrl+A**, and do one of the following:

- Press **F9**,
- Right-click on any of the fields and select **Update Field** in the popup menu:
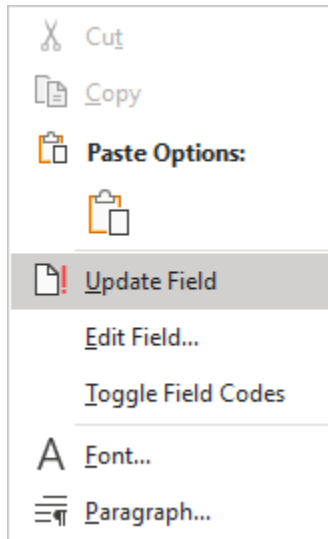
Note: Word doesn't update a numbering in text boxes as in shapes! So, if you have floating pictures, their numbering doesn't be updated until:

- You select every text box one-by-one and update numbering in each of them,
- Use a macro to update all fields (we don't recommend macros due to security reasons),
- Update all fields by using the following workaround:

    1. On the **File** tab, click the **Options** button:
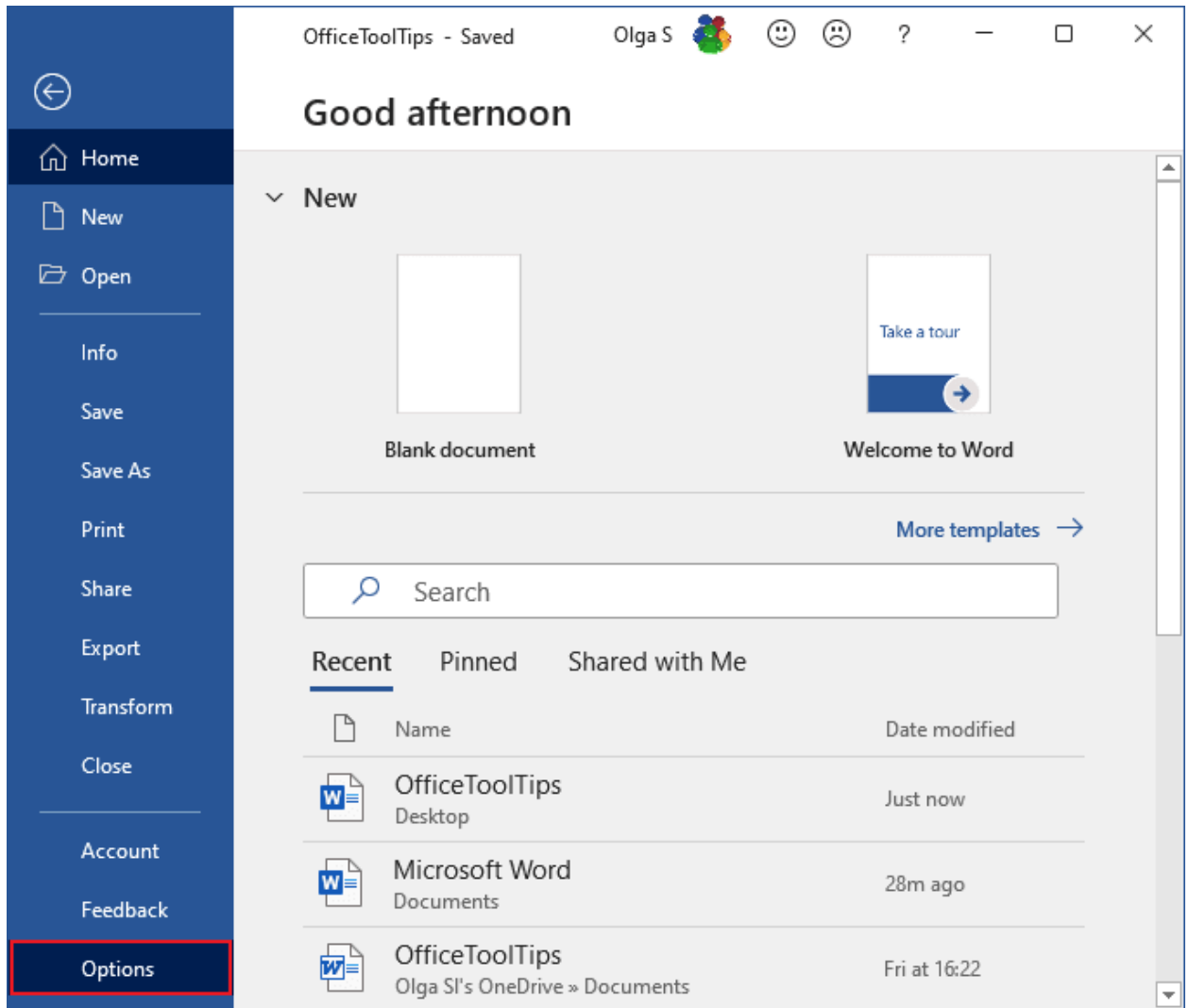
2. In the **Word Options** dialog box, on the **Display** tab, under **Printing options**, select the **Update fields before printing** check box, then click **OK** to close the dialog box:

