Karlen Communications
Track Changes and Comments in Word

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Introduction

This topic covers the use of Track changes, Comments and Compare Documents as accessible editing tools for those of us who use the keyboard or who are using the keyboard in combination with adaptive technology such as a screen reader. This topic was part of a series of webinars done for EASI (Equal Access to Information and Software). There is a sample document that is write protected attached to this tutorial to explore. There are also two sample documents to use if you want to test the Compare Documents tools.

Track Changes

As of Office 2013, there is a new way of viewing Track Changes in a document that is called "Simple Markup." Unfortunately because simple markup shows only a vertical line in the margin next to a change, adaptive technology can't see it and therefore simple markup is not accessible to those of us who use Track Changes with a screen reader or Text-to-Speech tool.

Figure 1 Simple Markup in Review Ribbon and document sample.

The best way for someone using adaptive technology to use Track Changes is to "Show All Markup." The following image is of the same text as in the previous image but showing all markup. Adaptive technology is able to find and render all markup.
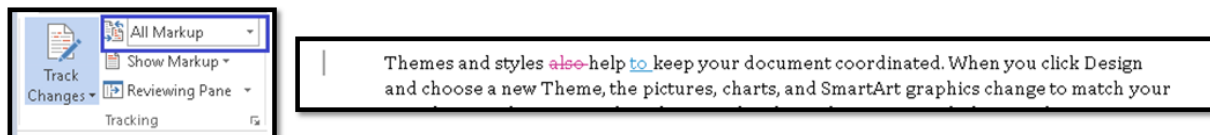

Figure 2 Track changes showing All Markup in Review Ribbon and document sample.

To verify that the option to show all markup is the one that is being used when you turn on Track Changes, Press Ctrl + Shift + E to turn on Track Changes and then press Alt + R, T, D which will take you to the Track changes drop down list to choose which view of the document you see. The choices are Simple markup, All Markup, No Markup or Original (to show the original document with no markup). The default is Simple Markup.
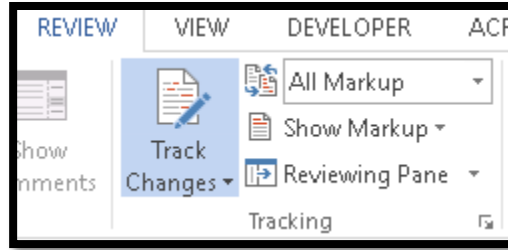
Figure 3 Track Changes Group in Review Ribbon showing Track Changes turned on.

As soon as you turn Track Changes on, any keyboard command you perform related to editing a document will result in markup. For example if you press the Spacebar or Enter key, a new space or paragraph will be inserted and there will be a mark in the margin to show the change.

If you press commands to access the Ribbons or to save the document, those commands are not reflected in any part of the document because they are not edits. However, if you insert an image or use the Ribbons to add or edit anything in the document, those will be reflected in the document as a change or edit.

You can have two documents or more open at a time with only one of them having Track changes turned on. The other documents are not affected in any way. Track Changes will only be present in the document in which you have Track Changes turned on.

Track Changes Options

By default Track changes are marked in red in the document. I have trouble seeing the red and since Comments are also marked in red, I usually go in and change the colour used to show Track Changes. This affects my version of Word only and when the document is opened on another person's computer, the colour options chosen by that person are used unless they leave the defaults for "By Author" in the Advanced Track Changes Settings.

To access the Track Changes options, press Alt + R, letter O for the Review Ribbon, track changes Options. The keyboard is faster to use as the button for the Track changes Options dialog is small and may be difficult to target with a mouse.

You don't have to have Track Changes turned on in order to modify the Track Changes settings.
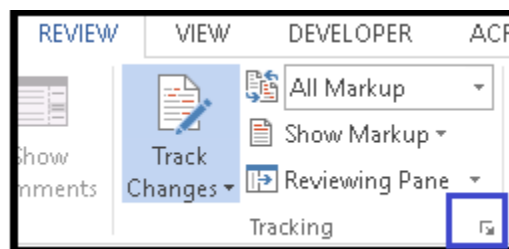

Figure 4 Track Changes Options button in the Tracking Group on the Review Ribbon.

The Track Changes Options dialog opens. This is the first set of options you can modify to suit your way of working with Track Changes.

The dialog starts with a series of check boxes:

- Alt + C to show Comments which is checked by default.

- Alt + letter I to show Ink which is checked by default.

- Alt + D to show Insertions and Deletions which is checked by default.

- Alt + F to show Formatting which is checked by default.

- Alt + H to show Highlighted Updates which is checked by default and not available for changes.

- Alt + letter O for Other Authors which is checked by default and not available for changes.

- Alt + T to show Pictures with Comments which is checked by default and will display the editor's Microsoft Account picture in the Comments balloon.

These behave as typical check boxes which means that using the keyboard commands listed above will move to the check box and either check or uncheck it depending on what state it was in when you started. You can Tab through the check boxes if you want to explore their default state and then use the Spacebar to either check or uncheck them.

I generally uncheck Ink if I'm not expecting anything from a digital pen and uncheck Formatting because I find it confusing. Sometimes I get a notification that formatting has changed even if I press the Enter key. This takes time from the real edits. Whether you choose to keep the formatting changes turned on or not will depend on how helpful you find them.

Pressing Alt + B will take you to the next setting which is "Balloons in All Markup view shows" which is a list box. The options are Revisions, Nothing or Comments and Formatting. My setting is to show Comments and Formatting but since I have formatting turned off, formatting will not appear in the balloons.

The next setting is to show or hide the Reviewing Pane. The default is off. The Reviewing Pane opens as the Revisions Pane.

I don't find the Revisions Pane particularly helpful as someone who uses a screen reader which is why I have it turned off. While you can use the keyboard to navigate through items in the Revisions Pane, the Revisions Pane is not accessible at this time (Word 2016).

I prefer to look at the revisions in the document. However, if you are not using a screen reader or Text-to-Speech tool you might find the Revisions Pane more helpful in isolating revisions.
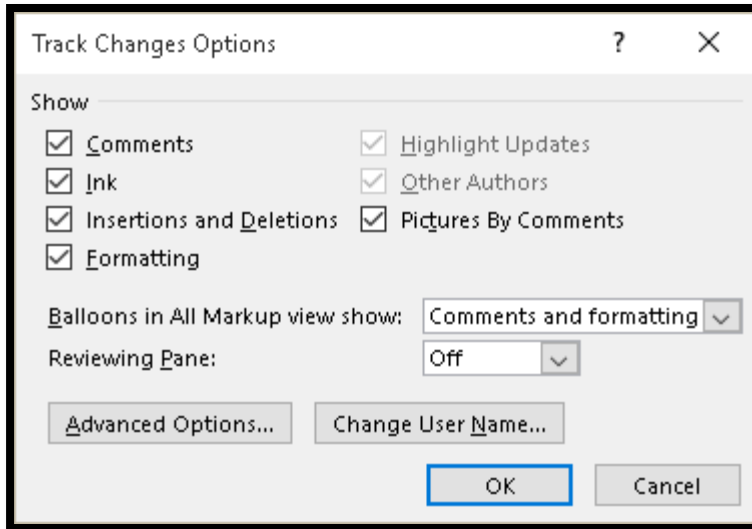
Figure 5 Track Changes Options dialog.

The last two settings are to access the Advanced Settings or to Change the User Name.

If you press Alt + N to Change User Name, you are taken to the Word Options dialog, General category where the information about the user (you) is housed. You can change your user name but be advised that this will change it globally in Office.

Once you change your user name or the user name, Tab to the OK button and press Enter to confirm your changes. You could also press Escape to dismiss the Word Options dialog if you accidentally launched it and haven't made any changes or don't want your changes confirmed.
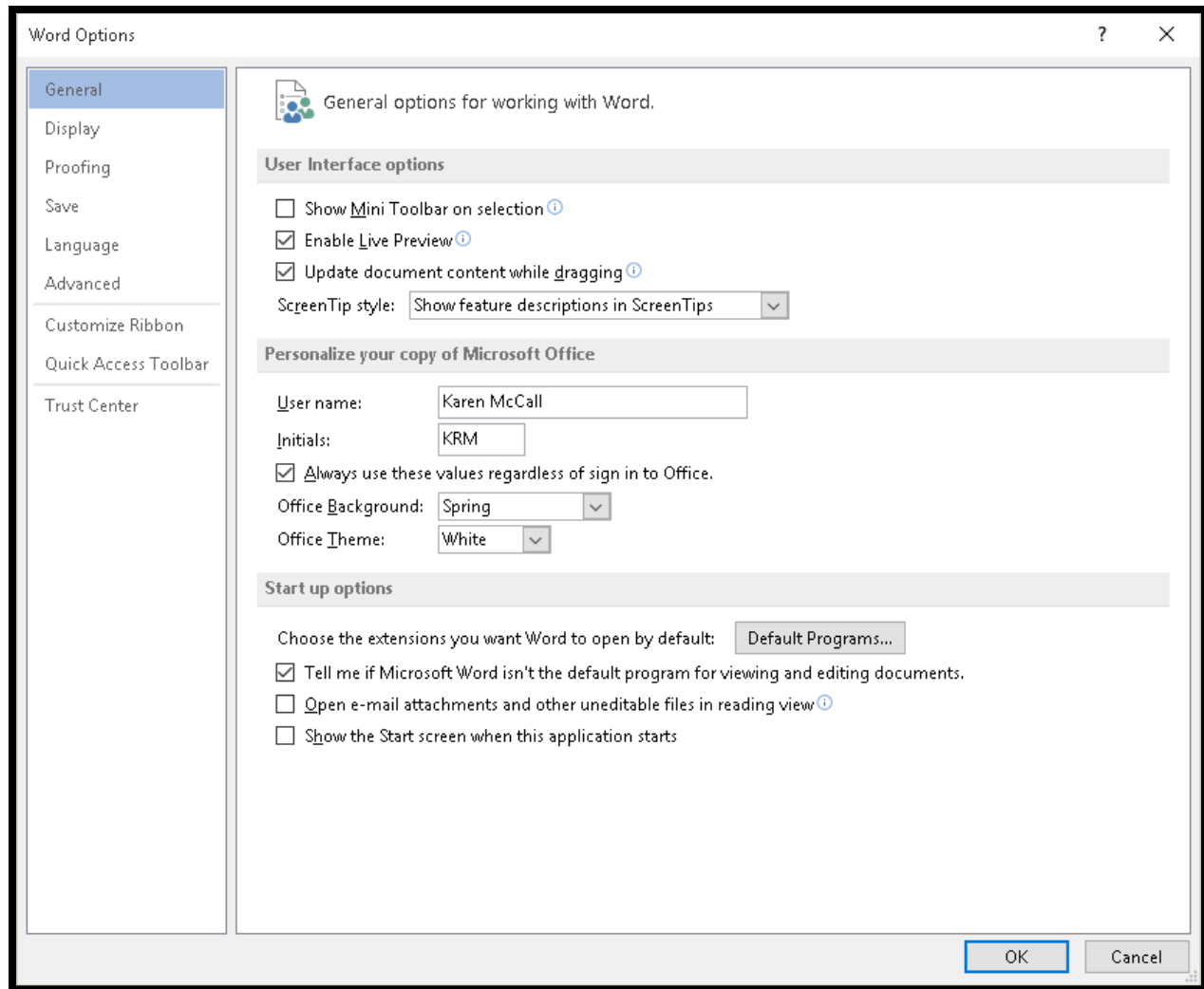
Figure 6 General settings in the Word Options dialog.

The Advanced Settings is where you can choose the colours for the various revisions to your documents. If you leave the default settings of "By Author," then the colour settings defined by the authors of edits will be the colours used. For example, I use Blue for my edits. If someone has changed the Insertions colour to Pink, then my edits will appear in Pink on their computer. If they leave the colour setting as "By Author" then my Blue revisions will be the colour seen on their computer.

Press Alt + A while in the Track Changes Options dialog to open the Advanced Track changes dialog.

To change the Marking settings in the Advanced Settings:

- Press Alt + letter I for Insertions. This is where focus is when you launch the Advanced Track Changes Options dialog. The default is Underline.

- Press Tab or Alt + C to move to the colour palette for the Insertions. The default is By Author.

- Press Tab or Alt + D for Deletions which is a list and the default is Strikethrough.

- Press Tab or Alt + C to move to the colour palette for Deletions. The default is By Author.

- Press Tab or Alt + A to move to the setting for Changed Lines which is a list. The default is to show changed lines in the outside border/margin.

- Press Tab or Alt + S for Comments which takes you to the Comments colour palette.

The next section is called Moves and are settings for when content is moved in a document.

- Press Tab or Alt + K to move to the checkbox to Track Moves. This is checked by default so using this keyboard command will uncheck it. You can also Tab to it.

- Press Alt + letter O to move to the settings for Moved From. The default is a Double Underline.

- Press Tab or Alt + C to move to the colour palette for Moved From. The default colour is Green.

- Press Tab or Alt + V to move to the list for Moved To. The default is a Double Underline.

- Press Tab or Alt + C to move to the colour palette for the Moved To setting. The default colour is Green.

The next series of settings is for Table Cells Highlighting.

The keyboard command is the same for all four settings so if you are using a screen reader or Text-to-Speech tool, listen carefully to the options.

