

# Fighting images in Microsoft Word

by Rachel Stancliff on March 11, 2013



Remember this? You're working on a document – maybe it's a report for your sales meeting, a set of instructions for a client, or a promotional flyer – and you are trying to place an image. You're bumping it down a few keystrokes at a time to get it perfectly situated between paragraphs or at the bottom of the page when suddenly it goes flying off, jumping to the top of the page or disappearing completely.

What happened?!

Images in Microsoft Word are finicky. Unlike programs such as Adobe InDesign or even Microsoft Publisher, in which inserted images are not anchored to surrounding text, **images in Word are always placed in relation to a paragraph or an “anchoring object” (which is also usually a paragraph).**

By default, images are treated as inline objects: they follow the flow of the rest of the document's content. There is no way to keep an inline image in a single place – it will move with the rest of the content.

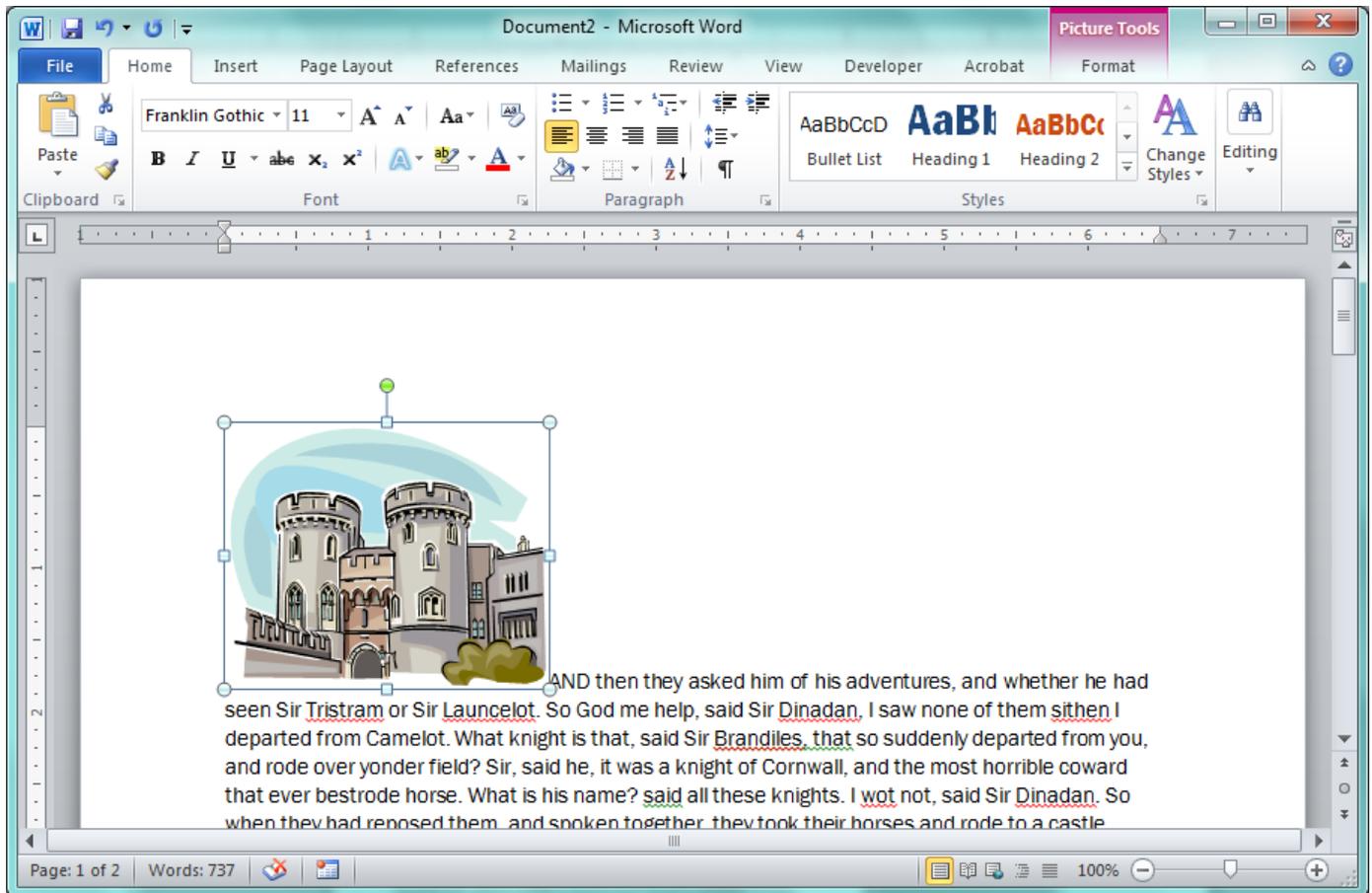


Figure 1. An example of an inline image.

