

Eight Handy Tools in Microsoft Word

by <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1759,2314059,00.asp> Neil J. Rubenking

Microsoft Word is full of tools that can help you work faster and smarter—but only if you know about them. Here's a list to remind you of just what Word can do for you. You're probably familiar with some of these. Your neighbor knows a few, too, but not the same few. Time to learn something new!

Shrink document by one page. A document whose last page is mostly blank is a waste of printer paper, especially if you have to make a lot of copies. Your letters and mailings will also look more professional if they fill the pages nicely. If Print Preview reveals a skimpy last page, click the Shrink to Fit (Word 2003) or Shrink One Page button (Word 2007). Word will tweak the fonts in the document to make it a page smaller. Don't like the results? Just press Ctrl-Z to Undo.

Calculate in tables. Sure, you can embed an Excel worksheet in a Word document, but if you just need a few simple calculations, you can use Word's own math skills. Select a cell at the bottom of a column and click Formula on the Table Tools Layout ribbon (Word 2007), or select Formula from the Table menu (Word 2003). Word will suggest =SUM(ABOVE), but you can select among over a dozen functions. Besides choosing ABOVE, BELOW, LEFT, or RIGHT to work with all cells in the specified direction, you can reference individual cells and ranges as you do in Excel—for example, =AVERAGE(A1:C3).

Merge to e-mail. Mail-merging to letters and envelopes is too-too 1990s, but you may still need to send a common message to a group of correspondents. That's no problem, since the familiar mail-merge feature in Word can also send e-mail messages. In Word 2007, complete your letter, click Finish & Merge in the ribbon and choose Send E-mail Messages from the menu. In Word 2003 select "E-mail messages" at the very first step of the Mail Merge wizard. Either way you'll be prompted for a subject (the same for every message) and for a data field that holds e-mail addresses of the recipients.

Compare two documents. Your newest client just returned a revised version of a contract document file but didn't mark his revisions. Is he trying to hoodwink you with sneaky changes? Rather than ruin your eyes poring over the old and new documents, have Word find the differences. In Word 2003 open the old document, choose Compare and Merge Documents from the Tools menu, and select the new document. In Word 2007 choose Compare | Compare from the Review ribbon and select both the old and the new document.

Document inspector. Your Word 2007 documents may contain a lot more information than you realize--tracked changes, comments, hidden text, private properties, and more. Distributing a document with this kind of data present can be embarrassing. To make sure you're not revealing too much in a Word 2007 document, click the Office button at the top left, point to Prepare, and click Inspect Document in the resulting menu. Word 2003

has no precise equivalent, but you can get some benefit using the Security tab of the Options dialog. Check the boxes "Remove personal information from file properties on save" and "Warn before printing, saving, or sending a file that contains tracked changes or comments."

Built-in translator. The Research panel in both Word 2007 and Word 2003 includes an option to translate the selected text or the entire document between various languages. It's more useful when you're trying to puzzle out what a foreign-language document means than when you want to communicate your own thoughts with those who don't speak English. To see why, translate a few sentences from English to another language and then back to English.

Create fancy equations. Sure, you can write "the electric field equals one over the electrical conductivity times the electric current density," but $E = \frac{1}{\sigma} J$ is a lot more compact. To insert an equation into Word 2007 choose Equation | Insert New Equation from the Insert ribbon and use the tools on the Equation Design toolbar that appears. In Word 2003, it's a bit more awkward. Select Insert | Object from the menu, choose Microsoft Equation 3.0, and click OK, then use the Equation toolbar that appears.

Use math autocorrect. (Word 2007 only) All of those fancy math symbols can be available even outside the Equation Design toolbar. Click the Office button at the top left, click the Word Options button, select Proofing, click AutoCorrect Options, and check the box "Use Math AutoCorrect rules outside of math regions." Now you can type `\aleph` to insert an aleph (\aleph), `\int` for an integral sign (\int) or even type `\quadratic` to insert the entire quadratic equation ($x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$).

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