Microsoft Word Basics

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will explore word processing and look at one of the most popular options people use for this task. You will also consider how a tool like this can help you be results driven and productive.

Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Word as a Productivity Tool
   a. Alternatives to Word
2. Word Features
   a. Create and Print Documents
   b. Format Documents
   c. Edit Documents
   d. Add Graphics

1. Word as a Productivity Tool

Word processing is the way in which you view, edit, and create text-based documents. The best-known word processing platform is Microsoft Word. You may already be familiar with Microsoft Word from work or school. And, when it comes to your career, you will also use Microsoft Word to create resumes, build invoices, track agendas, and more.

Microsoft Word's user interface is similar to many other digital tools you'll encounter in your career, so learning Word now will give you the digital proficiency and confidence to master these new technologies in the future. It will also help you improve your productivity skill.

Add video: (Strayer Week 4) Description of how one woman uses Word in her career as a travel writer

Productivity: Skill Reflect

Think back to a time before computers and word processing tools. What were the options to write a paper in school? Students had to use paper and pencil or maybe a typewriter. The time needed to write a three-page paper thanks to a tool like Microsoft Word is now drastically shorter. What used to

take an hour might now take 30 minutes. Talk about increasing productivity!

TERM TO KNOW

Word Processing
The way in which you view, edit, and create text-based documents.

1a. Alternatives to Word

You may ask yourself why there are alternatives to Word if it works so well. All other word processing apps have roughly the same features. What they don't always have is the high price tag of Microsoft Word. While there are free versions of Microsoft Word, the full application is not free. This has made room for competitors that are cheaper or don't cost anything. Take a look at some free options below:
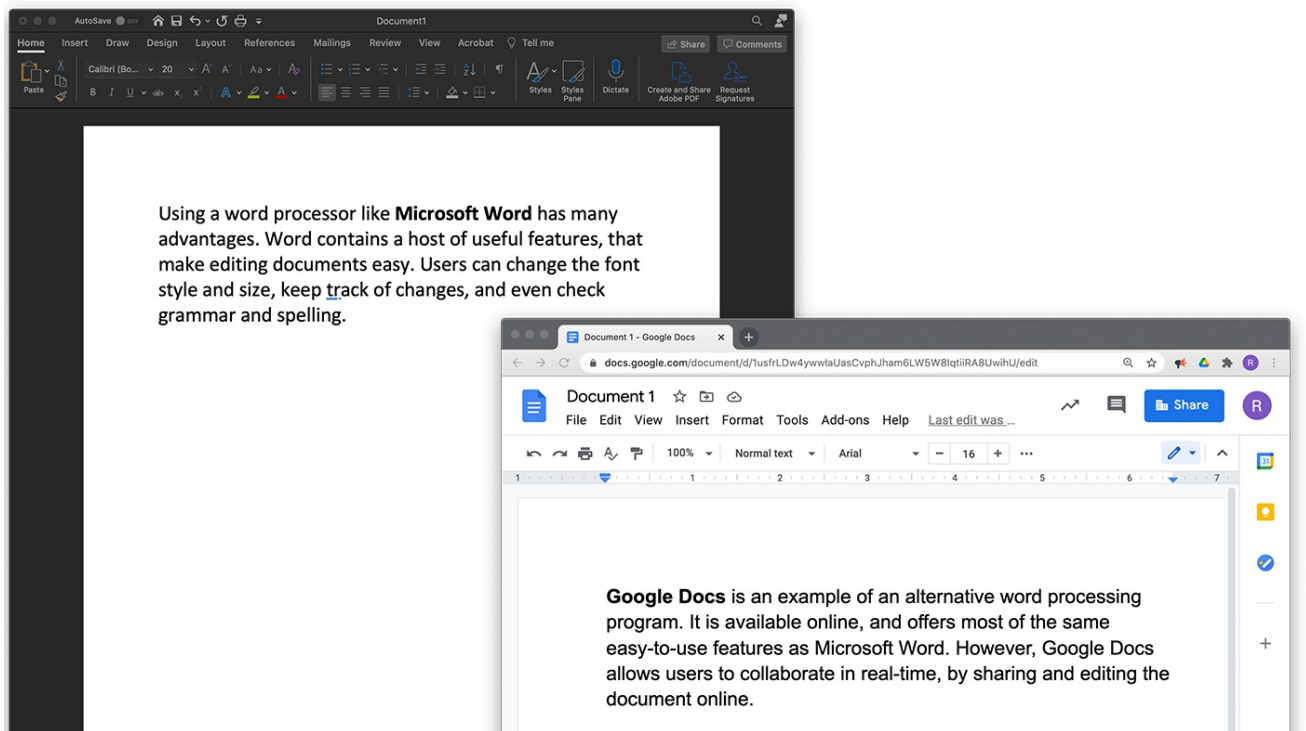
Free Word Processing Options

