

Tips¹ on how to type superscripts and subscripts (when using Microsoft Word)

Subscripts:

If you need to type the formula of sodium sulfate, you would need a **subscript of 2** after the sodium and a **subscript of 4** after the sulfate. So what do you do?

Type the formula as: Na2SO4

- a) Highlight the 2 Na₂SO₄ and at the same time type control [Ctrl] and equals [=]
- b) Highlight the 4 Na₂SO₄ type [Ctrl] and [=]

* **To undo** this, type the same thing! That is: type [Ctrl] and [=]

You can highlight a symbol using a mouse or by placing the cursor next to the symbol, holding the shift key, and using the left right arrows.

Superscripts:

For powers (as in squares or cubes), or for charges on ions or polyatomic ions, you would need a **superscript**. To type the phosphate ion correctly, you would need to have a **superscript of -3** after the phosphate ion.

Type the volume of 155.6 centimeters cubed (or cubic centimeters)

- a) Type 155.6 cm³
- b) Highlight the 3 155.6 cm³ type [Shift], [Ctrl] and [=] to make **3 a superscript**

Type the formula for phosphate: PO₄-3

- a) Highlight the 4 PO₄-3 and type [Ctrl] and [=] for a **subscript of 4**
- b) Highlight the -3 PO₄⁻³ type [Shift], [Ctrl] and [=] to make **-3 a superscript**

You can also use the formatting palette to, well, format text including subscripts and superscripts. **Now practice typing a bunch (more than 15) examples so when you have to type another lab report, this will become second nature (that means it will be easy!) for you! :o)**

When you need to type a minus sign hold down the [option] key while typing the [-]. This will give you what is called the n-dash. It is a dash that is the width of the letter n and looks more like a minus sign in the New Times Roman font. (If you use a different font, check the size to make sure it is large enough to be easily visible.) The original is - and the n-dash is –. Also for typing the degrees sign hold down the [option] and [shift] key and the [8] at the same time. It will automatically give you the correct symbol without further formatting, like 15°C. This looks better than a superscript letter o which would be 15^oC.

On a Macintosh system substitute the Apple key for [Ctrl].

¹ Bravo , M. Morgan and Flyin' Squirrel's Nest 2004