In order to more exactly position an image, you must convert it to a **floating image**. This is usually done by using Word's *Picture Tools* options on the Ribbon to wrap text around the image or align it.

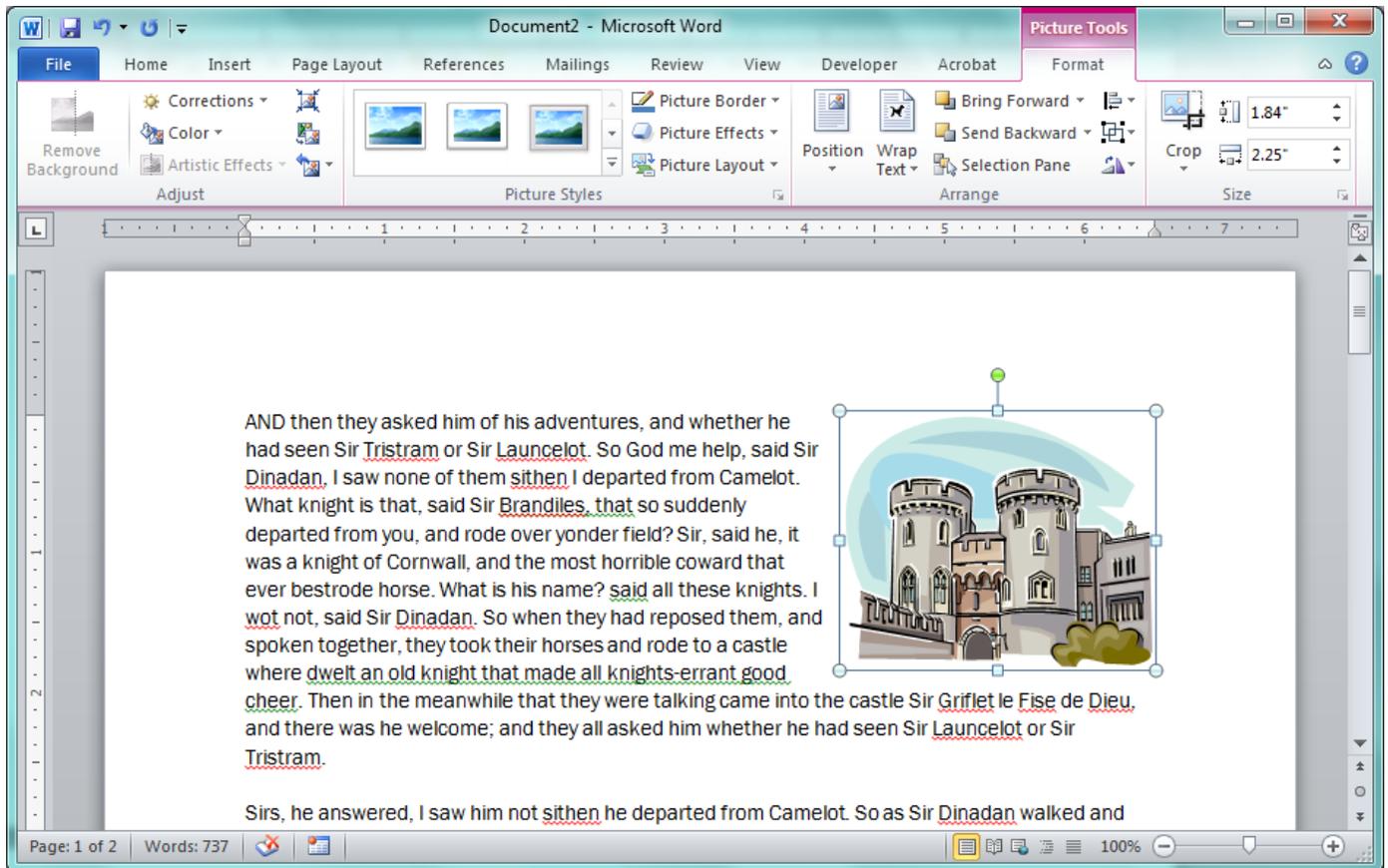


Figure 2. An example of a floating image, with square text wrapping and align right to margin applied from the Picture Tools options.

**Most images you work with will probably be floating images.** So, let's concentrate on those. Floating images have "object anchors" – if an image's object anchor is removed or hidden, the image will also be removed or hidden. Most anchors are in paragraphs.

