Recovering Corrupt Word documents

Symptoms

You open (or try to open) a Word document but the file appears to be broken. Examples of problems can be:

- File will open but you cannot print it
- File will not open at all
- File will open but then your computer grinds to a halt

There are three different procedures you can try to recover your document.

Procedure 1: Convert the document to a PDF document

This procedure is only available if all the following are true (if not please skip to Procedure 2):
- You have Acrobat Writer installed (this can be installed on any WBS computer by clicking on the Acrobat Writer icon in WBS Applications).
- You only wish to print the document and not perform any further editing.
- You can open the document.

To convert your document, do the following

- Open the broken document
- Convert the document to a PDF file in your usual way (for example by clicking the PDF icon as shown below

## *Procedure 2: Use Microsoft's built in document recovery tool*

If Procedure 1 did not work, or you are not able to open the file then try the following.

- Make a copy of the broken file if possible (so that you can revert back if things get worse)
- Open Word
- Click File > Open
- Navigate to, and select the broken file but do not open it. Instead click the Down Arrow next to the Open button (see below)
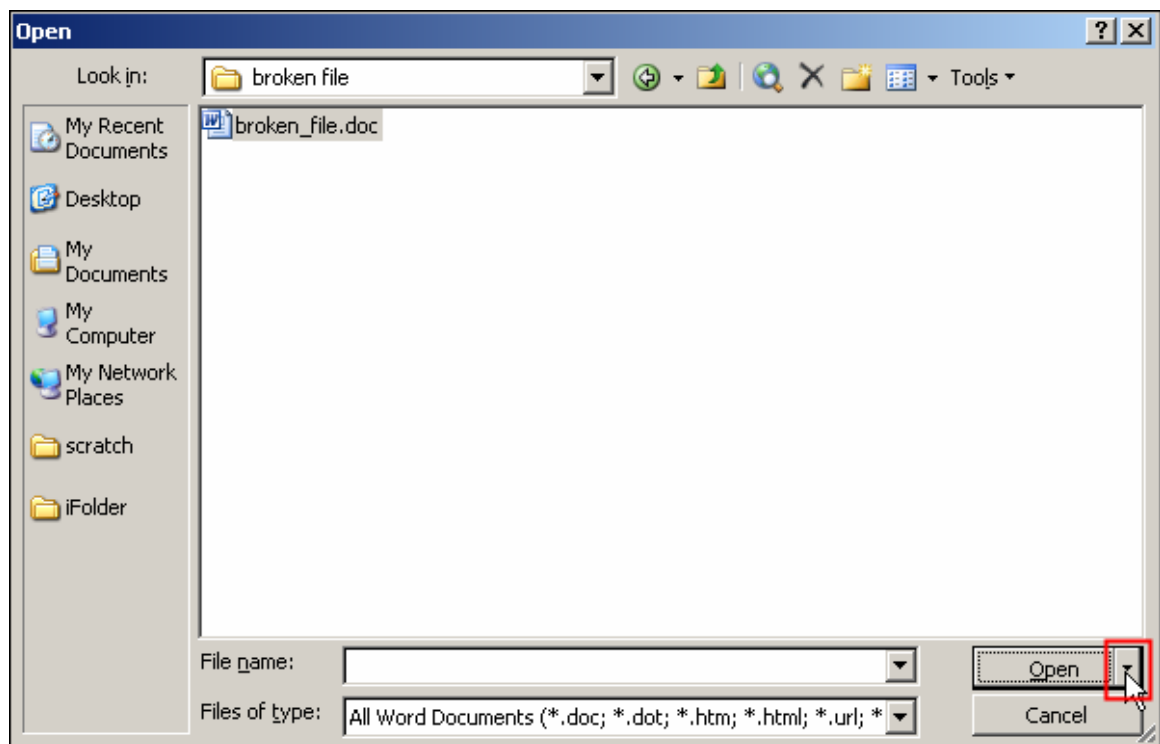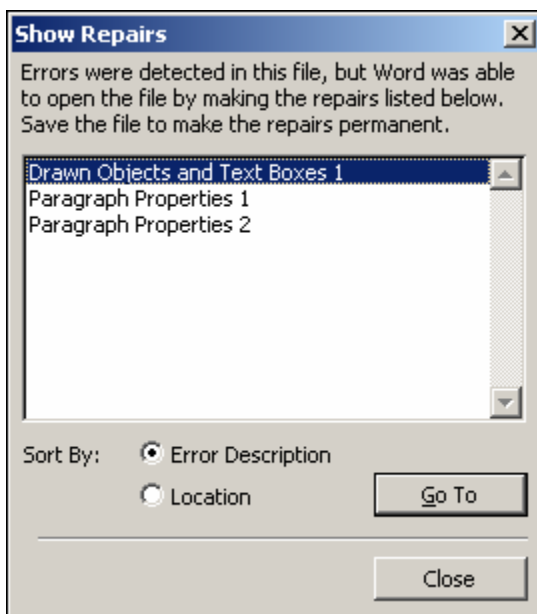

