

Get the most from **OpenOffice.org**

the practical guide to mastering
the Open Source alternative to
Microsoft Office

- ✓ Master the free office suite
- ✓ Produce documents
- ✓ Build spreadsheets
- ✓ Create presentations
- ✓ Start a database
- ✓ Use templates & add-ons
- ✓ Customise OpenOffice.org
- ✓ Make your own artwork

Dependable advice & time-saving
techniques from the experts at
PC Utilities magazine





Introduction



When most people think about word processors, spreadsheets and presentation software the first name that comes to mind is Microsoft Office. As good as Microsoft's office applications may be though, they don't come cheap, and the cost of the suite may be more than home users and small businesses can afford.

Just because you don't have the funds for Microsoft Office doesn't mean you need do without good quality productivity software. OpenOffice.org is an excellent alternative, which is completely free for home users and businesses alike. Originally developed from Sun Microsystems' StarOffice software, OpenOffice.org is a well established alternative to the commercial options. The StarOffice source code was released as Open Source back in 2000 and since then the OpenOffice.org project has developed it into a capable and flexible office suite, which is capable of handling virtually every task you could want from an office program.

The applications in the OpenOffice.org suite – including the word processor Writer, spreadsheet tool Calc and presentation program Impress – are capable of opening Microsoft Office documents and saving files in a format you can share with users of the commercial suite. OpenOffice.org is much more than just a free clone of the Microsoft tools though – its wider support means you can output files directly to .pdf or make use of Open XML formats too.

Over the course of this guide we'll introduce you to the various applications in the Open Source suite and guide you through the many features on offer, from the basic options to hidden and more advanced functions. You'll be a pro in next to no time.

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OpenOffice.org



David Nield introduces the powerful open source office suite that's packed with features and free to use



SOFTWARE GUIDE

SOFTWARE:
OpenOffice.org

LEVEL:
Beginner

ON THE WEB:
www.openoffice.org



Though it has its origins in commercial software, OpenOffice.org is now one of the most popular freeware applications on the Web. It's an open source project, which means that its source code is freely available to examine and rework, and the whole suite of tools is developed by a thriving online community of enthusiasts and programmers. Included in the suite of applications is a word processor (Writer), a spreadsheet tool (Calc), a database manager (Base), a presentation program (Impress) and a vector graphics application (Draw). Data in each of these programs can be easily swapped between the other components of the program, and other file formats – such as those used by Microsoft Office – are also well supported.

Version 3.0

Version 3.0 of OpenOffice.org was released in October 2008 and represented a significant step forward in terms of both looks and functionality

for the office suite. Together with a refreshing improved look and a handy start page, new features include notes and annotations in Writer, and a number of innovations in Calc's charting functionality. The broadly compatible OpenDocument Format, which OpenOffice.org is a significant supporter of, is fully supported in



OpenOffice.org 3.0 features a new start page that provides easy access to the components of the suite