- Pressing Alt + L will first take you to Inserted cells and the default colour is Light Blue.

- Press Tab or Alt + L again for Deleted cells and the default colour is Pink.

- Press Tab or Alt + L again to move to Merged Cells and the default colour is Light Yellow.

- Press Tab or Alt + L again to move to Split Cells and the default colour is Light Orange.

- The next series of settings are related to Formatting.

- Press Alt + T to move to the check box to Track Formatting. This is separate from the setting in the Track Changes Options dialog. The default is that the check box is

checked. I usually uncheck it so that formatting changes aren't shown to me. You may want to see the Formatting changes.

- Press Alt + F to move to the list of Formatting settings. The choices include Bold, Italic, and Underline, Double Underline or None.

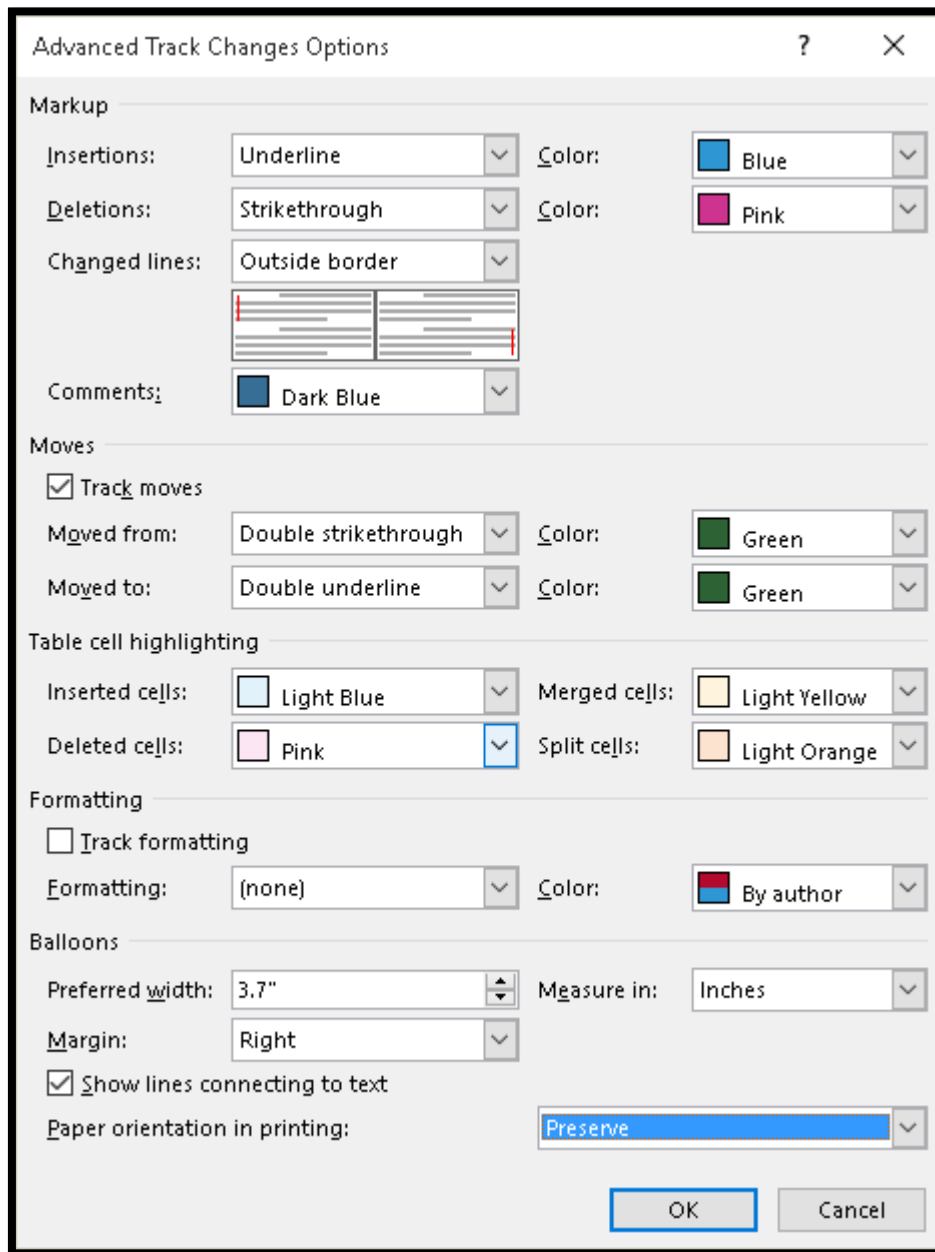- Press Tab or Alt + C to move to the colour palette for Formatting. The default is "By Author."

Figure 7 Advanced Track Changes Options dialog.

The last series of settings are for Balloons!

These are the balloons that comments and/or revisions can appear in, not hot air balloons.

- Press Alt + W to move to the list for the Margin Width for balloons. There is a default number and that is usually sufficient.

- Press Alt + E to move to the Measure in list. This can be Inches or Centimetres, for example. The measurement will be in whatever the default is for Word.

- Press Alt + W to move to the setting for which Margin the balloons will appear in. Typically this is the Right margin which is the default.

- Press Tab or Alt + S to move to the check box to Show lines connecting from the text to the balloons. This is checked by default and is usually left that way so that you can easily see which comments are for which piece of content.

- Press Tab or Alt + P to move to the settings for Paper orientation when printing. The default is Preserve which preserves whichever orientation the document or page is using, for example, landscape or portrait.

When you are finished, Tab to the OK button and press Enter.

You are returned to the Track Changes Options dialog.

Tab to the OK button and press Enter. You are returned to your document and the changes have been made to the look and feel of Track Changes.

The Revisions Pane

If you are using adaptive technology such as a screen reader or Text-to-Speech tool, the Revisions Pane is completely inaccessible to you. The adaptive technology will let you know that you are in the Reviewing Pane but nothing in the Pane is going to be read to you.

> **Note:** The Review Ribbon lists this tool as the Reviewing Pane but when it opens, it is called the Revisions Pane.
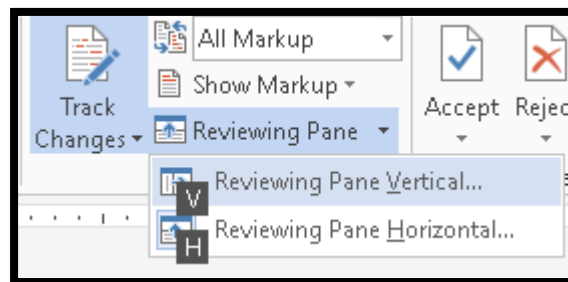

Figure 8 Options for turning on the Reviewing (Revisions) Pane in Word.

If you want to explore the Revisions Pane, once you press Alt + R, T, P, press either V to place the Revisions Pane vertically to the left of the document or H to place the Revisions Pane horizontally at the bottom of the document.

You need to press F6 to move to the Revisions Pane as it doesn't take focus automatically. Even if you place the Revisions Pane vertically, you press F6 to put focus on it.

Figure 9 Revisions Pane placed horizontally at bottom of document.

As with other aspects of the user interface of Office, it is difficult to visually distinguish the Revisions Pane from the rest of the user interface. Placing it vertically seems to provide the best way of visually finding it and using it.
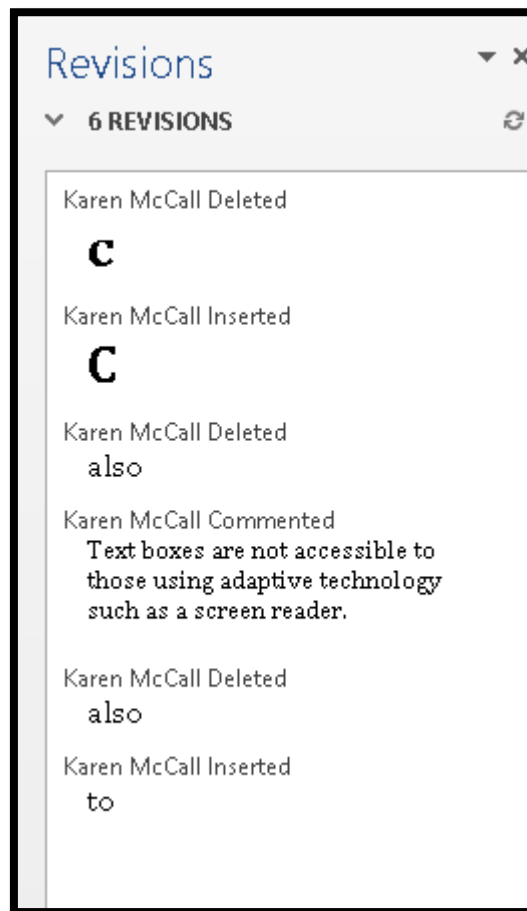
Figure 10 Revisions Pane placed vertically to the left of the document.

If you are not using a screen reader or Text-to-Speech tool, you can use the Revisions Pane to move among revisions and Comments, accept or reject revisions and work with Comments.
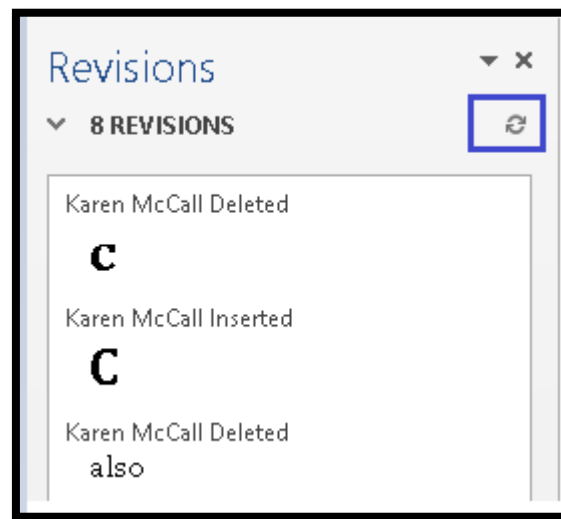

Figure 11 Close-up of content in the Revisions Pane.

As you move through items in the Revisions Pane, you can use the AppKey or right mouse click to open the context menu to let you accept or reject changes.

If you modify the Balloon Text Style (as illustrated in the following image) the larger text will appear in the Revisions Pane as well. Text or content associated with regular Track Changes is not affected by modifying the Balloon Text Style. (There is also a Style called Comment Text but modifying it doesn't have any effect on any aspect of Track Changes or Comments so it is not clear what this Style is used for.)

> **Note:** According to Microsoft, the Comment text Style is the one that is used in Comment balloons. It might be that I have the special computer where this isn't true. On my computers, modifying the Comment Text Style did nothing. Modifying the Balloon Text Style affected the text in a Comment balloon.
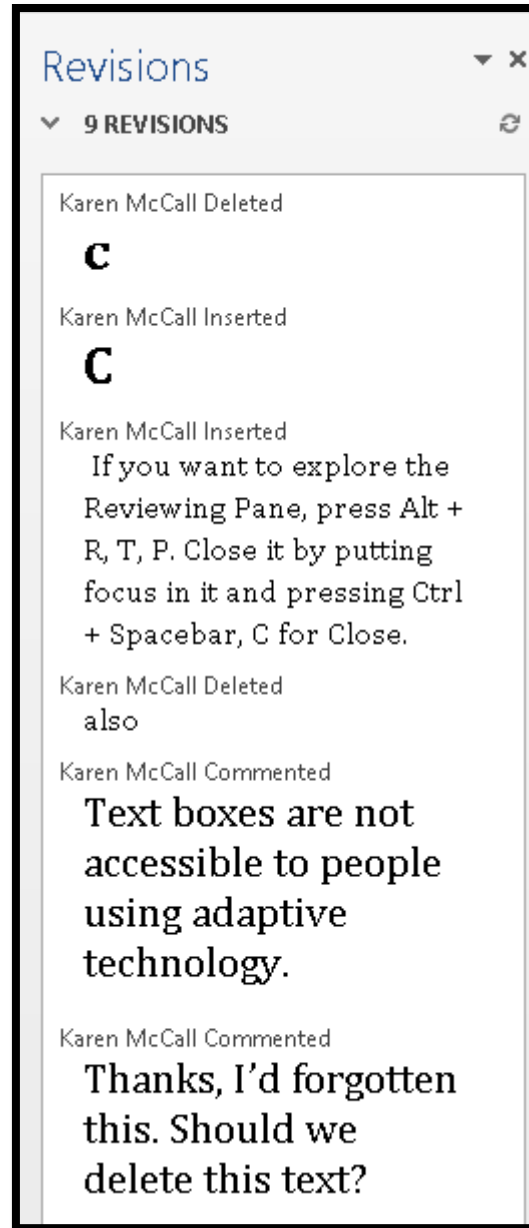
Figure 12 Revisions Pane showing modified Comment text and document revisions.

The following image shows the context menu opened while in the Revisions Pane so that changes to a document can be accepted or rejected. For those of us with visual, learning or cognitive disabilities, and who are NOT using a screen reader or Text-to-Speech tool, the Revisions Pane might be an alternative to viewing the changes in the document. It can also be used in conjunction with viewing the changes in the document for any items that you need clarity for.

