Walden University Academic Skills Center

Widows and Orphans in Paragraphs

The widow and orphan control options in MS Word helps ensure that the first or last line of a paragraph is not left on a page alone. A widow line refers to the first line of a paragraph that is on a page by itself. An orphan line refers to the last line of a paragraph that is on a page by itself. Word 2007 and 2010 automatically uses this setting for new documents.

Here is an example of a widow line:

Here is an example of an orphan line:
Word provides options for adjusting widows and orphans. Writers can either change this option when they first open the document or highlight the portion of the paper they would like to change. Then:

Option 1:

1. Right-click, choosing “Paragraph…”

2. In the Paragraph pop-up window, choose “Line and Page Breaks” and adjust the “Widow/Orphan control” as needed, selecting “OK” when done.

![Paragraph dialog box](image)

Option 2:

1. Choose the arrow in the bottom right-hand corner of the “Paragraph” menu under “Page Layout”

![Page Layout menu](image)

2. In the Paragraph pop-up window, choose “Line and Page Breaks” and adjust the “Widow/Orphan control” as needed, selecting “OK” when you are done.
Widows and orphans can also appear in tables. Word automatically uses this setting for tables as well.

Here is an example of a widow table column:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Source</th>
<th>Example Citation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Here is an example of an orphan table column:
Word provides options for adjusting widows and orphans in tables. Writers can adjust this by highlighting the entire table that needs to have this setting changed:

Option 1:

1. Right-click, choosing “Paragraph...”

2. In the Paragraph pop-up window, choose “Line and Page Breaks” and adjust the “Widow/Orphan control” as needed, selecting “OK” when you are done.
Option 2:

1. Choose the “Page Layout” tab and the arrow in the bottom right-hand corner of the “Paragraph” menu

2. In the Paragraph pop-up window, choose “Line and Page Breaks” and adjust the “Widow/Orphan control” as needed, selecting “OK” when you are done.