



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT WRITERS & EDITORS

Geoff Hart's *Write Faster With Your Word Processor* is a complete guide to using computer technology to increase both the ease and efficiency of the writing process. Hart takes a step-by-step approach to unravelling the incredibly extensive and complex features offered by Microsoft Word for both Windows and Macintosh to aid writers in personalizing their computers for faster, more consistent writing. (Hart notes that his focus on Microsoft Word does not preclude using this guide with similar word-processing programs.)

Each chapter provides a “working approach” to the topic covered, with a link to “on-line stuff,” allowing the reader to check for further explanations or updates. In addition, resources cited along the way offer further reading on specific chapter topics — all documented in an online, continuously updated bibliography. The title may seem a bit misleading, as a glance through the table of contents (TOC) shows this book covers more than the word processor. It also offers sections on choices of hardware, additional software, and backup strategies, as well as online research strategies and health and safety suggestions.

As a writer, I have used a word processor since I traded in my legal pads and pencils for a stand-alone Panasonic word processor in the late 1980s. Over the years I have moved through a series of computers and a variety of software until I finally met Microsoft Word on a Windows Millennium laptop. My current computer is a Windows 10 laptop with Office 365. As much as I am on a computer for my work, however, I am not particularly computer savvy, so I rarely attempt to adjust anything on my laptop or within Word. (And Mr. Hart makes many suggestions in his book that I will not have the courage to try.) My writing runs the gambit from fiction (novels, short stories, and plays) to scholarly nonfiction and everything in between. I also suffer from carpal tunnel in both hands and am ever in search of keyboard shortcuts to minimize my mouse time.

Whether you recognize my experience as similar to your own or are a whiz on a computer, this book will definitely help you speed up your writing process. The step-by-step instructions, provided in excruciating detail, do sometimes take a long time (for me) to implement, but as I carefully make a list of those things I have changed in Word so I can (a) remember how to use them the next time and (b) know how to *undo* something I decide I don't like, this book promises to make a huge difference in my writing efficiency.

If you have been writing on a word processor for a long time, some of this content may seem like a refresher course. You will find some ideas that you already use (e.g., I always use style sheets). There may also be some strong recommendations you have already considered and

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rejected (e.g., I only rarely use detailed outlines and have never liked the “Outline” view in Word). You will likely, however, discover something you never knew about your software and rejoice at the simplicity of the cure for something that has always proven problematic (e.g., I can now create keyboard shortcuts for my fictional character names!). The highly detailed TOC and an index allow for easy navigation, and an extensive glossary helps the reader decipher the technical terms needed to understand what the author is talking about.

Some of the content may seem terribly simplistic to a seasoned writer. For example, Hart makes a firm point about organizing your files and makes suggestions on ways to do it. But then I remember a writer friend of mine with multiple books under his belt who still has no idea of where any of his files are saved on his computer, so even this discussion could prove germane to some writers using a word processor.

I do not recommend anyone attempt to read, digest, and implement this entire book all at once, but if you are like me, you can browse the TOC and appendices to find those shortcuts that look promising then take them for a test drive. Hart does not claim to have all the answers for all writers, and, in fact, his recommendation is to “learn what works best for you.” Fine advice, indeed, from someone who has written a work covering a whole universe of how-to advice on using electronic tools to help writers write more efficiently. But *all* writers, I dare say, will find a great many useful tools herein, though the complexity of the subject matter will require patience to implement them.



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