



## Don't Let a Word Processor Hinder Your Writing

IT MAY SEEM COUNTERINTUITIVE, BUT A FEATURE-RICH WORD PROCESSOR CAN GET IN THE WAY WHEN YOU'RE WRITING.

That seems to make about as much sense as saying that a well-appointed car can hinder your personal transportation, but there might be a relationship. Well-appointed cars come with *infotainment* systems that can distract the driver, and a distracted driver is much more likely to crash than one who is paying close attention to the road.

The feature-rich word processor distracts the writer with bold, italics, typefaces, colors, columns, headers and footers, footnotes and endnotes, references, layout and design — a seemingly endless list of visual effects that can be applied to the words.

This is all out of place when you're writing.

### Ignore Spelling & Grammar

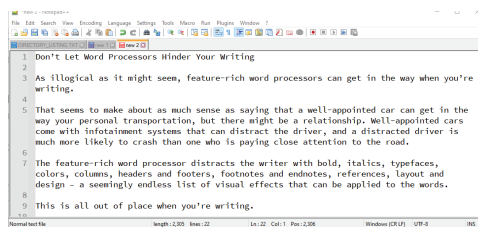
OLD TIME WRITERS UNDERSTOOD THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT TASK IS GETTING THE INFORMATION DOWN ON PAPER.

Pencil and paper or a typewriter made it impossible to add visual effects when writing. Write now, edit later. And formatting? That was left to the discretion of the publisher, who hired designers and typesetters.

Now all the tasks seem to be the responsibility of the writer, at least in business environments. Spelling, grammar, and design all get in the way because the mindset needed for these tasks is different from what's needed for writing.



WORD PROCESSORS CAN GET IN THE WAY OF WRITING BY CAUSING THE WRITER TO SWITCH FROM WRITING MODE TO EDITING MODE TO DESIGNER MODE. ALL FUNCTIONS SUFFER.



TEXT EDITORS, LIKE TYPEWRITERS, OFFER LIMITED FUNCTIONALITY.

Maybe it's time to go back to the typewriter. Not an actual typewriter, of course, but an application that's more like a typewriter than a word processor. Such applications are called text editors.

Software developers use text editors every day to write code and they can also be used to examine executable files and dynamic link libraries. Writers can use them to eliminate distractions.

Unlike Microsoft Word, Wordperfect, and LibreOffice Writer, text editors can't create bold or italic text, bullet lists, tables, or footnotes and endnotes. They can't create multiple columns of text on a page. You can't add references. All you can do it type.

Text editors do include color coding that software developers and website designers use sections of code, but these colors don't print. If you're using UltraEdit, UESstudio, Notepad++, or any other text processor, the coloring can be turned off when you're writing plain text.

The TechByter Worldwide podcast uses an RSS file to communicate information about each week's program. RSS stands for RDF (Resource Description Framework) Site Summary or Really Simple Syndication, and there

is disagreement about the name. An RSS file contains information that can be read by both humans and machines. The text editor I use, UESTudio, is essential for this task, and it can also be used to edit HTML files.

Business writers are unlikely to need either of those capabilities, but if you sometimes feel that you're being distracted by a word processor's hundreds of functions for formatting text, give a text editor a try. Ultra Edit and UESTudio have free trials; Notepad++ is free.

Most articles for this newsletter begin in UESTudio — not because it's difficult to write in Adobe InDesign but because doing so can distract me from the message. TechByter Worldwide articles start in UESTudio, too because a visual editor such as Dreamweaver makes it easy to get sidetracked with formatting instead of information.

## Facts First, then Formatting

GETTING IT DOWN ON SCREEN HAS REPLACED GETTING IT DOWN ON PAPER.

