Track Changes Technical Tips
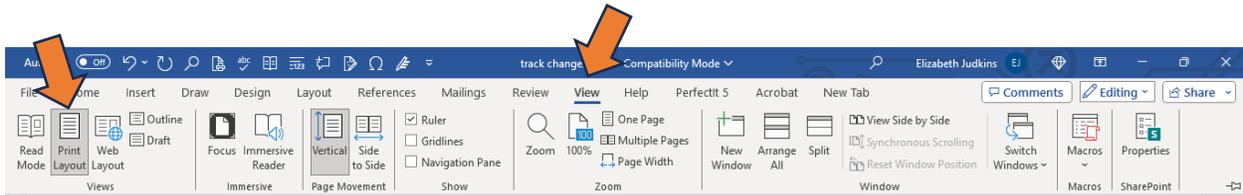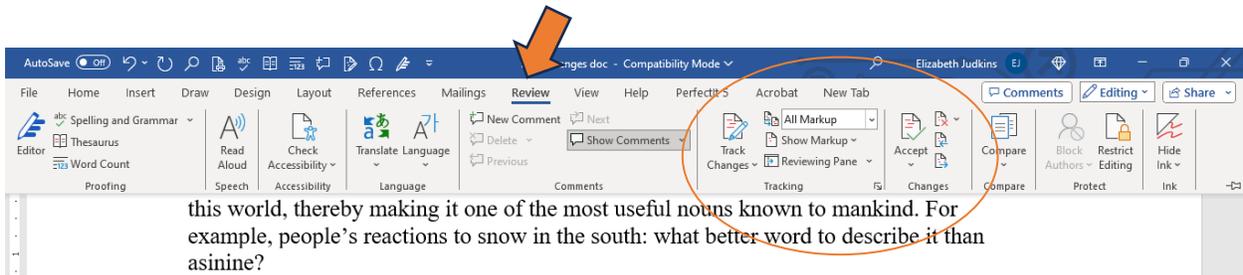
Word's Track Changes is an incredible tool for collaboration…if you know how to use it to your advantage. These tips will help you get the most from your edited manuscript.

- When you first open your edited document, you'll need to ensure you aren't in Read Mode or you won't be able to see your edits. In the main toolbar, click View and then Print Layout.

- Next, navigate to the Track Changes tools. In the main toolbar, click the Review tab.

this world, thereby making it one of the most useful nouns known to mankind. For example, people's reactions to snow in the south: what better word to describe it than asinine?
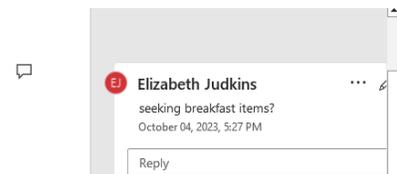
- Be sure All Markup is showing in the dropdown menu. This way you can see every comment, deletion, addition, etc.
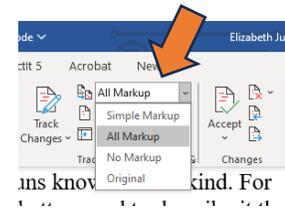

- Edits should now be clearly visible in your manuscript. If only one editor has used Track Changes, the edits are likely red (though this too can be customized). Below is an example of what my edits look like. Added text is in a red font, deleted text is struck through, and there is highlighted text and a little callout box that indicate there's a note in the margin. Also notice the vertical line down the left side—some changes are small and may be hard to spot, so a short vertical line gets added to the end of each line of text that has a change in it. These can add up, as you can see below.

- A few clicks can customize this look to suit your preferences. Use the dropdown menu next to Show Markup to reveal your options: You can hide or show Insertions and Deletions; hide or show Formatting; choose where you want to see revisions—Inline (top right example below) or in Balloons (middle right); and choose which people's edits you want to see at any one time. Clicking the bottom choice in the Balloons menu (Show Only Formatting in Balloons) will draw your attention to changes in formatting that you may otherwise have missed—the italicized word *text* in that bottom right example.
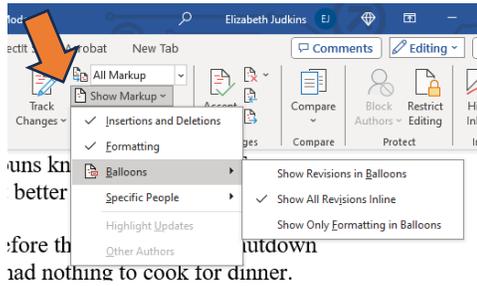
So, you've customized how you'd like your toolbar and document to look, and you can see all the changes and notes your editor has made. Now what?

