Software Reviews

Microsoft has made a huge leap with Word 4.0. Its feature set is comprehensive, its speed greatly improved, and its ease of use superb. Word 4.0 has redefined the meaning of excellence in word processing.

• REVIEWS SCORING

InfoWorld *reviews only finished, production versions of products, never beta test versions.*

All products receive scores ranging from unacceptable to excellent in various categories. We then weight the scores in different categories (giving the most weight to the performance and value categories) to produce an overall numeric score for the product. Scores should be judged as follows:

10 — Excellent 9 - 10: — Tops in its class

Very Good 7 - 8.9
Meets all essential criteria and offers significant advantages

Good 6 - 6.9
Meets essential criteria and includes some special features

Satisfactory 5 - 5.9
Meets essential criteria

Poor 3 - 4.9
Falls short in essential areas

Unacceptable 1 - 2.9
Fails to meet minimum standards

1

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Microsoft Word 4.0

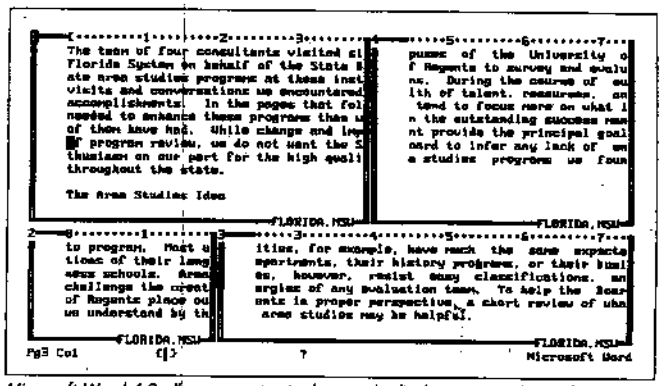
Quantum Leap Puts Microsoft Word Out in Front

Greater Speed, Improved Interface Help Improve a Champion

By John Lombardi Review Board

Microsoft Word for the PC — long famous for formatting power and sloth — offers speed to burn in Version 4.0. It is also easier to use and adds a raft of features to a list that was already quite long.

These improvements in speed and ease of use put Word 4.0 in the top rank of corporate word processors.



Microsoft Word 4.0 allows users to simultaneously display up to eight windows on the screen. The windows can be divided horizontally as well as vertically.

FEATURES:

Derived from a typesetting model — rather than a dedicated word processor, typewriter, or computer editor model — Microsoft Word has always seen its text through the typesetter's eye, which gives it the advantage of precise control of the printed page. The disadvantages of using Word have been its unfamiliar terminology, complex commands, and clumsy operation compared to competing word processing products.

Version 4 addresses many of these problems while enhancing the basic program. The list of new features in Word 4 is impressive in itself — an excellent thesaurus, an improved spelling program, document revision marking, and line numbering are just some of the additions.

Microsoft Word has always had superb formatting and been capable of producing the best output on any printer. Through an elaborate set of formatting specifications known as style sheets, you could develop and save a complete description of a document. Then, on subsequent projects, you could attach these saved style sheets to a new document and reuse all the specifications.

A new feature lets you create a style sheet from a file's existing text. You can use the regular Word commands to boldface, indent, change margins, and the like for your current document. Then, when you are finished, you can ask Word to record that format into a style sheet to be reused later with other documents.

You can also now search and replace hidden formatting marks, making changes much easier to achieve.

Word 4 implements improved document management capabilities. It can attach a short summary statement to a document. This summary does not get printed with the rest of the document, but you can view it when you're selecting a document from the directory. You can search for documents in this summary by words, by file name, and by a search for any word in the text of the document.

In addition, you can directly import spreadsheets in Lotus, Excel, or Multiplan formats into a Word document. Further, they are imported in such a way that the source file name is preserved, and the next time you load the Word document, the source spreadsheet is reimported with any changes. Word 4 has a relatively limited capability for importing graphics files (but not Lotus .PIC files) automatically into a Word document. A Microsoft spokeswoman told us that a newly announced companion product, called Microsoft Pageview ($49), would, among other things, let users import Lotus .PIC files.

Another significant change is the addition of a superior keyboard macro language. Word can now use macros you prepare either by recording keystrokes or by writing a sequence of commands, saving them, and recalling them as a macro. You can use macros as named files or you can assign them to control-key combinations.

The power of this facility is as great as in any of the separate keyboard macro programs. Not only can you record keystroke sequences for instant playback, but the Word macro language also includes a wide variety of programming constructs for pausing, branching, and conditionally processing text. This word processing control language permits an almost endless variety of specialized applications.

Word offers an IBM DCA/RFT utility for converting formatted text files learned from other word processors.

