Step-by-step FORMATTING

How to Format Your 5.5" x 8.5" Fiction
Novel Without Losing Your Mind

www.indieauthorrevolution.com

WHY DIY FORMATTING?

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Let's Talk
REALITY

Formatting isn't just about aesthetics—it's about creating a seamless reading experience. A well-formatted book helps guide the reader's eye, enhances readability, and ensures your story shines without distractions. Whether in print or digital form, proper formatting reflects your professionalism, increases reader trust, and can even impact reviews and sales. Don't let poor layout take away from your hard work—give your book the polished finish it deserves.

Step 1:

Set your Trim Size and Margins

File → Page Setup → Paper

Size: Custom 5.5" x 8.5"

Margins:

- Top: 0.75"
- Bottom: 0.75"
- Inside (Left): 1"
- Outside (Right): 0.25"

Longer than 300 pages? Add to the inside margin

Page setup

| Pages | Pageless |

Apply to

Whole document ▾

Orientation

⦿ Portrait   ◯ Landscape

Paper size   **Page color**

Statement (5.5" x 8.5") ▾   ◯ ▾

Margins (inches)

Top	Bottom	Left	Right
0.75	0.75	1	0.25

Saved as default   Cancel   **OK**

Step 2:

- Use serif fonts: Garamond, Baskerville, Georgia, Times New Roman
- Size: 12 pt or 14 pt (depends on page count)
- Format → Line spacing: DOUBLE
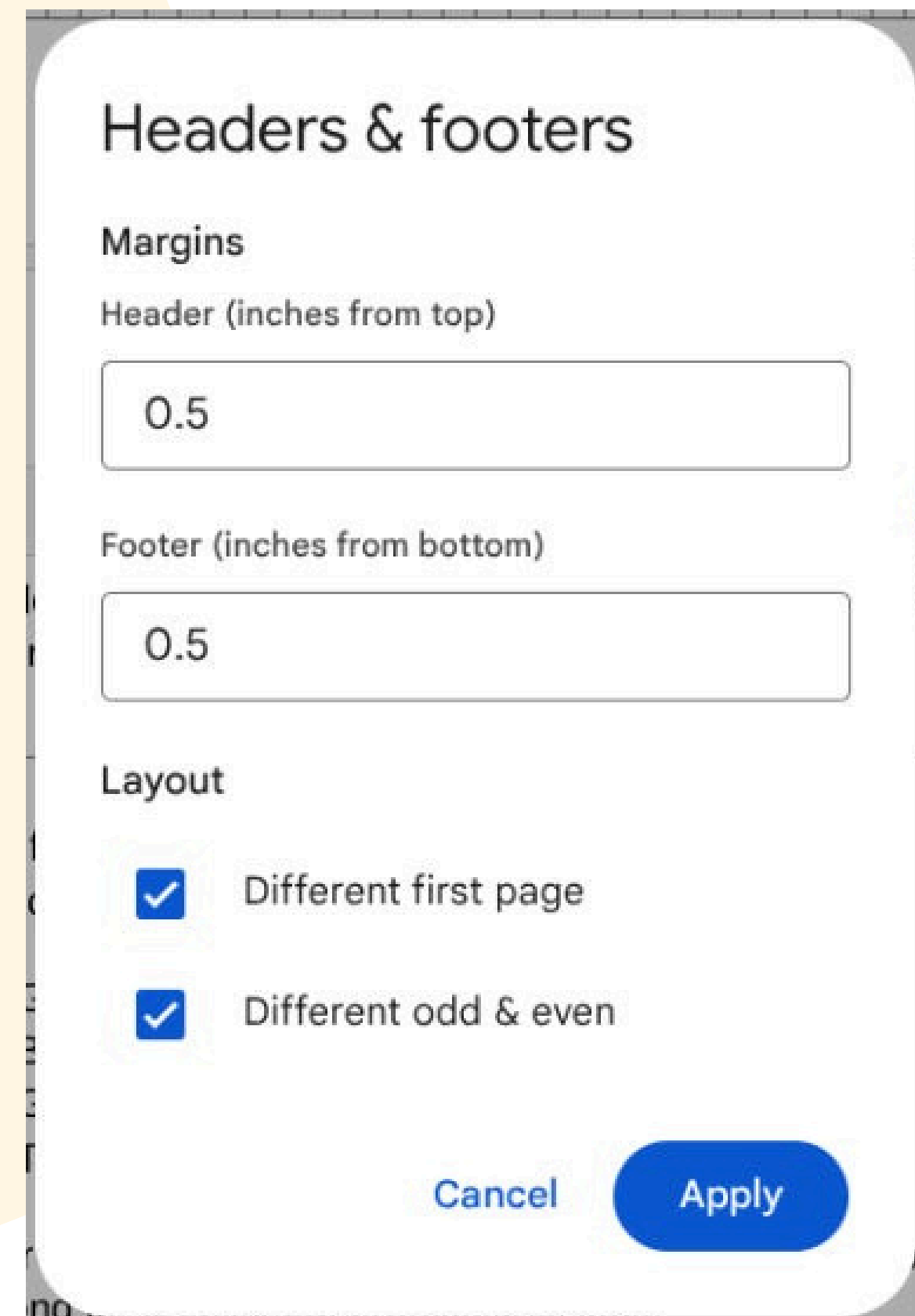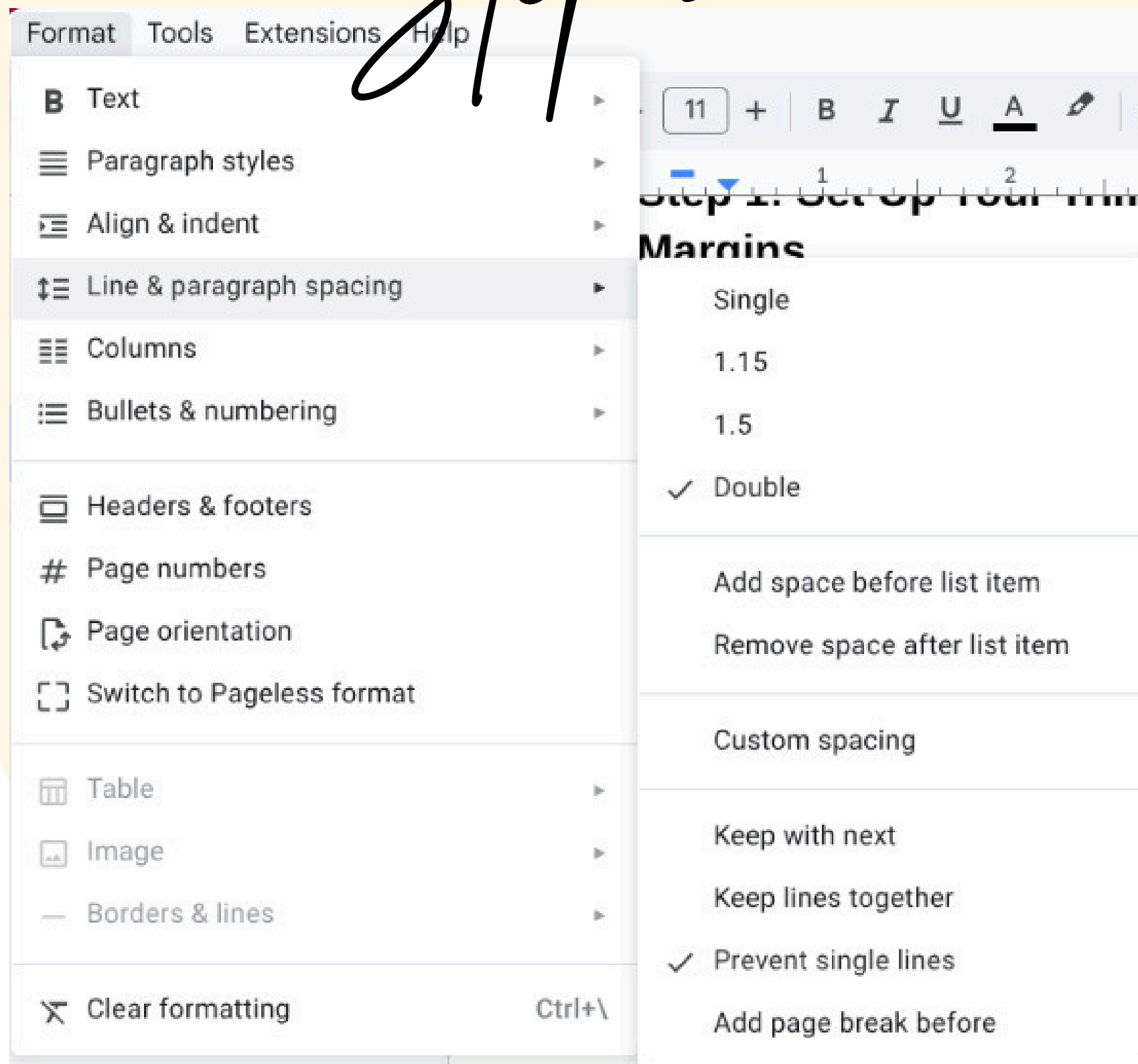- Enable "Prevent single lines" to avoid widows/orphans

