



## If You Type at the Head of a Heading, and Other Verses about Word Cross-References

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*If you type at the head of a heading,  
Word stretches the bookmarks and reffing.  
If you type at the tail  
The crossrefs will fail  
To show the new text you've been editing.*

Have you encountered the scenario described in the poem? In a Microsoft Word document, you insert a cross-reference reading:

For more information, see *This Important Reference.*

After a couple days, the reference spontaneously changes to:

For more information, see *This is the end of the preceding section.*  
*This Important Reference.*

The reference has been stretched. It now contains extraneous text that comes from the preceding section of the document, followed by a paragraph mark and the correct referenced heading. In this example, the extraneous text is a single line, and it looks like a typo. I have seen examples where the extraneous text was 10 pages. The reader is confused by pages of text that are totally unrelated to the context.

Here is what happened:

1. You inserted a reference to the heading.

Word placed a hidden bookmark on the heading, and it inserted a REF field that points to the bookmark:

For more information, see `REF :_Ref40961996 \h \*charformat`.

2. You inserted some text – perhaps a single paragraph, perhaps several pages – immediately before the heading.

To do this, you clicked at the start of the heading, and you pressed Enter. That is the intuitive way to insert a paragraph, but it was a mistake!

3. You typed before the paragraph mark. Another mistake!
4. You updated the REF field.

You might have pressed F9 and updated the field deliberately. Or you might have generated a PDF or online help, and the generation tool updated the field. In the latter case, the original document might look fine. The reference is stretched only in the PDF or the online help.

The problem is that you typed at the start of a bookmarked heading. The new text and the paragraph mark are now part of the bookmark. The bookmark originally covered the heading between the brackets:

**[This Important Reference]**

Now it covers the preceding text, too:

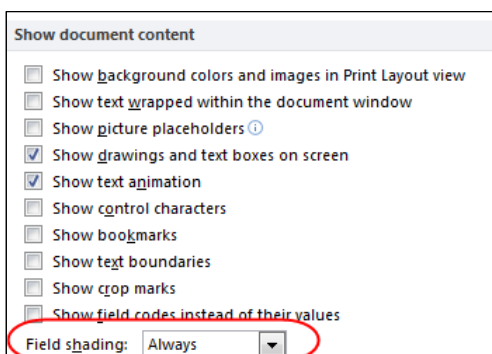
**[This is the end of the preceding section. ¶  
This Important Reference]**

When you update the bookmark, the REF field displays the complete bookmarked text. It does not know that you stretched the bookmark inadvertently.

### Detecting Stretched References

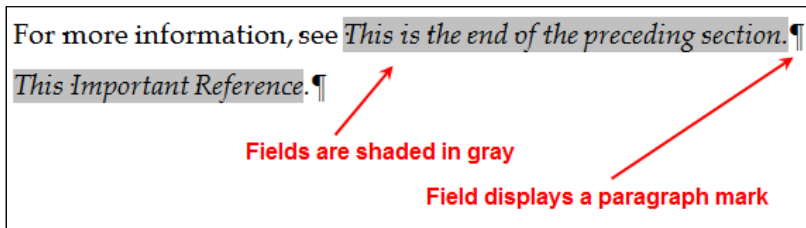
To detect the extraneous text in existing cross-references:

1. Open File > Options > Advanced. About halfway down the page, set Field Shading = Always.



2. Select the entire document and press F9.  
This updates the fields throughout the document.
3. Scroll through the document quickly, and view the gray-shaded fields.

4. If a field displays a paragraph mark or it spans several lines, it is probably a stretched cross-reference. Delete and re-create the reference.



### Preventing Stretched References

*Don't type at the head of a heading*

*If you're on the way to a wedding.*

*You will not have time*

*Before the deadline*

*To fix the bad bookmarks and reffing.*

As the poem says, never type at the start of a heading. Do not even press the Enter key.

Otherwise, if the document contains a reference to the heading, you will stretch the reference. Instead, go to the end of the preceding body paragraph, and press Enter there.

Here is another version of the poem, describing the right place to insert the new paragraph:

*Para before a heading?*

*Stop! You'll corrupt the reffing.*

*In the previous section*

*Do the Press-Enter action*

*So your xrefs will keep on behaving.*

### What About Typing at the Tail of a Heading?

If you type at the end of a bookmark, Word does not stretch the bookmark. The references do not display extraneous text. However, the references might be truncated.

For example, you change the bookmarked heading from

[This Important Reference]

to

[An Important Referenced Heading]

When you type *An*, Word includes it in the bookmark. When you type *d Heading*, Word does not extend the bookmark. After updating fields, the reference displays:

For more information, see *An Important Reference.*¶

## Preventing Truncated References

*To edit a heading throw darts.  
Aim for the middle – it's smart.  
Then delete the start  
And the finishing part,  
Update fields and admire your art.*

So how do you edit a heading safely? Edit in the middle. Then delete the start and finish. For example, change

[This·Important· Reference]

to

[This·An·Important· Referenced· Heading· Reference]

Now delete the start and finish:

[~~This·An·Important·Referenced·Heading·Reference~~]

The bookmark contains the remaining text:

[An·Important· Referenced· Heading]

When you update the REF field, it displays the reference correctly:

For more information, see *An Important Referenced Heading*.

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