

A Comparison of MS Word 2000 and OpenOffice.org 1.03

This table has two purposes.

First, it compares features in MS Word and OpenOffice.org. Features were chosen for mention either because they were common, or are ones that are used by technical writers. All features are not listed; to do so would require a table three times as long

Second, the table can be used as a crib for those interested in trying OpenOffice.org. OpenOffice.org's menus can be deceptive: they're close enough to MS Word's to lull you into a sense of security, but different enough that your expectations can surprise you. Maybe this table can avoid both these problems.

Feature	MS Word 2000	OpenOffice.org 1.03
AutoCorrect	Tools > Autocorrect	Tools > AutoCorrect / AutoFormat
Autoformat	Tools > Autocorrect	Tools > AutoFormat Options similar to MS Word's, but more extensive.
Autonumbering	Format > Bullets and Numbering Bulleted and numbered lists corrupt easily, but can be worked around by inserting numbers via fields and setting up macros for numbering.	Format > Number/Bullets Bulleted and numbered lists are placed in fields automatically. Corruption does not occur. Bullet choices include graphics,
Autospellcheck	Tools > Spelling and Grammar On by default.	Tools > Autospellcheck On by default.
Autotext	Tools > Autocorrect	Edit > Autotext Entries can be associated with a macro, or imported. Separated from Autocorrect and Autoformat, which are in the Tools menu.

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Borders and shading	Borders and shading can be set for paragraph and character styles, as well as for individual graphics, frames, and tables.	<p>Borders and shading can be set for the same items as in MS Word as well as table of contents or indexes.</p> <p>Borders and shading can also be set for frame and table styles.</p> <p>Shading is called Background.</p>
Clip Art	<p>Insert > Pictures > Clip Art</p> <p>Limited selection.</p>	<p>Tools > Gallery</p> <p>Limited selection.</p> <p>StarOffice 6.0 includes clip art comparable to MS Word's in variety.</p>
Comment	Insert > Comment	<p>Insert > Note</p> <p>Functionality similar to MS Word's.</p>
Compare Document	Tools > Track Changes > Compare Documents	<p>Edit > Compare Documents</p> <p>Functionality similar to MS Word's.</p>
Conditional Text	No functionality similar to FrameMaker's conditional text.	No functionality similar to FrameMaker's conditional text.
Cross-References	Insert > Cross-reference	<p>Insert > Cross-reference</p> <p>Options comparable to MS Word's, but cross-references treated as a data field.</p>
Customization	<p>Tools > Options</p> <p>Includes options to ease transition from WordPerfect.</p> <p>Options for tracking changes and spell-checking included here rather than in the menu items.</p>	<p>Tools > Options</p> <p>Options comparable to MS Word's. Unique options include external programs used, default formats for saving files, and how MS Office macros are treated in converted documents, as well as a pane for adding new dictionaries for other languages.</p>

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Data sources	<p>Tools > Mail Merge</p> <p>Can be moderately difficult to use for the average person</p>	<p>View > Data sources</p> <p>Supports several open source databases, as well as Mozilla and spread sheets. Data sources can be associated with a template.</p> <p>Can be difficult to use for the average person.</p>
Envelope Tool	Tools > Envelopes and Labels	<p>Insert > Envelopes</p> <p>Includes positioning when sent to printer.</p>
Fields	Insert > Fields	<p>Insert > Fields</p> <p>Includes user-defined fields. Somewhat fewer dpre-efined options than in MS Word.</p>
File size		Files are stored compressed, typically occupying 40-60% of the space of the same file in MS Word format.
Find / Replace	Regular expressions supported	<p>Edit > Find / Replace</p> <p>Comparable to MS Word's, but some search compatibility, such as searches by format, are hidden by buttons.</p> <p>Supposed to support regular expressions, but does not.</p>
Frames, graphical	Creating consistent frames requires writing or recording a macro.	<p>Format > Styles > Catalog > Frame Styles</p> <p>Default frame styles include Graphics. Others can be created as necessary.</p>

