

TOC Lines Missing

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Sometimes Microsoft Word seems to get hopelessly confused. We can look things up on the Internet, but it usually boils down to trying everything possible, until something works. One of the nastier problems: a reference to a heading gathers a whole bunch of text; the solution to that one usually lies with the heading itself – likely it was changed – or a second heading was created by positioning at the front of the heading and hitting Enter. I have not nailed it down, but it seems the problem can be related to either the old or new heading – or to a sleeping null heading.

The current problem was far worse, took hours to fix. My book is approaching 400 pages. It has a main table of contents (TOC) with level 1 and 2 headings. Each of the eight chapters has its own TOC with level 2 and 3 headings. This has all been working well for years (third edition in progress).

Then I made some major updates to Chapter 1, mostly at the beginning. This involved renaming a section (replacing most of its text), moving text around, etc. A whole bunch of new tables were added – it's technical, a bridge book.

The TOC for Chapter 1 failed: The first four of seven Heading 2 sections had disappeared (with their subsections) – yet they were in the main TOC!

Relying on my regular local backups of the file: the last version of 25 Sep was fine, but all three later copies were bad. On yet another copy, I attempted a quick fix, using everything I could find on the internet and all my wiles (I spent my career in computer support). No luck.

Next, a simple variation of the last resort: in yet another copy of the file, I deleted all four of the offending sections. The variation was, instead of moving them to a new file, I moved them to the end of the current file, just before a copy of the back cover. Then I added a new first Heading 1 of “TESTing” with a dummy paragraph. The chapter TOC now built correctly, with the new first section.

In stages, I moved the desired sections back into place, testing that the chapter TOC still worked. Finally, I moved text-only for the first section over the dummy paragraph – and retyped the desired heading over TESTing. It worked!

All that remained was to clean up residue at the end of the book and repair the footers for the returned sections. Whew!