

Formatting Your Ezine

By Windsong

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One of the common problems faced by ezine editors is being able to format their ezine so that it does not get screwed up when sent out.

So what causes the formatting information to be changed when your ezine is received by your subscribers?

There are many different email programs and they all interpret the email text they receive slightly differently. Some email programs automatically word-wrap lines at a set number of characters, others do not. Some will use a different character font and font size from the original text.

The biggest problem an ezine editor faces is trying to compensate for different font types. A font type determines how much space a character occupies and how close it is to a neighbouring character.

Always use monospaced fonts, or fixed fonts. Otherwise, your text may tend to grow when emailed. In other words the line gets longer. This effect is caused because these characters, known as variable fonts, can occupy a different amount of space making fixed alignment of text very difficult. Fixed fonts all have the same amount of space.

The next thing to avoid is using tabs to align lines of text. This will cause you alignment problems. The best way around this is to always manually insert the number of spaces you require and the incidents of major formatting problems will be reduced.

When it comes to line lengths never use lines longer than 65 characters. Email programs will wrap lines at different lengths but the majority are probably set to wrap at 65. To control where your lines wrap, always use a hard break. This forces the email program displaying your text to wrap a line

at that point unless the user has set it to a shorter length.
I prefer to use a line length of 60 characters.

When creating your ezine, always use a text editor such as notepad. Do not use Word to compose your ezine. You will have more problems than you want to deal with. It will lose all formatting when you paste it into the email composition window.

So to summarize... follow these simple rules:

1. Always use a fixed or monospaced font.
2. Do not use the tab key to align lines of text.
3. Always insert a hard break at the end of each line.
4. Keep your line lengths to a maximum of 65 characters.
5. Always use a simple text editor.

If you follow these rules the majority of your subscribers will receive your ezine formatted as you intended it.

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