While in the context menu, pressing E will Accept Changes.
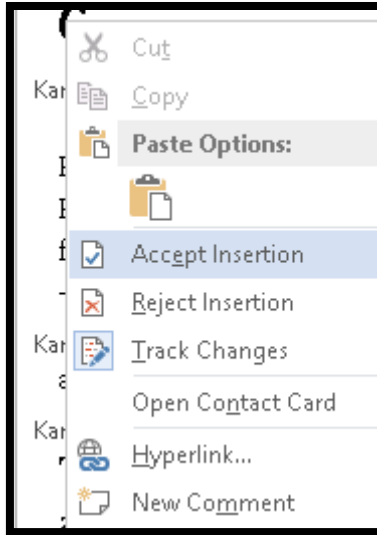
Figure 13 Context menu open in Revisions Pane to accept changes.

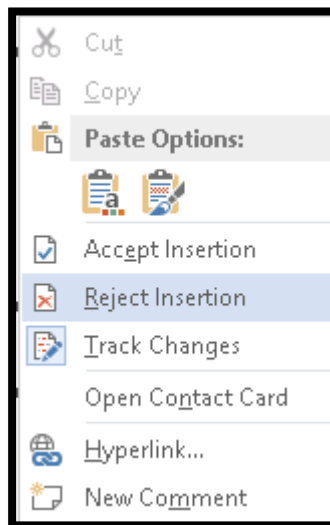While in the context menu for a revision in the Revisions Pane, pressing R will Reject Changes.

Figure 14 Context menu in Revision pane showing Reject Changes option.

Accepting and Rejecting Changes

You can accept and reject changes from the Review Ribbon using the keyboard. This is an accessible process.

Let's look at how to accept changes made by others in a document.

The second part of using Track Changes is what to do with them once your document has the edit markup. To the immediate right of the Tracking Group on the Review Ribbon is the Changes Group. This group of tools has the buttons to accept or reject changes and to move to the previous or next revision in the document.

To move among revisions:

- Press Alt + R, V to move to the Previous revision.

- Press Alt + R, X to move to the Next revision.

You must return to the Review Ribbon to move forward or backward through revisions. There is a keyboard command to either accept or reject changes and move to the next, but that is not the same thing as simply moving forward and backward through revisions to see what they are.
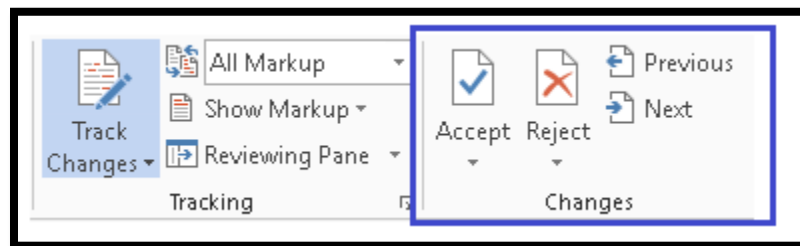

Figure 15 Changes Group on the Review Ribbon to move to Previous and Next revision.

When you move to the Previous or Next change, it is selected in the document.
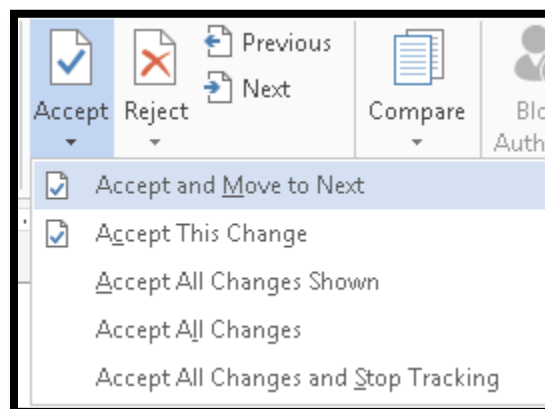

Figure 16 Accept Changes options from the Changes Group on the Review Ribbon.

The Changes Group on the Review Ribbon also has buttons to Accept or Reject revisions.

The options for accepting changes are Alt + R, A, then:

- M for Accept all changes and move to next. This moves to the Next change and selects it…so be careful of accidental keyboarding.

- C for Accept this change. This option is only available when a revision is selected.

- A for Accept all changes shown. If you have Simple Markup turned on the revisions will not be accepted. You can use this option when in All Markup view of the document only.

- L for Accept all changes. This will rapidly accept all revisions but not turn off Track Changes.

- S for Accept all changes and stop tracking. This will accept all revisions and turn off Track Changes.
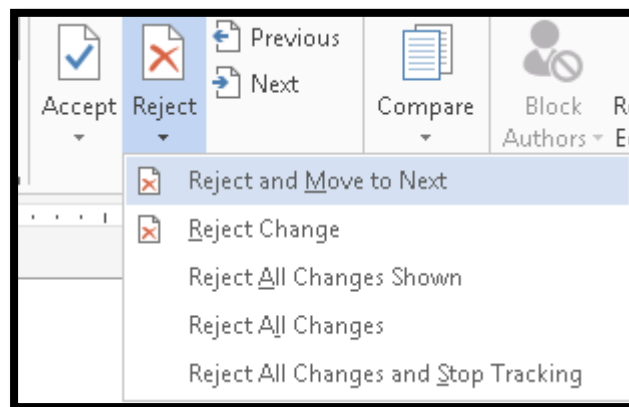

Figure 17 Reject revisions/changes options on Review Ribbon.

The keyboard command to reject revisions or changes in a document are to press Alt + R, J, then:

- M for Reject all changes and move to next. This moves to the Next change and selects it…so be careful of accidental keyboarding.

- R for Reject this change. This option is only available when a revision is selected.

- A for Reject all changes shown. If you have Simple Markup turned on the revisions will not be accepted. You can use this option when in All Markup view of the document only.

- L for Reject all changes. This will rapidly accept all revisions but not turn off Track Changes.

- S for Reject all changes and stop tracking. This will accept all revisions and turn off Track Changes.

Most of the keyboard commands in the sub-menu are the same as for accepting revisions or changes. The two keyboard commands that are different are in using J to access the Reject options and R to Reject this change only.

Editing Documents using Track Changes

The strategy I use for editing documents using Track Changes is to have a clean copy of my document with Track Changes turned off. Yes, turned off.

I then send out either one document or several with my editors names in the filename so I can keep them straight.

Once I get edits back with Comments, I choose which ones to accept or reject in the documents with Track Changes turned on.

I can then copy and paste the good versions of content into my clean copy of the document, the one with Track Changes turned off, and when printing or sending the document to someone, the revisions don't accidentally get revealed to those I don't want to see them.

This is one strategy for using Track Changes if you are confused about accepting and rejecting revisions.

If Track Changes is turned off in one document and you copy content from a document where Track Changes is turned on, your clean copy of the document will simply accept the changes and paste the revised content into the document that has Track changes turned off.

Comments are different…they do get copied over so if a piece of content has both Track Changes and Comments, I address the Comments and delete them, then copy and paste.

To keep the original revisions, I simply close the document with Track Changes and Comments without saving. This preserves the original revisions should I want to go back and review them.

Track Changes with the JAWS Screen Reader

The JAWS screen reader has user verbosity settings for working with Track Changes and Comments.

To review the verbosity settings, press JawsKey + V while in a Word document.

When the Quick Settings – Word dialog opens, focus is in the Search box. Press Tab to move into the list of settings. Press T for Track Changes. This will be the fourth item you find by pressing the letter T repeatedly.

When the Quick Settings dialog opens, you can start typing Track which will give you all of the settings with that word in it. Press Tab to move into the list of found settings and then

use the Up or Down Arrow to find the one you want. Track for Track Changes is the only setting that has that word in it.

The default setting is to speak Type. I set it to speak Type and Author. You change the setting by pressing the Spacebar to cycle through the options, stopping at the one you want and moving on.
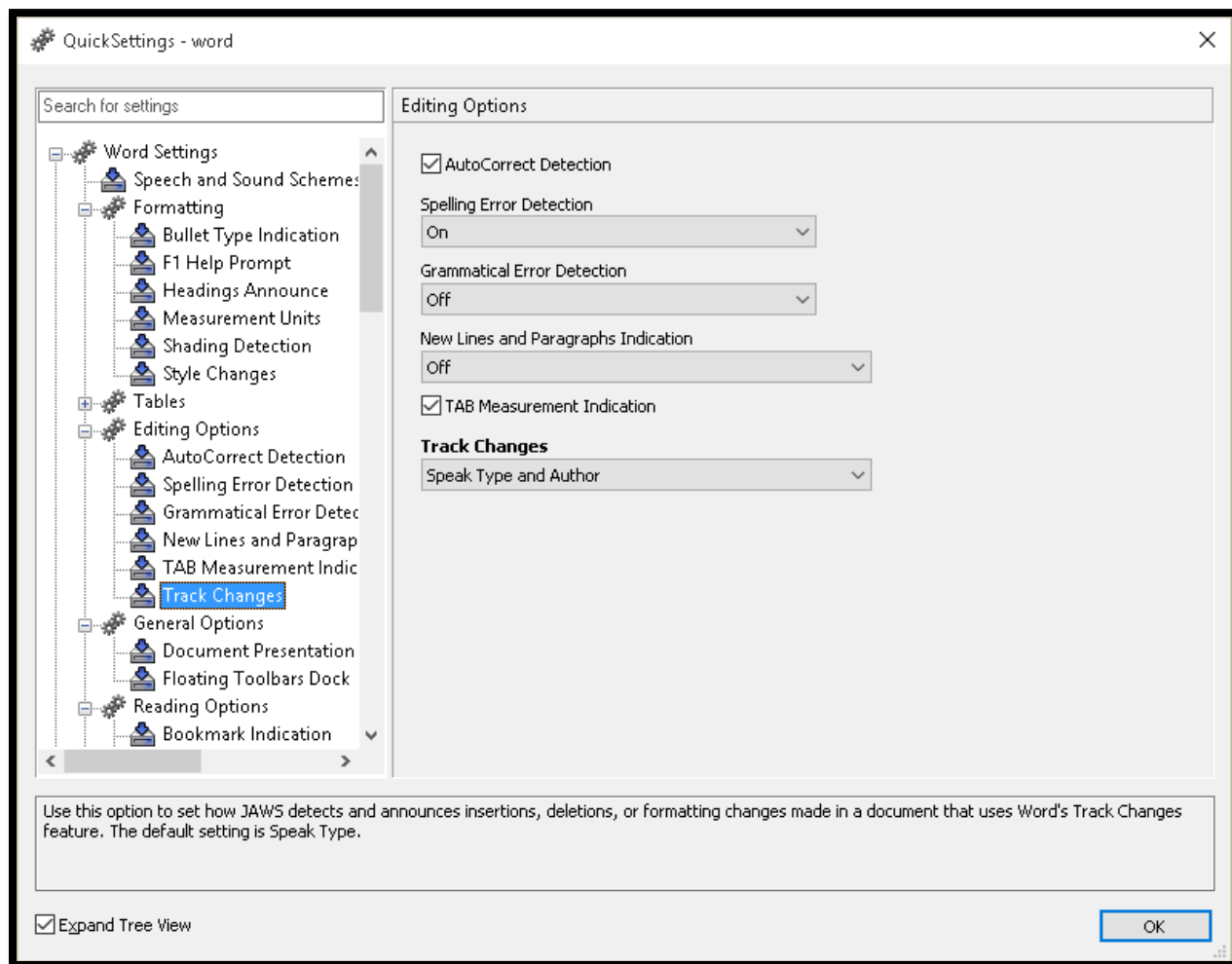

Figure 18 JAWS Quick Settings for Word.

There are settings for Comments in the JAWS Quick Settings – Word dialog.

To find the Comments settings, either type comments in the Search box or press Tab to move into the list of settings and press the letter C which will cycle you through all the settings that start with the letter C.

Comments, footnotes and Endnotes notification is either on or off and is turned on by default. Use the Spacebar to toggle this setting on or off.