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Frames, text	Callout boxes can be used instead.	<p>Insert > Frames</p> <p>Extensive frame customization available, include setting of text flow between frames and frame styles.</p> <p>Frame styles can be edited in the Stylist floating palette.</p>
Go To	Edit > Go To	<p>Edit > Navigator</p> <p>As a floating palette, the navigator is more convenient for using, especially on a large screen.</p>
Grammar Checker	Tools > Spelling and Grammar	None
Graphics, Linking	Default is to embed. Linking requires making a selection when inserting the graphic.	Default is to embed. Linking requires checking a box when inserting the graphic.
Header/footer tools	<p>View > Header and Footer</p> <p>Headers and footers cannot be edited directly. Tool is pre-WYSIWYG, and hard to use.</p>	<p>Insert > Header; Insert > Footer</p> <p>Headers and footers can be edited directly in document. Header and footer styles can be created and stored as part of page styles.</p>
Help	<p>Help menu</p> <p>Extensive help with detailed steps for basic to intermediate functions.</p> <p>Office assistant can be used for simple tasks, but is often too limited to be useful.</p>	<p>Help menu</p> <p>Help is extensive, but sometimes circular in describing fields, and lacking in context.</p> <p>Office assistant tends to refer to sections where help can be found, rather than providing an alternative source of quick help.</p>

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Instability	Can be unstable and crash, especially with larger files and inexperienced users without a good knowledge of work arounds. Autorecovery can usually help prevent corruption unless using a master document.	Some instability in version 1.0, but subsequent three releases (up to version 1.0.3).are noticeably more stable, especially with large files. Crashes never seem to corrupt files. Autorecovery excellent.
Label Tool	Tool > Envelopes and Labels Includes templates for North American labels only. Tool design somewhat cumbersome, with options available only by opening other windows.	File > New > Labels Extensive collection of templates for most European and North American labels. User interface is generally good, but lack of search function means that finding the right template may take some time.
Macro recording	Tools > Macros > Record New Macro An important tool for overcoming MS Word's shortcomings.	Not present in version 1.03, although a scripting language is available for creating macros. Feature is in beta for version 1.1. Macros from imported MS Word files can be saved, but not used until the file is opened again in MS Word.
Master documents	View > Outline Handling of master document is often difficult. Can corrupt original files. Generally a feature to avoid.	New > Master Document Handling of master documents is easy, especially through the Navigator floating palette. Master documents occasionally crash, but original files not corrupted.

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Menu Organization	<p>Menu widely criticized for being illogical and cumbersome.</p> <p>Default to place commonly used items first can be confusing for new or tired users.</p> <p>Menus widely configurable.</p>	<p>Obviously based on MS Word's, but with some rationalizations. Many inconsistencies remain.</p> <p>Menus do not change according to how often items are used.</p> <p>Menu configuration is limited</p>
Merges	<p>Tools > Mail Merges</p> <p>Excellent wizard</p>	<p>Tools > Data Sources; Insert > Fields; File > Autopilot > Address Data Source</p> <p>Merges are potentially powerful, but tools are in different menus, and can be extremely hard for new users to master.</p>
Navigation without mouse	<p>Most features accessible by keyboard shortcuts, but emphasize in recent versions has been on customization of menus and icon bars. Shortcuts can be edited in:</p> <p>Tools > Customize > Keyboard</p>	<p>Most features accessible by keyboard shortcuts. Shortcuts can be edited and added in:</p> <p>Tools>Configure>Keyboard</p>
Objects	<p>Insert > Objects</p> <p>Objects and types of files available from same menu.</p> <p>File types that can be inserted include any of those associated with an installed program.</p>	<p>Insert > Objects; Insert > File</p> <p>Objects and types of files available are separate menu items.</p> <p>OLE objects, plug ins, applets, formulas and charts supported.</p> <p>Only file types for which a translation filter exists can be inserted. No PDF files can be inserted.</p>