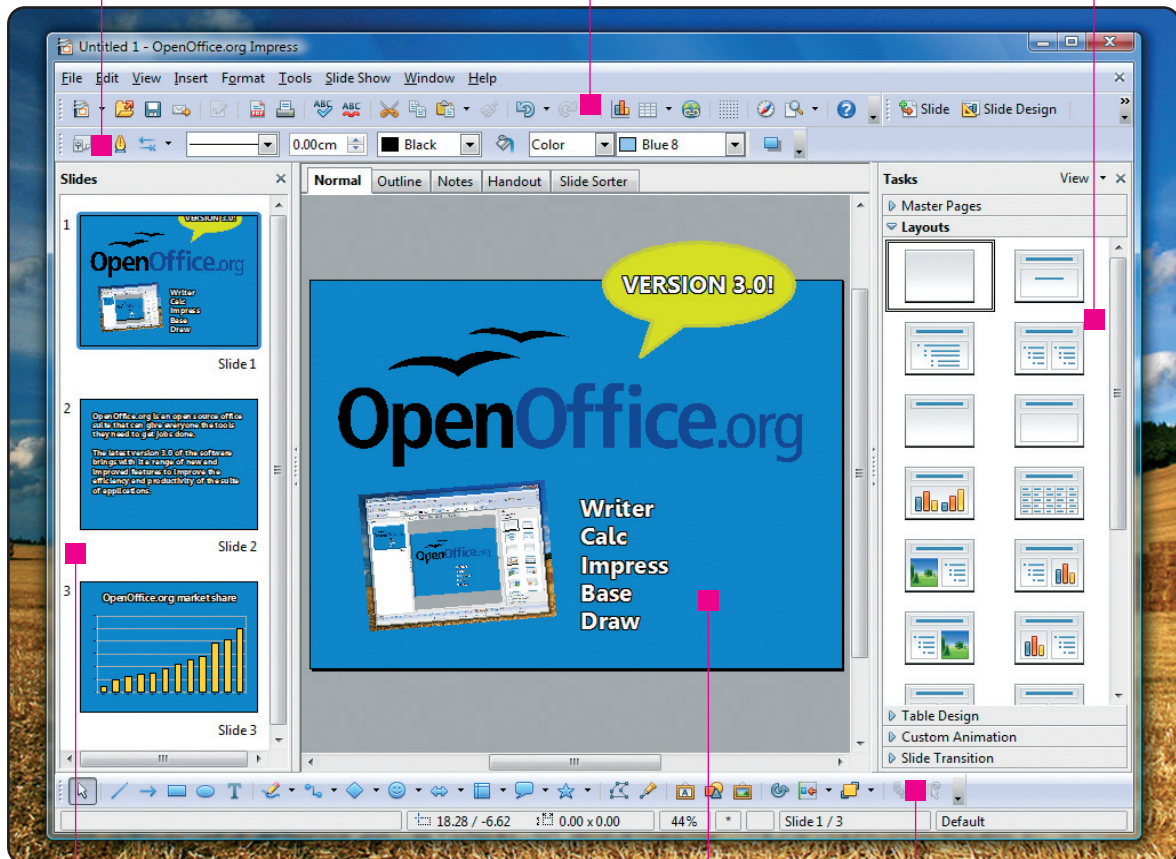


The OpenOffice.org interface

The Formatting toolbar provides quick and easy access to the properties of the currently selected object or text. For more detailed formatting options you can delve into the menus.

The Standard toolbar appears in all OpenOffice.org components and enables you to open and save files, check spelling, insert charts and tables, and navigate around the document.

OpenOffice.org provides plenty of help and assistance for beginners. In Impress (shown here), several sample layouts are provided and can be applied with a single mouse click.



Depending on the program that you're currently working with, certain panes can be shown or hidden to help you find your way around your project or access commonly used features.

Elements in a word processor document, spreadsheet or presentation can be configured by right-clicking using the mouse – a new, context-sensitive menu will appear on screen.

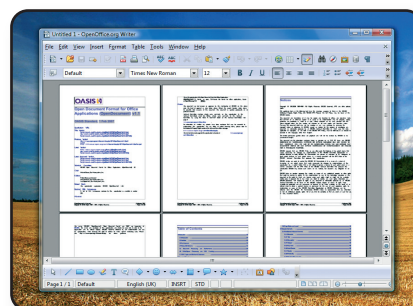
The Drawing toolbar is helpful for importing basic shapes and text objects. You'll also find tools for manipulating and rotating objects, and keeping them correctly aligned on the page.

version 3.0 of the suit as well. You can find out more about the features in the new version of OpenOffice.org at www.openoffice.org/dev_docs/features/3.0.

Getting started

New documents can be created from the opening splash screen that appears when you launch OpenOffice.org from the desktop shortcut or the Start menu. You can also create new documents from the OpenOffice.org system tray icon, if you have the Quickstarter configured to launch at the same time as Windows.

Each of the main OpenOffice.org components have a similar interface, so it won't take you long to learn the ropes and find your way around the application. By default, you'll see a standard toolbar (for opening files, copying and pasting text, and so on), a formatting toolbar (for applying styles and formats) and a drawing toolbar (for importing shapes and arranging objects on the page). These



OpenOffice.org documents can be exported as PDFs if you want to ensure compatibility with other systems

and other toolbars can be configured by selecting View/ Toolbars – use the Customise option at the end of this submenu if you want to change which features are shown on which toolbar.

Further program settings can be accessed via Tools/ Options. Some of the settings here will apply to the suite as a whole, while others focus

on one program in particular – you can change the default colours that are used in the charts produced by the software, for example. If you need assistance at any point, there's an extensive set of OpenOffice.org help pages available for you to refer to, which you can call up by hitting the F1 key or selecting Help/ OpenOffice.org Help from the menus.

Saving and exporting

When it comes to saving your work, there are a variety of options to choose from. Save a word processor document to disk, for example, and you can select Writer's own format as well as Microsoft Word (.doc), plain text or HTML. Most OpenOffice.org files can also be exported as PDFs too, which means that the formatting and layout options should be preserved whichever computer they are opened up on. To export a document as a PDF, select File/ Export as PDF and set up the options as required on the subsequent dialog.



Produce documents with Writer



David Nield takes a detailed look at the features available in OpenOffice.org's word processor application



HOW TO GUIDE

SOFTWARE:
OpenOffice.org Writer

LEVEL:
Beginner

ON THE WEB:
www.openoffice.org



For many users, a word processor application will be the most commonly run program on their system. Able to create anything from a menu to a business report, OpenOffice.org's Writer application is a powerful tool that offers a number of advanced features and complete control over your documents. Over the next four pages we'll introduce you to all of the tools and options you need to be familiar with – you'll find that you're producing eye-catching documents in no time at all.

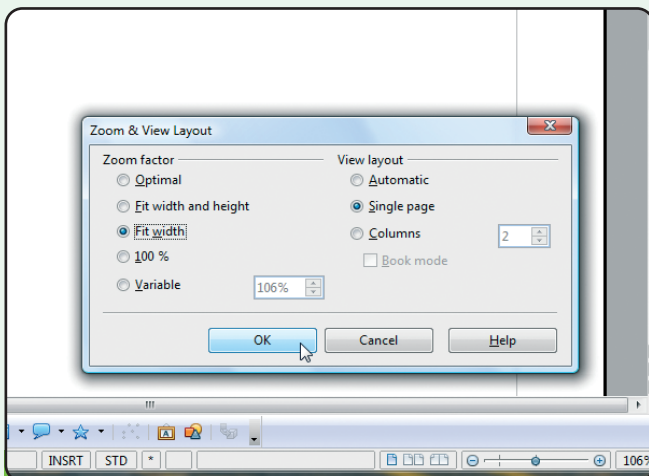
Getting started

To create a new Writer document, right-click on the OpenOffice.org system tray icon and choose Text Document from the menu. Alternatively, run OpenOffice.org from the shortcut in your Start menu or on the desktop and choose Text Document from the splash screen that appears. If you've used previous versions of the OpenOffice.org suite or Microsoft's Word

