

# MS Word vs Pages vs LO Writer

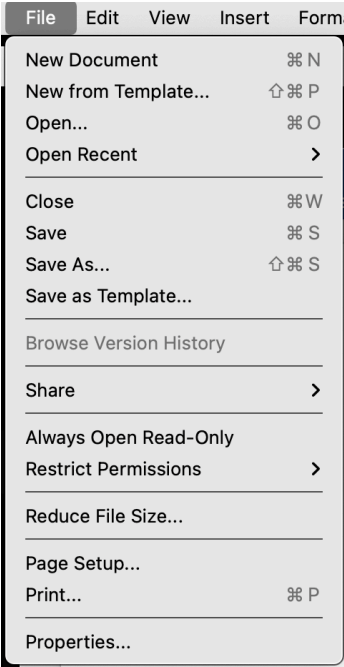
By John Carter, September 27, 2021

This is a review of the differences between MS Word, Apple Pages, and LibreOffice Writer. Only a few examples will be given. These examples will include typical operations that casual users would most likely want to take advantage of. The purpose of this document is not to teach how to use any of the apps, but to highlight the significant differences between them.

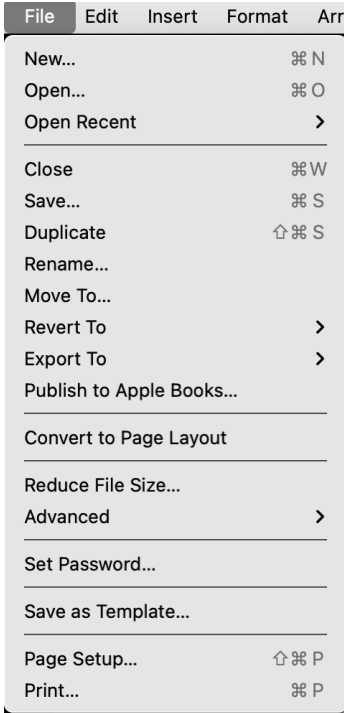
For the basic task of just writing text with no concern for formatting or layout, these apps are essentially identical. The exception is that neither Word nor Writer can access a Pages document (.pages), whereas Pages can access a Word document saved as a .doc or .docx and save it back in a compatible Word format. Pages cannot access the default document format of Writer (.odt), but Word can. Writer can access a Word document and save it back in the same format. The catch is that the font used in any one app must be available in the other apps to be as compatible as possible.

The basic keyboard shortcuts (Cut, Copy, Paste, New, Open, Close, Save, Print) for all three apps are the same. Word and Writer might have a few extra keyboard shortcuts. The menu items are quite different.

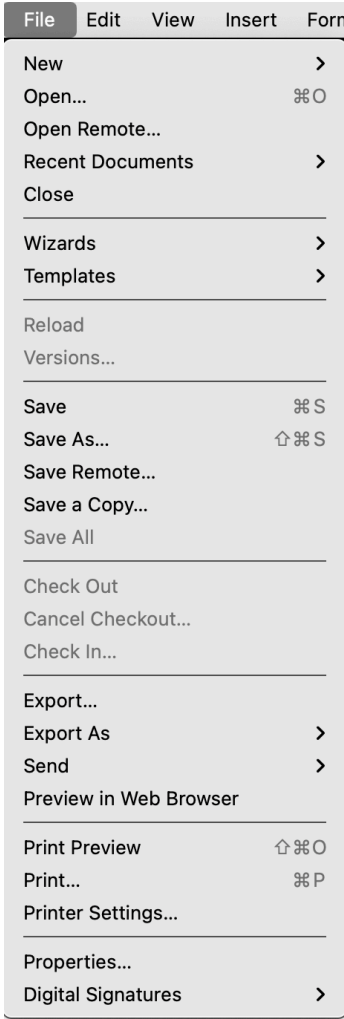
Here's the File menu:



Word

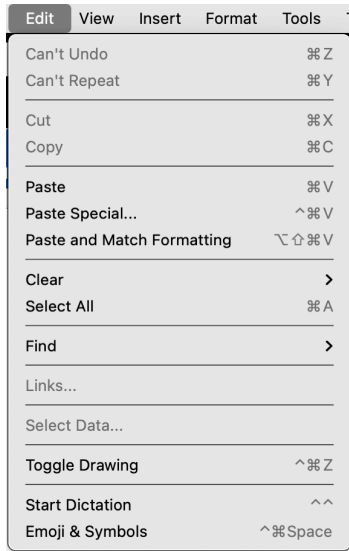


Pages

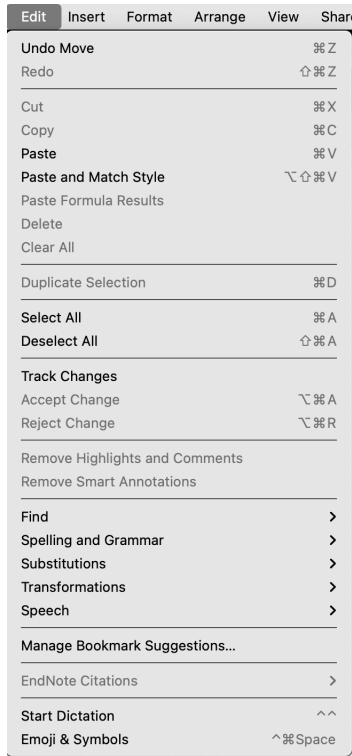


Writer

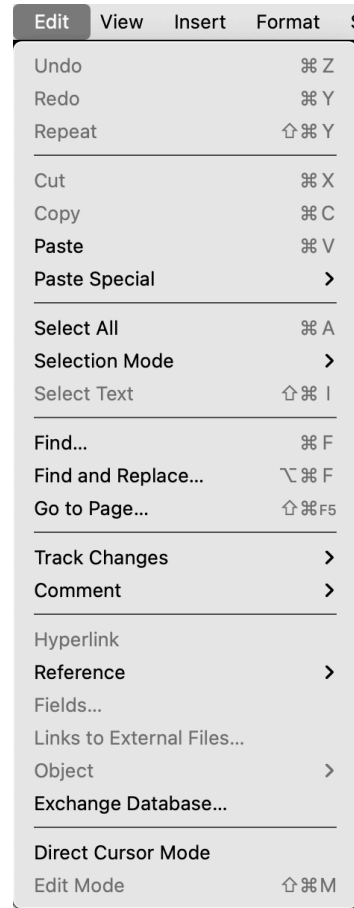
And here's the Edit menu:



Word



Pages



Writer

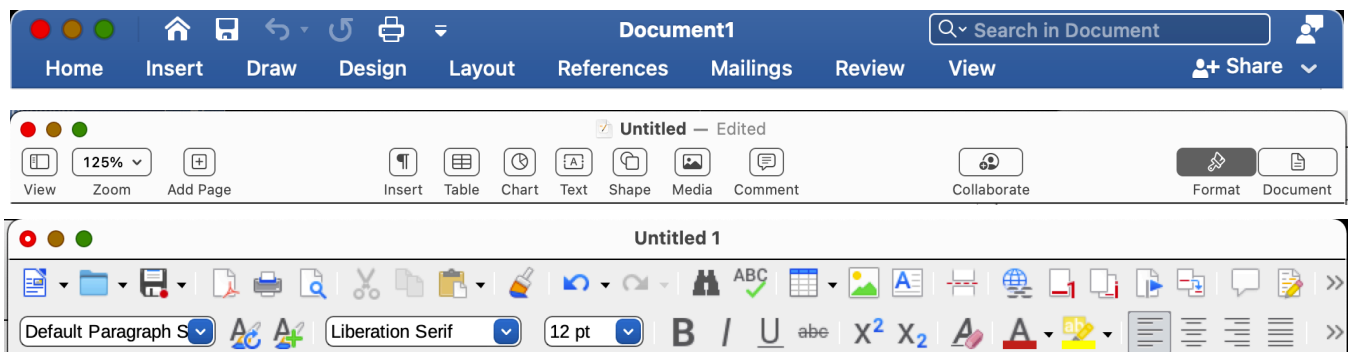
The menu list is also somewhat different for each app. Here's the menu list:

**Word** File Edit View Insert Format Tools Table Window Help

**Pages** File Edit Insert Format Arrange View Share Window Help

**LibreOffice** File Edit View Insert Format Styles Table Form Tools Window Help

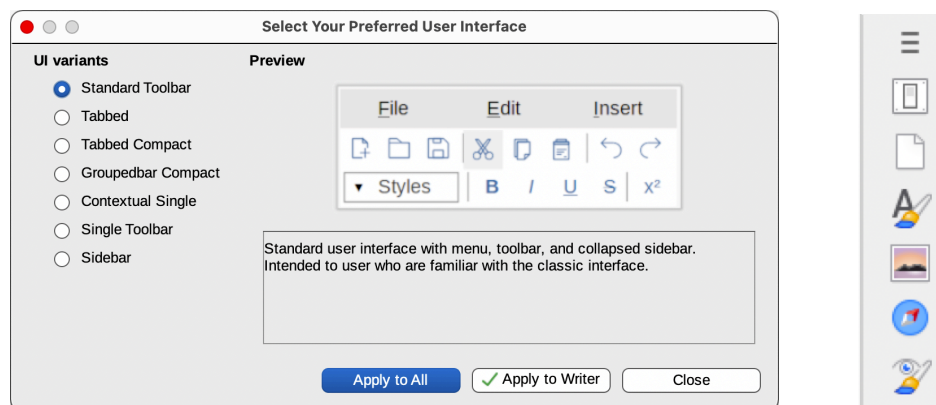
Each app also has additional formatting tools available from the Toolbar (T-B: Word, Pages, Writer):



In Word, when accessing the items in the toolbar, a Ribbon opens up with all of the options for that item. In Pages, to access the additional formatting tools, click on the Format button and they pop out on the right side of the document window. For writer, the appearance of the

formatting options is determined by selecting one of the seven possible *User Interface variants* (found under the View tab in the Menu Bar).

What is shown for the Writer Toolbar in the previous image above is the Standard Toolbar. Other variants look like variations of the Word Toolbar. Similar to Pages, additional formatting options are available in a right sidebar (see image below right).



In all, Writer provides more formatting options than the others while Pages provides the least formatting options.

If you want to start a document using a template, Word has a vast selection of templates to choose from. Many of the Word templates can be used in both Pages and Writer, but first you have to have access to them, and that requires a subscription to Word. Notwithstanding, there are hundreds of additional templates available on the Internet. Some templates are unique to the app that they are written for and this is because they use proprietary code called macros that is specific to the app. When you look for templates specific to Pages or Writer, the number of available templates are quite few. For Pages, there are a lot of templates available for a price.

The User Interface for Pages is quite lean. Simplicity of use is the byword for Apple. Word attempts to clean up the User Interface by hiding the Toolbar formatting options. Writer can be as complex or as lean as you like.

The options for formatting text for each app can be as simple or as complex as your design requires. There are fewer text formatting options in Pages than in the others. The one thing to keep in mind is that it is far easier to use a template with any of the apps wherein you simply add text to the text frames and insert images in the picture frames. If you don't like the template design, then you need to learn all techniques for document, page, and paragraph styles.

Adding images, as was done in this document, can be done by inserting an image from the menu bar, from the toolbar, or simply by dragging an image onto the document where you want it to show up. This can be problematical with all of the apps, but is much easier to do in Pages. The image formatting options for Word and Writer are quite complex. To include in this document a discussion for making adjustments to the size and position of an image for each of the apps would require many pages. So, this will be done in the class with as much brevity as possible if only to give the student an idea of what is involved.

