Tablemaking 101:
Word tables for publications and presentations

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Genetics Werkbespreking

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Making nice tables

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Remove
to improve
the **data tables** edition

Why make a table?

Present a lot of similar / connected data

Contrast SOME of this data to the rest

"Voor de data liefhebber..."
   – To satisfy interested parties

Table, figure or description?

TABLE	FIGURE	WORDS
• Show many related values in a small space • Compare/contrast values • Show presence/absence of specific characteristics	• Show trends/patterns/ relationships • Summarize results • Present an explanation visually	• Limited data • Table would have two or fewer columns • Data is peripheral to study

Adapted from:

Tables in manuscripts

Should be the core results

Should demonstrate or support assertions

Otherwise?
– they should probably be supplements

Referring to tables in manuscripts

As shown in table 1 …

You've constructed the table to demonstrate this point

… as seen in table 1.

Feature/process/phenomenon can be seen in the table

… not every patient responded to the new treatment (table 1).

Sends reader to table that demonstrates this point

… once these corrections were made some factors no longer reached significance (see adjusted p-values in table 2).

Sends reader to an example of this observation

Why fix tables for submission?

"Journal just does it anyway, right?"

Maybe. But you have to get accepted first.

Many journals don't have big budgets for formatting

Shows layout editor what you intend
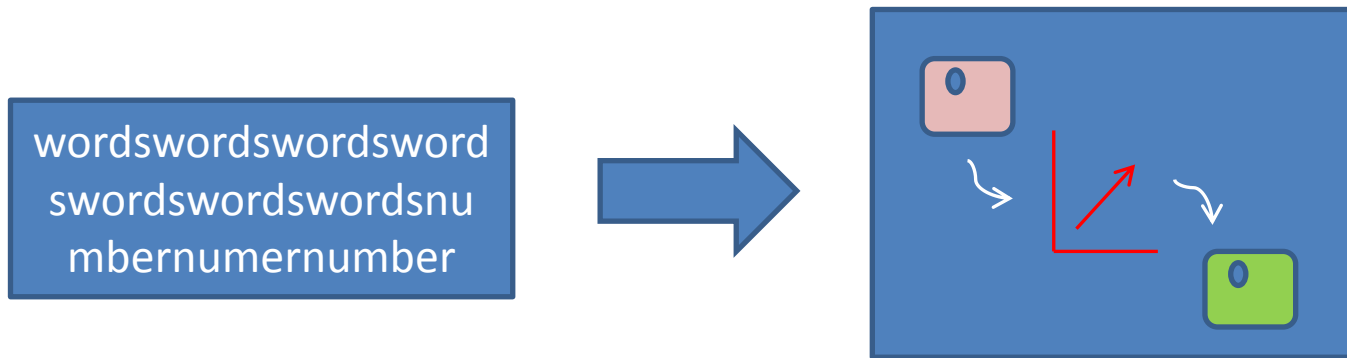
Supplemental tables don't get edited at all

Tables in a presentation

Must be only way to present the information

Do you really need to make this table?

If you can show it in a figure or diagram…

MAKE THAT FIGURE or DIAGRAM!

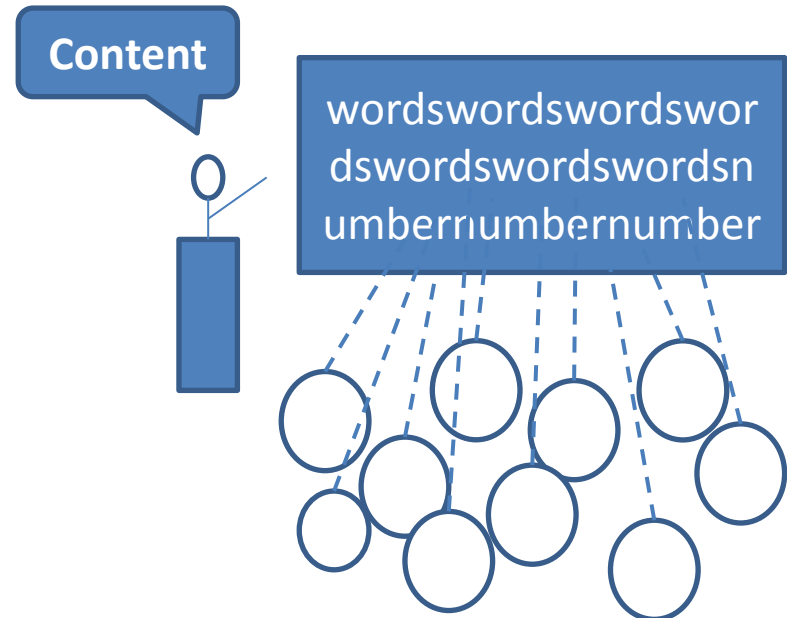wordswordswordsword swordswordswordsnu mbernumernumber