Word Processor	Compatibility	User Interface	Collaboration
Google Docs	Can open and convert Word docs; can download DOCX, HTML, PDF, rich text format (RTF)	Features housed in drop-down menu and one toolbar	Real-time editing available to anyone with a Google account
LibreOffice	Saves documents in OpenDocument text (ODT), but can also save in all MS Office formats	Features housed in drop-down menu, with toolbar and sidebar	Easy to share by saving in other file formats, but no real-time editing features
OpenOffice	Supports file formats from Word, Excel, and MS Office, but does not include all the same features	Features housed in menus and one toolbar	Able to track changes and offer comments, but no real-time editing features

Replace Image
add source

You might even like some of the free versions more than Microsoft Word. Some people have a personal preference, for example, for Google Docs. They may like the interface or they may already use other Google products. You can see how Microsoft Word and Google Docs appear below.

Using a word processor like **Microsoft Word** has many advantages. Word contains a host of useful features, that make editing documents easy. Users can change the font style and size, keep track of changes, and even check grammar and spelling.

Google Docs is an example of an alternative word processing program. It is available online, and offers most of the same easy-to-use features as Microsoft Word. However, Google Docs allows users to collaborate in real-time, by sharing and editing the document online.

You can see they have many of the same features, but the interface has a different look for each. You can check out several options before you decide which one is best for you. The choice is yours!

2. Word Features

DID YOU KNOW

Word allows you to complete many tasks. The features you may need are located on the menu bars or toolbars. They are arranged in a way to help you be effective but also efficient. Understanding these basic elements and options of your word processor can help you be as productive as possible.

2a. Create and Print Documents

You have options when you create a new document in Microsoft Word. You can start with a blank document or select a template from the template library.
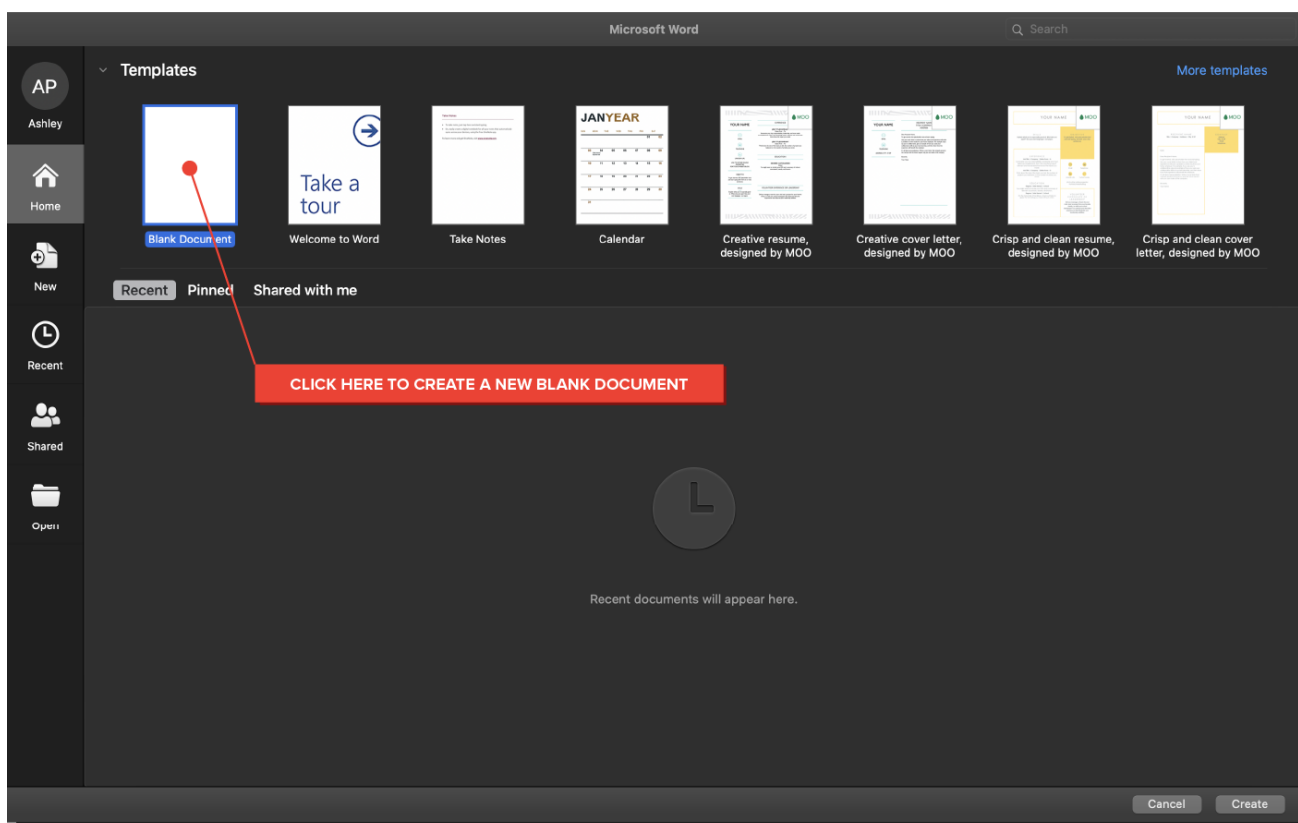
If you do choose to search the template library, you will find things like newsletters, resumes, invoices, and certificates. In each category, you will find several options to choose from. Some may be simple and others may be elaborate.