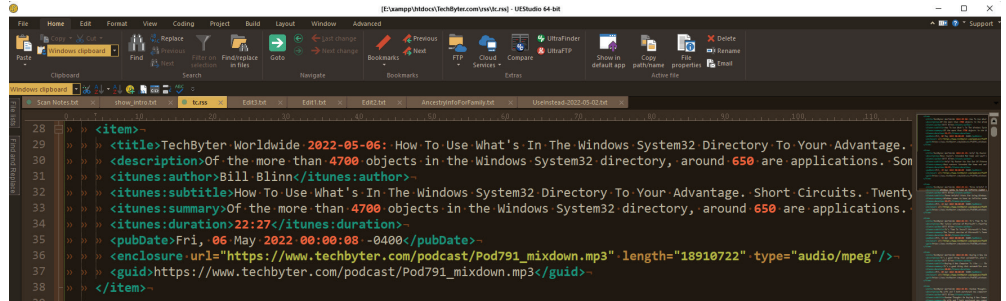
Text doesn't move to InDesign or Dreamweaver until the article is complete and it's time for final editing, design, and copy fitting.

Eliminating the distractions introduced by a word processor helps us humans when we're writing. Multitasking is a distraction, and multitasking is hard to avoid when the word processor offers so many shiny objects.

Our brains have one mode for writing, another for editing, and a third for design. When we have to switch from one to another, all three processes suffer.

Authors who worked on a typewriter or with a pencil had few options for editing or revising as they were writing, and none for designing. After writing a first draft, the author would mark corrections and changes and write or type another copy.

Try a text editor the next time you have to write something. Notepad is

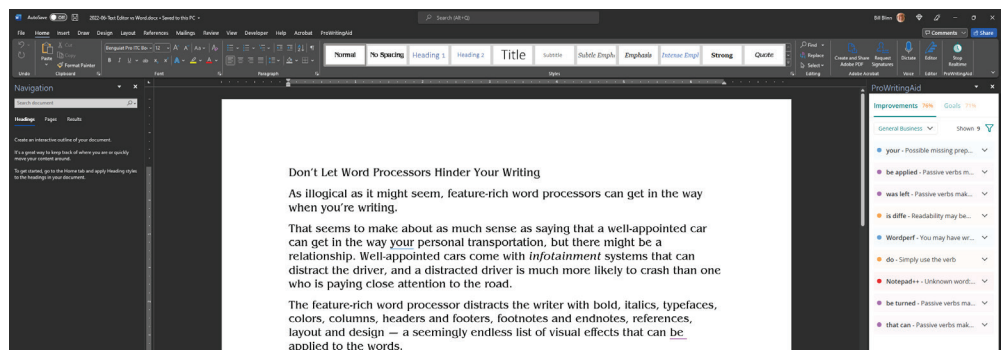


already on all Windows computers. Notepad++ can be downloaded for free. As much as I like UESTudio, licensing the application for nearly \$100 per year may seem a bit high.

When you've finished writing in the text editor, save the file and open it in your favorite word processor. Sometimes less is more, and using a text editor is proof of that. Ω

**TEXT EDITORS HAVE ADDED VERSATILITY TO WORK WITH MANY OTHER TYPES OF FILES, INCLUDING HTML, RSS, AND EVEN EXECUTABLE PROGRAM FILES. SURPRISINGLY, THEY'RE ALSO GREAT FOR WRITING.**

**WHEN THE BASIC FACTS, DETAILS, AND STORY FLOW ARE IN PLACE, IT'S TIME TO MOVE THE PLAIN TEXT TO WORD, INDESIGN, OR DREAMWEAVER FOR FORMATTING, FITTING, SUBHEADS, CALLOUTS, ILLUSTRATIONS, DESIGN, AND FINAL PROOFREADING.**



## Beware The Urge to Skip Updates

UPDATES CAN BE ANNOYING, BUT SKIPPING THEM PUTS YOUR COMPUTER AT PERIL.

Monthly security updates from Microsoft, less frequent feature updates, and the occasional emergency patch join updates from applications. That's a lot!

Adobe Creative Cloud can update any of its many applications at any time and I've added an update utility, PatchMyPC, that keeps nearly three dozen utilities and components up to date. It runs daily at 11am.

Delaying or ignoring Windows updates is problematic because many of the updates include security fixes. Software flaws can be exploited by crooks.

Any update can create a problem for users and it doesn't matter whether the computer runs Windows, MacOS, or Linux — but errors that are introduced as part of an update are usually addressed quickly.

To avoid being interrupted when you're working on something important, set *active hours*, to limit the times when restarts can be scheduled.

If you define active hours so that there is never an open time, Windows will eventually insist on restarting the computer with little warning. Ω