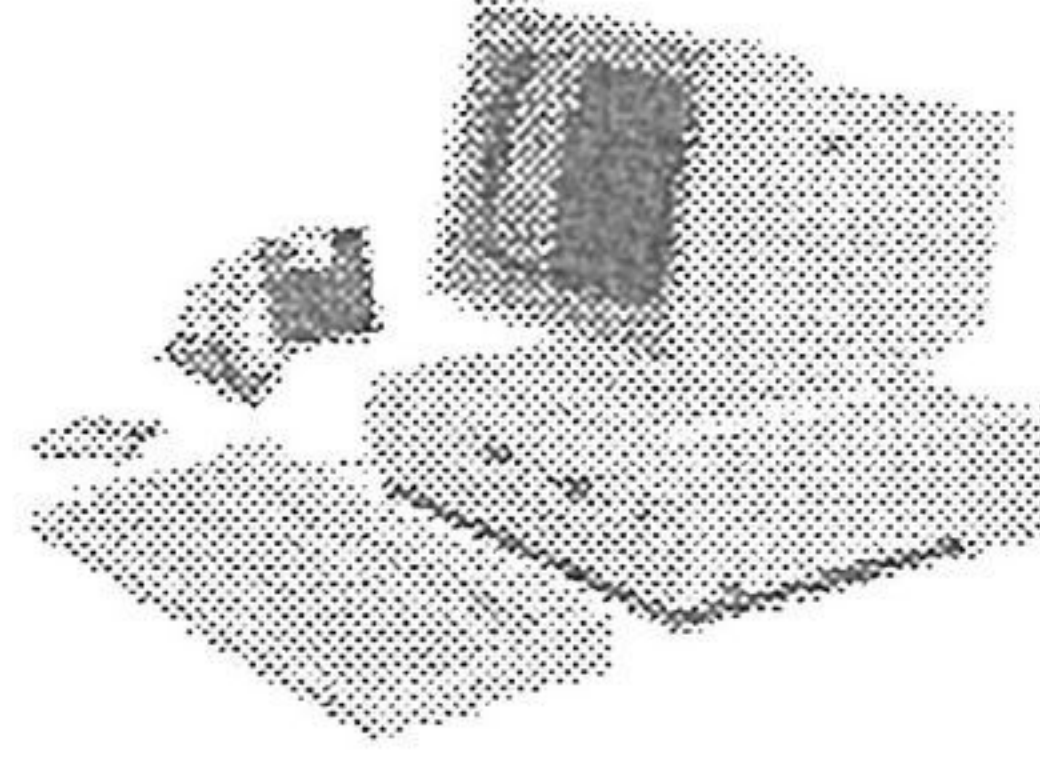


Computer Tips



June is finally here. For many weeks it looked like it would not arrive, but here it is and it is so nice to be working with doors open and sun shining into the office. This month I thought we would touch upon word processing and the ongoing battle between free software and pricey software.

Many people use word processors each day, but have no idea which program they are using or know the program very well and will never touch another. I have seen people show the utmost of loyalty to one particular program and shun all others, declaring that the program they use is simply the best and all others should be burned. To some this may sound right, but before you become so rigid you should look at some of the features of the other programs to make sure you are getting everything you need. Let's start off by naming the most familiar.

Word is Microsoft's formidable word processor. It is usually the one that all others are measured by. It comes either with their office suite or alone or in a stripped down version, bundled with Microsoft Works. It has many powers and when used in conjunction with other programs in the Office Suite, can even be used to produce Web Sites. The current versions support such things as auto correct on the fly. (If you get sick and tired of little typo's this feature is great. Trust me; my computer can spend more time auto correcting than typing.) It can check your Grammar, there is even a thesaurus built in to many. The downside can be the price; Word alone is over \$100 for the full version. However, if you are looking for a full program that will allow you to do almost anything in the desktop publishing world, this is the one.

There has been an ongoing battle between Corel and Microsoft. As much as I support Canadian companies, the American side is winning this one. Corel WordPerfect for many years kept up with Microsoft Word and for a few years was a better product. Due to financial difficulties at Corel, WordPerfect is no longer what it was and has had to let Word have its throne uncontested. It is still a widely used program, however, and many users find it to be friendlier than Word. It only comes bundled with the WordPerfect office suite and you will find this fully featured suite to have all the bells and whistles of Microsoft's Office. The downside is compatibility. WordPerfect tends to do things it's

own way and many users find that they get lots of communication from people who cannot open their attachments, etc.. The other question with WordPerfect these days is how long Corel will remain solvent. I already know of several companies that will no longer support WordPerfect. I hope that Corel will overcome it's difficulties, but for now I would recommend only purchasing WordPerfect if you have to.

And now for the free stuff. Yes folks that's right free!! Step right up Step right up. Why spend so much money on expensive programs when you can have everything for free!! Indeed there are free office suites available. Companies like Sun have offered free word processors in the past. And if you go to a downloading site like Tucows, type in Word Processing and you will find a bevy of free programs. But be forewarned pilgrim, nothing is ever free. I haven't used one of these programs that haven't proved to be cumbersome, incompatible, and a general pain in the tush. Still if you feel the need to brag to all of your friends who have forked over at least \$100 for the latest office suite, which you can do anything they can and yours was free, go ahead. Just don't try and match them in productivity, because you will spend most of your time trying to find out why a particular function will not work.

There are two fairly simple processors built into the modern windows systems, which certainly are functional, just not frilly. These are notepad and WordPad. If you need to quickly type a small letter with no pictures, these programs are great. Some people find that they can exist with these programs alone, but most users will find that their limited functionality will hamper them. Still for simple letters that can be sent quickly they are tough to beat.

Have a great month and enjoy the warmth. Happy computing and see you next month.

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