Word Options dialog box showing Display section with Printing options. "Update fields before printing" is checked and highlighted with a red box.
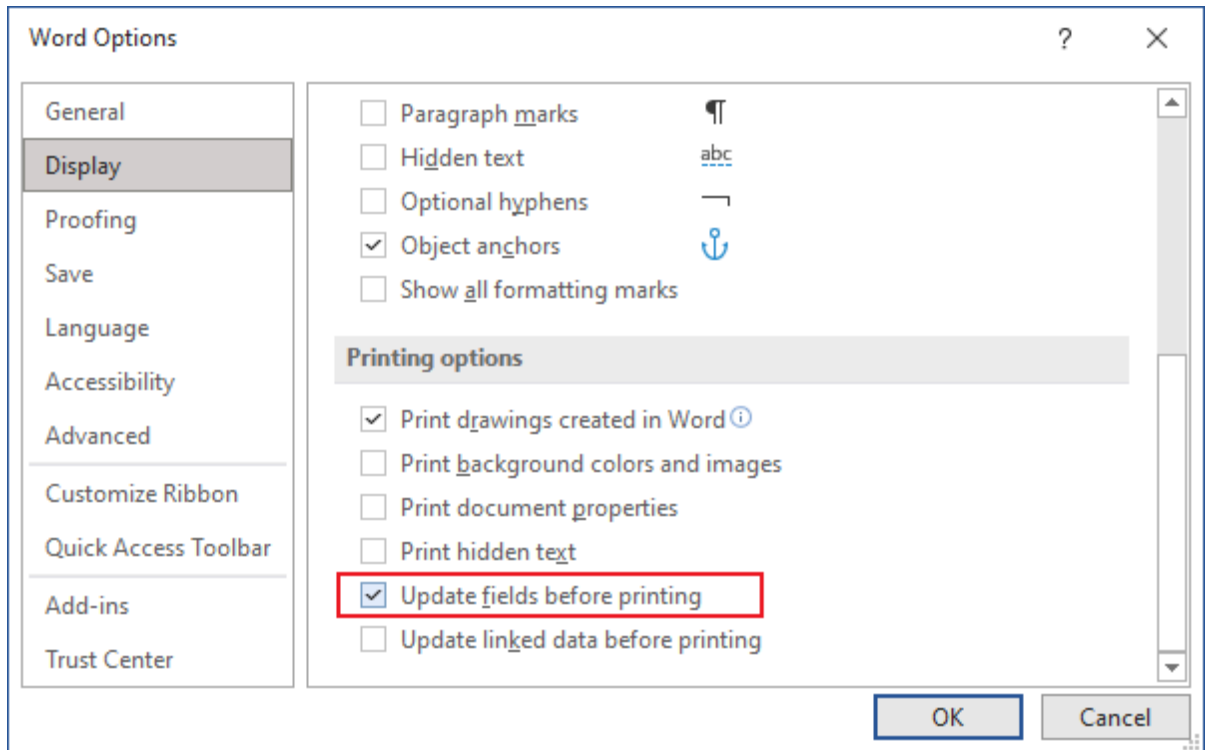
3. On the **File** tab, click **Print** (or press **Ctrl+P**):
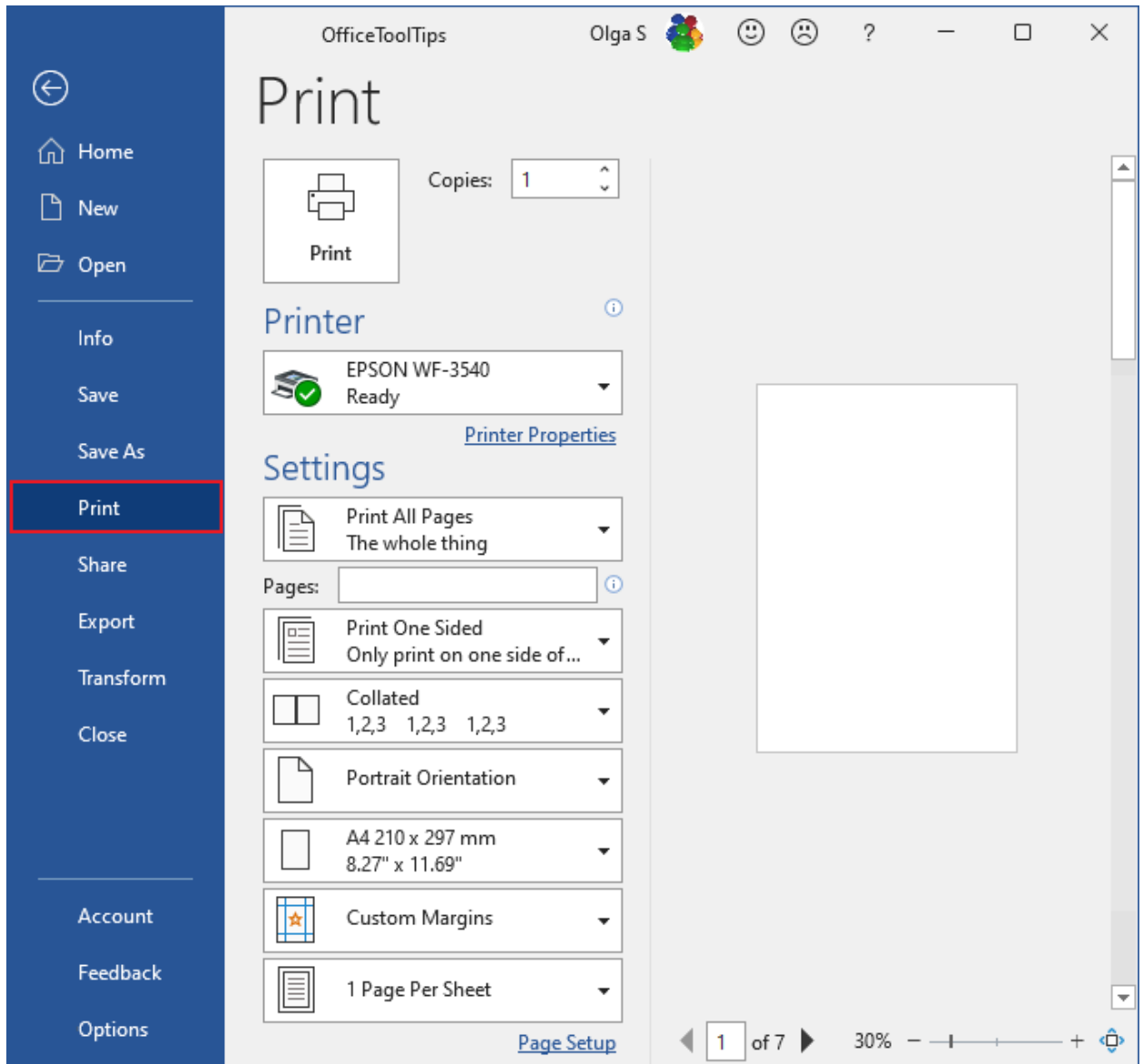
You don't need to print the document – only tell Word that you want to print!

4. Return to the document view by clicking the **Return** button:

All fields in the document should be updated.

So, your captions will be automatically updated, and you can be sure that the numbering and references are correct. **We strongly recommend checking a document at least visually after changes!**

How to create Table of Figures and List of Tables

Some requirements demand listing figures, tables, and other visual objects at the end of a document. They are named **List of Figures** and **List of Tables**. Microsoft Word offers the functionality named **Table of Figures** that helps generate and update a list of the captions for pictures, charts, graphs, diagrams, slides, photos, or other illustrations of the document, along with the numbers of the pages on which the captions appear.

How to create numbers and titles for tables

Tables are visual displays of data arranged in rows and columns. Table cells contain numbers, text, or a combination of numbers and text. Some cells can include images, symbols, links, and other objects. See how to create and modify tables in Word.

How to insert automatic numbers, captions, and cutlines for photos in Word

Unlike most images, pictures, and charts captions, photo captions (also often called cutlines) have multiple lines of text. Many publications share the title of the photo (caption) and a more detailed description (cutline). The terms **Captions** and **Cutlines** are often used interchangeably, particularly in magazines.