

MULTIMEDIA TRAINING KIT

MOVING OVER TO OPENOFFICE.ORG WRITER FROM MICROSOFT WORD HANDOUT

Developed by: Anna Feldman for
the Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

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About this document

These materials are part of the Multimedia Training Kit (MMTK). The MMTK provides an integrated set of multimedia training materials and resources to support community media, community multimedia centres, telecentres, and other initiatives using information and communications technologies (ICTs) to empower communities and support development work.

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Introduction

The OpenOffice.org Writer workspace should feel at least a little familiar to most Microsoft Word users. This is, of course, no coincidence. Since the evolution of Microsoft Windows, MS Word has established a model for word processing packages. And although Writer parts company with MS Word on various features, it does also take its cue from the Microsoft model in a very basic way. On the whole, almost everything that can be done with MS Word can also be done with OOo Writer.

As an experienced MS Word user, this familiarity may cause frustrations as you expect things to operate with a greater *sameness* than is actually the case. There is a slightly different logic to the operations of OOo Writer, and mastering that logic is the key to working productively with the system. Moving to an open source office environment is a transition that needs a willingness to adapt to the new system. Bringing your MS Word skills to OOo Writer

will work much better if you use them as the basis for understanding word processing principles, and not as a measure of how every word processing system should work.

This handout provides a very brief overview of some of the issues. For more detailed information refer to the resources in the list of additional resources which accompanies this unit.

Features comparison

By way of introduction here's a brief look at the comparative operations of MS Word and OOo Writer in a few key areas:

Writing and editing documents

Whilst the formatting toolbar gives very similar options using familiar-looking icons, and the basic formatting key strokes are the same for both systems: e.g. control + c, v, x, z, the menu routes to various, more complex formatting tasks is often different in OOo Writer.

OOo Writer's **Navigator** replaces MS Word's **Edit > Go to...** It provides a floating toolbar which can be rolled away without quitting, using the toggle button in the right hand corner. The **Navigator** allows you to click directly into headings, bookmarks, etc. throughout the document.

The changes training tool operates almost identically in both systems but is to be found under **Tools > Track Changes** in MS Word and under **Edit > Changes** in OOo Writer.

Controlling the look of documents – layout, styles, templates

In general the **File** menu in OOo Writer is your starting point for all **Templates** work. **File > Templates > Organise / Save / Edit** replaces the **Tools** menu for the same tasks in MS Word.

On the other hand, the method for working with **Styles** is almost the same for both: **Format > Styles**.

There is a different approach to page setup and layout which is worth mastering at the outset. Firstly, the equivalent to MS Word's **File > Page Setup > Margins / layout** menu route, which gives most page layout options, lies with OOo Writer's **Format > Page > Page** route.

And secondly, the MS Word approach which applies your page setup as a default across an entire document, with the exception of those sections you specify other settings for, is different in OOo Writer. Each page style that you specify within a given document needs to be defined *explicitly* – i.e. there is no default style that will carry through minus the exceptions you specify.

Using fields

In general you can apply the same method for both systems – **Insert > Field(s)**.

Converting documents

MS Word documents can be opened and edited in OOo Writer, and you can save documents you produce in OOo Writer in MS Word format (the reverse is not true - MS Word cannot open OOo Writer files or save in OOo Writer format).

Although MS Word files should always be readable by OOo Writer, there is a risk of losing some formatting in more complex documents. Bullets, fields and cross-references are particularly hazardous for conversions. If you are working collaboratively on documents with

others who are using MS Word, you may find it easier to switch to the same system for that work.