Why shouldn't I show a table?
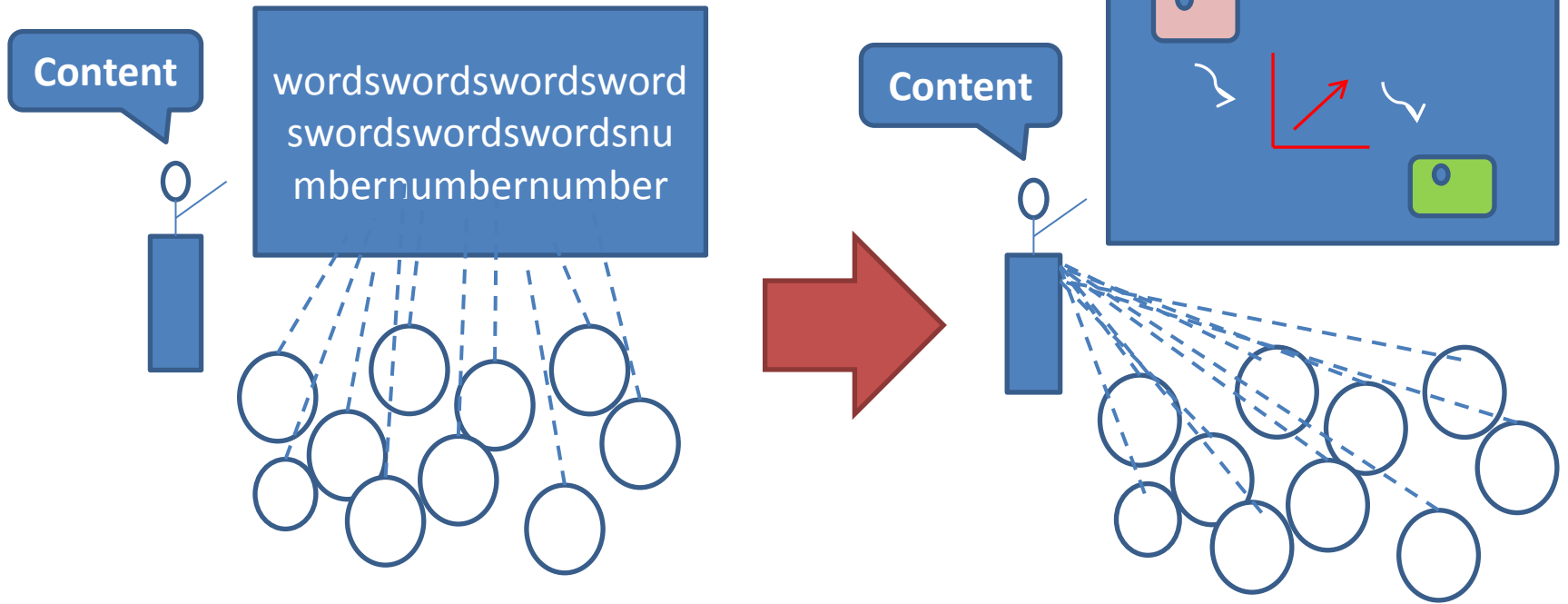
Audience will try to read all text on your slides

- Even if you tell them not to

And if they're reading?

- They're not listening

In fewer words…

Table problems I see all the time

- Crowding
- Poor or confusing data alignment
- Use of the space bar to align values or words
- Columns of un-necessary data
- Too many horizontal lines

How do I fix them?

Check orientation
    Portrait vs landscape?
    In manuscripts – repeat headings on each page?

Take out all lines
    Put back one by one
    Keep only the minimum
        Minimum = vertical lines above and below headers and at bottom
    Allow text alignment to guide the eye instead

