

Word-processors

A word-processor is one of many applications which can run on your computer, alongside accounts packages and programs for spreadsheets or desktop publishing. For many people however, a word-processor and a computer are almost one and the same thing. This is why their names are often used interchangeably. The reason for mentioning this is to remind you that all these applications are doing basically the same thing—taking the information you put into the computer and converting it into electronic code. In the case of a word-processor, your instructions are put in at the keyboard, and they appear on the screen as letters and words. Within your computer however, they are just a series of numbers.

What we're going to do in this chapter is discuss the basic functions of word-processors, and look at what they can do to help us write. We'll examine some of the most useful items from those drop-down menus and their keystroke equivalents. These are the basic tools we all use in generating and manipulating text. We'll start with the simplest features of most programs and leave the tricky stuff until later. But first a few words about word-processing programs in general.

There are many word-processing packages on the market - all of them rapidly becoming very similar. This is because user needs are now quite well known, and the manufacturers all wish to capture the biggest share of the market.

If you are still using one of the older word-processors or an early version that doesn't have all the latest bells and whistles, you might feel slightly frustrated by mention of glamorous features on the latest release. But take heart! Even the simplest word-processor [*Notepad* in Windows, for instance] will offer very powerful tools to assist your writing, and there are other reasons why the latest is not necessarily the best.