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Outlining	View > Outline; Tools > Autosummarize	Edit > Navigator > Headings; Headings and the contents beneath them can be repositioned by drag and drop in the Navigator floating palette. No feature similar to Autosummarize exists.
Page Preview	File > Print Preview Best way to get a WYSIWYG view.	File > Page Preview Not usually needed for WYSIWYG view, although some modified tables of contents do not display properly except in Page Preview.
Properties, document	File > Properties	File > Properties Includes user defined fields and statistics. Otherwise, features match MS Word's closely.
Reveal Codes	Does not exist, although View > Normal can often be used for trouble-shooting	Does not exist. However, a saved file can be uncompressed, and the resulting XML file can be viewed.
Revision Tracking	Tools > Track Changes	Edit > Changes Tools > Options > Text Options > Changes customized revisions by author. Customization works best when user accounts are strictly used.
Sideheads	No automatic provision.	No automatic provision.
Styles	Format > Styles Paragraph, character, and list formats supported.	Format > Stylist; Format > Styles Paragraph, character, list, frame, and page styles supported.
Styles, applying changes to all styles	Can be done, but hierarchical structure of styles can be difficult to see.	Hierarchical view in the Stylist floating palette can be used to oversee changes.

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Styles, copying between documents	Tools > Templates and Add-Ins	Format > Styles > Load. Styles for loading can be selected.
Styles, defaults	Default styles cannot be removed.	Default styles cannot be removed.
Styles, editing	Drilling down cumbersome	Styles can be edited from the Stylist floating palette by right-clicking and selecting Modify.
Styles, lists	Format > Styles Styles for bulleted and numbered lists are not clearly separated from paragraph styles.	Format > Stylist > Number styles Bulleted and numbered lists are listed and editable separate from paragraph styles. Paragraph styles can attach number styles.
Styles, locking	Styles cannot be locked to prevent others from changing them.	Styles cannot be locked to prevent others from changing them.
Styles, pages	No general provision for page styles, although different headers and footers can be set for first, odd and even pages.	Format > Page Page styles can be set between page breaks. Page break types can be selected in Insert > Breaks. Somewhat awkward, especially when compared to master pages in FrameMaker, but workable.
Styles, viewing pre-existing ones	Format > Styles > List > All Styles	The Stylist floating palette opens on the Automatic view, which shoes pre-existing styles.
Table formats	Table > Insert > Table Draw table allows quick insertion of a basic table.	Format > Autoformats Users can create and store their own autoformats, as well as using existing ones. No draw table function.

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Tables of Contents	<p>Insert > Indexes and Tables > Table of Contents</p> <p>Users can choose autoformats, and paragraph styles to include.</p>	<p>Insert > Indexes and Tables > Indexes and Tables</p> <p>No autoformat.</p> <p>ToC formats and components can be customized, as well as the number of columns.</p>
Template Management	Tools > Templates and Add-Ins	<p>File > Template</p> <p>Extensive features, including setting printers for a template without opening it and setting data sources for merge documents.</p> <p>Interface makes missing some features very easy.</p>
Thesaurus	Tools > Thesaurus	<p>Tools > Thesaurus</p> <p>Other loaded dictionaries can be used to find synonyms.</p>
Translation filters	<p>Translation filters include HTML, RTF, text, WordPerfect, and various Windows and MacIntosh versions of MS Word.</p> <p>Backward compatibility is often notoriously poor.</p>	<p>Translation filters include HTML, RTF, text, and recent versions of MS Word.</p> <p>No WordPerfect filter exists, but one is being worked on.</p> <p>Backward compatibility with OpenOffice.org and StarOffice is high.</p> <p>MS Word filters are good, but not perfect, with symbols a special problem.</p> <p>StarOffice contains many more translation filters than either MS Word or OpenOffice.org.</p>

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Undo, Multiple	Select items in list on tool bar.	Select items in list on tool bar Number of undo steps can be set in Tools > Options to take advantage of greater memory or to compensate for less.
User Interface	User interface cumbersome, but includes some efficient wizards.	Some improvement on MS Word's, but interface varies from highly usable to hopelessly obscure.
Word Count	Tools > Word Count	File > Properties > Statistics

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