Adjust alignment & column widths
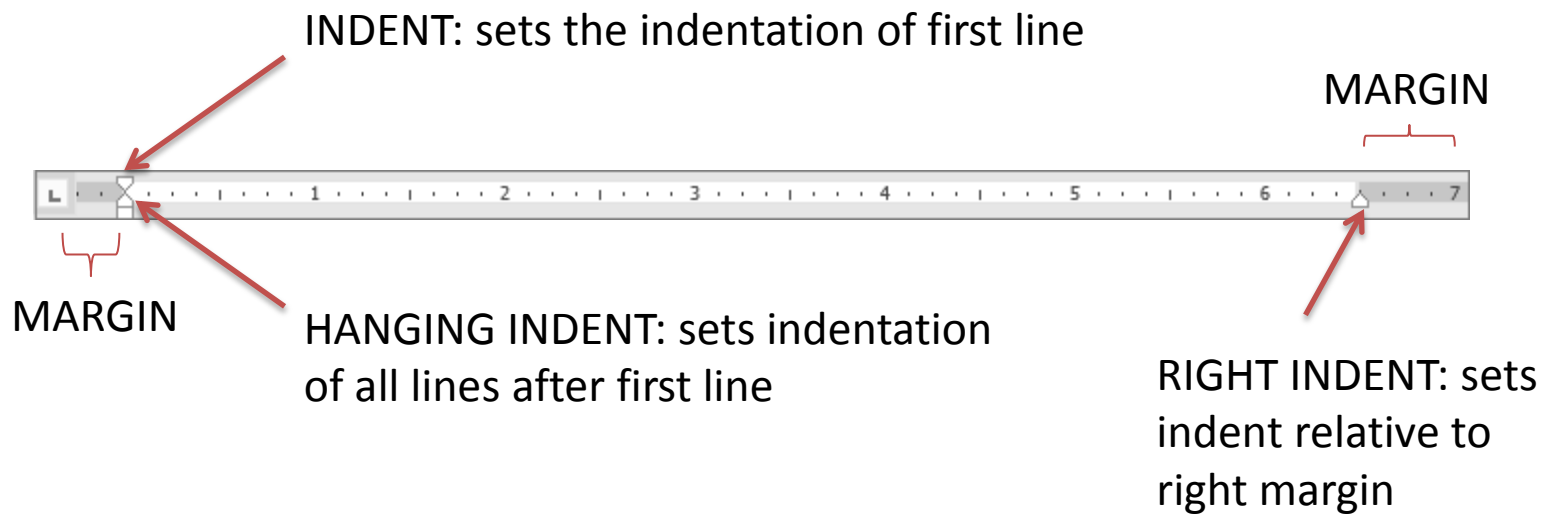   Align text left
    Align numbers right
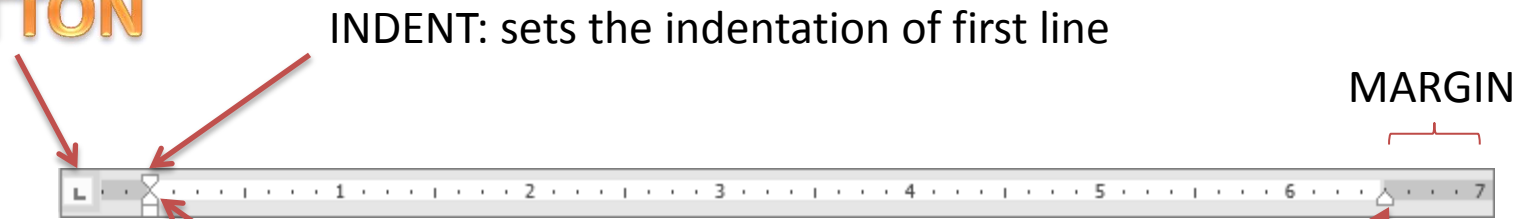   Adjust column width to fit data width
    Align headings with contents
    Use tabs instead of spaces to align text/numbers

One ruler to Word them all!

INDENT: sets the indentation of first line

MARGIN

MARGIN

HANGING INDENT: sets indentation of all lines after first line

RIGHT INDENT: sets indent relative to right margin

Real sophistication!

TAB BUTTON

INDENT: sets the indentation of first line

MARGIN

MARGIN

HANGING INDENT: sets indentation of all lines after first line

RIGHT INDENT: sets indent relative to right margin

If you click on the TAB BUTTON

Left Tab   Text is aligned to the right of the tab stop.

Center Tab   Text is centered as you type.

Right Tab   Text is right aligned and extends to the left.

Decimal Tab   Numbers are aligned to the left of the decimal. You can't use the **Decimal Tab** to align numbers around a different character, such as a hyphen or an ampersand symbol.

Bar Tab   Text isn't positioned with a **Bar Tab**. Instead, a vertical bar is inserted at the tab position.

First Line Indent   Located at the top of the ruler, the **First Line Indent** lets you indent the text in the first line of a paragraph.

Hanging Indent   Located at the bottom of the ruler, the **Hanging Indent** lets you indent the text in the second line of the paragraph and all lines thereafter.

Golden rules for vertical alignment

Text in columns should be left aligned

We read left to right

Numbers in columns should be right aligned

Larger/smaller values easily identified

Decimal values? Same significant figures

Use the ruler and tabs to align column contents

Headings should be aligned to their column content

Rules for horizontal alignment

Use horizontal alignment to guide the eye

Rather than horizontal lines

Golden rules for presentations

Use minimum text/data necessary

Allow for whitespace

Leave borders to account for projector variations

Projector + screen setups can vary

Don't want important information cut off

Test out presentations on projector in advance

Crisp on laptop may get washed out/fuzzy when projected

Check settings when you project

Editor pet peeves

Increasing use of left adjusted titles

    Centered titles look better

Do think about color blind viewers/readers

Gray text

    Both Jackie and I find this hard to read

Conclusion

Learn to format tables

    Editor time is a limited resource

    Students - you can take these skills with you

I am willing to do short workshops

    30 mins of tailored training for small groups

Resources

https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Set-clear-or-remove-tab-stops-06969e0f-2c81-4fe0-8df5-88f18087a8e0

http://www.editage.com/insights/tips-on-effective-use-of-tables-and-figures-in-research-papers

http://www.somersault1824.com/tips-for-designing-scientific-figures-for-color-blind-readers/