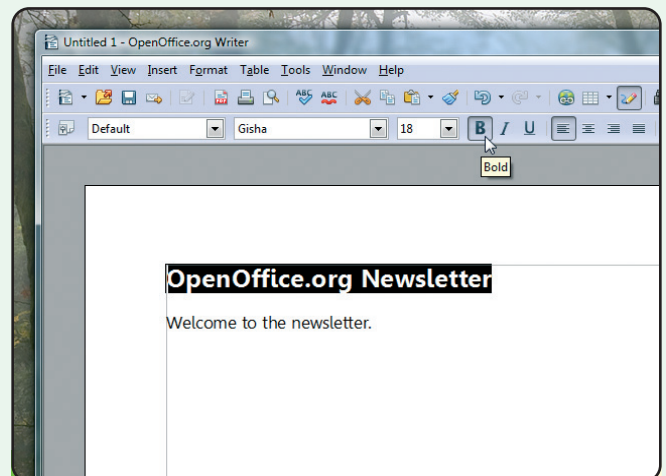
program then you'll be familiar with the interface that appears – various key functions and formatting settings are available via the toolbars at the top, while in the status bar at the bottom you'll find zoom controls and information about the document that you're currently working on.

Everything that you would expect to find in a top quality word processor is available in Writer – you can create advanced layouts using tables and columns, import and manipulate images, and keep track of longer documents with bookmarks, footnotes and cross-references. When it comes to saving your work, you can export the document as a PDF or a Microsoft Word document, or save it in OpenOffice.org's own format. If you're completely new to OpenOffice.org Writer, you might want to try out one of the Wizards that appear on the File menu, which will guide you through creating a standard document using the program.

Create a newsletter



1 Once you've created a new blank Writer document you can set the zoom level via the Zoom option on the View menu – you can enter a custom value or choose an automatic setting. The setting can also be adjusted using the slider down in the lower right hand of the program interface.



2 It's a good idea to start entering some of your text before you start thinking about various layouts. Formatting options are available on the toolbar at the top of the screen – it's possible to adjust font style, size and colour quite easily by making selections from the drop-down menus.

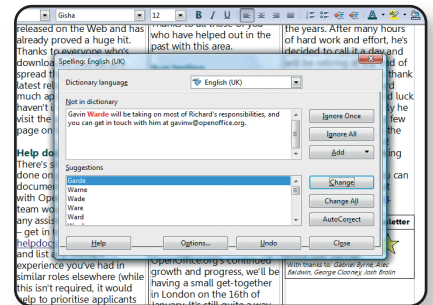


download for free from the OpenOffice.org website. Other program settings covering the behaviour of Writer, the way it handles material and the way it appears on screen, can be accessed by choosing Tools/ Options from the menus – you'll notice that general OpenOffice.org settings are available as well as those specific to the Writer program.

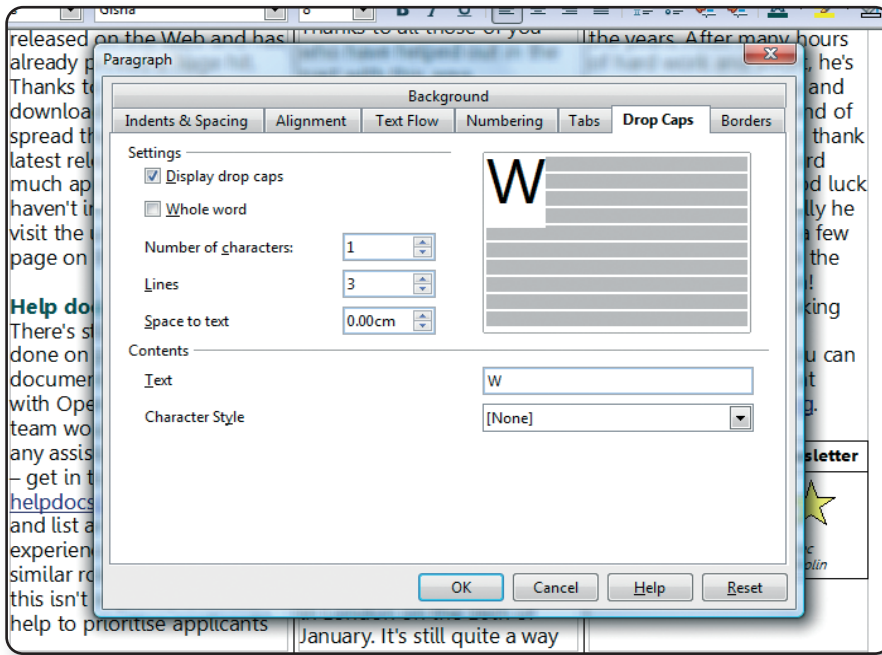
Advanced layouts

If you're moving beyond the basic letter layouts to produce something like a newsletter or poster, then you'll need to familiarise yourself with some of the more advanced tools Writer has to offer. Both columns and tables can be used to get text into position – you can create tables with invisible borders, for example, to lay out your document correctly. Using the icons on the drawing toolbar at the foot of the screen you can create all kinds of shapes and drop in floating text boxes that don't necessarily have to flow with the rest of the text.

