

# Preparing Tables for JALT's Publications

One of the biggest problems we face when working with writers' manuscripts is dealing with poorly laid out tables. For this reason, we have decided to set a common standard for submissions—this means that submissions will only be accepted with tables created within a word-processing programme, and not within other software (such as Microsoft Excel).

To help writers, we have created this simple guide to creating tables. If you want to learn more about creating tables, try an Internet search such as “creating tables in Word.”

## How much table formatting should I do?

When a manuscript completes the editing process, it is then sent to a design company for layout. During layout, ALL the formatting is stripped out of the tables, leaving just the text and the “skeleton.”

- What you *should* do: Put all the text in the correct cells, and all the cells in the correct locations. Simple and clean is best!
- What you *should not* do:
  - Format any of the text in the cells with anything other than *italics* or **bold** styling
  - Align text with anything other than left, right, or centre alignment (NEVER use multiple spacebar clicks to align text!!!)
  - Create tables inside tables, or separate tables that are part of the main table. If you create separate tables, each must have its own title.

## Before you start

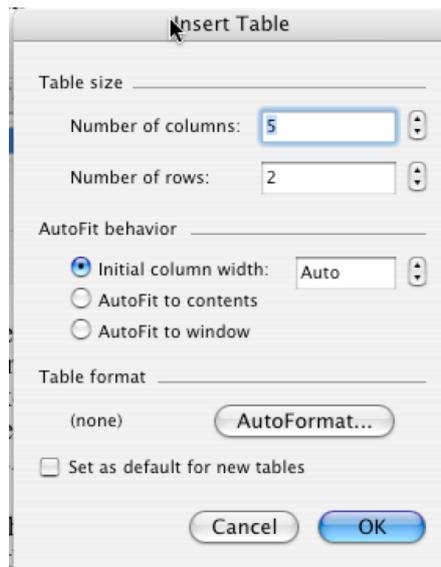
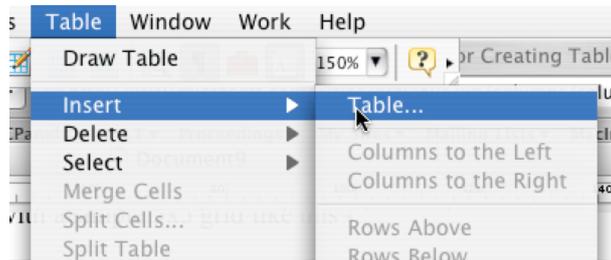
1. Prepare all your data beforehand so that you have a clear picture of what you want to create.
2. Until you are accustomed to creating tables, it is a good idea to sketch out the table you want on a piece of paper. Keep your table as simple as possible! If it becomes too complex, consider splitting the table up into a number of smaller tables.
3. Make sure that you understand these four terms:
  - a. Cell: an individual “square” within the table
  - b. Row: a horizontal line of cells
  - c. Column: a vertical line of cells
  - d. Merge: when you join a number of cells together

## Creating your table

The first step is to calculate how many cells you will need. So, if you need to create a table that looks like this:


You actually have to start with a simple 5x5 grid like this

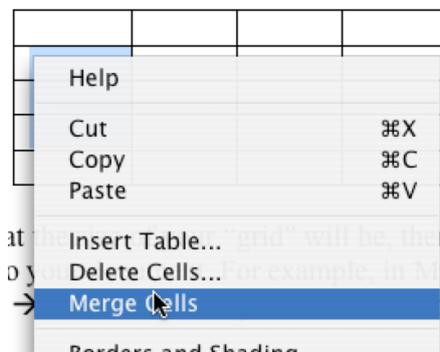

Once you know what the size of your “grid” will be, then use your software’s **Table** menu to insert it into your document. For example, in Microsoft Word, choose “Table” → “Insert” → “Table,” then input the number of rows and columns you want.



When your grid is in place, you can begin merging cells to create your final table. To do this, select the cells you wish to join together by clicking in one with your mouse, then dragging through to the other(s) you want to merge.

A screenshot of a 5x5 grid. The first column of the grid is highlighted in blue. A mouse cursor is positioned over the bottom cell of the first column, indicating the process of selecting or merging cells.

Then, keeping the cursor over the selected cells, click your mouse's right button (on single-button Macs, use "Control-Click") and select "Merge" from the menu that appears.



Now that your table is created, it is simply a matter of inserting the data by typing or pasting it in. You can navigate between cells using your mouse, the TAB key, or the arrow keys on your keyboard.

Once the text is in place, check that there are no unnecessary empty cells. If there are empty rows or columns, select them the same as when merging cells, then choose "Delete" from either your Table menu or your mouse's right-button menu. Be careful not to delete cells with data in (though if you do, you can use the Edit → Undo command to go back as many steps as you need).

Finally, do any minor formatting that is necessary, add a title such as:

**Table 1**  
*Responses to My Questionnaire*

...above the table. Save your document, and your table is complete. Remember to plan your table carefully, make it as simple as possible, and you cannot go wrong!

If you have further queries, please contact the editors.