Once you've finished modifying the JAWS settings for Word, Tab to and press the OK button to confirm your choices.
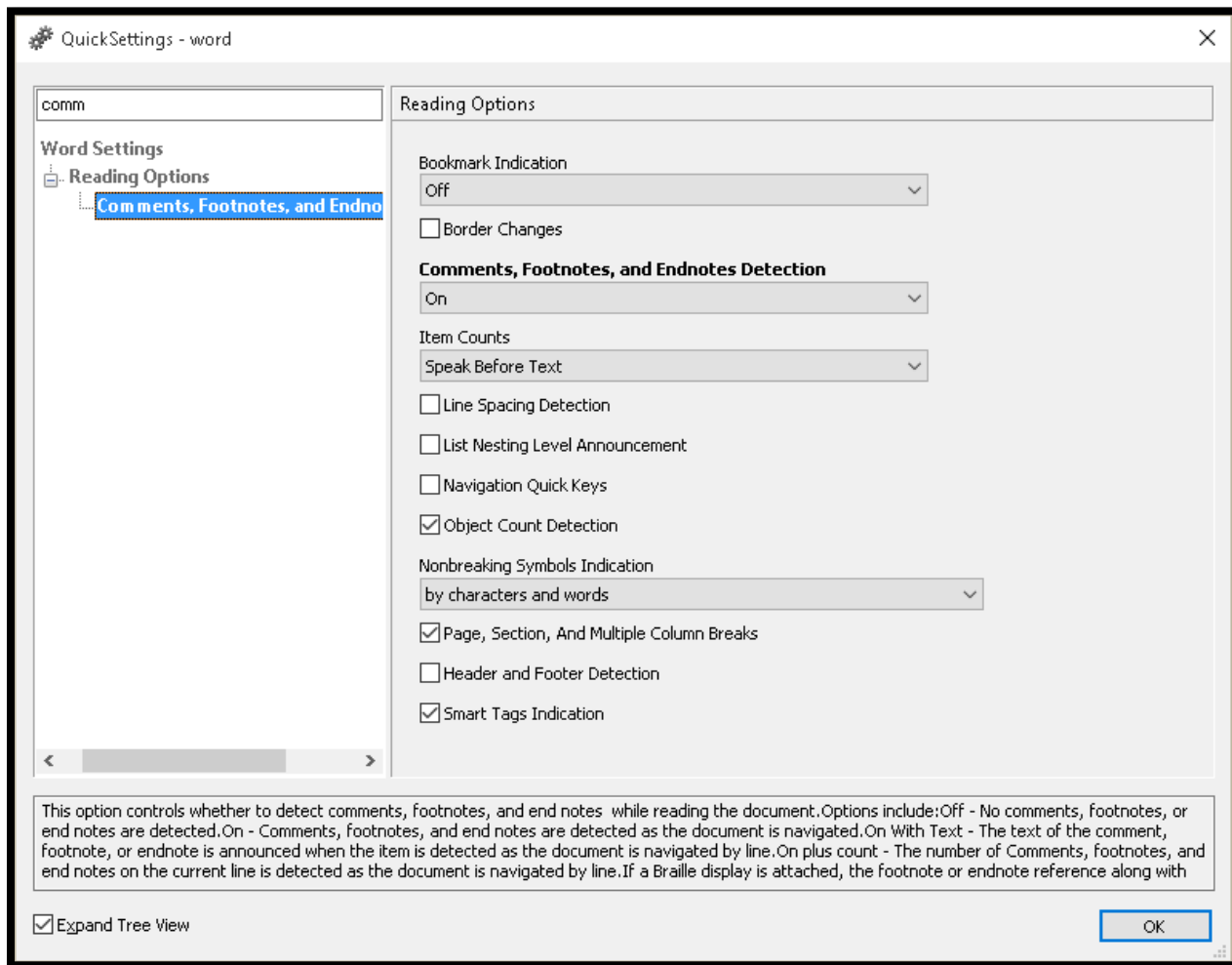

Figure 19 Comments, Footnotes and Endnote detection in JAWS Quick Settings for Word.

The JAWS screen reader has specific keyboard commands for finding and reading Track Changes and Comments.

Pressing JawsKey + Shift + R will list Revisions. The JawsKey is the Insert key on the NumPad when the NumLock is turned off.

When the list of revisions opens, use the Up and Down Arrows to move through them.

Press Enter on the one you want to go to.

Your cursor is placed just before the revision. The revision is NOT selected.
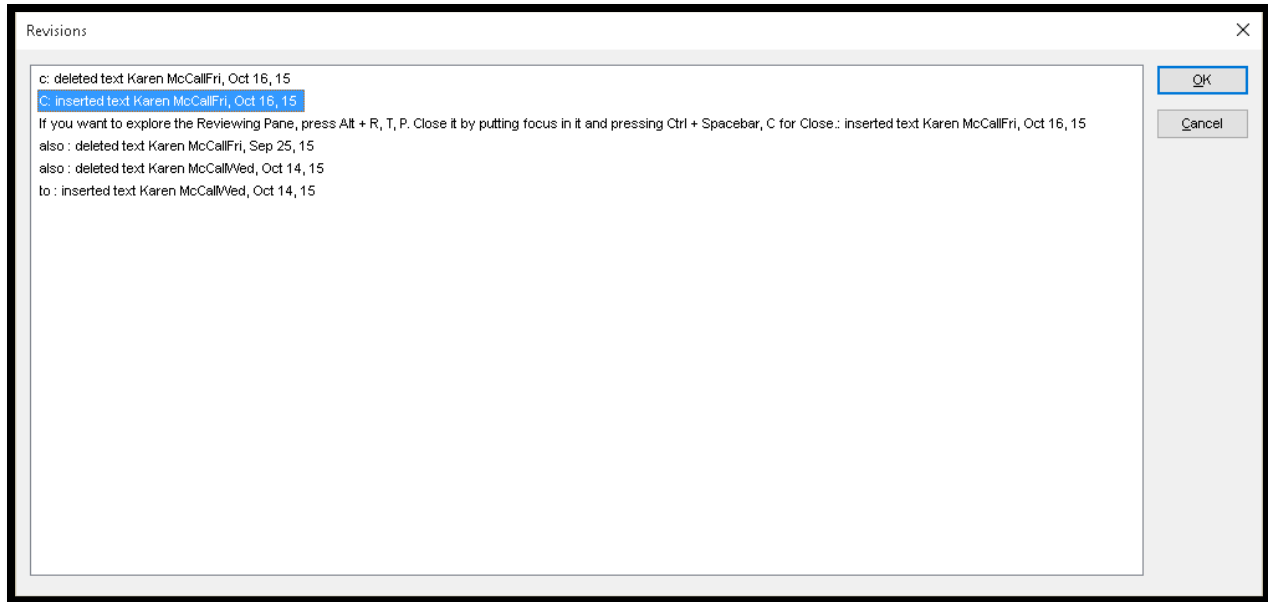
Figure 20 List of all revisions in Virtual Viewer.

The list of revisions opens in the JAWS Virtual Viewer. You can press the Escape key to dismiss the viewer once you've finished. It will dismiss itself when you press Enter on a revision.

When working with Comments and JAWS, there are two ways to display Comments. The first is to press Ctrl + Shift + Apostrophe which shows the Comments in Virtual Viewer.

When you find a Comment you want to explore a bit more, press Enter. The Virtual Viewer closes and your cursor is placed just before the Comment text (the text highlighted to indicate that it is associated with the Comment).
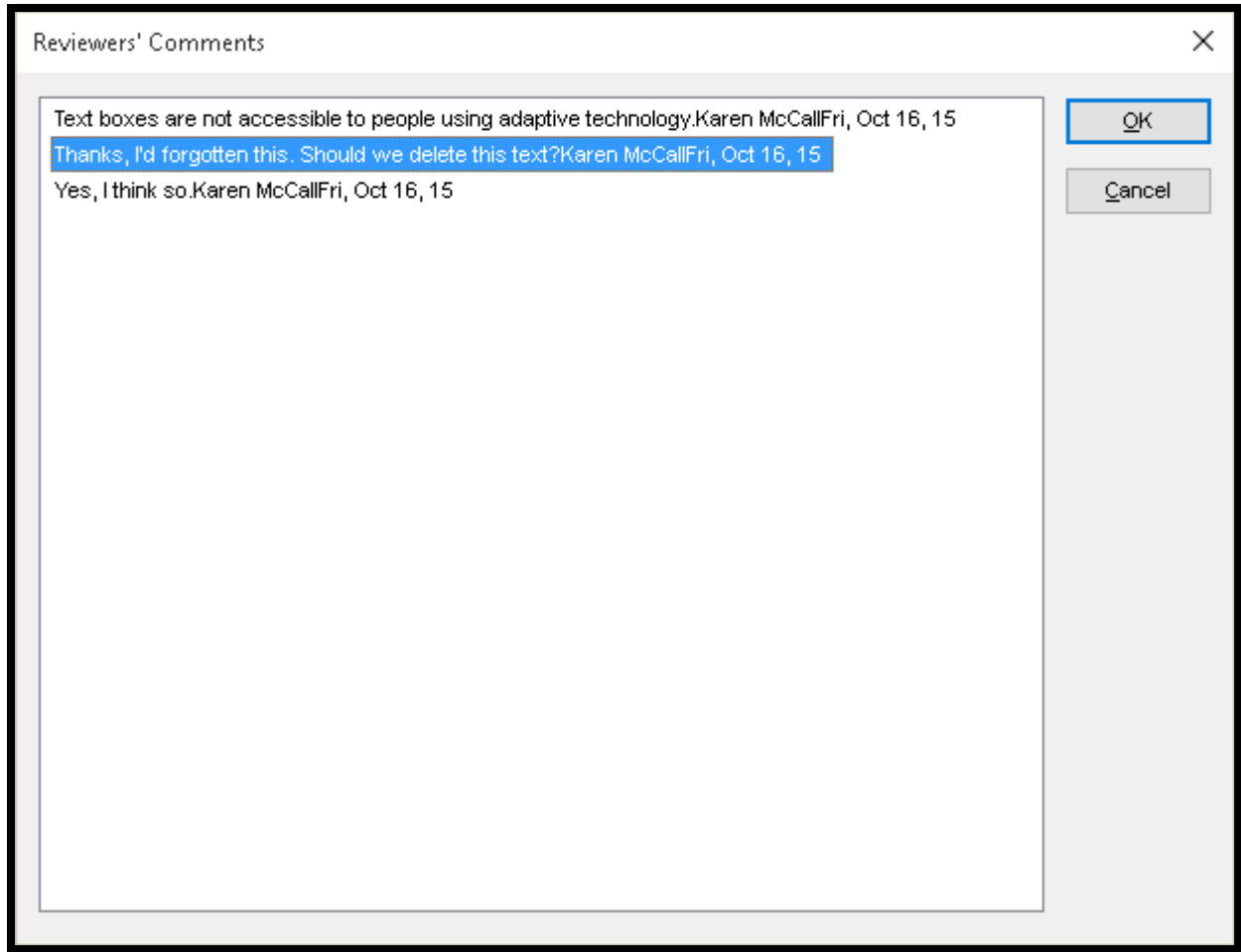
Figure 21 List of Comments in Virtual Viewer.

When you land on a Comment, pressing Alt + Shift + Apostrophe will read the Comment that your focus is in. Focus will remain in the document and doesn't go into the Comment balloon.

The other way to view Comments is to press Windows key + Semi-Colon. This opens the Items to Display in Virtual Viewer and the choices are Comments, Footnotes or Endnotes.

When you choose the one you want, in this tutorial it would be Comments, the list of Comments in the document opens in the JAWS Virtual Viewer.
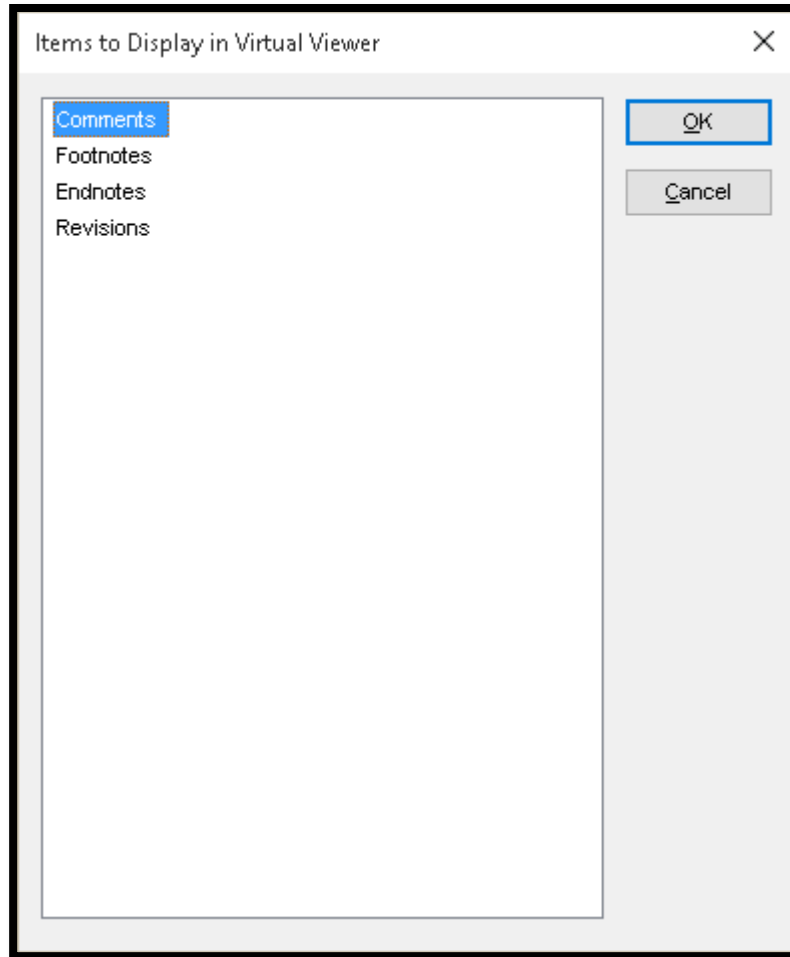
Figure 22 Items to Display in Virtual Viewer dialog.

When the list of Comments opens in the Virtual Viewer, you can use the Up and Down Arrows to move through the Comments. If you press Enter on a link to a Comment, the Virtual Viewer closes and your cursor is placed in the document just before/at the place the Comment begins.

