

By Katherine Murray

The latest version of Word provides a number of ways to tailor the program so that it fits your style of doing things. Here's a look at 10 techniques for customizing the look, feel, and function of Word 2007.

#1: Hide the Ribbon

The earliest reactions to Word 2007 have been mixed—some people love the look of the new Microsoft Office Fluent interface (the



Figure A

formal name for the new design, which includes the Ribbon), and others, not so much. It seems that the most resistance has come from experienced Word users, people who were happy with their familiar set of shortcut keys and customizations.

One complaint has been that the Ribbon is a little too space-consuming. If you prefer to have more working room on the screen than Word 2007 offers by default, you can hide the Ribbon by pressing Ctrl+F1. This reduces the Ribbon to only the tab titles, so the commands are within reach if you need them (**Figure A**). To return the Ribbon to normal display, press Ctrl+F1 again.

#2: Customize the Quick Access Toolbar

The Quick Access Toolbar is the small toolbar that appears to the right of the Microsoft Office button in the upper-left corner of the Word 2007 window. This toolbar provides access to commands you are likely to use often. By default, it displays only Save, Undo, and Redo. You can easily change the commands that appear in the Quick Access Toolbar so that it contains those you use regularly. For example, if you frequently check spelling and grammar in your documents (not a bad idea), you may want to add the Spelling & Grammar command to the Quick Access Toolbar. To add a command, click the arrow to the right of the Quick Access Toolbar. The drop-down list shown in **Figure B** will appear, showing you the most common additions. Click the item you want to add (or click More Commands to see additional options) and Word will add the command to the toolbar.



Figure B

#3: Display and use KeyTips

KeyTips provide you with a display of the keys you can press if you want to navigate through Word using the keyboard instead of the mouse. Press Alt to display KeyTips on the Ribbon. You'll see small boxed characters appear on the major tabs and Quick Access tools in the Word window. When you press one of the characters (for example, pressing I selects the Insert tab), you'll see that all commands on the Ribbon have their own KeyTips. KeyTips will remain on the display until you press Alt a second time to hide them.

#4: Tailor the status bar

The status bar in Word 2007 has a new level of, uh, *status* in Word 2007. You can get more information than ever, simply by right-clicking anywhere on it. When you do, a popup list of available items will appear (**Figure C**). At a glance, you can see helpful things like word count, spelling status, and whether Track Changes is enabled.

But the real purpose of the Customize Status Bar list is to enable you to choose the items you want to see displayed on the status bar. You can add Caps Lock, for example, if you want to see an indicator when you've accidentally pressed the Caps Lock key (or forgotten to toggle it off). To add an item that's not currently displayed, just click it. To hide something you don't want displayed in the status bar, click the item to remove it. (Displayed items appear with checkmarks in the Customize Status Bar list.)

#5: Change the color of Word

You don't have a huge range of vibrant colors to choose from when you want to customize the overall look of the Word 2007 window, but you do have a few options. To change the color of the interface, click the Microsoft Office button and choose Word Options. In the Popular window, click the Color Scheme down arrow. Blue is selected by default; you can also choose Silver or Black. (I know, *yawn*.) Take heart, though—you can wake yourself (and your readers) up with plenty of color by applying Themes and Quick Styles to your actual documents.

#6: Modify ScreenTips

Word 2007 includes Enhanced ScreenTips that give you more information about Word commands and procedures. This is helpful when you need to find a command to do a particular thing and can't quite remember what various commands do. (For example, what is the difference between a citation and a cross reference?)

When you point to a command on the Ribbon, Word displays a ScreenTip to give you the basics of the command. By default, Word gives you lots of information. But you can shorten the ScreenTips if you feel you need only little nudges now and then, or do away with them altogether. To change the way ScreenTips appear, click the Microsoft Office button and choose Word Options. In the Popular window, click the ScreenTips Style down arrow and choose the option you want. Click OK to save your changes.

#7: Create keyboard shortcuts

If you're a diehard shortcut key fan, you're probably eager to create your own shortcut keys in Word 2007. To do that, click the Microsoft Office button and choose Word Options. Click Customize and then click the Keyboard Shortcuts button at the bottom of the window. In the Customize Keyboard dialog box (**Figure D**), choose the tab containing the



