

Microsoft Word

Odds and Ends
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Office 2000: A Tool for Project-based Learning

By Jane Nissen Laidley, Ph.D.

Open-mindedness, whole-heartedness or absorbed thought, and responsibility in facing consequences are three attitudes that John Dewey believed contribute to the habit of thinking. (*How We Think*, 1933) As educators today, our concern is to foster that habit, developing our students into life-long learners equipped with a curiosity and the accompanying analytical skills to take charge of whatever learning they need to do, whenever they need to do it. To that end, our students are more involved in project-based learning than ever before.

Technology is an effective facilitator of this approach when it is integrated into the curriculum. Project-based learning has four components: explore, create, communicate, and reflect. This article notes ways in which Microsoft® Office 2000 can be an integral part of a project-centered classroom.

Explore

When students explore new topics, they conduct research, interviews, and experiments independently as well as collaboratively in small groups. The power of project-based learning begins here: how independent and self-sufficient can students be with regard to their own learning?

In developing their projects, students use software applications to facilitate many aspects of the learning process. To this end, Office 2000 provides improvements in ease-of-use and the Help system.

When students encounter a question regarding a software feature, the Microsoft Office Assistant, part of the Help system, guides them toward finding the answer on their own. Context-sensitive tips and wizards help students complete specific tasks, providing solutions directly within the applications they are using. Students can also query the Help system by asking natural-language questions. By enabling students to answer questions independently, Office 2000 fosters the development of important problem-solving skills.

The explosion of Internet access in schools and homes has opened the research and inquiry process to a seemingly infinite number of resources. The gift of worldwide access to experts and research data challenges us and our students to become keen and responsible researchers. Office 2000 helps students organize and manage their research.

To document their work, students use the Notes feature of Outlook® 2000 messaging and collaboration client, keeping track of and organizing the information they gather. If students are gathering and responding to information from a peer in another country, they may find it practical to correspond in the international student's native language. The Language AutoDetect feature in Office 2000 automatically recognizes the language that the students are using and provides language-specific spelling and grammar correction tools. With this resource at their fingertips, students can confidently explore the diversity of other cultures.

Create

Once they've collected their data, students evaluate, analyze, and organize the material. They decide how they will eventually present their results. Will it be a written report, a hands-on demonstration, a multimedia slide show, or will they post it to a Web site? Do they need graphs and charts? An audio component? Artwork? Video? The power of project-based learning lies in the freedom students have to take risks and make changes, to look at the complexity of their data and match it to the opportunities for presentation.

For younger students, the intricacies of creating and formatting documents can present a daunting challenge. Imagine how much easier it would be if your students could begin a writing project by simply entering text where they would like it to appear. Envision a drop-down menu that displays not just a list of font names but the way the fonts appear in the document. Using Word 2000's Click N Type feature, students can double-click any location on the page to begin typing there, eliminating the need for tabs and carriage returns. To select a new font, students display the drop-down fonts menu on the toolbar and preview the fonts before choosing one. Office 2000 enables students to give free rein to their imaginations in laying out ideas on the printed page while still focusing on the organization and content of their work.

An important part of project-based learning is the construction and assimilation of knowledge. In creating a document, students incorporate several pieces of data gathered during the exploration phase. To assemble the data, they can use the Collect and Paste feature, gathering information from multiple sources simultaneously, then organizing that information in a meaningful order. Because the document can be easily revised and updated, according to a peer review cycle or as new information is discovered, technology can encourage students to revisit their work and reach for the excellence that satisfies them.

Communicate

Next, students deliver their work for review by a larger audience. This can be an oral report to another small group or to the whole class, with or without a multimedia component. Student work can be posted to a school or district intranet, or to a Web site for worldwide access.

PowerPoint® 2000 presentation graphics program offers students a dynamic medium with flexible editing tools in which to create their presentation. Students can use the Tri-Pane view in PowerPoint 2000 to view multiple representations of a single concept. If they want to reposition a slide in a presentation and add a table for clarity, students can drag and drop the slide to its new location in the outline section of the view and update its content by drawing the table directly over the slide, visually creating rows and columns. Once the creation process is complete, students can broadcast the presentation to other students in the school as well as to the World Wide Web. Whatever the venue, the sense of publishing to a real audience provides an valuable incentive for students to take pride in and ensure the quality of their work.

Reflect

When a project-based learning event comes to a close, students take time to reflect on their experience. What did they already know that made this project easy? What new skills did they have to acquire? What would they like the teacher to do differently next time? How would they assess their collaborative work with other students? What do they want to learn next? This exercise can be done independently, as an Outlook 2000 Journal entry; it can be done in the same small groups that worked together; or it can be done with the whole class. This is the time when students take the intellectual responsibility for their own knowledge and ongoing inquiry that Dewey mentions.

