

ENGL 380:  
MICROSOFT WORD MANUAL  
SPECIFICATIONS

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Date: September 21, 2010  
To: English 380  
From: Prof. Janine Solberg  
Subject: Microsoft Word 2010 User's Manual

This memo outlines the working requirements for your user's manual. As the semester progresses, we will continue to discuss, clarify, and possibly add to, the elements below. Annotate and update this handout by taking notes, as needed.

The Microsoft Word 2010 manual you will write must be *task-oriented*, use a *modular format*, and be written as a resource for UMass students in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts (<http://www.umasscreative.com/index.html>).

**Technical requirements:** your manual will document Microsoft Word 2010 for Windows

**Elements of the Word manual project:**

- user research/analysis memo (exercise)
- doc plan + cover memo (graded assignment #2)
- first third + cover memo (graded assignment #3)
- second third + cover memo (graded assignment #5)
- have complete working draft before Thanksgiving break (see schedule)
- final complete draft, cover memo, and other accompanying documentation

**Manual deliverable formats:** color-printed, hard-copy version and a PDF file

**Manual due date:** submit manual and supporting docs by Thurs, Dec 9

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**Scenario**

Technology skills are increasingly important for 21<sup>st</sup> century college students, no matter what their major or career aspirations. Yet, not all students arrive at UMass with the same level of computing experience and, depending on their major, they may not receive much explicit instruction while here. As part of a larger, university-wide initiative to improve students' "technological literacy," the College of Humanities and Fine Arts (CHFA) has allocated funds for the development of programming, as well as online and print materials.

You have been recruited to help create some of the materials for this initiative; one of the documents you've been asked to create is a Microsoft Word "quickstart" guide. This guide will be included in a technology packet given to all incoming students. The contents of your guide may be adapted for the Web at some point, but for now your task is to focus on producing a printed guide.

You should aim to write a guide that will appeal to UMass students—but remember, too, that your documentation is being distributed by CHFA, so any themes, language, or other content should be acceptable to parents and UMass higher-ups (think secondary audiences and gatekeepers here).

### Length, contents, citation

- Length (approx 20-25 pages). Each user's manual must be a minimum of 20 pages long, with acceptable use of text and graphics. There isn't a strict maximum limit on the number of pages, but if you go beyond 35 pages be careful that you are not sacrificing quality.
- Contents of the manual. When your manual is complete, it must include the following elements:
  - cover
  - title page
  - copyright page (optional)*
  - dedication (optional)*
  - acknowledgements
  - table of contents
  - introduction
  - chapters (or sections) made up of modules
  - appendix (optional)*
  - index (optional)*
  - page numbers
- Intellectual property. You *must* create all of your own original screen captures. All decorative images must be acknowledged. All quoted/paraphrased sources must be cited. See course policy on plagiarism.

### Chapters, modules, style

- Modules. Each module must be sized to fit onto a one- or two-page spread (see Weiss reading on modules). Make module content *task-oriented*, and follow procedural style. Include the following elements in your modules:
  - title
  - summary/intro
  - numbered step-by-step procedures
  - screen captures – include *at least one screen capture* (with callouts or labels) in each module

Follow procedural style. You may use elaboration, but be strategic: keep notes and tips concise so that they don't clutter or overwhelm the page.

- Style. Your manual should follow the style guidelines discussed in class. These include (but are not limited to):
  - present tense
  - imperative (required for steps)
  - active voice
  - parallelism, consistency (esp. titles and steps)

- tone should be appropriate
- concise prose
- precise language

### **Images, unity, page design**

- Use of images. Be judicious and *consistent* in your use of visual elements—including screen captures and other graphics—throughout the manual. In the coming weeks we will talk about the visual design of the manual in more detail; take notes and update this handout as necessary.
- Title, unity. Your manual must have an appropriate, original title, and must be unified. Make your tone/persona, style, and visual design consistent throughout; the chapters should look and sound like they are all part of the same text, and written by the same person.
- Visual hierarchy. Make effective use of visual and organizational strategies to increase readability and help readers locate information quickly and easily. These can include headers, footers, line-work, callouts, and strategic use of color. Create visual patterns. Apply visual principles like: alignment, contrast, chunking, white space, smallest effective difference, and font size/weight. Take care not to clutter or overwhelm your pages with design elements and visual information (“less is more”).

### **Task- and reader-oriented content**

- Task orientation. Your guide should be task-oriented.
- Tone. Adopt a tone appropriate to the task of instructing and motivating your readers in the context of this scenario (a manual distributed by UMass to its students). Use a tone that is friendly and “you”-oriented (with “you” being the reader).
- Introduction. Include an introduction at the beginning of your manual that clearly communicates its purpose, and explains who it’s written for. Use the introduction to orient, inform, and motivate readers.