No matter what you choose, your document will be saved as a .doc file. While that is the default setting, you can also choose to save your work as a .pdf file. Strong technology skills can help you determine which format is best. For example, knowing that a .pdf is best when you want to maintain your formatting no matter who views the document, would help you make the best choice.

2b. Format Documents

Speaking of formatting… there are many options for things like font and text size when working in Microsoft Word and or most other word processing applications. You will want to choose your formatting based on your audience and professional protocols. Below is a list of just some of the options you will have.

- **Text**: You have numerous ways you can select the way your text will appear. You can choose font size, font color, underlining, and more. For example, to call attention to an important date, you may choose to make it red and bold.
- **Paragraph**: You may need to write a paper for school and your teacher gives you specific spacing directions for your lines and paragraphs. She wants it double-spaced throughout. The next day you may need to draft a new resume where you need some single spacing. You can set it easily with one click.
- **Pages**: Sometimes you may need to add a header and footer to your paper. Other times you may need to add a border around some text. Those and more options are available to ensure your formatting is correct for the given situation.

The screenshot below shows just some of the formatting options available to you.
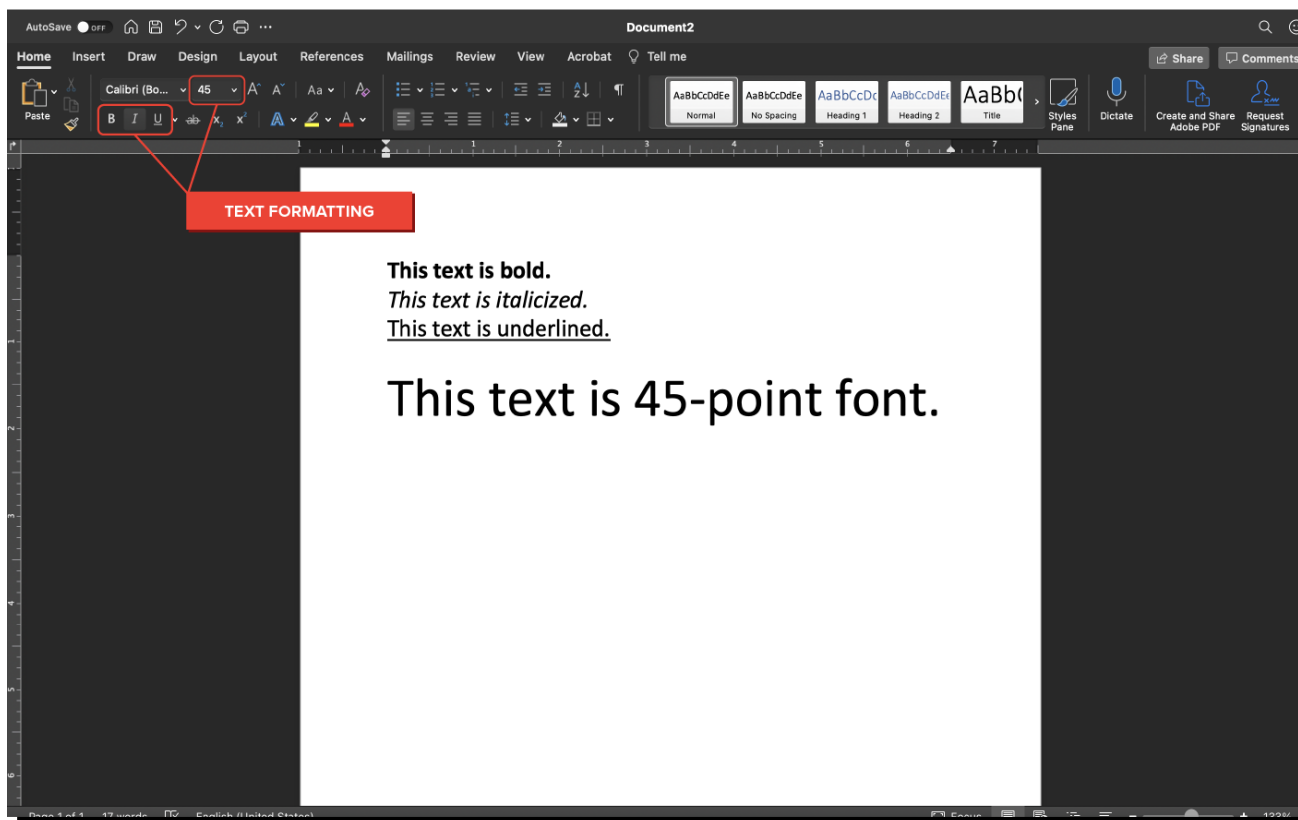
2c. Edit Documents

There are times you may need to make some revisions to your work. Microsoft Word and other word processing applications have some built-in tools that can help prevent mistakes. Spell check, for instance, will flag misspellings as you work so you can correct them on the spot. Even so, it is important to review your documents once done to catch things that may have been missed.

Technology: Skill in Action

Coy had his final English paper due on Friday. He completed it on Thursday, but before turning it in, he wanted to do one more review. On the last page, he found two back-to-back sentences where he used the same word. Reading it out loud, it did not sound right. He was able to use the thesaurus tool in Microsoft Word to find an alternative. He made the update in one of the sentences. His strong technology skill meant he would improve his paper and, perhaps, his grade.

