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and e-mails before I hit send. Even my Instant Messages are less than instant; I'll read and edit before sending. It's the little fine-tuning that I'm after — the stuff you miss the first time (or the second time) that you write something. Often, this makes a big difference in how clearly you are communicating your meaning.

When I'm writing, my tool of choice is Microsoft Word. My feeling is that it can handle most anything I need in a document. Yet the reality, as other users will attest, is that we are just scratching the surface on functionality. It is very forgiving, but the effect is that we often just "get by" instead of using all that functionality to streamline our work.

I recently upgraded to Microsoft Word 2007 and had a real "awakening." There's still much I have not yet discovered, but I definitely like this new version. I cheated at the start by tapping our in-house Microsoft Office guru to spend some time guiding me through the new format. The biggest surprise was that Microsoft, in addition to the new functionality, redesigned the navigation to uncover existing features that were there all along. In the old version, I suspected more features were there, I just never set aside the time to learn. I should have. Now that I know how easy using these tools in Word can be, my goal is to pass on the knowledge and save you some time. Here are a few features that I believe you will find helpful and that can be real timesavers.

Setting Defaults

We are judged, in part, on the way we present ourselves. So if there's a look we like our documents to have, we should be consistent and always use that look. I happen to like the more modern looking sans serif fonts. In Word 2003, it was a constant chore to have to change the default font in my documents from Times Roman. Enough already! One day I just dove in and found where I could

set my default preferred font and font size. The embarrassing thing was it was

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Since 2003 (the instant of the new Word), I don't have to worry about those in my office (and my life) who are using earlier versions of Word not being able to open my documents.

Lining Up Those Outlines

The subject of editing takes us to the often-used Outline format. Outlines seem to invite changes, and that is the perfect recipe to mess up my need for order and consistency in a document. I was finishing up an outline recently, and it just wasn't lining up correctly. In the old days, frustration would have kicked in, knowing that I had the chore ahead of reformatting to make it all look right. That is no longer the case since another team member introduced me to the Format Painter. What a great tool. It looks like a little paintbrush on the Home tab, Clipboard Group in Word 2007. (In Word 2003, get to it by expanding

your standard toolbar. Once used, it will stay on your visible toolbar.) Here's the cool part: Simply highlight the block of copy with the format you like, and click the paintbrush. It will turn your cursor into a paintbrush primed for one job. Highlight the text you want reformatted with the paintbrush, and it's done! Wow! If you're like me, though, you'll want more.

And there is more. Highlight the format you like, and then double-click on the paintbrush. You have the power in the paintbrush for as long as you like, and can then change the format of any sections, anywhere in your document. It's a keeper. By the way, the paintbrush feature is good for any Word formatting you need and is also available in Excel. It works miracles there, too!

E-Mailing Word Documents

I don't know about you, but I attach a lot of Word documents to e-mails. My "old" process was to save the document, write my e-mail and then attach the Word document to the e-mail. Now, all I do is write my document, hit the office button (or file in Word 2003) > send to > email. Voila!

I have an e-mail created, and the document I just wrote is already saved as

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quickly get replaced by the right word, spelling like Webster intended. It definitely speeds my writing. This feature is known as Auto Correct, but it can do a lot more than just correct misspellings. To see what's in the full toolbox, go to the Office button and click on the Word options button at the bottom > proofing > autocorrect options. On this screen, you can add other "replace text as you type options." Think of the names or groups of words you type constantly. I added "lk," which now automatically fills in my name, "lka" fills in our company name and "tc" fills in my favorite salutation — Take care. It is amazing what a timesaver this is. I think you get the idea; you can go wild with this.

A Toolbox Filled With Timesavers

As you suspected, we're just starting to scratch the surface on features, as we did in last month's Excel column, "Know Your Office: In Search Of Excel-lence," which is available at www.CPATechAdvisor.com/go/1792. Microsoft Office is a toolbox filled with timesavers. You owe it to yourself (and your stress level) to learn and use more of those new features for the big win-win. It will definitely make your communications more professional and save you time.

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