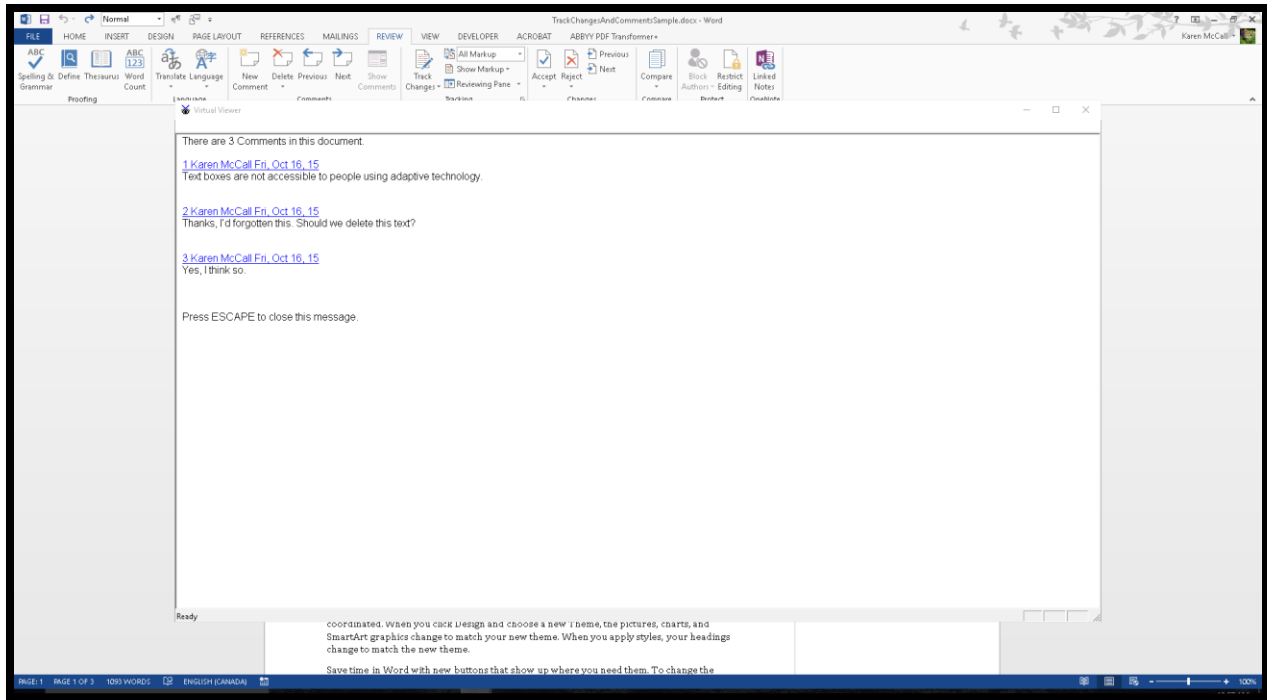You can then press Alt + Shift + Apostrophe to reread the Comment.

Figure 23 List of Comments in document in Virtual Viewer.

There is another way to move through Comments in the Comments balloons. We'll cover that in the Comments section of this tutorial because it is not a JAWS method. JAWS will work with it, but it is not specifically a JAWS technique…anyone can use it.

Comments

Comments are different from revisions or Track Changes because they allow your editors to ask questions or for clarification on points you've made in your document.

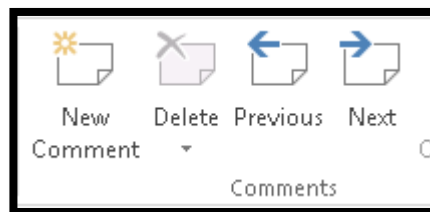The Comments Group is on the Review Ribbon to the immediate left of the Tracking/Changes Groups.

Figure 24 Comments Group on the Review Ribbon.

To begin the process of adding a Comment, select a word, phrase or paragraph in your document.

The keyboard command to add a Comment is Alt + R, C.

When you press this keyboard command, a new Comments balloon opens in the right margin and your cursor is moved there so you can begin typing your Comment.

Press Escape once you've finished writing your Comment. You are returned to the document and the cursor is at the point where you added the Comment.

Figure 25 Comment in a document.

The text in the Comment in the preceding image was modified to make it larger...yes you can do that!

Collaborating with Comments

One of the nifty things you can now do when using Comments is to have a conversation about a Comment with your editors. This can either be done using a cloud or network based document repository or by e-mail.

If you hover the mouse over the place in the Comment where the person's picture should be, a set of tools appears just above the Comment with options to call, instant message, send an e-mail or video conference. Unfortunately this pop-up is not accessible using the keyboard or adaptive technology.

However, there is a way to access these tools through the context menu for a Comment.
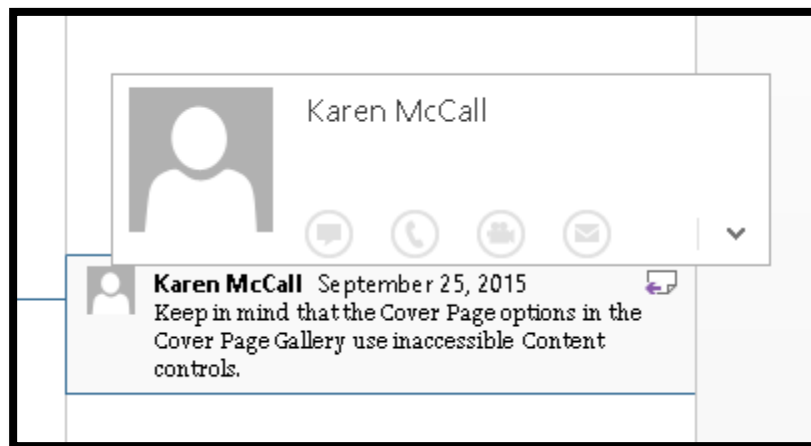

Figure 26 Inaccessible Comment collaboration tools.

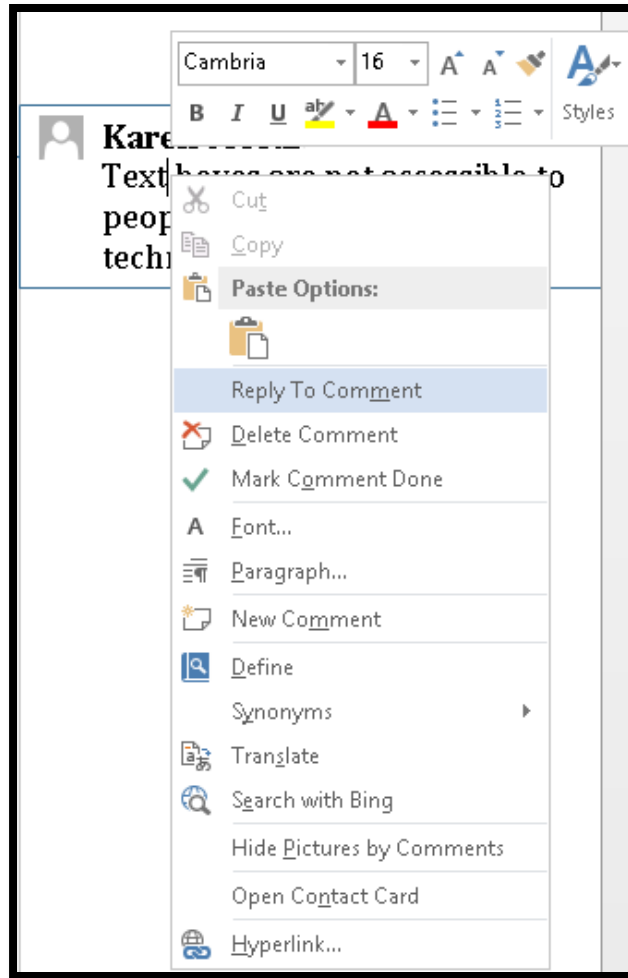While in any Comment balloon press the AppKey or use the right mouse button equivalent.

Figure 27 Context menu for a Comment.

Press M to choose Reply to Comment. A new Comment is added nested under the original Comment. This visual representation will let you follow the conversation if you are using screen magnification or have a learning or cognitive disability…or can access the Comments visually.

Although the Comments appear to be in a conversation that flows (is nested to indicate a conversation), each Comment is still identified as an individual Comment. This means that someone using a screen reader must move to the Next or Previous Comment in order to read the entire conversation. This can be confusing if the conversations are long or prolific for the content being discussed. There is currently no way to simply move from one part of the conversation/Comment to another.
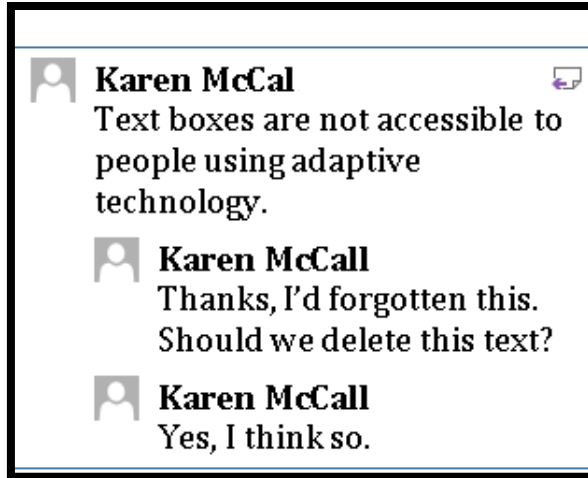
Figure 28 Example of a Comment that has been replied to.

In the Comment balloon, when you press the AppKey, you can press N to Open Contact Card which then gives you the ability to instant message, video conference, call or e-mail the commenter if that information is entered on their Contact Card.
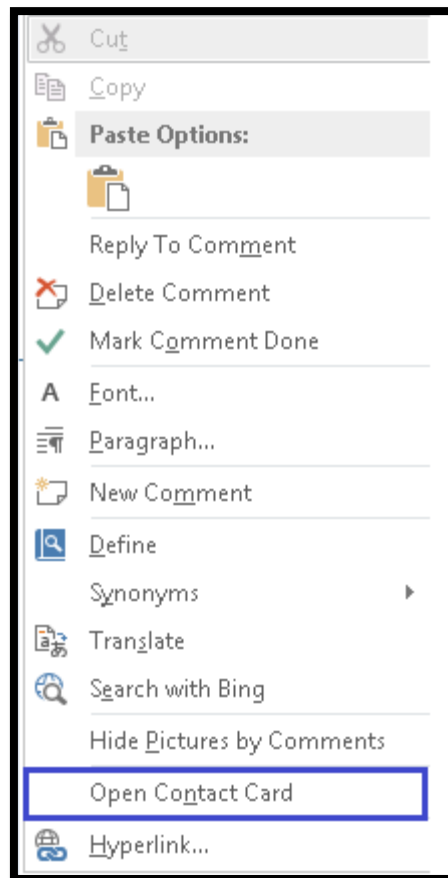

Figure 29 Open Contact Card option in context menu for a Comment.

The Contact Card is the one you created for the person in Outlook.
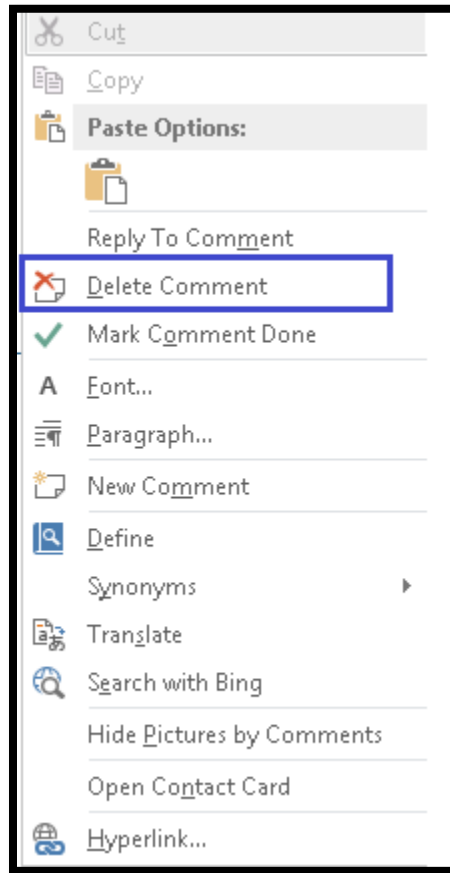

Figure 30 Comment context menu showing the option to Delete Comment.

With the context menu open, you can press the letter O to Mark Comment as Done. This does not delete the Comment, but acknowledges that you have read the Comment and dealt with the issues or discussion.

If a Comment is marked "done" it is grayed out but still visible in the right margin.

Figure 31 Comment marked as done in a document.

When a Comment is marked as being done, this information is not given to those of us using a screen reader or who can't see the greyed out Comment. If you get a list of

Comments from JAWS, the Comment is still listed with no distinction that it has been dealt with. Similarly, if you are using the Revisions Pane, the Comment is still there and there is no indication that the Comment has been dealt with. The only indication of this is in the Comment balloon for the Comment marked done in the document itself.
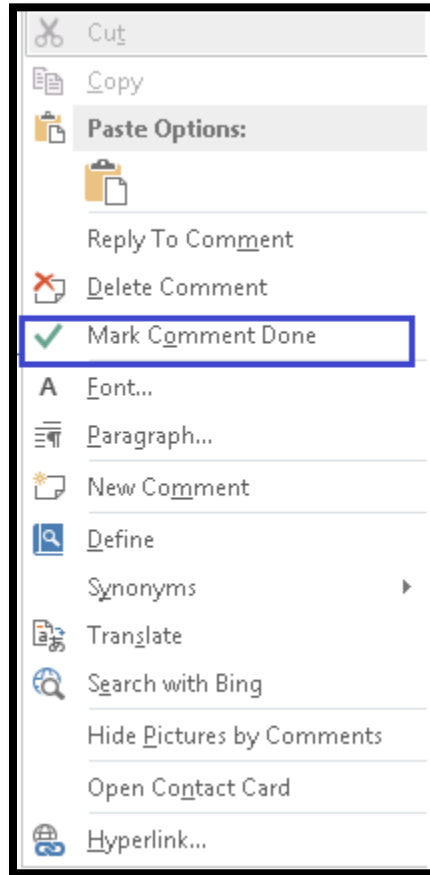

Figure 32 Context menu for a Comment showing the option to Mark Comment as Done.