You can display object anchors to get a better idea of where a straying image is "attached" to your content. In Word 2010, to display object anchors, go to *File > Options*. In the *Options* window, select *Display* on the left. On the right side, under *Always show these formatting marks on the screen*, select *Object anchors*.

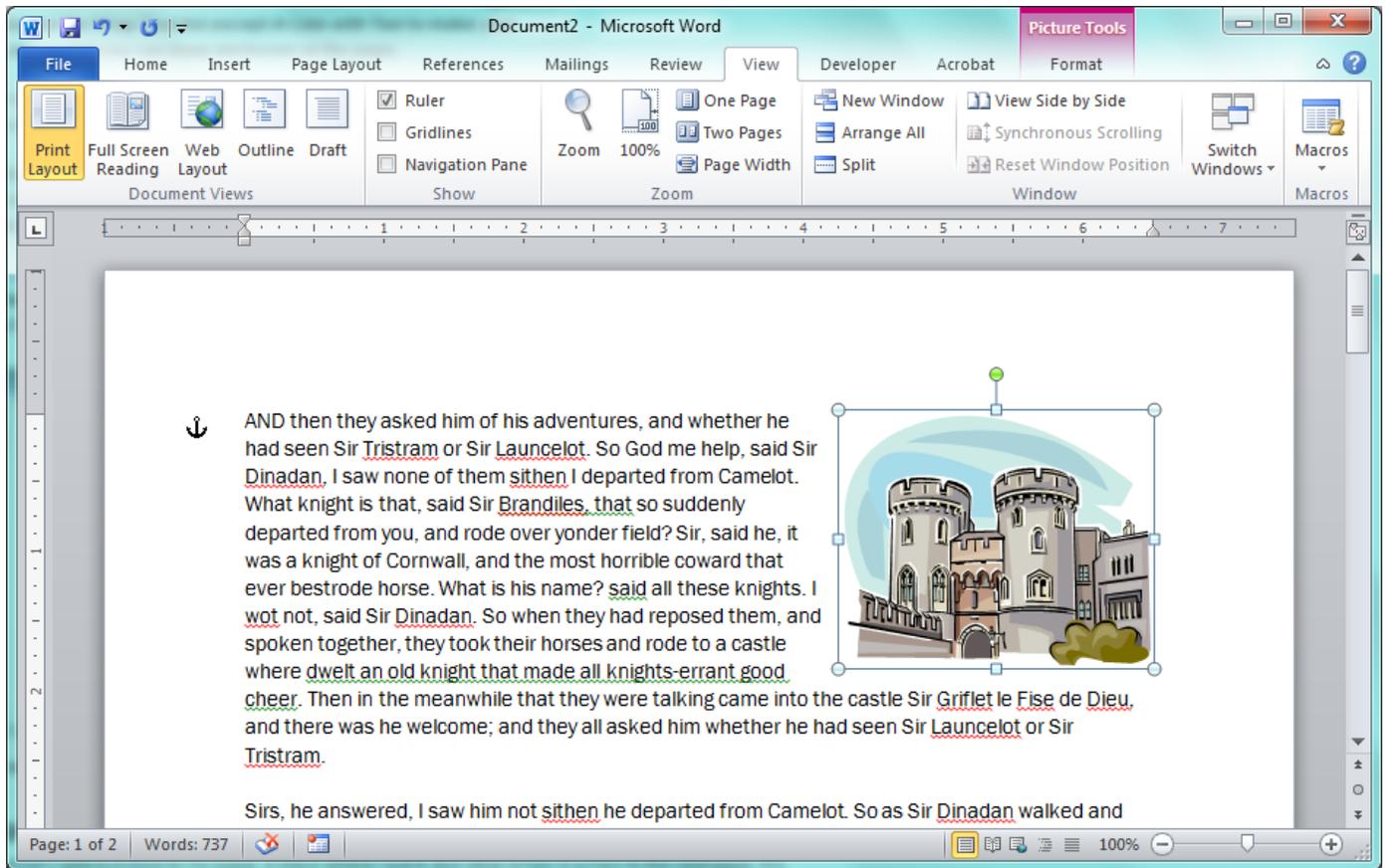


Figure 3. In this screenshot, Word is set to display object anchors. This floating image aligned to the right is actually anchored to an object at the very beginning of the text paragraph, on the left side of the document.