If you're working on a design that contains many different elements, you can control how they are stacked on top of one another using the options on the Format/ Arrange menu. The Group menu, meanwhile, can be used to keep particular objects together while you're positioning them on the page. Text and image elements can be 'anchored' with the main body text or positioned freely, and this behaviour can be modified using the options that you'll find on the Format/ Anchor menu.



The spelling and grammar checker ensures that mistakes in your text are kept to a minimum



Writer enables you to add a number of effects, such as a drop cap, to your text and paragraphs

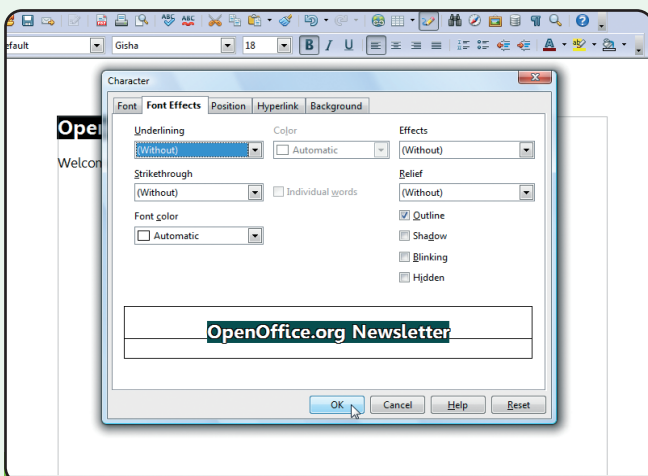
Characters and paragraphs

OpenOffice.org Writer offers features that enable you to do almost anything you'd like to do with your text. Open up the Format/ Character or Format/ Paragraph dialogs to see some of the settings that are available. Select the Drop Caps tab in the Paragraph window, for example, to configure a drop cap for the selected block of text. It's a good idea to set up a series of styles that you can use again and again, for sub-headings or introductions for example – to do this, hit the F11 key or select Format/ Styles and Formatting. Right-click on the list that appears to add or modify one of the styles, which are accessible at any time from the drop-down list in the top left hand corner of the Writer interface. You can also create a new style based on the text that's currently selected (you'll see an icon on the right of the Styles and Formatting dialog that can do this).

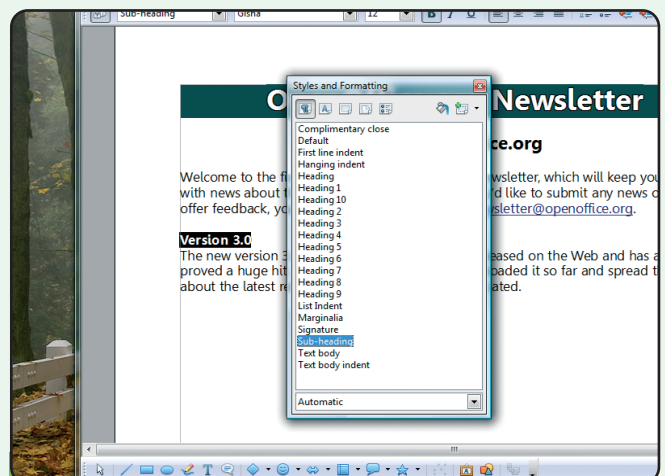
Creating bulleted or numbered lists is very straightforward too. Select the text that you would like to manipulate, then click either the Numbering On/Off or the Bullets On/Off icon on the toolbar – the default formatting will be applied to your list, which you can then tweak using the options available on the Bullets and Numbering toolbar which should automatically appear on screen.

Check spelling and grammar

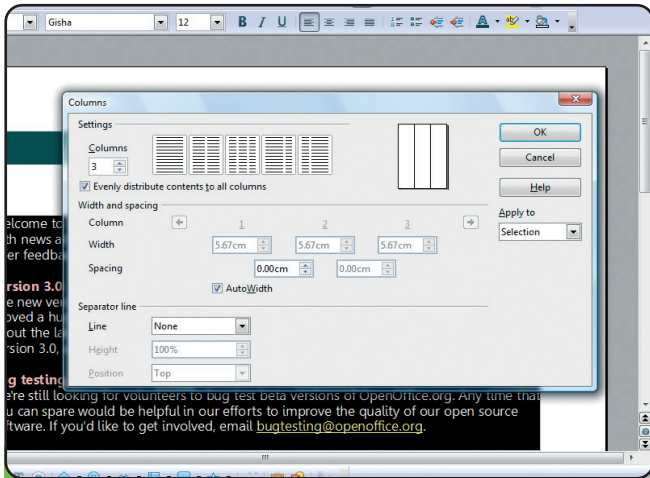
If you're prone to the occasional mistake in your typing then you'll be glad of the spelling and grammar checker that comes with OpenOffice.org Writer. To launch the main interface, hit the F7 key or select Tools/ Spelling and Grammar. Further settings can be accessed by clicking on the Options button at the bottom of the dialog – you can, for example, have the program flag up potential spelling errors while you type. Dictionary extensions are available to



3 For more formatting options, you can open up the Character dialog box by selecting Format/ Character. Note that the changes you apply will only affect the selected text. A number of font effects are available, and you can change background colours and a range of other settings from here.