Step 3:

Header Setup:
- Different first page
- Different odd & even pages
- Even = Author Name
- Odd = Book Title

Footer Setup:
- Start page numbers on actual story
- Turn OFF "Show on first page"
- Start at 0

Step 2:

Format   Tools   Extensions   Help

B Text ▶
≡ Paragraph styles ▶
⮕ Align & indent ▶
↕≡ Line & paragraph spacing ▶
≡≡ Columns ▶
☰ Bullets & numbering ▶

▭ Headers & footers
Page numbers
⬡ Page orientation
⊡ Switch to Pageless format

⊞ Table ▶
🖼 Image ▶
— Borders & lines ▶

✕ Clear formatting   Ctrl+\

11 + **B** *I* U̲ A̲ ✎

Step 1: Set Up Your Thin
Margins

Single
1.15
1.5
✓ Double

Add space before list item
Remove space after list item

Custom spacing

Keep with next
Keep lines together
✓ Prevent single lines
Add page break before

Headers & footers

Margins

Header (inches from top)

0.5

Footer (inches from bottom)

0.5

Layout

☑ Different first page

☑ Different odd & even

Cancel   Apply

Step 4:

Title Page:
- Centered Title (36 pt), Author (24 pt)
- No header/page number

Copyright Page (10 pt):
- ISBN, disclaimers, edition
- Dedication: Optional & Sweet
- TOC: Insert → Table of Contents (use Heading Is)
- Page Breaks between each section

Step 5:

- Use Heading 1 for chapter titles
- Customize font size and styling
- Add a page break at the end of each chapter
- Always start chapters on the RIGHT-HAND PAGE
- Use left alignment (not justified)

Step 6:

Add Visual Elements (OPTIONAL)

Insert → Image

- Use sparingly (especially in print!)
- Color images increase print cost
- For custom breaks: use unique symbols for multiple POVs
- Test print settings with KDP or IngramSpark

Step 7:

Format the Back Matter

- Acknowledgements (Heading 2)
- About the Author
- Bonus content, appendices, extras
- New page for each
- Match formatting style

Bonus Tips
TO STAY SANE

- Turn on: View → Show Non-Printing Characters
- Save paragraph styles as default
- Export DOCX for editing
- Export PDF for upload (KDP, Ingram, etc.)

Final Pep Talk

You built this book from the inside out-
And when you hold the proof in your hands?
You'll know it was 100% worth it
Go format that masterpiece and claim your success