[PC Club: What does that backwards P mean?](#)

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*The **North Orange County Computer Club** helps The Gadgetress tackle the multitude of readers' cries for help. NOCCC group has experts in Windows, Word and all sorts of computer topics. The club, which meets monthly on various topics, has been in existence since 1976. Visit the club's site at [noccc.org](#). To get this answer delivered to your computer automatically, sign up for [the e-mail update HERE](#).*

QUESTION: I have a PC running Windows XP, 2 gig memory, and over the past week I have come across a strange thing happening in my WORD documents. Seems that no matter which document I open, I get a paragraph sign, (looks like a backward P,) at the start and end of each paragraph. It must have been an error on my part while using the WORD program.

PC Club: What you are seeing is actually a feature of Word. Many people use this particular feature to troubleshoot problems with the formatting of their document. However, I totally understand your reaction if you are not used to it or did not intend to have it turned on.

With most versions of Word, a simple click of the mouse in the right place can toggle this feature on and off. But before we get to that, let's make sure that you have the correct toolbar turned on.
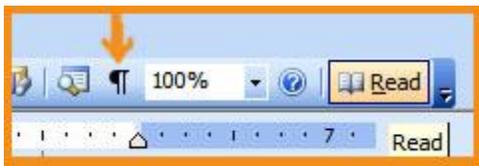
If you select "View" and then "Toolbars" from the Word menu at the top, make sure that there is a checkmark next to the item labeled "Formatting." If not, click this item to enable your Formatting Toolbar.

With the Formatting Toolbar enabled, you should see a backward P button near the right side of the toolbar similar to the backward p you see in your documents. This backward p on the Toolbar controls what is known as the Show/Hide feature.

Clicking this button will toggle the feature on and off. The character that you see in the document represents where Word has placed paragraph marks, which will appear each time you hit the "Enter" key on your keyboard. This feature will also show any spaces as dots, tabs as right-facing arrows and carriage returns as left-facing arrows as well as

several other special characters. This enables users of Word to see where these special characters are located as an aid to resolving formatting problems.

In addition, this feature can also reveal hidden text, which is a feature infrequently used but useful in certain situations.

This feature can also be controlled by selecting "Tools" and then "Options" from the Word menu. If you look at the section labeled "Formatting Marks," placing a check in the "All" checkbox is similar to clicking the Show/Hide button. *–Ed Schwartz, NOCCC member and PC Instructor. View his blog at* edwardns.blogspot.com*.*