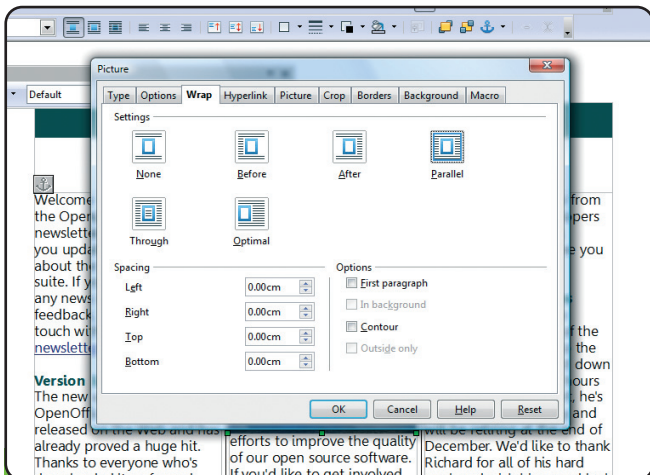
4 If you're going to be using a particular format on a regular basis, then you can set it up as a style which can be accessed from the formatting toolbar. Select Format/ Styles and Formatting to view the available styles and create a new one which can then be used again in the future.



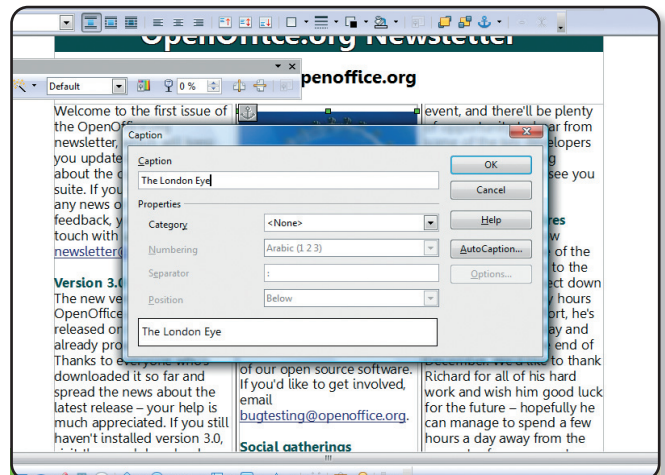
5 You can take more control over the layout of your document by sorting your text into columns. Select the text that you'd like to work with, then choose Format/ Columns. The columns themselves can be automatically sized, or you can enter manual values into the relevant boxes.



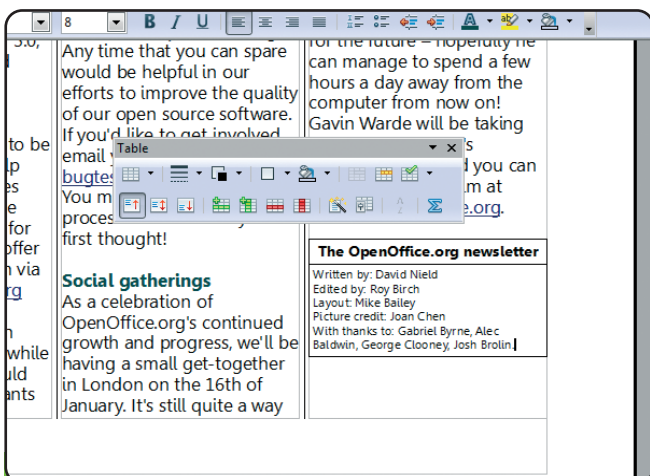
6 Images are a great way to liven up your documents, and you can drop a bitmap into the page by selecting Insert/ Picture/ From File. You'll then be able to resize and reposition the picture using the handles at the side of the object. The Picture toolbar will appear, offering further options.



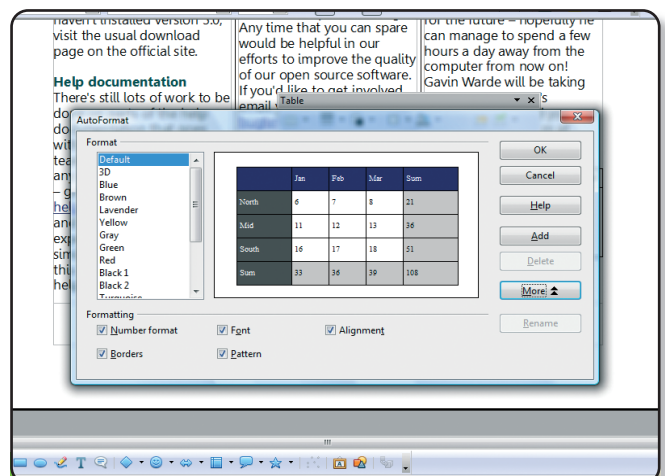
7 To change the way in which the text interacts with the new image object, right-click on it and choose Picture. The Type tab enables you to change the way the image is anchored, while the Wrap tab lets you dictate how the underlying text flows around the picture that you've imported.