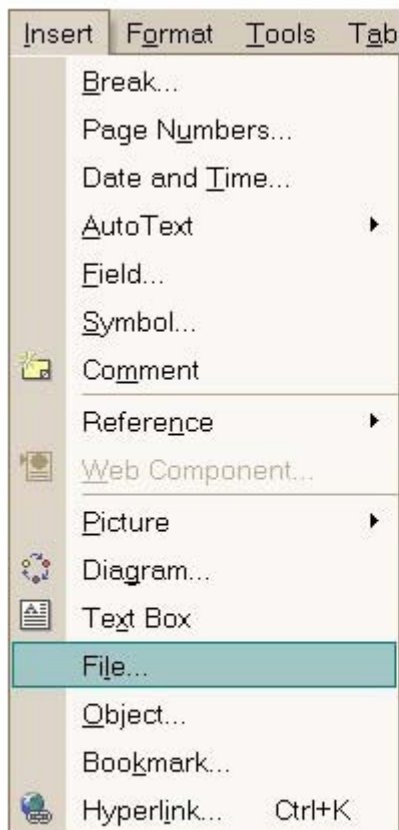
Clearly, technology can be infused into project-based learning events in transparent ways. The point is to create a classroom environment full of enthusiasm for discovery and learning and provide the tools to carry out the learning. And, note that Donald Graves reminds us in one of his stories about teaching and learning (How to Catch a Shark, 1998), "We were hanging around with a learner, the best kind of teacher."

About the author: For the past 15 years as a writer and curriculum developer, Dr. Laidley's work has placed her at the forefront of the infusion of technology into education, creating innovative curriculum and training solutions for K-12 teachers and students.

Combining Word Files

How to:

1. Start Microsoft Word, and open the first file.
2. Select **Save As** from the **File** menu, and give the combined file a new file name so you always keep the original file as is.
3. Position the insertion point where you want the next file to begin. This can be below the last paragraph of the first document, for example, or at the top of the next page.
4. With the insertion point in the location where you want to insert the next file, select **File** from the **Insert** menu.



[http://www.microsoft.com/education/default.asp?ID=Combine Files](http://www.microsoft.com/education/default.asp?ID=Combine%20Files)


Enter the name of the file you want to add and the folder where the file is located, and then click **Insert**. The second file is now combined with the first file.

5. Keep combining other files as needed, and remember to save the new version frequently by clicking **Save** on the **File menu** or just pressing CTRL+S.

Creating a watermark using Word

Add a background or watermark to a printed document

1. On the **Format** menu, point to **Background**, and then click **Printed Watermark**.
2. Do one of the following:
 - o To insert a picture as a watermark, click **Picture Watermark**, and then click **Select Picture**. Select the picture you want, and then click **Insert**.
 - o To insert a text watermark, click **Text Watermark**, and then select or enter the text that you want.
3. Select any additional options that you want, and then click **Apply**.

For Help on an option, click the question mark , and then click the option.

4. To view a watermark as it will appear on the printed page, use print layout view.

Tip

- If you want to use an object, such as an AutoShape, as a watermark, you can manually paste or insert it into the document header. You cannot use the **Printed Watermark** dialog box to control these settings.

Note If you want to add a theme, which includes document backgrounds, design elements, and color schemes, use the **Themes** command on the **Format** menu.

Saving as a Template

After creating the document you want to save as a template...

1. Choose "File".
2. Choose "Save As".
3. When the Save As... box appears, go down to Save As Type... box.
4. Click on arrow at the right end of the box.
5. Scroll down to choose "Document Template".

Measuring Readability and Grade Level of Text Using Microsoft® Word

Below are instructions for using Microsoft® Word to measure the grade level of any text you enter. These instructions were submitted to the NIFL-Technology listserv on September 14, 2000.

On MS Word (I use '97) you can do a "Readability" check by following the following steps:

1. Click on TOOLS bar.
2. Click on SPELLING & GRAMMAR.
3. At this window you have to click on OPTIONS. On my version, the LAST option is Show readability statistics. Make sure that window is "checked" and any other that you want your SPELL CHECKER to do. You may want to set the "writing style" drop-box for an option other than STANDARD that is more appropriate for your document.
4. Click OK
5. Whenever you select SPELL/GRAMMAR for this document, it will take you to all those places the system thinks you need to change something. Most often you IGNORE those suggestions. At the end of the CHECK, you will get a READABILITY STATISTICS table that will tell you (at the bottom) the Flesch-Kincaid Grade level).

Flesch Reading Ease Score

Rates text on a 100-point scale; the higher the score, the easier it is to understand the document. For most standard documents, aim for a score of approximately 60 to 70.

The formula for the Flesch Reading Ease score is:

$$206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{ASL}) - (84.6 \times \text{ASW})$$

where:

ASL = average sentence length (the number of words divided by the number of sentences)

ASW = average number of syllables per word (the number of syllables divided by the number of words)

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Score

Rates text on a U.S. grade-school level. For example, a score of 8.0 means that an eighth grader can understand the document. For most standard documents, aim for a score of approximately 7.0 to 8.0.