- Select Open and Repair from the pop-up menu
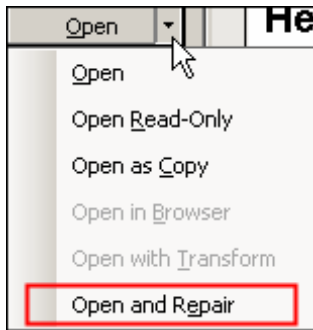
- Windows will report the errors that it found and was able to fix. You should check the document thoroughly as some formatting may have been lost during the fix


Procedure 3: Convert the document to another format and back again

If neither of the above worked but you can open the document then you can try saving your broken document as a different format and then saving it back to Word. This will often fix the problem.
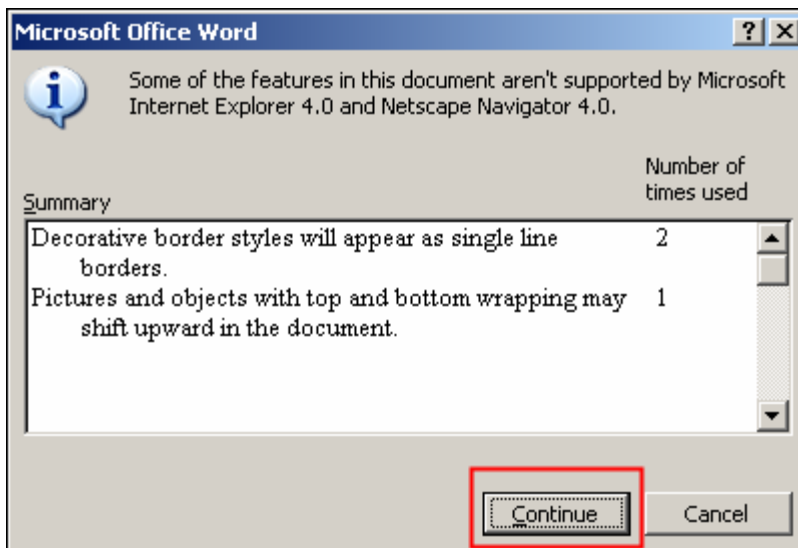
- Make a copy of your broken document so that you can revert back if things get worse
- Open the document in Word
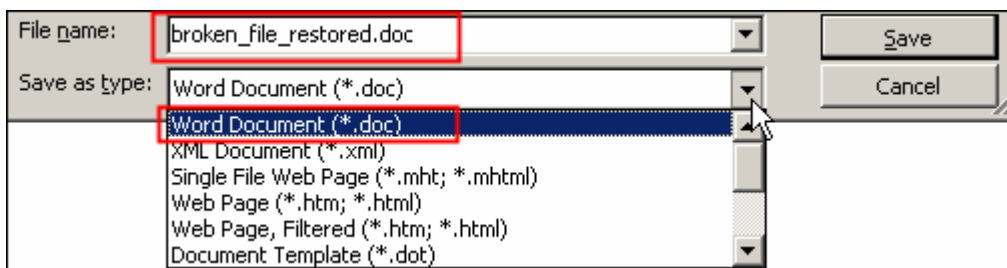- Choose File > Save As

- Select '**Web Page**' as the type. Do not select **Web Page, Filtered**. Save the document
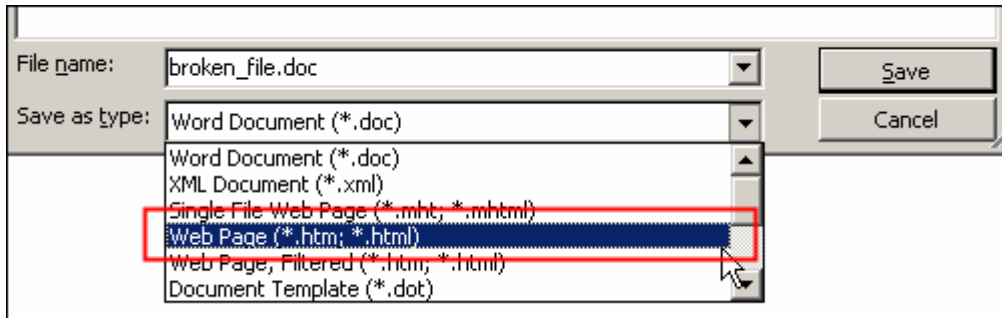
- If you receive a warning about formatting that will be lost click Continue

- You now have your document as a web page (half way there!). Click File > Save As
- Change the file name (so you don't copy over the original) and select to **Save as type 'Word document'**. Click Save

- If you are lucky your document will now work correctly again. You should check it carefully however as some formatting may have been lost.

- If your document is still broken please forward it to help@wbs.ac.uk If none of the above work then it may be badly damaged but it should still be possible to at least extract the text.

Tips on preventing documents from becoming corrupt

- Try to keep your document simple. Do not include unnecessary graphics
- Never use Versioning (nice idea, doesn't work)
- Never use nested tables (i.e. tables inside tables)
- Never use Master and sub documents
- Periodically take copies of important document that you can revert to if things go wrong
- The longer the document the more risk of corruption and hence the more careful you have to be
- Never say a Word document directly to a floppy disk
- Saving when resources are low can also be a problem. If you notice Word start to slow down try closing any other applications that are open and restarting Word. If things are still slow then you should shutdown and restart your computer.

Why do Word documents corrupt?

See this excellent article on the MSVP website:
http://word.mvps.org/FAQs/AppErrors/CorruptDoc.htm