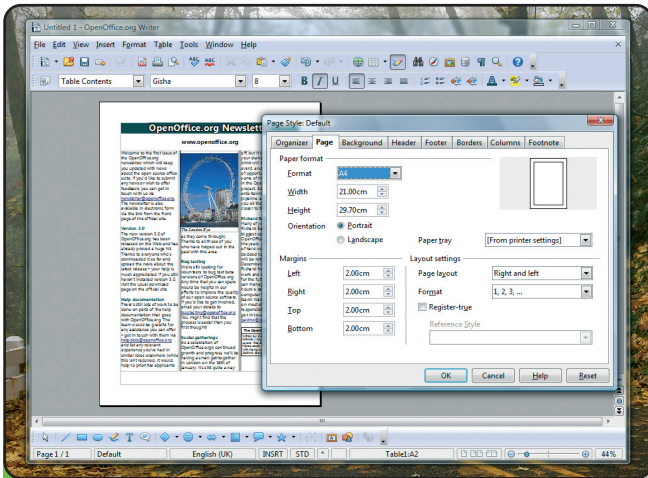
8 Right-click on an image and choose Caption to add a line of explanatory text underneath the picture. If required, the Writer program can keep track of the illustrations, drawings and tables – if you simply want to add a standard caption, select <None> from the Category drop-down menu.



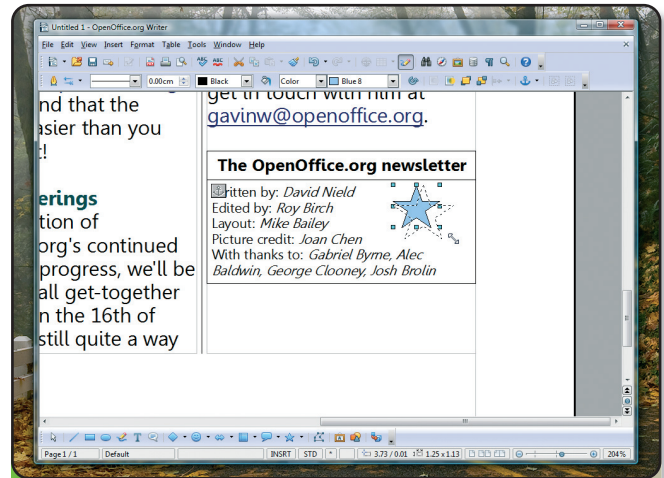
9 If you need to drop in a table for whatever reason, this is easily done. Select Insert/ Table and then set the configuration options as necessary. As with images, a toolbar will appear on screen whenever a table is selected that enables you to change various aspects of the object's appearance.



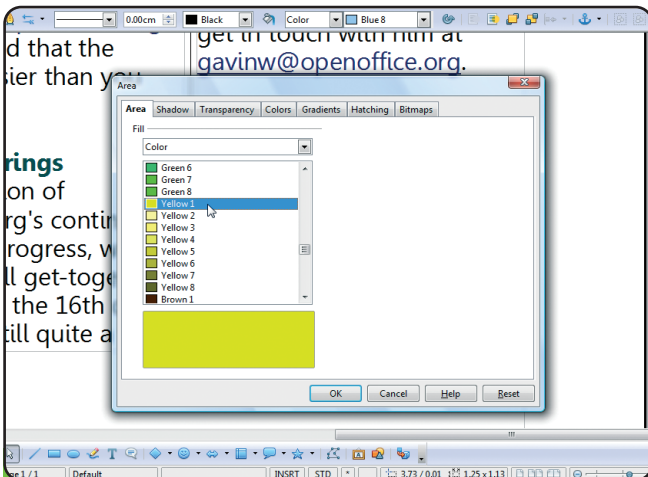
10 Tables can be auto-formatted using a variety of different styles – click the AutoFormat button on the Table toolbar to see some of the designs that are on offer. Use the tick boxes to restrict which table elements are adjusted. Any of these designs can be tweaked manually.



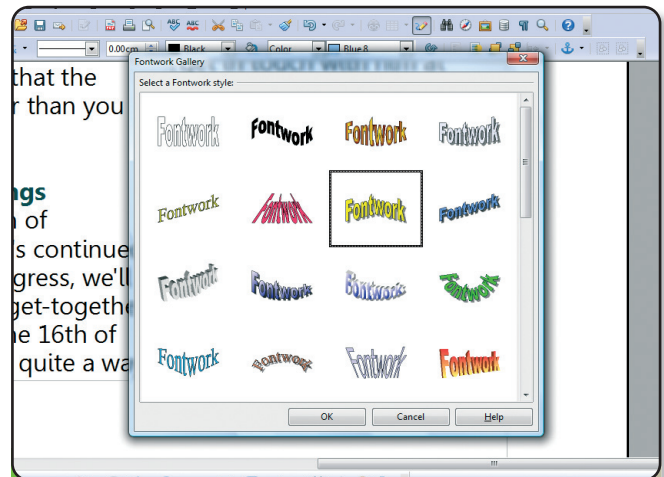
11 To get a better overview of the newsletter that you've created, select View/ Zoom/ Fit width and height. You can make changes to the page size and layout by choosing Format/ Page – it's possible to adjust the margins using the boxes in the lower left hand side of the dialog, for example.