Powerful mail merge, form letter, and special forms processing commands continue to make this product well-adapted to business uses.

PERFORMANCE:

The most noticeable difference in Word 4 is its increased speed. The program is now as fast as or faster than any of its major competitors. In text mode — which shows underlining and boldface but not italics or block caps — Word is lightning fast. It's so fast, in fact, that a special command is needed to slow the cursor and the scrolling to humanly comprehensible speeds.

In graphics mode — which draws characters and shows italics and block letters — Word is slightly slower than the competition. Of course, graphics speed is dependent on the speed of your system's graphics hardware. If your system has a Hercules board, for example, you will find Word faster than on a CGA system.

Word does not show proportionally spaced characters or alternative font sizes on the graphics screen; hence, the graphics mode is of limited value. Newspaper columns do not show side by side on the screen.

Macros work as ex-

Test	Microsoft Word 4.0	Word Perfect 4.2[1]	Wordstar 4.0	Eyeville II Plus 3.51
Load File	0:01	0:03	0:01	0:02
Save/Continue	0:04	0:07	0:24	0:03
Save/Exit	0:04	0:08	0:04	0:03
ASCII Import	0:02	0:11	0:01	0:02
ASCII Export	0:02	0:30	0:37	Compatible
DCA Translate	2:52	0:46	N/A[2]	N/A[2]
Cursor Top/Bottom	Immediate	0:04	0:04	Immediate
Manual Scroll	2:31[3]	2:29	2:33	2:29
Margin Reformat	Immediate	Immediate	1:48	Immediate
Repage 20 Pages	0:07	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic
Search	0:07	0:05	0:18	0:01
Search and Replace	[4]	0:10	0:25	0:02
Append Document	Immediate	0:12	0:19	0:02
File Size	89K	86K	86K	86K
Number of Pages	36	32	37	30

Times are in Minutes:Seconds. System Configuration:IBM AT with 640K, 1½ megabyte expanded memory.
[1]Word Perfect, Version 4.2 dated 9/10/87.
[2]Feature not available.
[3]Tested in character mode. Manual scroll in graphics mode took 3 minutes 33 seconds.
[4]Insufficient memory to search and replace all hits in our standard file. Search and replace on a file shortened to one-third the size of our standard file took 10 seconds. Hypothetical speed for a search and replace in our standard file would be 30 seconds.

pected; the spelling program is good, if not the best in the business; and the thesaurus is superior. Formatting, Word's strength, simply gets better with the addition of the capability to record an existing set of formatting characteristics into a stored style sheet. The search and replace capability for formatting commands also helps to speed performance.

Word read spreadsheet files from Lotus and Multiplan 3.0 without any difficulty, but it could not handle a spreadsheet from an older version of Multiplan 1.06. A Microsoft spokeswoman said Word is compatible with Multiplan, Versions 1.1 and later.

Word's windowing is good, with eight possible windows. The program's capability to do complex indexes, lists, and footnotes, along with a very fine math facility, make this a superior product.

Its nearly endless features list and superb performance combine to place Word 4.0 at the top of the professional word processing class. Its only serious performance drawback, nonautomatic pagination, may be of only minor concern to many users. We rate Word's performance excellent.

DOCUMENTATION:
The documentation for the latest Word continues the high standard Microsoft set with Word 3.0. The *Using Microsoft Word* manual does a good job of describing and illustrating how to use the program. Careful reading enables most users to conquer the system's complexity. The manual's index is good, and its examples are helpful.

Another manual serves as a reference to the commands, while a third manual discusses printer capabilities. Both are clear and well-done. Additional pamphlets give command summaries, and there are the usual keyboard templates.

Word has a fine on-line tutorial that you can run on a stand-alone basis or call from the help system. On-line help is context-sensitive and provides a reasonable, if not entirely complete, set of information on each command.

We rate Word's combination of manuals, tutorial, and on-line help excellent.

EASE OF LEARNING:
Although the documentation and tutorial make learning Word less formidable, this is not an easy program. Word requires the user to think about text in ways that are quite new to most people. Terms in Word are different from what new users might expect them to be, and what Word calls glossaries and libraries have special meanings that the novice might not immediately understand. The rich formatting capability carries with it complexity, and the system of formatting by character, paragraph, and division through attaching style sheets does not come easily to the uninitiated.

Thanks to excellent documentation and tutorial, Word can be learned by normal people in a reasonable amount of time, even if not easily or quickly. We rate its ease of learning good.

EASE OF USE:
Once learned well, Word is easy to use. Its multiple means of editing through function keys, mouse, or menu provide every user with whatever style works best. The macro language offers the possibility of putting any function with almost any set of control keys.