If you use the JAWS keyboard command to list Comments, the Comments that are marked as being done are still listed.

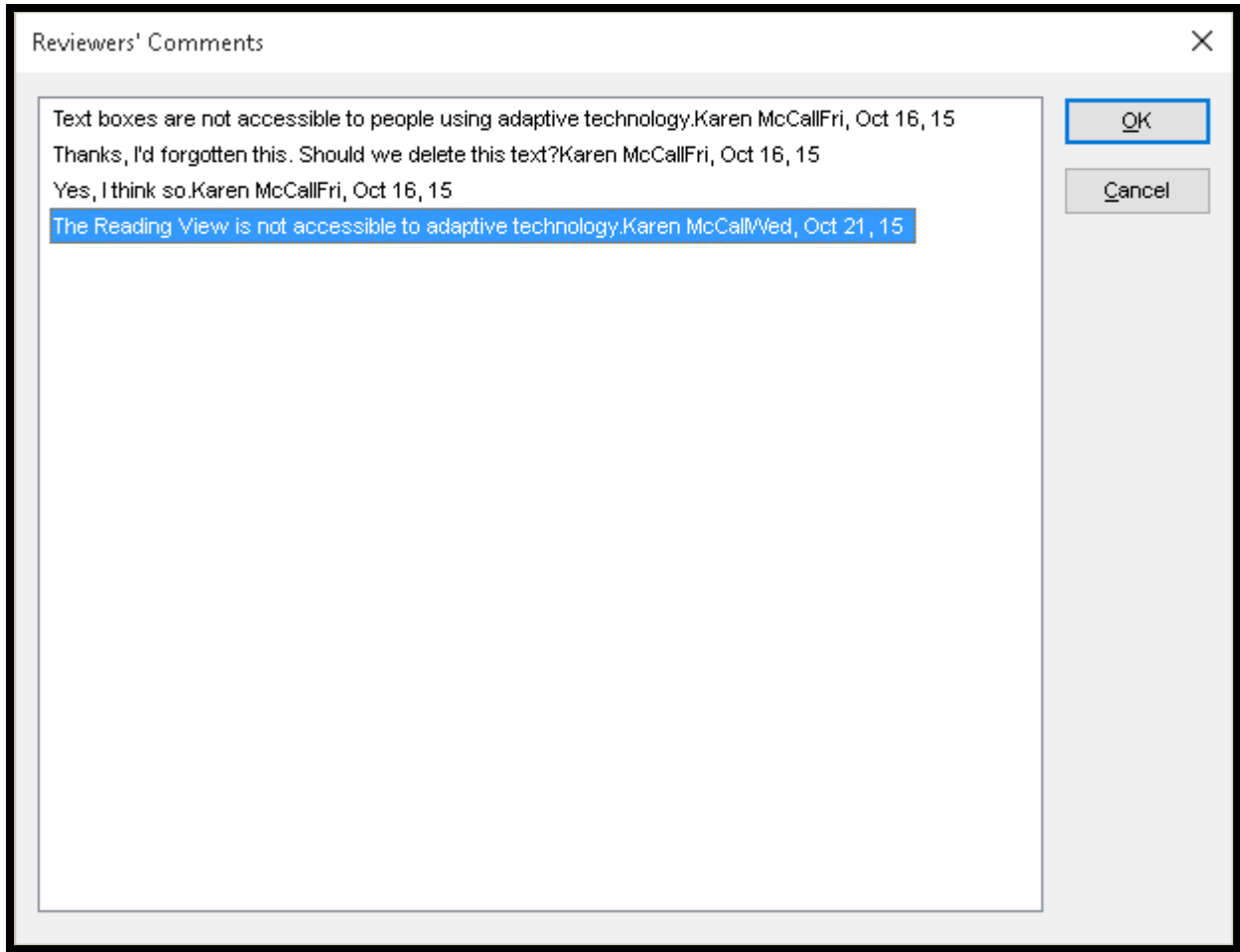If you press Ctrl + Shift + Apostrophe (JAWS only keyboard command), you will see all Comments.

Figure 33 JAWS list of Comments in a document.

If you use the other method JAWS has for listing comments, Windows key + Semi-Colon, then choose Comments, the Virtual Viewer displays all Comments so there is no indication that a Comment has been marked done.
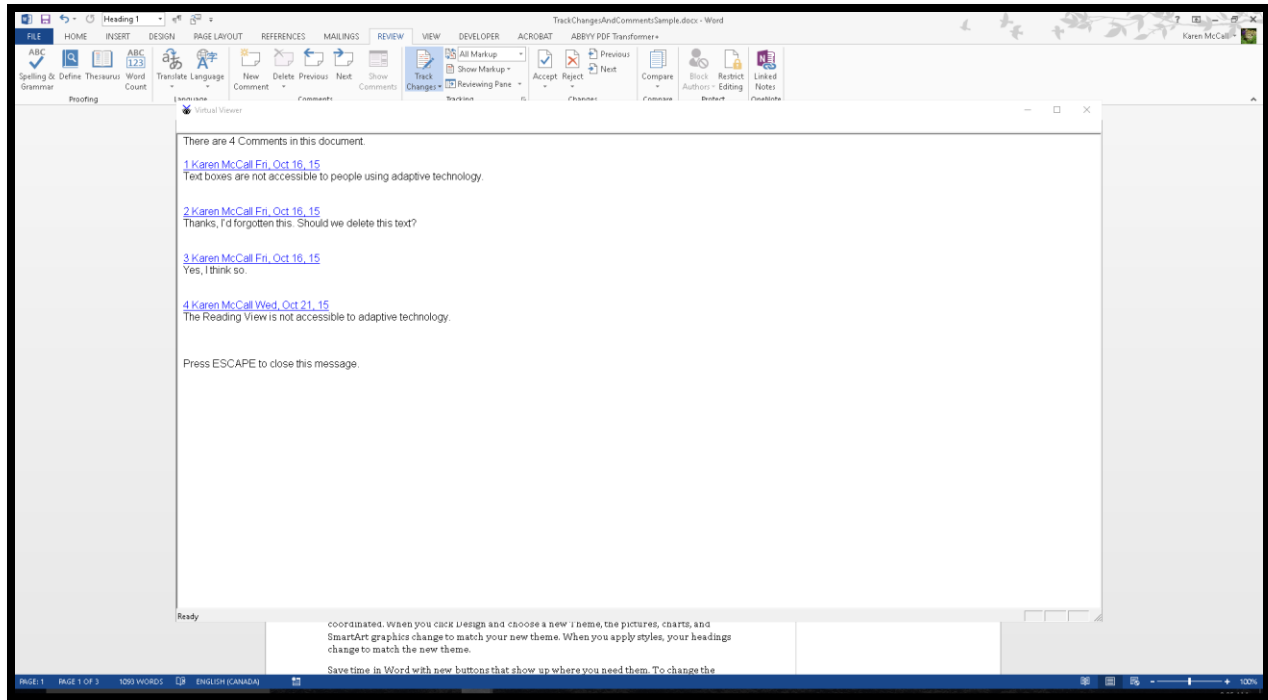
Figure 34 Virtual Viewer in JAWS showing all Comments in document.

Even if the Revisions Pane were accessible, the only indicator in the document that a Comment has been marked as done is the visual change in colour of the Comment in the margin.

Marking a Comment as done, while helpful for those who can see the margin area, is not an accessible way of working with Comments. I suggest not using the Mark as Done tool for Comments until such time as those of us using adaptive technology can get this information.

With the context menu open for a Comment, pressing D will Delete the Comment. While this does remove the Comment from the document, the change is reflected in the JAWS list of Comments which is a way of confirming that the Comment is no longer there.

If your cursor is in the initial Comment and you press D to Delete Comment, all parts of the conversation associated with that Comment will be deleted.

If, however, you are on one part of the conversation and press D to Delete Comment, only that one Comment or piece of the conversation will be deleted.

While in the context menu for a Comment, pressing N will add a New Comment balloon for you to enter a new Comment at the same point in the document.
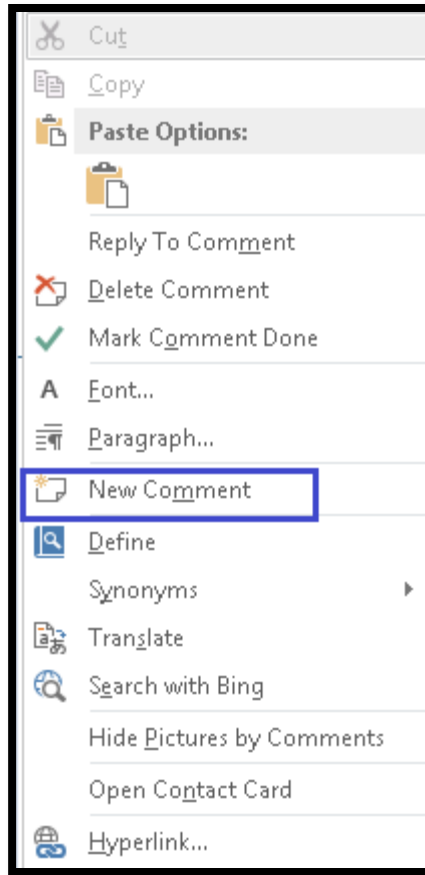
Figure 35 Add New Comment option in Comment context menu.

Modifying the Font Size in Comment Balloons

I mentioned previously in this tutorial that you can change the font and font size of the text in a Comment balloon. This change will also affect the font and font size in the Revisions Pane.
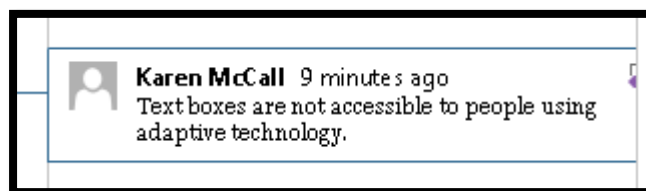

Figure 36 Original font and font size of Balloon Text.

There is a bit of a conflict or contradiction happening in Word around the Style used for a Comment. If you select the text in a Comment balloon, the Style says it is "Comment Text." However, if I modify the Comment Text Style, nothing happens.

When I choose Balloon Text and modify it, the changes appear in my Comment balloons and the Revisions Pane.

Note: Microsoft says the correct Style is Comment Text so you might try modifying that first. If nothing happens, modify the Balloon Text Style.

Even though the default is to show the Balloon Text Style in the Styles Pane once it has been used in the document, this doesn't happen. If you do see the Balloon Text Style in the Styles pane, consider yourself lucky!

The way to modify the Balloon Text Style is to open the Styles pane (Alt + H, F, Y).

Once the Styles Pane is open and has focus, press Shift + Tab to move to the Manage Styles button at the bottom of the Styles Pane.
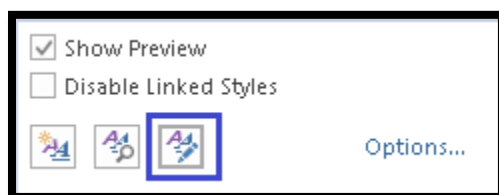

Figure 37 Manage Styles button in the Styles Pane.

Press Spacebar on the Manage Styles button and the Manage Styles dialog opens.
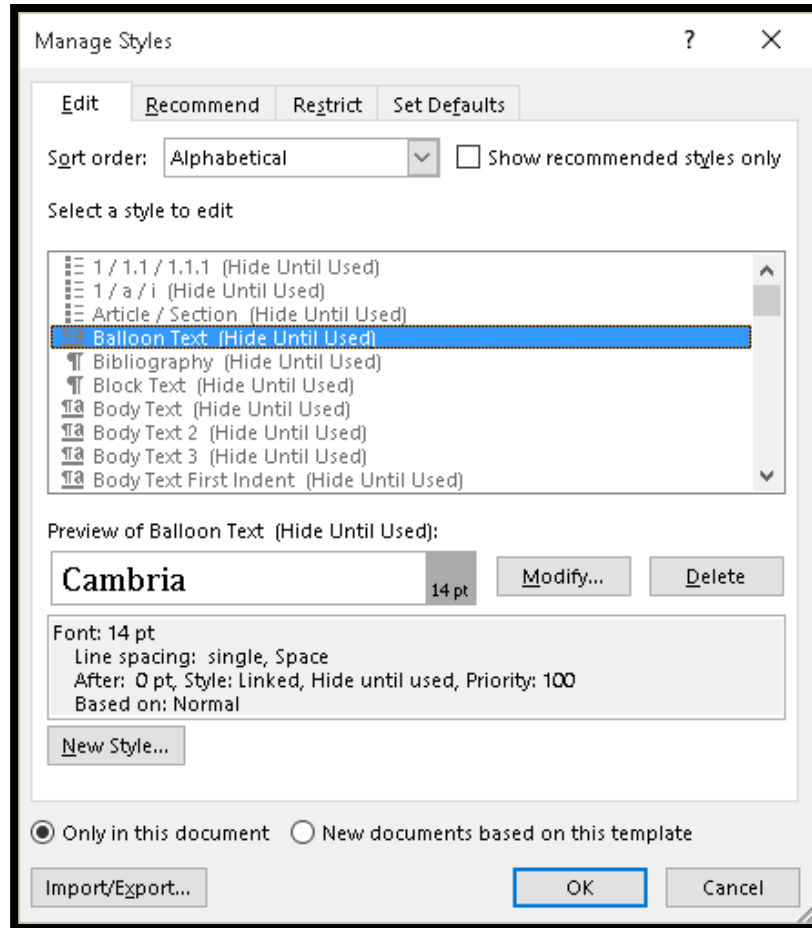
Figure 38 Manage Styles dialog.