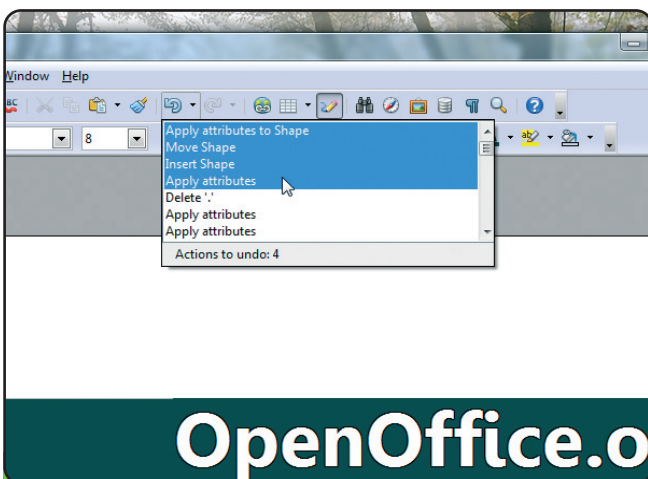
12 Writer features a full range of drawing tools, which you can use to create simple shapes and add some visual appeal to the documents you create. The drawing toolbar at the bottom of the interface enables you to drop in objects, which can be resized and repositioned as necessary.



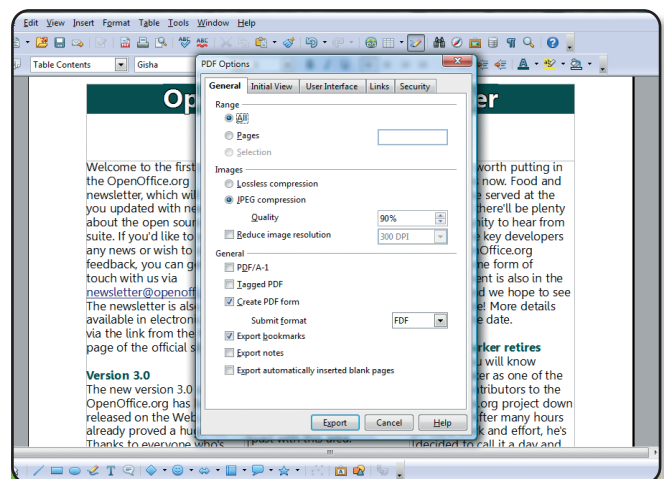
13 Right-click on a drawing object and choose Line or Area from the menu to change the appearance of the shape that you've created. Objects can be made transparent or can contain a bitmap if required. Writer also enables you to enter lines of text inside any of your shapes.



14 A tool called Fontwork enables you to import some eye-catching text effects into your documents. Click on the Fontwork Gallery icon in the toolbar to display a series of thumbnails – choose one of the styles shown to use as a basis for your own customised design.



15 Remember the Undo tool built into the Writer framework can be used to retrace your steps if you don't like some of the changes that you've made – by clicking on the small downward arrow next to the undo icon on the toolbar you can reverse several changes with one mouse click.



16 When it comes to sharing your work with others, there are a number of options open to you. One of the most useful is the File/ Export as PDF choice, which ensures that your formatting and layouts will be retained. A new dialog box will appear, enabling you to configure the export settings.



Build spreadsheets with Calc



OpenOffice.org can take your PC's number crunching capabilities to a new level, as David Nield demonstrates



HOW TO GUIDE

SOFTWARE:
OpenOffice.org Calc

LEVEL:
Beginner

ON THE WEB:
www.openoffice.org



The humble spreadsheet was the first “killer app” for the home PC – that is, an application useful and appealing enough for people to buy a computer just to be able to use it. Early spreadsheets such as VisiCalc and Lotus 1-2-3 were responsible for turning desktop PCs from machines that only enthusiasts operated, into business tools that everyone could use. Computers have always been well suited to running spreadsheet applications – they can process many calculations very quickly, hold large amounts of data, and won't get tired of performing monotonous, repetitive tasks. As time has gone by, the power and functionality of spreadsheet programs have continued to grow.

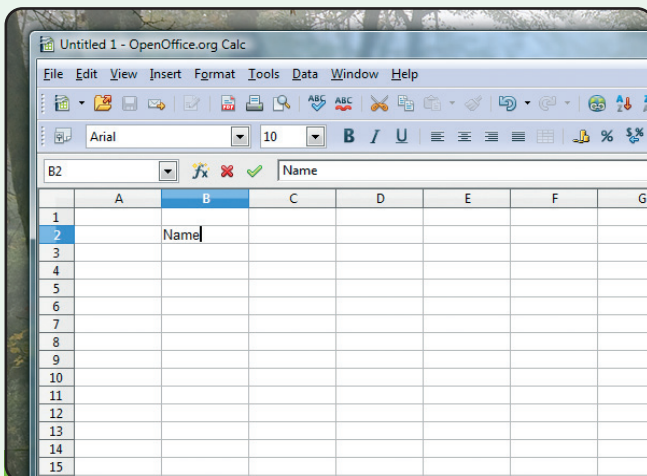
The latest version of OpenOffice.org includes its own spreadsheet application in the form of Calc. It offers plenty of features for the home user to take advantage of, including natural language formulas (using labels instead of cell references), multiple user support, improved

charting capabilities, hypothetical scenario management and extensive style and formatting controls. Despite all of the advanced features, the program interface remains intuitive and straightforward to operate.