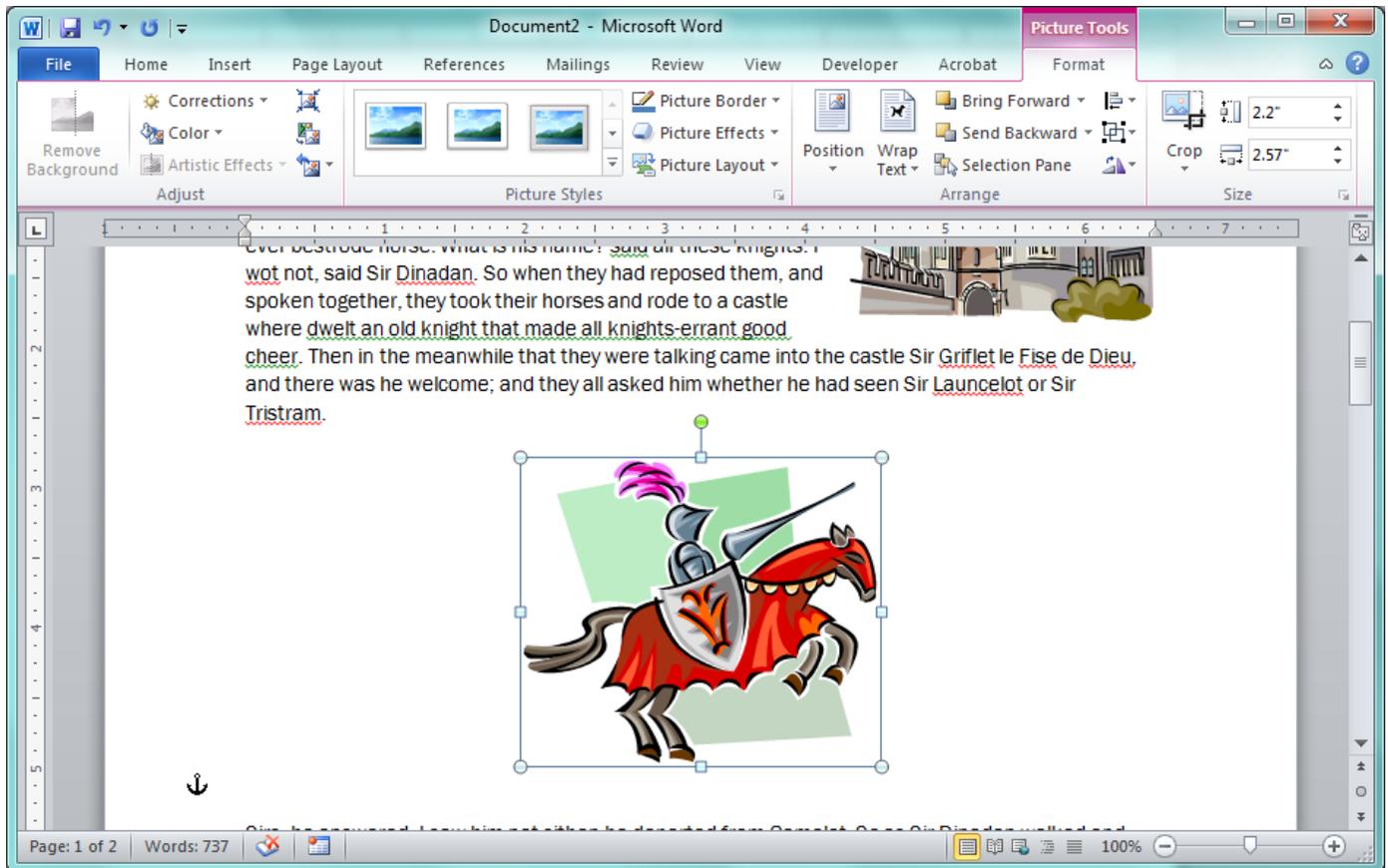


Figure 4. This floating image, centered in the middle of the page, appears to be “between” two paragraphs. However, it is still anchored to an object in a “blank” paragraph.

**So why do images get moved around?** Because they are anchored to paragraphs. If text or additional pictures are inserted into your document **above** a paragraph with another image, that entire paragraph will move...and the image along with it. What can you do?

- To mitigate problems, insert all your pictures **last**, and in the order they appear in the document. By starting from top to bottom, your images will less likely be affected by changes.
- If you insert an image and move it far away from its original anchor (where it was first inserted), you will encounter more problems. **Try to keep an image and its object anchor as close as possible to each other.** Don't insert an image at the very top of a page, and then try to push it to the bottom of the page. Instead, select an image, cut it (using Ctrl + C on your keyboard), and then paste it back into the document (Ctrl + V) closer to where you want it positioned.
- Play with the *Picture Tools* options – Word provides **some powerful built-in positioning and wrapping options** that can make your life easier. And in a pinch, knowing how to right click on a picture and use the *Size and Position* manual options can help you make precise placements.