When the Manage Styles dialog opens, Tab to the list of Styles if it doesn't already have focus and press B for Balloon Text.

With Balloon Text selected in the list of Styles (even though it says hide until used and appears gray), press Alt + M to move to and activate the Modify button. The Modify Styles dialog opens and Balloon text is in the name of the Style. Leave it as is and make the modifications to the Balloon Text Style you want.
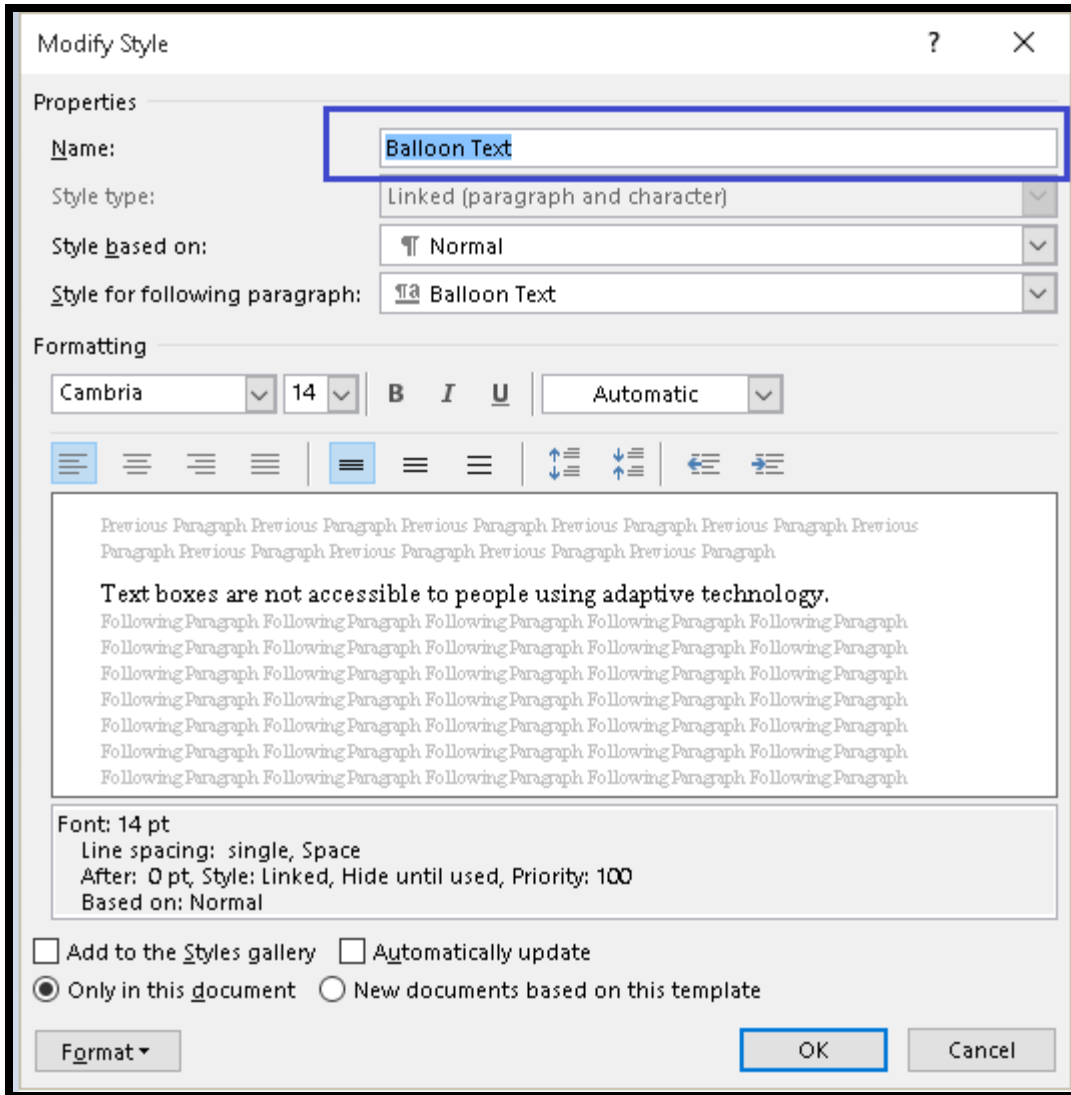
Figure 39 Modify Style dialog for Balloon Text Style.

Remember that the Balloon Text is in the right margin of the document so making it something like 28 point may not work effectively. You might try 14 or 16 point to see if that helps in making the Comments text easier to read.
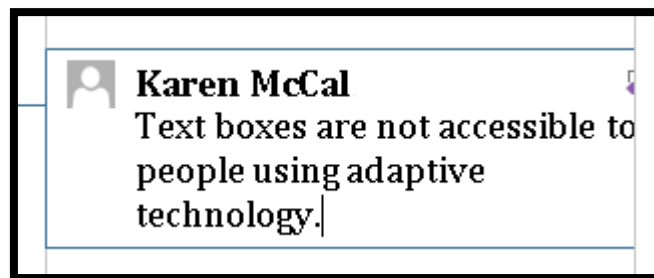

Figure 40 Sample of Balloon Text at 14 point.

Comparing Documents

In the past, it has been difficult for those of us using adaptive technology to use the Compare Documents tools in Word. That has changed. There are two ways we can compare documents.

We'll start with the Compare Documents tool.

Any changes to the revised document will appear as Track changes whether Tack Changes was used to make the edits to the document or not. This makes the ability to compare documents a great tool if you have editors who just change things and you can't tell what's been changed!

I recommend using a copy of the original document just in case you accidentally mess it up in reviewing the changes.

Press Alt + R, M, C for Review Ribbon, Compare, Compare Documents. The other option is to Combine documents (M).
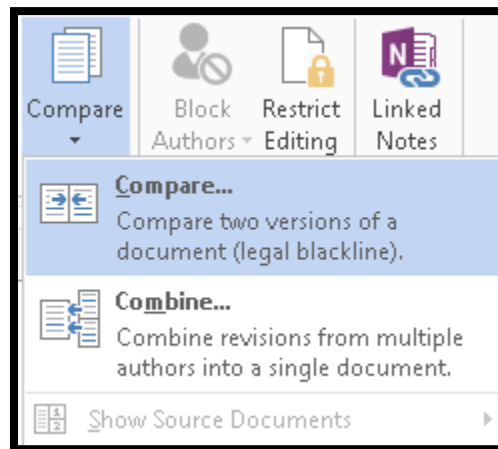

Figure 41 Compare options from the Review Ribbon.

The ability to compare documents will work whether Track changes was used on a document or not. In both cases, when the documents are compared, the differences will show using Track changes.

Once the Compare Documents dialog opens, the dialog is divided into three basic areas:

- The upper left is the area to open the original document.

- The upper right is the area to open the document you want to compare it with.

- The bottom of the dialog is a series of check boxes to choose which items to look for and let you know about what has been changed. By default it is closed. Pressing Alt + M for More will reveal these settings.

To review the list of check boxes, press Alt + M when you've identified the two documents to compare. This opens the "More" part of the dialog. To close this part of the dialog, press Alt + L for "Less."
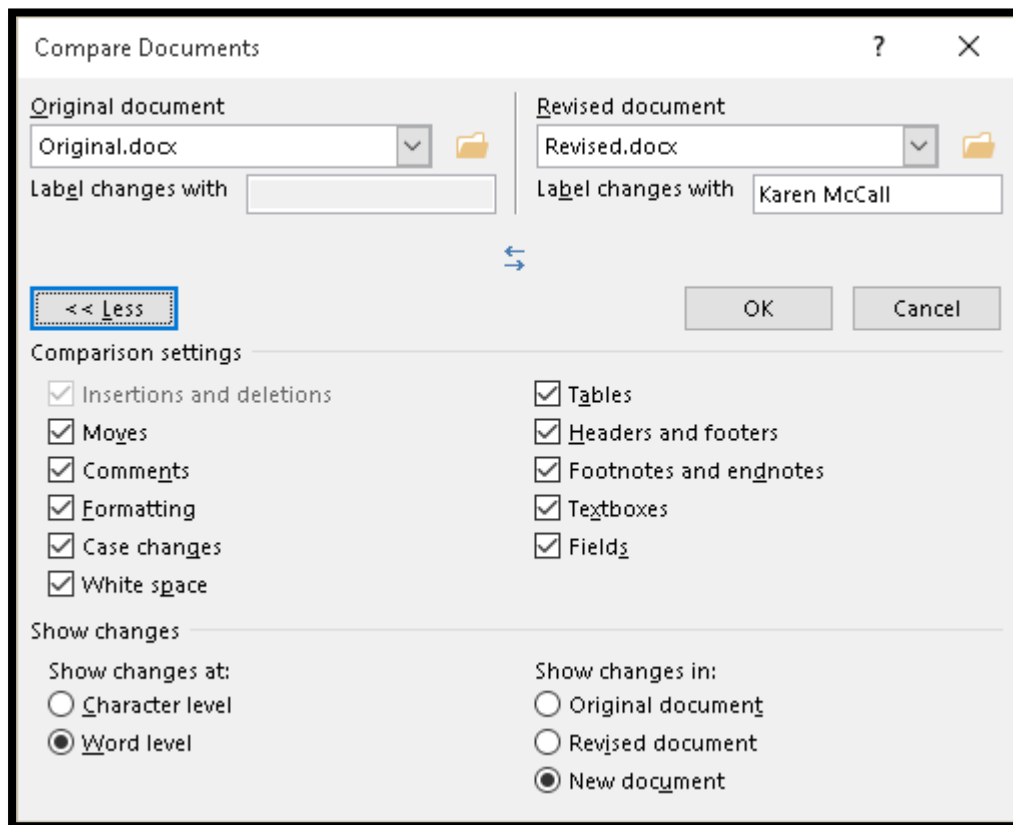

Figure 42 Compare Documents dialog showing "More" options for comparing.

The options for comparing documents are:

- Alt + V for Moves.

- Alt + M for Comments.

- Alt + F for Formatting.

- Alt + G for Case Changes.

- Alt + P for White Space.

- Alt + A for Tables.

- Alt + H for Headers and Footers.

- Alt + D for Footnotes and Endnotes.

- Alt + X for Textboxes.

- Alt + S for Fields.

The next settings are to show changes at either a character or word level.

Press Alt + C to choose the radio button to show the changes at the Character level or Alt + W to show the changes at the Word level.

The last settings are to show the changes in:

- Alt + T for Original Document.

- Alt + letter I for Revised Document.

- Alt + U for New Document.

I usually keep the default of New Document unless I am using Side-by-Side document comparison in which case I show the changes in the revised document…but we'll walk through that process in the next topic.
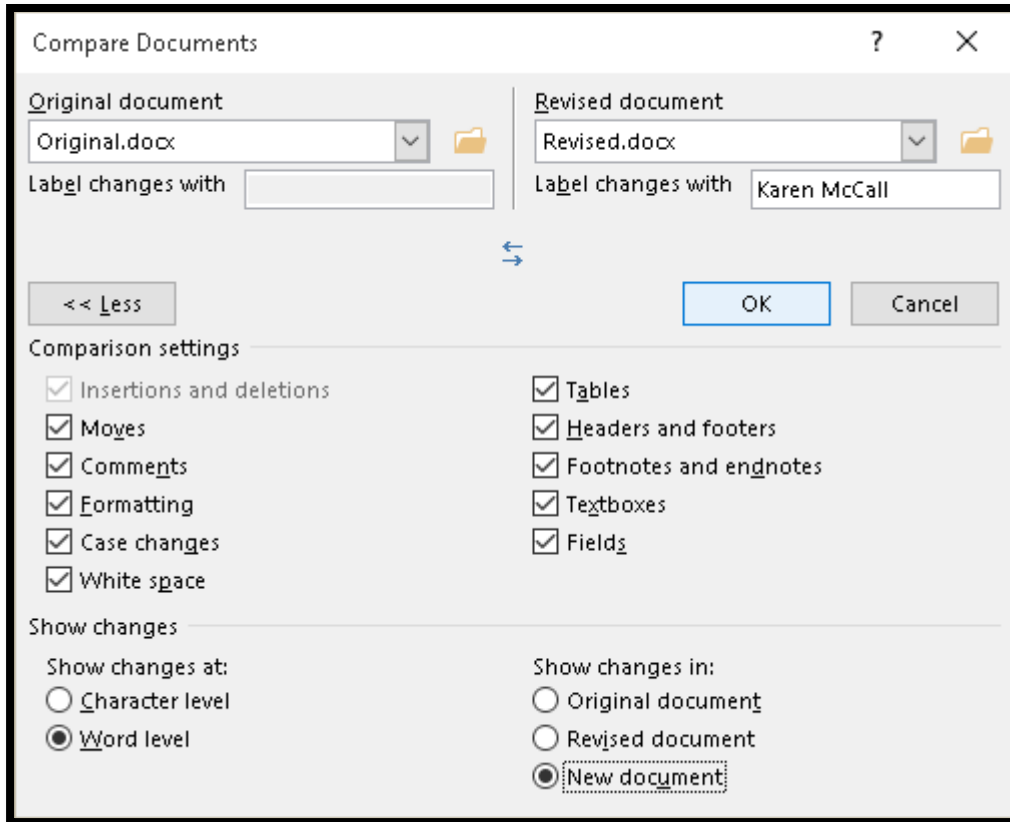
Figure 43 Compare Documents dialog with two documents loaded, ready to compare.

