

## Moving beyond Word 2003

### What's new, and why

Until 2007, the different versions of MS Word looked much the same – updates to the program mainly involved adding new functions rather than changing the appearance.. However, with Word 2007, Microsoft moved to a quite different layout, based on:

- a ribbon (which Wikipedia tells me is actually called the fluent user interface<sup>1</sup>) – this is a tabbed toolbar that replaces the menus and toolbars we all know and love
- a button (referred to as the *Office button*) – this includes common commands (print, save, etc) and a *Word options* section, where it is possible to vary settings such as autocorrect and keyboard shortcuts.

The ribbon and the button layout is common to most of the Office 2007 suite of programs. Apparently, the thinking behind the change was to make it quicker and easier for users to find the features they needed.<sup>2</sup> In reality, most of those who were previously a bit befuddled by the programs just became more befuddled, and many experienced users were driven to fury.<sup>3</sup>

### Seeing the light

I made the change to the 2007 Office suite about 18 months ago. At first, it definitely slowed me down, as I struggled to find the features I was used to working with. For example, I use the comments feature a lot, and went looking for it in the 'Insert' tab (surely the logical place, given that I wanted to 'insert' a comment). I eventually found the comments feature in the 'Review' tab of the ribbon. It's probably an indication of my advancing age, but no matter how I tried, I couldn't stop myself looking first in the 'Insert' tab every time I wanted to add a comment.

Luckily, there is a space above the ribbon called the *Quick access bar*, where the user can park icons for commonly used features. I eventually worked out that I could place the comments icon there, by right clicking on it in the ribbon, and selecting 'Add to quick access toolbar'. I could then use that feature easily, without cursing Microsoft each time I needed it.

For months, the only things in my quick access bar were the icons for undo, redo (which are there by default), comments and track changes. I got used to the ribbon format, but was not particularly enamoured of it. Then a massive formatting job came along, and I discovered the power of the quick access bar. The document contained numerous tables, many of which needed to be split. The 'split table' feature in Word was in the 'Layout' tab of the ribbon (a tab that only appears when the cursor is within a table, another confusing new feature). By adding the icon to the quick access bar, I could split tables with a single click. When I finished that particular job, I simply deleted the icon from the quick access bar.

These days, the moment I find myself using a feature a lot, I add it to the quick access bar. If a feature has sat there for a week or so without being used, I remove it. Since I discovered that method of working, I like Word 2007, and believe it has speeded up my work. On the downside, I still struggle with templates and styles in Word 2007, even though I used them competently in earlier versions of Word.

## Getting started

There are numerous resources for those who have not yet made the change to Word 2007, although some of these are becoming out of date, because Microsoft has now released Word 2010. Resources for Word 2007 include:

- a step-by-step guide <sup>4</sup> and an online tutorial <sup>5</sup> on getting started in Word 2007
- an article on the changes in Word 2007 and the thinking behind them <sup>6</sup>
- useful tips, and a free weekly newsletter from WordTips . <sup>7</sup>

However, if none of this works and you simply can't get to grips with the new version, the classic menu is available as a download – it makes Word 2007 look like the earlier versions). <sup>8</sup>

## References

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<sup>1</sup> Microsoft Office 2007, Wikipedia (<http://tinyurl.com/fn8xo>)

<sup>2</sup> Microsoft Office 2007, Wikipedia (<http://tinyurl.com/fn8xo>)

<sup>3</sup> Excel 2007's Ribbon Hurts Productivity, Survey Shows, Excel User (<http://tinyurl.com/ls9k8rF>)

<sup>4</sup> Moving from Word 2003 to Word 2007, Computing Services Department, University of Liverpool (<http://tinyurl.com/23fl9m2>)

<sup>5</sup> Getting started with Word 2007 – the ultimate guide, The New Paperclip (<http://tinyurl.com/3a24vh7>)

<sup>6</sup> Explore what is new and different in Microsoft Word 2007, TechRepublic (<http://tinyurl.com/345ax7d>)

<sup>7</sup> Wordtips ribbon interface (<http://wordribbon.tips.net/>)

<sup>8</sup> Add old Word 2003 classic menu layout to Word 2007, Technixupdate (<http://tinyurl.com/35jpvsr>)

## Note

Most of the web links used in this article are tiny URLs, generated using the URL shortening service TinyURL ([www.tinyurl.com](http://www.tinyurl.com)).

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Published in the Canberra Society of Editors newsletter, August 2010

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