Figure C

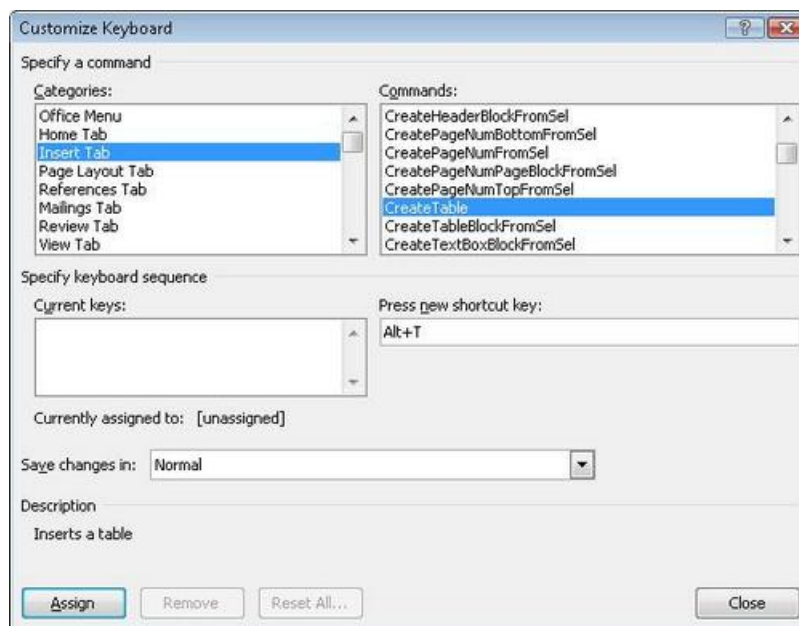


Figure D

command you want to automate. Then, in the Commands list, select the command name. (Notice that these names are the command names as they are known in the program—not as they appear in the Ribbon.) Press the shortcut key you want to assign to the command and click Assign to save the new shortcut key. Click OK to close the Word Options dialog box, and the new shortcut key should be in effect.

#8: Start Word automatically

You can easily have Windows Vista launch Word 2007 at startup by copying Word into your Startup folder. Here's how. Click the Windows Start button and choose All Programs. Click Microsoft Office to display the programs in that folder. Right-click Microsoft Office Word 2007 and choose Copy. Now scroll down to the Startup folder in the All Programs list, right-click on it, and choose Explore (**Figure E**). When the Startup window opens, press Ctrl+V to paste the Word 2007 shortcut you copied into the folder. Now, close the Startup window. The next time you start Windows, Word will start automatically.

#9: Launch Word and open a particular document

If you want Word to open to a specific document each time the program starts, you can use a switch to tell Word which document you want to use. First, click the Windows Start button and select Run. Then, type the path to Word (for example, C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\Office\Winword.exe), press the spacebar, and

type the switch /t, followed by another space and the name of the file you want to open. If you really like starting Word this way, you can create a desktop shortcut for it by right-clicking your desktop, choosing New, clicking Shortcut, and entering the path and switch in the Location box in the Create Shortcut dialog box.

#10: Change where your documents are stored

You can tell Word to save your documents in a folder of your choosing by clicking the Microsoft Office button, choosing Word Options, and clicking Save. In the Save options, click the Browse button to the right of the Default File Location box and navigate to the folder where you want to store your documents. Click OK to save the location and close the dialog box and click OK a second time to return to your document.

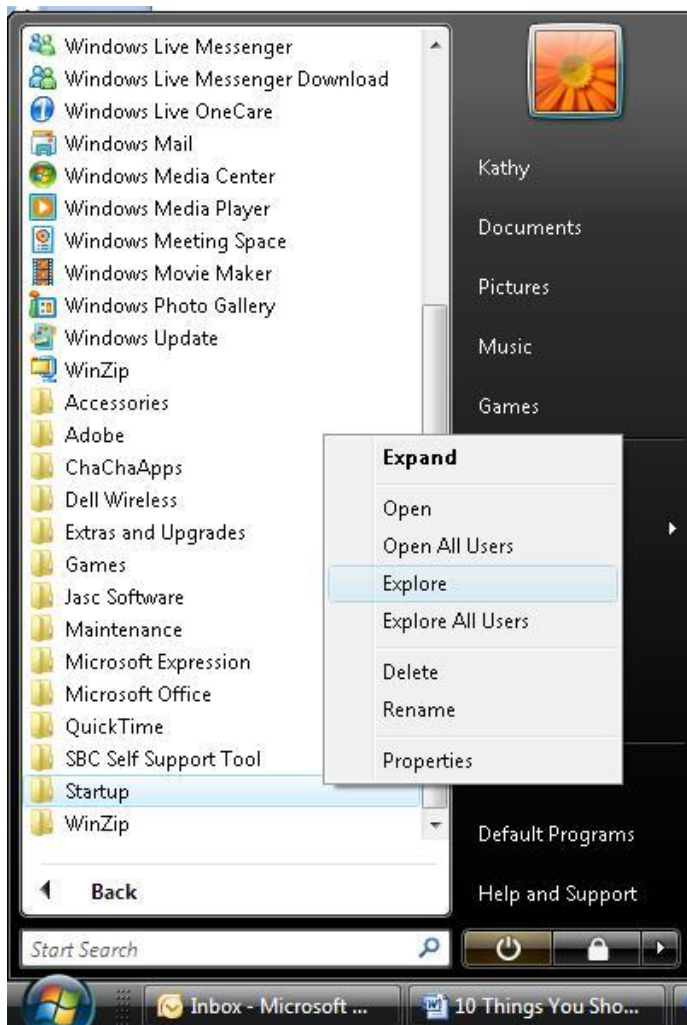


Figure E

Katherine Murray is the author of many computer books (including the in-the-box documentation for Microsoft Office 2007 Professional and Small Business Editions). She also writes digital lifestyle articles for various Microsoft sites and publishes a blog called BlogOffice that shares Microsoft Office ideas, how-to's, and tips.

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Version history

Version: 1.0

Published: June 11, 2007

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