I've included a document called Original and one called Revised with this tutorial so you can test this tool. Both are write protected.

When the Compare dialog opens, focus is in the list of documents to use as your original document. If you simply press the first character of the document you want, the list will open. You can also press Alt + Down Arrow to open the list.

The list is taken from the Recent Documents list in Word. Any document in the Recent Documents list including any documents you have pinned to the list of Recent Documents will be in the list. Word assumes that you were working on the document and any versions of it so it picks that list to choose from. There is no browse button so make sure that you recently opened the document you want to Compare.

The two keyboard commands to focus on the original and revised documents are:

- Alt + letter O while in the Compare Documents dialog to list the documents to use as the original.

- Alt + R while in the Compare Documents dialog to list the documents to use as the revised.

Once you Tab to and activate the OK button to compare the documents, a new document is created based on the choice to see the changes between the documents in a new document. If you are using adaptive technology you can verify this by using the keyboard command to read the Title Bar. For those using JAWS, it is JawsKey + T.

Figure 44 Title Bar in Word showing new document name.

In the new document any changes between the original document and the version you loaded into the Compare Documents dialog will be shown using Track changes. There are no Comments in this process, only the identification of changes to the original text.
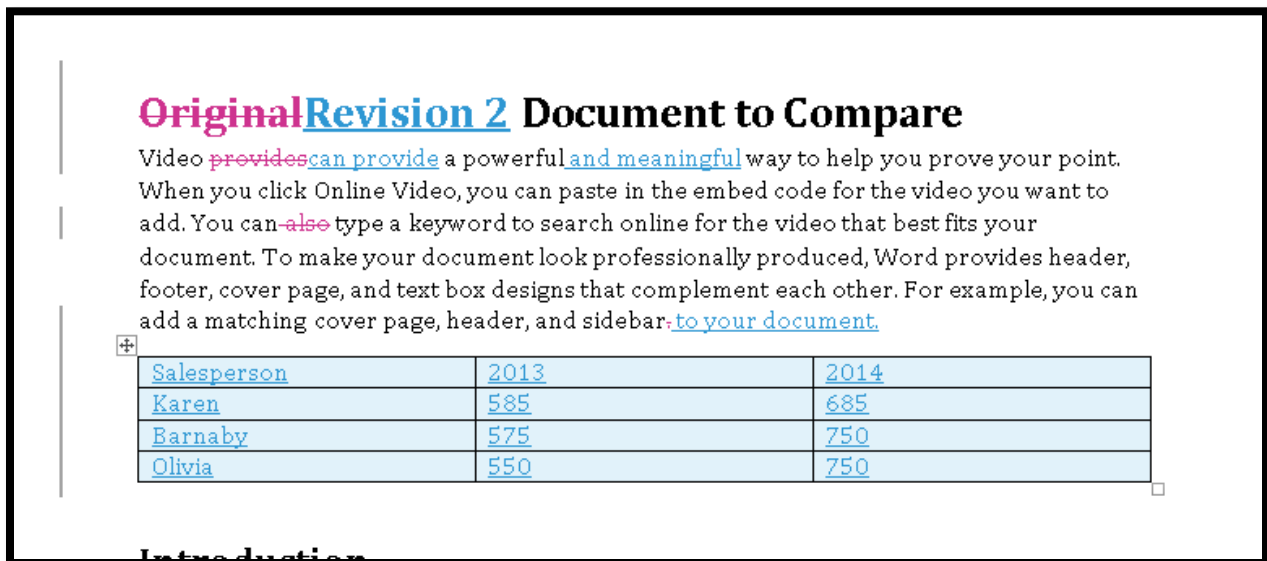

Figure 45 Sample of a new document created by comparing two documents.

Side by Side Document Comparison

There are times when you might want to visually see the two documents side by side to visually compare the changes. This is also accessible to those of us using screen readers, but it takes an extra step in the review process.

The first step is to open the two documents you want to compare. I advise closing all other documents just to keep things straight.

Make sure you've pressed Ctrl + Home to put focus at the top of each document. This should happen by default when you open each document. Do not use the Resume Reading tool. We need to make sure that both documents are showing the same page.

Place focus on the original document and press Alt + W, B for View Ribbon, View Side-by-Side. This automatically turns on Synchronized Scrolling. This means that as you

move through one document using either the mouse or the keyboard, the second document will reflect the movement exactly.
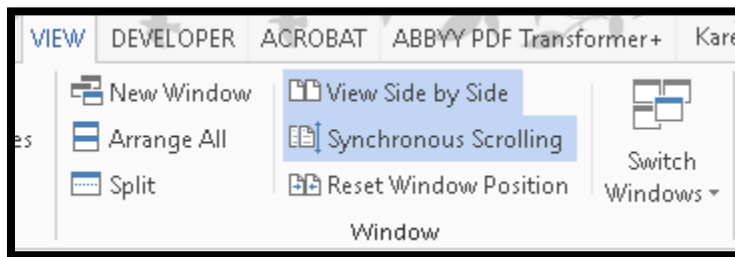

Figure 46 Side-by-Side and Synchronized Scrolling turned on in View Ribbon.

If you have more than one document open, a Side-by-Side dialog opens with a list of all open documents for you to choose which ones to view Side-by-Side. This is why I only have the two documents I want to compare open when I do this. It is less confusing as I move between them.
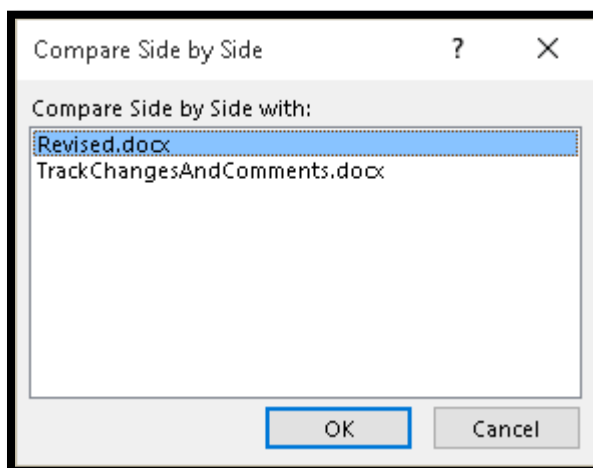

Figure 47 Side-by-Side dialog to choose which open documents to view together.

With Side-by-Side view and Synchronized Scrolling turned on, keep focus in the original document. I do this to keep my reference point although if you are using a screen reader the filenames will be announced to you as you move between the documents.

Press Alt + R, M, C for Review Ribbon, Compare, Compare Documents.

The Compare Documents dialog opens and you can choose the two documents you want. You can use first character navigation in the list of files for both the original document and the revised document.

When the Compare dialog opens, focus is in the list of documents to use as your original document. If you simply press the first character of the document you want, the list will open. You can also press Alt + Down Arrow to open the list.

The list is taken from the Recent Documents list in Word. Any document in the Recent Documents list including any documents you have pinned to the list of Recent Documents will be in the list. Word assumes that you were working on the document and any versions of it so it picks that list to choose from. There is no browse button so make sure that you recently opened the document you want to compare.

Before you Tab to and activate the OK button, choose to show the changes in the revised document (Alt + letter I) which is in the More settings area at the bottom of the Compare Documents dialog. We will be viewing the two documents Side-by-Side and will have the original on the left of the screen and the revised document showing any changes on the right.

Tab to and activate the OK button. The changes will appear in the revised document and that is where your focus will be.
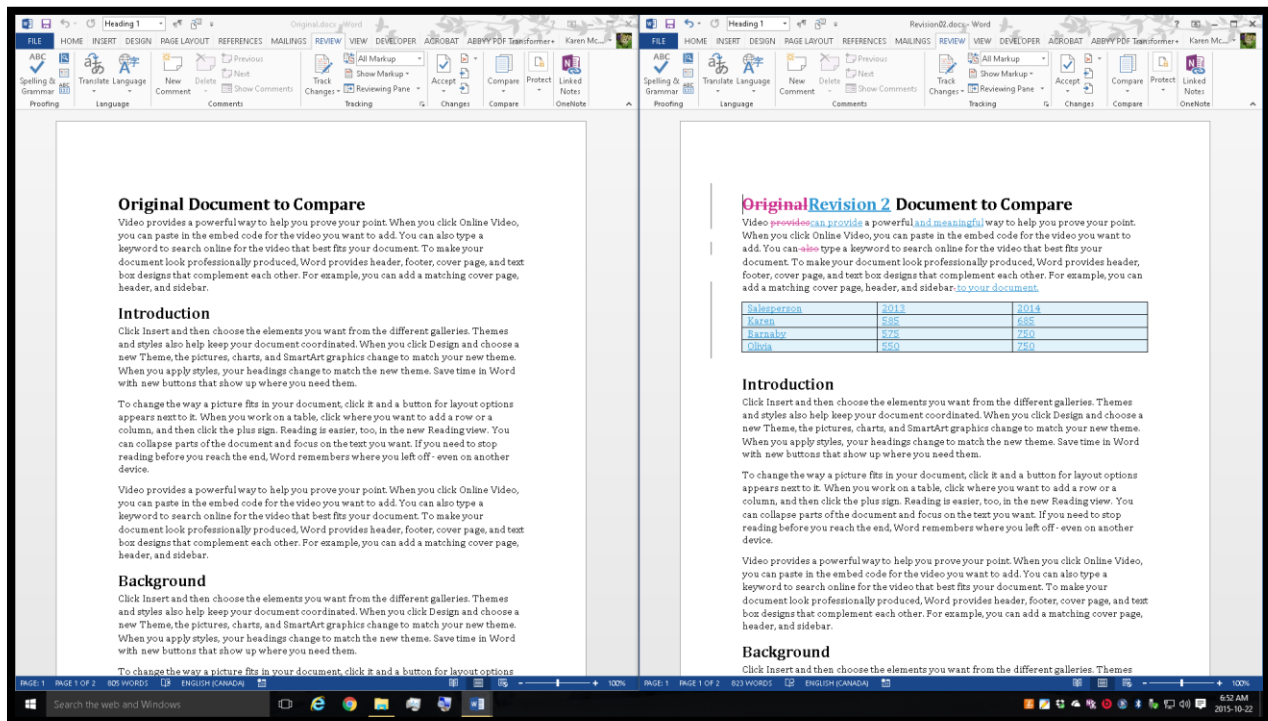

Figure 48 Comparing two documents Side-by-Side for changes.

With focus in one document, move to the other by using the View Ribbon, NOT by using Ctrl + F6 or Ctrl + Shift + F6. If you use those keyboard commands, focus will be in different places in each document and they will be out of sync.

Use the ability to Switch Window in order to keep the cursor at the same place in both documents.

The keyboard command to Switch window is Alt + W, W for View Ribbon, Switch Window. When this keyboard command is pressed, a list of the open documents appears with corresponding numbers.
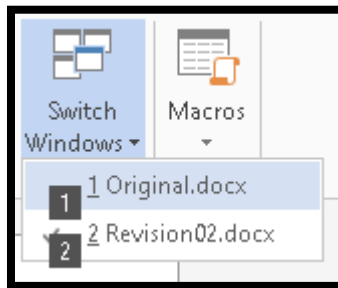

Figure 49 Switch Window option on the View Ribbon.

Because we opened the original document first, it is number 1 and the revised document is number 2. This is another strategy to keep things straight if you are using adaptive technology to Compare documents.

You can easily press Alt + W, W, number 1 to switch to the original document and Alt + W, W, 2 to switch to the revised document.

When you close the revised document, you will be asked if you want to save the changes. Remember that this document now has all revisions to the text showing using Track Changes. You may want to press F12 and give the document showing all revisions to date a new name if you want to keep them.

If you just wanted to be able to see the changes and review them, don't save the revised document.

Contact Information

You can contact Karen McCall with any questions about this how to booklet or any suggestions for others. Visit the Karlen Communications web site for more how to booklets!