

Floating Figures and Tables in Microsoft Word

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Caution: The procedures described here are NOT EASY OR RELIABLE. If you use them, check your document repeatedly, after every minor format change, to make sure your floating figures or tables have not disappeared or been relocated to an unsuitable place!

1. The Concept

In well-printed books, figures and tables do not interrupt the text. Instead, they “float” to the top or bottom of the page or appear on pages by themselves. In the text, they are referred to by number.

In L^AT_EX, the *figure* and *table* environments automatically float; that’s what they’re for. In Microsoft Word, you can create floating figures and tables, but it is a considerably more complicated process.

2. Drawing canvas and text box

In Word, you *can* make a picture or table float by itself, but in that case, the caption does not float with it. Instead, I recommend the following procedure.

You will create a **drawing canvas**, which is a potentially floating block of material, and within it a **text box**, which is like a short Word document. Within the text box, you can place tables, figures, and any other kind of material, along with their captions.

Every drawing canvas is **anchored** to the text at a particular point. By default, it interrupts the text there. However, you can make it float to the nearest top of the page. (It will move to the appropriate page if you move the text that contains it.)

An example of a floating figure appears above. It is anchored to the text right here →. But it floats to the top of the page.

3. Creating a drawing canvas

Go to the place in the text where you want the floating figure or table to be anchored.

Choose **Insert, Text Box**.

You will see a large block labeled “Create your drawing here.”

Drag the mouse cursor diagonally within this box to create a text box. As soon as you’ve created the text box, you can drag its edges around to adjust its size.

You will find life easier if you **do not move the edges of the text box all the way to the edges of the canvas**, at least not immediately. (Move them to within about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.) You need to be able to right-click on the edges of the canvas and of the box separately.

Also, it is advantageous to **go ahead and put the contents in your text box** before you make it float. Do that now. You can put anything in a text box that you can put into a Word document.

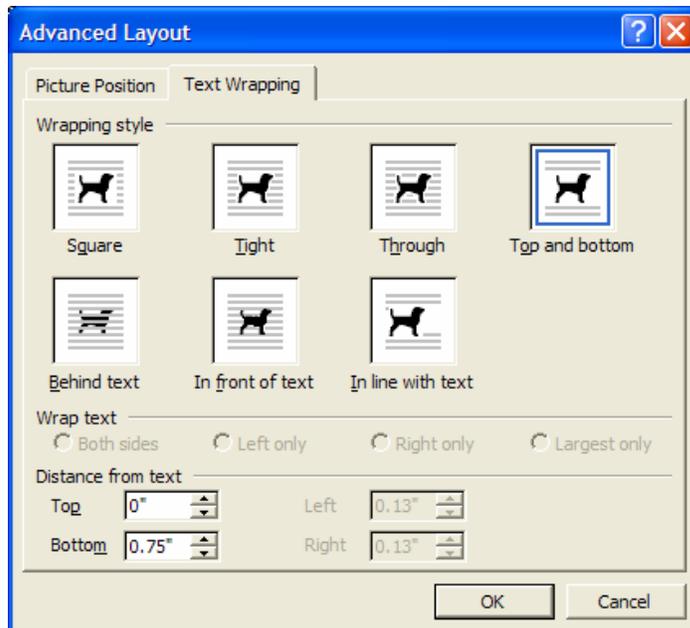
When you start putting in content, you will need to **change the size of the drawing canvas**. To do this, right-click on the edge of the canvas (which is outside the edge of the box) and choose “Show Drawing Canvas Toolbar.” On the toolbar, choose “Scale Drawing” and you will be able to drag edges of the drawing canvas and thereby resize it. When you do, your text box will stay the same distance from the edges, so you may need to adjust it too.

To make adjustments to the text box, right-click on *its* border and choose Format Text Box. In particular, to get rid of its border line, choose Colors & Lines, then change the line color to No Line. (It is handy, though, to leave the border line in place until you’re through making other changes; it will help you see that everything is working correctly.)

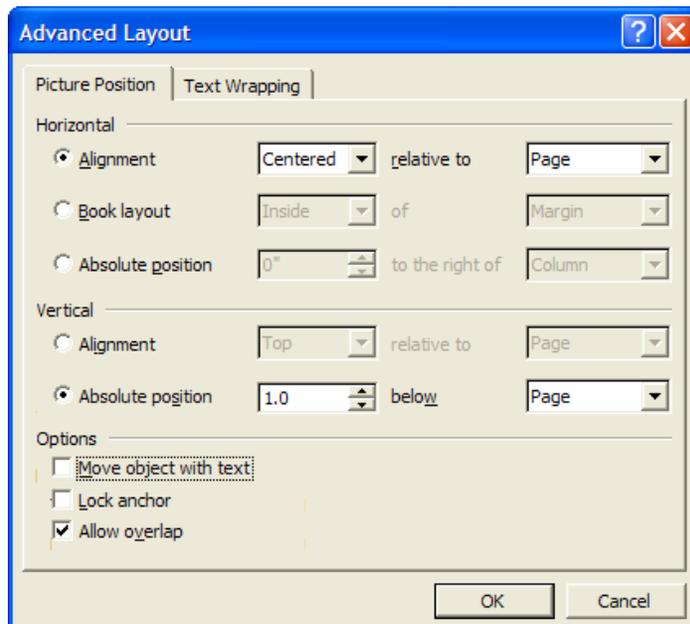
4. Making it float

To make your drawing canvas float to the top of the page, do the following:

- (1) Right-click on its edge and choose **Format Drawing Canvas**.
- (2) Choose **Layout, Advanced**, and on the Text Wrapping tab choose **Top and Bottom**, and set **0.75 inches** separation from the text at the bottom:



- (3) Go to the **Picture Position** tab and choose **Horizontal, Center of Page**, and **Vertical, 1.0 inch from top of page**. *That establishes its floating position.*



There! You have created a floating object.

5. Final Adjustments

Now is a good time to remove the box around the picture and to scale the drawing canvas in exactly the way already described. Your biggest challenge will be making sure there is neither too much nor too little space between floating figures and the text beneath them.

6. To Make it Occupy the Whole Page

One of the most glaring omissions in Word is that it does not support full-page floats, i.e., floating pictures or tables each of which appears on a page by itself, with text flowing smoothly from the previous to the following page, corresponding to floats with the [p] option in L^AT_EX.

This is discussed at:

http://groups.google.com/group/microsoft.public.word.pagelayout/browse_thread/thread/393c9da48d91b987/55aa36e41986c414?lnk=st&q=full+page+float+in+microsoft+word&rnum=1#55aa36e41986c414

The only way to get a full-page figure or table is to make the page breaks manually and insert the figure or table (non-floating).

However, Word will happily accommodate floats that leave room for just a couple of lines of text beneath them. *Proofread carefully* – it is possible for a float to *hide* lines of text in this situation.