Take some time to review the editing options available to you in your favorite word processor. Have you used all of them? Are some of them news to you? It is important to be familiar with all of these tools as you may need each of them at some point.
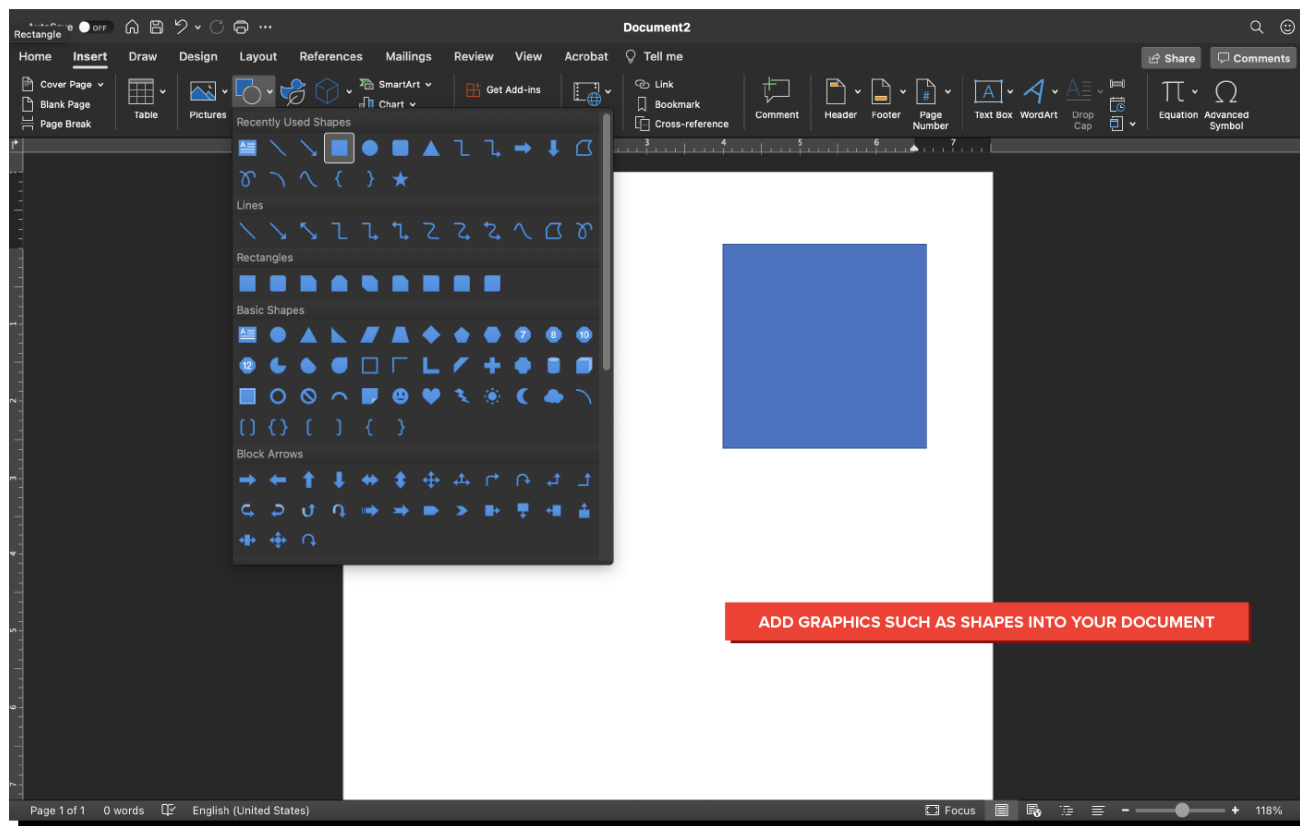
2d. Add Graphics

Another useful tool in Microsoft Word and most other word processors is the ability to add **graphics**. Graphics can include the following and more:

- Chart
- Graph

- Image
- Drawings
- Shapes

You can see where to locate these tools in the screenshot below.

Understanding these options and tools can help you complete a personal task like creating an invitation to a birthday party. You may add an image of a party hat on the front page and a graphic of number three on the inside. In your professional life, you may need to create a presentation for your team with the company logo on each slide. No matter the task, there are numerous graphic options for you in a word processing application.

Technology: Why Employers Care

Employers want to know any new hire can complete their daily tasks. For example, you may be hired as a salesperson for a local home improvement company. In your role, you visit people at home and walk them through a presentation on your computer. Part of that presentation includes a chart comparing your company's sales to your competitor. If you can't include that chart, you can't do your job.

TERM TO KNOW

Graphics
Visuals or designs used to inform, illustrate, or entertain — may include charts, graphs, images, drawings, and shapes.

☑ SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about some basic features of Microsoft Word and how you can use **Word as a productivity tool**. You explored topics like formatting, editing, and graphics. You also considered **alternatives to Word** and what may lead you to choose one over the other. You learned that being knowledgeable about **Word's features** can make you both more productive and more attractive to some potential employers. You will be able to **create and print documents, format documents, edit documents, and add graphics**. Learning more about word processing strengthens your technology skill and ensures you can complete any task in front of you.

Let's keep moving forward!

🖹 TERMS TO KNOW

Graphics
Visuals or designs used to inform, illustrate, or entertain - may include charts, graphs, images, drawings, and shapes.

Word Processing
The way in which you view, edit, and create text-based documents.