The formula for the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level score is:

$$(.39 \times \text{ASL}) + (11.8 \times \text{ASW}) - 15.59$$

where:

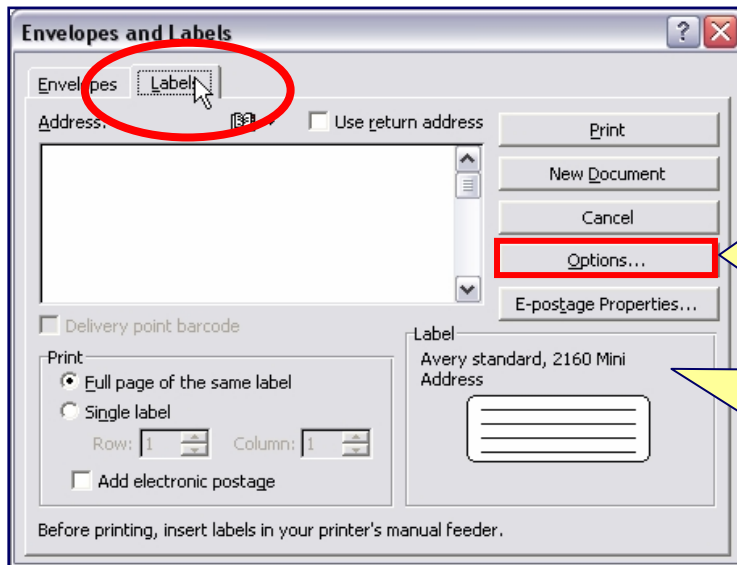
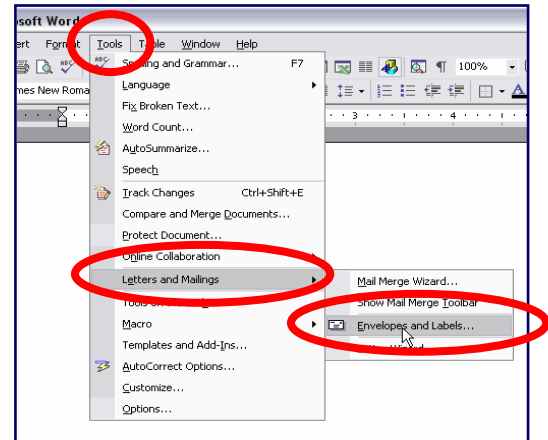
ASL = average sentence length (the number of words divided by the number of sentences)

ASW = average number of syllables per word (the number of syllables divided by the number of words)

<http://www.lhup.edu/ablenet/profdev/mtresources.htm>

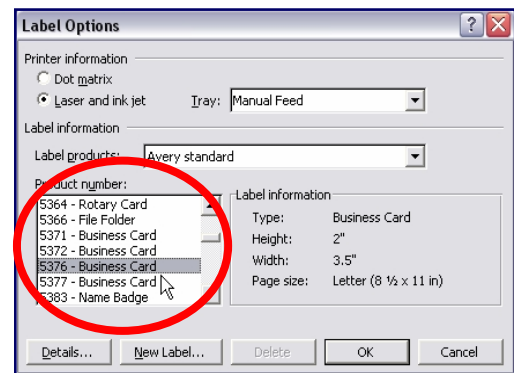
Making Business Cards in Word

- Click on **Tools**
- Click on **Letters and Mailings**
- Then on **Envelopes and Labels**
- Under the **Envelopes and Labels** select the **Labels** tab.

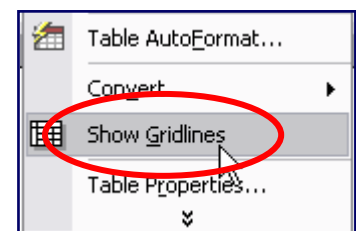


This area shows the current label or business card type that is set to print for. If this **does not** match the paper you are using, you can change it by clicking on the **Options** button.

- If you click on **Options**, you get another window
- Choose your Label or Business Card type from the list
- Click **OK**
- Now click on **New Document** and you have a page ready to edit!
- **IF** your new document does not display a table, you can either:



- Apply a border to it. Click on **Format...Borders & Shading...** then choose the borders you want
- Check to see if your table gridlines are turned off. Click on the **Table** menu, then see if you have the option to **Show Gridlines**.



Ideas for Microsoft Word



Newsletter
Memo
Letterhead
Calendar
Story Starter Template
Book Report
Book Report Covers
Bookmark
Vocabulary/Math Problem Bingo
Certificates
Brochure
Multiple Choice Test
Short Answer Test
True/False Test
Timeline
Outline
Fliers/Signs
Assignment Sheet
Graphic Organizer
Seating Chart
Presentation
Review Games