



Reasons to Start Writing with a Plain Text Editor

ASKED IF THEY WRITE FOR A LIVING, MOST PEOPLE WOULD SAY NO. WE'RE NOT TONI MORRISON, JOHN GRISHAM, OR STEPHEN KING; BUT THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THAT YOU DO WRITE FOR A LIVING EVEN IF YOU THINK YOU DON'T.

I suggest that anyone who writes proposals for their business, reports for senior management, or documentation for a computer application or an office process is writing for a living. Maybe you're doing it wrong.

That's not to say that what you write will have spelling or grammatical errors. Instead, it's a question of getting the editing and designing cart in front of the writing horse.

This happens when an application such as Word, Wordperfect, Dreamweaver, or InDesign get in the way of the writing process by offering too many options for formatting, illustration, and design.

I write a series of articles weekly (some might say weekly) for the *TechByter Worldwide* website and could easily start work using Dreamweaver, Adobe's visual website designer. I also write a monthly article for clients, of which this is an example.

I could start with Word or work directly in Adobe's InDesign. Instead, I start with a plain-text editor that doesn't permit me to set text in bold or italic, insert images, create columns, or perform any other tasks that belong later in the workflow.

Unlike applications such as Wordperfect, Microsoft Word, and LibreOffice Writer, text editors force the user to concentrate on the words, and only on the words.

Two other groups of people who need text editors such as Notepad++, UltraEdit, or UESTudio are software developers and web designers. They use text editors because word



processors introduce characters that cannot be included in software or in web pages.

Beware Distractions

IF YOU'RE SOMETIMES DISTRACTED BY A WORD PROCESSOR'S HUNDREDS OF FUNCTIONS FOR FORMATTING TEXT, TRY ELIMINATING THE CLUTTER WITH A WRITING TOOL THAT DOESN'T HAVE THOSE FUNCTIONS.

Most *TechByter Worldwide* articles start in UESTudio, an advanced and somewhat pricey text processor. I start there but because working in a visual editor makes it all too easy

to get sidetracked with formatting instead of facts, design instead of details.

During the writing phase, I can concentrate solely on the message, but I also use UESTudio to prepare the Really Simple Syndication (RSS) file that's used by podcast organizations to create lists of aggregated podcasts. The RSS file must follow explicit coding rules and UESTudio has functions that highlight coding errors.

Editing an RSS file is a feature most people will not need, but text editors can help people

who write a reports and other documents. Our brains have two, and possibly three, modes that are used in communicating: Writer mode, editor mode, and designer mode. During the writing phase, it's essential to get the information down "on paper" even though "paper" is invariably a screen these days.

But we're tempted by shiny objects such as adding bold or italic text, changing the typeface, or adding an illustration.

In the past, writing was done on a typewriter or on a legal pad with a #2 pencil. Opportunities for editing, revising, and designing were limited or nonexistent. After writing a first draft, we would mark up the pages with corrections and changes, then type another copy. If the report was going to be formatted, somebody else would handle the typesetting and layout. In many business settings, the writer is now responsible for editing and design.

"A WRITER IS SOMEONE FOR WHOM WRITING IS MORE DIFFICULT THAN IT IS FOR OTHER PEOPLE."

Thomas Mann, *Essays of Three Decades*

It may seem logical to save time by doing the tasks simultaneously, but editing and designing get in the way of writing.

If you use a text editor solely for first-pass writing and not for software development or HTML coding, nearly \$100 per year for UESTudio might be too much. Notepad is an adequate text editor that's included with Windows, but there's a better option. Notepad++ is an open-source text editor that is free (as in "free speech" and also as in "free beer"). You can download it from the [Notepad++ website](#).

Notepad++ supports several programming languages, and is favored by a loyal group of

software developers. If you'd like to try out the process of writing documents in a text editor, skip Notepad and start with Notepad++. It's is a great introduction to plain text editors and the program has a loyal user base.

Earlier I said Word cannot be used to create a web page. Microsoft does claim that Word can be used to write website code, and that is not an inaccurate statement. But when used to create a web page, Word must output the document in hypertext markup language format. Word creates bloated, inefficient, ugly HTML. So although it *can* be used to create code for websites, it shouldn't be. 🐛

Microsoft Updates Settings in Windows 11

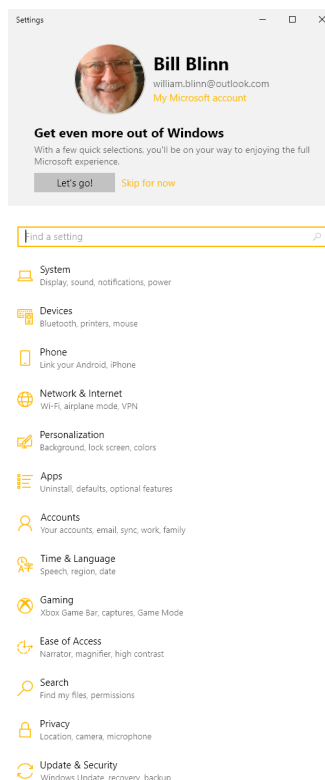
THE AUGUST 2012 RELEASE OF WINDOWS 8 PROMISED TO REPLACE THE CONTROL PANEL WITH SETTINGS. NEARLY 10 YEARS LATER, WINDOWS 11 IS ALMOST THERE.

That doesn't mean the Control Panel will disappear, though. It's still needed for some advanced adjustments. *Settings* is now far enough along that many users will never need the Control Panel.

The Settings app has received new features with every version of Windows, particularly version 21H2 from late 2021. The Windows 10 app includes areas for System, Devices, Accounts, Phone Synchronization, Personalization, Apps, Network & Internet, Time & Language, Ease of Access, Updates & Security, Gaming, and Privacy.

The visual changes added in Windows 10 have been further refined for Windows 11 and the main panel now has 11 major categories: System, Bluetooth & Devices, Network & Internet, Personalization, Apps, Accounts, Time & Language, Gaming, Accessibility, Privacy & Security, and Windows Update.

The Control Panel remains for the few functions that are not present in Settings, and it will likely remain after Microsoft migrates everything to Settings. Even when every Control Panel setting



has been migrated, the Control Panel will probably remain because Microsoft rarely deletes functions that are no longer needed.

For example, your computer probably doesn't have a modem, and yet you'll find options to set up a modem and to define your area code and dialing rules.

Why? Because the occasional user may still need a modem. Microsoft retains these deprecated features in part because removing them would save little disk space, but also because any change in old code can introduce unintended results that cause system instability.

No matter how well computer code is documented, and the documentation is never adequate, it's possible for undocumented and forgotten dependencies to exist. These might not cause problems for most users, but it's a safe bet that somebody, somewhere will feel the bite of an unnoticed bug.

Leaving the antiques in place is the safer option for everyone. 🐛