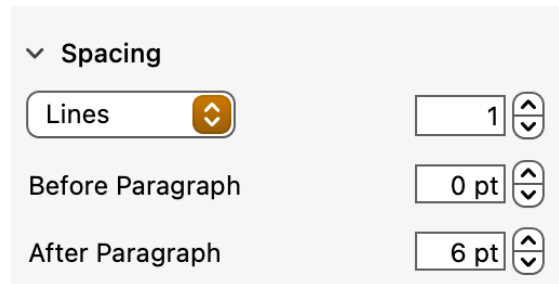
Adding links to a document is done with the keyboard shortcut Cmd-K in all apps, or from the Menu Bar in the Insert tab.

Sharing a document is best done by exporting the document as a PDF file as this preserves the exact format of the document. When printing a document, there is an option to print to a PDF file.

To share a document from one app to the other with the intention to allow for editing the shared document, export the document as a Word document (.doc or .docx) since that is the common format that all of them can work with. The changes to the document that can result will be due mostly to differences in available fonts and in the way that page and paragraph formatting are handled. If images are included in the document, then it may require a little

“surgery” on the image properties to put things back in order. Exporting a document as a PDF always keeps the formatting of the document intact, but makes it rather difficult to edit since none of these apps can view or edit a PDF.

This document was prepared with Pages. It uses no fancy formatting options. Only one change was made to the paragraph Body style and that was to add 6 points of additional space after each paragraph. This is done in the Format section, the Style button, and then selecting the amount of space to add in the Spacing group. The default paragraph spacing for all apps is 0 pt. Similarly, line spacing can be adjusted independently from paragraph spacing. The first line of a paragraph can also be adjusted independently of the rest of the paragraph.



If you have any experience with writing technical documents or in formatting books for print, what is highly desired in a document editor is the ability to create new paragraph styles - of any kind. This is possible in Pages, with an exception. What can be done is to modify an existing paragraph style or create a new paragraph style based on the current paragraph style settings as long as the change does not involve bullets or numbering. If you need to convert a paragraph to use bullets or numbering, it cannot be saved as a new paragraph style. Leave it as a modification to the current paragraph style.

The examples below are typical for all of the apps.

- This is a bullet paragraph
- Entering “Return” continues the next paragraph with the same format.
  - Starting the next paragraph and tapping the Tab key indents the paragraph and keeps the bullet.

Entering “Return” twice resumes the default paragraph style.

1. This is a numbered paragraph
2. Entering “Return” continues the next paragraph as a numbered item and increments the number.
  1. Starting the next paragraph and tapping the Tab key indents the paragraph and restarts the line numbering.

There are several options for selecting bullet and numbering formats. The options vary widely with each app.

Each app has its own list of available paragraph styles to choose from. Pages has the fewest.

You can copy a style from one document to another. When you save a document, you also save any changes to styles with that document so that you don’t have to make the changes again the next time you open that document. Those styles might not import well from one app to another. In Pages, you cannot create a global style that then becomes available in any new document or that you open to edit. To preserve a style to be used in new documents, save the document as a template.

If you are going to write a book and if you need to have full flexibility over formatting, then use either Word or Writer because you get every possible feature and option imaginable. I have used Writer to format several books that have been published, so everything you need is there. Book publishers make available a set of templates to make creating a book even easier. And of course, if writing a book is really what you intend to do and if professional design and quality is a must, use something like Affinity Publisher (which rivals Adobe Publisher at a fraction of the cost). At the very least, write your book using Pages (or TextEdit) and then turn it over to a professional to reformat it for publication.

The comparison between Word, Pages, and Writer regarding text formatting can best be demonstrated by showing some examples of templates in each app. Examine the property of

each style what it takes to modify and create a style to achieve the effects shown in the templates.

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