- The box to the right of the Track Changes tool is about to come in very handy (orange circle below). One by one, you can click through and accept, reject, or jump to the previous or next revision. In the paragraph showing on the screen in the example below, the cursor is on the second line, where the word *of* has been inserted. Since it's clearly missing, click Accept, which turns the text black and moves you to the next revision. You can continue like this until you've gone through the entire document. Comments in the margin can be dealt with as you go, but you can't do anything with them with these particular buttons. For comments, you can use the tools in the yellow oval in the example below to navigate to the next or previous comment and deal with each in turn.
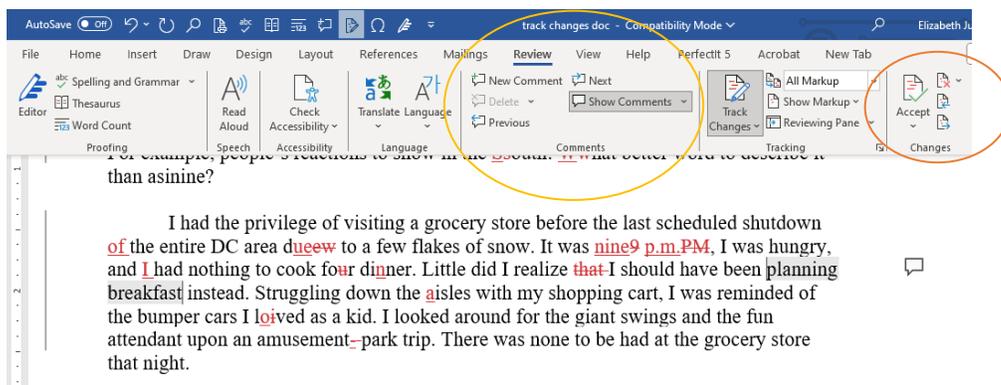

- Another way you can accept or reject changes is to right-click on them, though it can sometimes be a bit fiddly to click in just the right spot. In the example below, you've right-clicked on *p.m.* You can click Accept or Reject on the menu that pops up, or you can click Accept and Move to Next in the longer menu that pops up on top of that. With additions, you also have the choice of simply deleting them, but if you want to restore something that has been deleted by your editor, you'll need to either use a right-click or use the buttons on the menu bar to advance through the document.
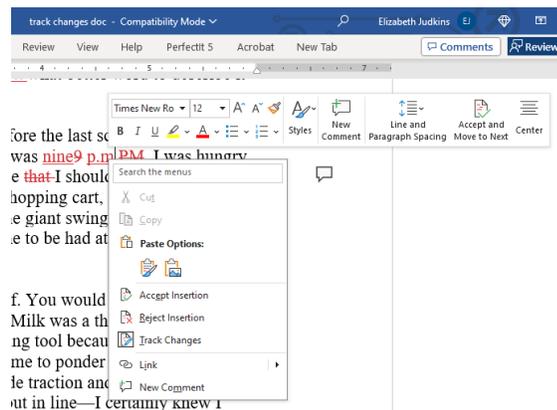
Other options

In the Track Changes menu, the dropdown menu has other options that can be useful. Simple Markup leaves the vertical line in the left margin indicating where there are changes and shows the tiny callout boxes in the right margins indicating notes. The rest of the text is black, as if you have accepted all the changes (though you haven't yet). No Markup turns all the text black AND takes away the vertical line and the callout boxes. And Original displays the document as it was before edits, though the changes are still there, just not visible in this mode. *If you've used Track Changes on a document, you'll need to deal with all the revisions and notes before moving to the next step, whether that's printing, uploading, sending it to beta readers, or whatever.*
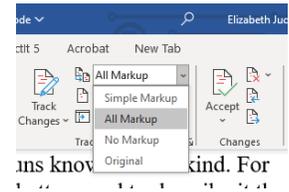
A few extras

While I have your attention, there are a few other cool features I just have to point out.

1. If you look at the top blue bar in the example below, you'll notice that I've personalized that toolbar with everything I use daily. From left to right: Undo, Redo, Find, Print Preview, Spelling and Grammar, Thesaurus, Word Count, Insert a Comment (used with Track Changes), Track Changes, Symbols, and Editor. Clicking on the arrow after that last icon will allow you to make choices for your own customized toolbar—the options in the More Commands at the bottom of that menu may take you quite a while to scroll through. Yes, many of the icons on my toolbar also have keyboard shortcuts, but before I learned those, it helped to have everything I needed at my fingertips. ⭐

2. Clicking Editor will pop up a window to the right of your screen. You'll get an overall score on your document, and then it will list how many issues you have with spelling, grammar, clarity, conciseness, punctuation conventions, and vocabulary. Clicking on each one shows the error and provides suggestions for how to fix the issue. Document stats, near the bottom, gives all sorts of helpful readability feedback (see bottom example below). ⭐

3. Read Aloud can help writers find places where they left out or repeated words or used a word that's spelled *almost* like the one they really wanted. Clicking this button adds controls to the top right of your screen. To use this feature, highlight the text you'd like the computer to read aloud and press play. It's pretty intuitive and may surprise you with how it sounds. ⭐
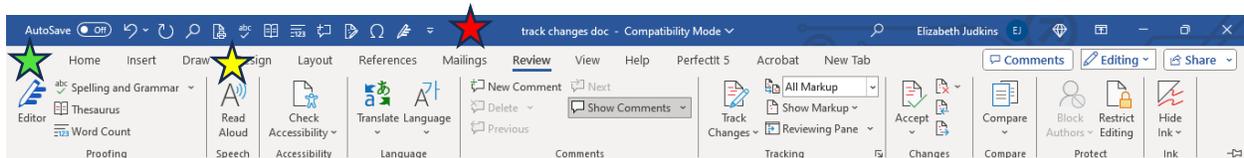
If you have other tips and tricks you think I should add to this guide (or there's something I haven't gotten quite right, please reach out to me—I love learning new shortcuts and ways of doing things that save time and effort and especially clicks: carpal tunnel is no joke.