

Word Processing

Word Processing refers to the act of using a computer to create, edit, save and print documents. In order to perform word processing, specialized software (known as a Word Processor) is needed. One example of a Word Processor is Microsoft Word, but other word processing applications are also widely used. Examples include: Microsoft Works Word Processor, Open Office Writer, Word Perfect and Google Drive Document.

These programs allow users to create a wide variety of documents including (Word processing cycle but certainly not limited to) reports, letters, memos, newsletters and brochures. In addition to typing text, the word processor allows you to add content such as pictures, tables, and charts to your documents as well as decorative items including borders and clipart.

The editing and formatting capabilities of the word processor demonstrate the application's true power. Text can be inserted, edited, moved, copied or deleted within your document and the appearance of the text can be modified in numerous ways. Most word processors also give you the ability to check your spelling and grammar and many have built in dictionaries and other tools to assist you in your writing.



ESSENTIAL WORD-PROCESSING FUNCTIONS

Essential word-processing functions can be grouped into the categories of input, manipulation, formatting, and output of text.

Text Input

Typically, text is entered into the word processor from a keyboard; other input methods include:

Copying text from other applications (such as from hypertext markup language [HTML] documents, e-mail messages, or online encyclopedias) and pasting it into a word-processing document

Scanning printed documents and using optical-character-recognition (OCR) software to convert the scanned documents into text characters

Using voice-recognition software to convert spoken words into text characters

Text Manipulation

Text manipulation refers to the "processing" part of word processing. Word processors provide easy methods of deleting, inserting, copying, and moving individual characters, words, phrases, and paragraphs—even entire pages of information—with a few clicks of a mouse button or with such keyboard shortcuts as Ctrl-C to copy, Ctrl-X to cut, and Ctrl-V to paste or insert text. Text can be automatically checked for spelling and for conformance to basic grammatical principles as the text is entered and edited.

The find-and-replace feature in a word processor allows the user to search for every occurrence of a particular character, word, or phrase within a document and replace it with new text. Most word processors also include automatic correction and automatic formatting of common errors and mechanical conventions as text is entered from the keyboard. For example, commonly misspelled words can be automatically corrected as soon as the misspelled words are entered; two spaces entered after the end of a sentence can be changed automatically to one space; a lowercase letter beginning a new sentence can be capitalized automatically. Proper typographic quotation marks ("smart" or "curly" quote marks—" and ") and apostrophes (') can be inserted automatically instead of the straight typewriter-style quotation marks entered from the keyboard. Fractions and other symbols can be formatted automatically as their keyboard equivalents are entered. For example, when a fraction for one-half is entered as 1/2, it is changed to the symbol $\frac{1}{2}$; two hyphens (—) are changed to a long dash (—); and (c) is changed to ©.

Text Formatting

Word-processing software typically includes "wizards" or "help" features to provide automated formatting of common business documents. For example, a letter wizard can assist the user to properly format a business letter, and a résumé wizard can help the user format a professional-looking résumé. Templates are another automated formatting feature. A template is a type of pre-formatted, fill-in-the-blank document that is useful for maintaining a specific format each time a document is created, especially when multiple word-processing operators are involved. A newsletter template, for example, allows a user to enter the text of newsletter articles, headlines, and graphics without having to re-create the newsletter layout for each issue of the newsletter.

The most-common formatting tasks are typically performed by the user as a document is created. Individual character and word formatting includes selection of type size, type style, and typeface. Size is measured in points, a unit of measure in which 72 points make up an inch. Typically, 11- or 12-point type is used for basic business documents. Newsletters, annual reports, and other such "designed" documents may use type as small as 8 or 9 points for the basic text and as large as 24, 36, or 48 points

(or more) for main titles. Type styles, such as italics, underline, and bold, are easily selected using keyboard shortcuts or by selecting them from the basic font menu. Typefaces (typeface refers to the look or design of the type) are available in thousands of varieties, including such commonly known faces as Times Roman, Arial, Helvetica, and Garamond.