After you understand them, the style sheets provide unlimited formatting power with relatively little effort. Word's capability to generate style sheets from existing files is another plus.

Function keys now do much more than in previous editions. You can use the shift, control, alt, and scroll lock keys with most function keys to produce editing and command sequences. They can also be used with the keypad to accomplish additional editing tasks. And a combination of alt plus other keys handles the majority of character and paragraph formatting. Hence, it is possible to do most of your work without using a mouse or the infamous Word tab-key menus.

Even the menus are better. You can remove the menus and screen border, leaving a clean editing screen. More importantly, you can navigate about the menus with the arrow keys, not just with the tab key as in previous incarnations. And while the mouse is still there, keyboard people can do just fine without it, thanks to the much-improved keyboard implementation.

Word still requires explicit

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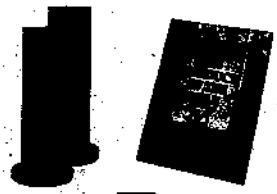

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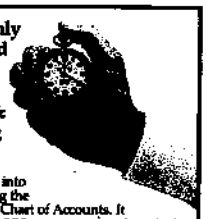

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repagination to get page breaks right. When you're editing text, Word does not automatically adjust page breaks, and you must invoke a Repaginate command to redo the entire document to see where the breaks are going to occur.

In short, whatever the task, Word does it easily and well. We rate its ease of use very good.

ERROR HANDLING:
By now, Microsoft Word has learned how to trap most errors. Common ones like open drive doors are handled without problem.

The Undo command works reasonably well, although Word 4 apparently will no longer undo a sort operation.

Overall, the program is well-protected against normal errors, and we rate Word's error handling very good.

SUPPORT:
Microsoft offers free (not toll-free) telephone support. We called the company with a number of questions and received good answers.

Microsoft will replace defective media for 90 days. Word 4 comes in a package that includes both 3½-inch and 5¼-inch disks. The program is not copy-protected.

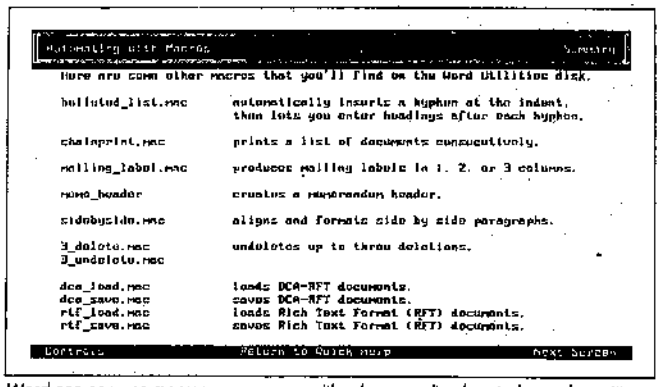
In short, we rate Microsoft Word's support good.

VALUE:
Microsoft Word has become a fast and effective office word processing product. The addition of redlining, macros, formatting by example, an excellent thesaurus, and a variety of other features makes this a superior product. Although not quite as easy to use as such products as Word Perfect, Word 4.0 offers superior formatting capabilities that make it among the best in its market.

At a list price of $450, Word 4.0 falls well within the price range of other high-power office word processing packages. (Users of previous versions can upgrade for $75.)

Microsoft has made a huge leap with Word 4.0. Its feature set is comprehensive, its speed greatly improved, and its ease of use superb. Word 4.0 has redefined the meaning of excellence in word processing. We rate it an excellent value.

John Lombardi is a professor of history and author of five books. He has been working with computers since 1967.



Word can now use macros you prepare either by recording keystrokes or by writing a sequence of commands, saving them, and recalling them as a macro.

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REPORT CARD

SOFTWARE

MICROSOFT WORD 4.0

9.0	Unacceptable	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Performance						■
Documentation						■
Ease of Learning				■		
Ease of Use					■	
Error Handling					■	
Support				■		
Value						■

SUMMARY

With Word 4.0, Microsoft has redefined the meaning of excellence in word processing. Important additions include formatting by example, redlining, macros, and an excellent thesaurus. Not copy-protected. For the IBM PC. *Pros:* Superb formatting, powerful macro facility, excellent editing speedy operation. *Cons:* Manual repagination; considerable complexity.

PRODUCT DETAILS

List price: $450. Version tested (4.0) available for IBM PCs, XT, ATs, and compatibles, and PS/2 line. Requires 320K of RAM, two floppy drives, DOS 2.0 or later. Microsoft Corp., 16011 N.E. 36th Way, Redmond, WA 98073. (206) 882-8080.

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