Paragraph formatting includes line spacing, meaning the amount of blank space left between lines of type (single spacing and double spacing, for example); paragraph spacing (the amount of blank space that precedes or follows each paragraph); justification (all lines of type made even at both margins, or left uneven or ragged at the right margin); and indentation (such as a first-line indentation at the beginning of each paragraph).

Page and overall-document formatting includes setting margins (typically 1-inch margins are used on the top, bottom, and both sides of such basic business documents as letters, reports, and memos), creating columns like those used in a newspaper or newsletter, and creating headers and footers (information such as the page number or a chapter title that is repeated at the top or bottom of each page of a document). Most word processors also provide special layout features for formatting outlines, tables, envelopes, and mailing labels.

Text Output

Once text has been created, edited, and formatted into a finished electronic document, it must be put into some tangible form or lasting electronic form to be of practical benefit. That output process usually starts with the saving of the document on the computer's hard drive, a floppy disk, a CD, or a memory device such as a flash drive. Saving the document, in fact, is an activity that should take place frequently during the creation and editing processes to guard against loss due to problems such as electrical-power failure, computer malfunctions, and operator error.

Printing a document on paper is the most common output method; other output methods include faxing a document directly from the word processor by use of a computer modem, sending the document to another person by e-mail, and converting the word-processing document to various other electronic formats for online viewing or for eventual printing from other applications. For example, word-processing documents are frequently converted to HTML for use as Web pages, to portable document format (PDF) files, and to rich text format (RTF) files for use in other computer programs (particularly other word-processing programs).

ADVANCED WORD-PROCESSING FEATURES

Although most word-processing users tend to learn and use primarily the basic word-processing features, numerous more-advanced features are available in most word processors to make word processing much easier to complete in less time. Taking the time to learn some advanced word-processing features and functions usually has a high payoff in terms of productivity and professionalism.

Some of the more-common advanced word-processing features and functions are described briefly below:

Styles

Styles are user-created formatting commands that allow great control over repetitive formatting structures within a document. For example, using a "style" for each type of heading in a report will ensure consistent formatting of the headings and will eliminate the need for a user to manually format each heading as it is created.

Macros and Merging

Macros are stored keystrokes, or sets of editing and formatting commands, that can be replayed whenever needed. Macros can boost productivity and take much of the tedium out of repetitive word-processing tasks. Merging is the process of using lists of such information as names, addresses, phone numbers, product descriptions or model numbers, and so on to fill in designated fields or blanks in documents to create mass mailings, address labels, directories, and catalogs.

Version Control

Version-control features allow a user to track the various stages of editing that a document may pass through, including versions created by multiple users involved in the creation and editing of a document. Related features such as the ability to track changes made in a document enable multiple users to review suggested document changes and to accept or reject proposed changes.

Automatic References and Indexes

Documents that include tables of contents, cross-references, indexes, footnotes, endnotes, and captions will benefit from the capability of a word processor to automatically generate and format these items.

Desktop-Publishing Capabilities

Professional-looking documents such as newsletters, advertisements, annual reports, brochures, and business cards can be designed with most modern word-processing software.

Graphical images from clip-art collections, digital photographs, and scanned images, and drawings created with graphics programs, can be integrated easily into word-processing documents. Pages and paragraphs can be enclosed with decorative borders. Background images and colors can be added to pages within a document. Graphical elements such as lines, boxes, arrows, and artistic textual headings can be created quickly and easily within most word-processing programs.

Although word processors are generally not as sophisticated as desktop-publishing software or page-layout programs in their capabilities for setting type and for working with graphical elements, they can be used to create attractive, professional-looking documents that go beyond the basic layout and formatting of letters, memos, and reports. Using a word-processing program to create designed documents is often preferable to using a high-end desktop-publishing program, however, because word-processing users are not required to become proficient in using another program and because documents within an organization or department are created and maintained using the same application.