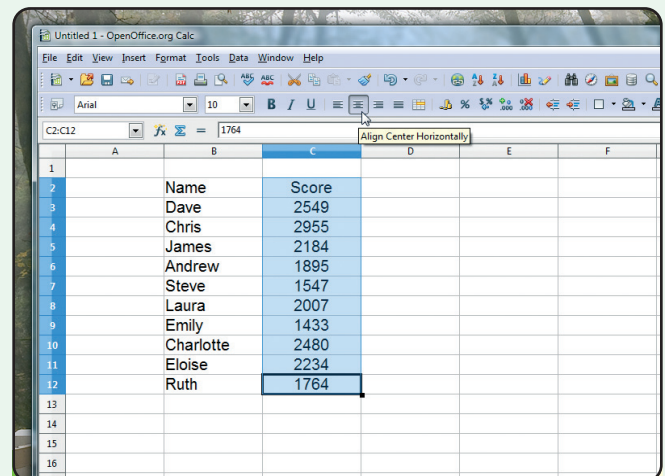
Getting started

New Calc spreadsheets can be created from the OpenOffice.org start page or via the suite's system tray icon. Any spreadsheet-wide formatting changes you want to make can be applied by clicking on the button at the apex of the row and column headings (this will select all of the sheet's cells, so you can configure the font style and size for the entire document). The majority of the formatting tools can be accessed from the toolbars at the top of the screen – it's possible to change font size and colour, cell backgrounds and borders, number formats and more from here. Open up the menu options to take even more control over your spreadsheet.

Create a new spreadsheet



1 Once you've started OpenOffice.org Calc, the familiar spreadsheet interface will appear on screen. Data is set out on rows and columns, with highlights appearing to indicate the currently selected cell. To begin entering data into your new spreadsheet, simply start typing text or numbers.



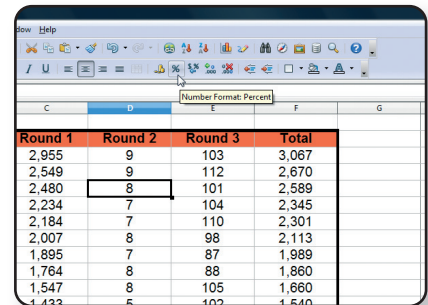
2 Whenever you enter data, Calc will apply the default formatting to it (with numbers aligned to the right, for example). However, you can easily set your own formatting by selecting the cells in question and choosing options from the toolbar above – here we've centre-aligned a column.



Sharing spreadsheets

There are many scenarios where you'll want to be able to share your Calc spreadsheets with other users, and the software has made allowances for this. By selecting Tools/ Share Document and ticking the box at the top you can enable other users on different machines to work on the spreadsheet at the same time as you – this can come in useful if you're working on a home or office network. Note that any values can be changed, but some formatting options will be blocked while the spreadsheet is shared (turn off sharing if you want to make these changes). If you need to send the document to someone else, Calc supports a wide variety of output formats, and can even export spreadsheets as PDFs.

You'll also need to apply a range of different numerical formats to your data, such as currency, percentage, and so on. The most commonly used formats are available on the toolbar, while a broader range – giving you control over decimal places and other minor details – can be viewed by selecting Format/ Cells/ Numbers.



The most commonly used formatting options are available on the toolbars at the top of the screen

	A	B	C	D	E
1					
2		Name	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
3		Chris	2,955	9	103
4		Dave	2,549	9	112
5		Charlotte	2,480	8	101
6		Eloise	2,234	7	104
7		James	2,184	7	110
8		Laura	2,007	8	98
9		Andrew	1,895	7	87
10		Ruth	1,764	8	88
11		Steve	1,547	8	105
12		Emily	1,433	5	102
13		John	1,120	8	96
14		Alexander	1,024	8	95
15		Sophie	772	6	80

Calc makes it easy to build up complex formulas and take references from other cells in the spreadsheet

Formulas and functions

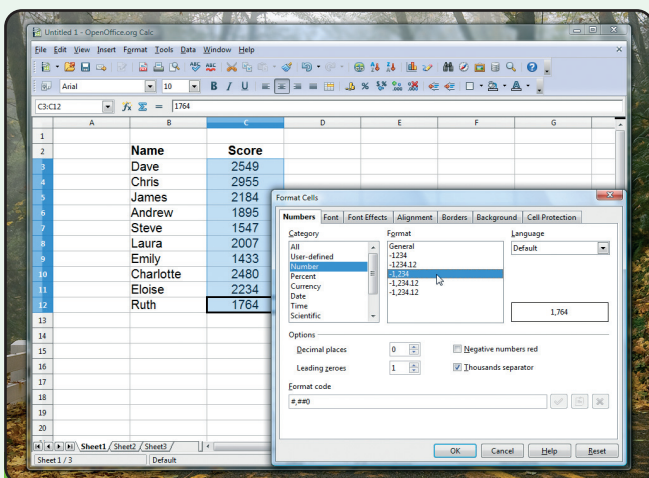
Spreadsheet programs are useful for organising information on screen, but it's only really when you start using them for calculations that they really prove their worth. If you're familiar with building formulas from other programs, then you'll feel right at home with Calc, but even if you're new to the art it won't take you long to pick it up. Calc features a special Function Wizard that is helpful in familiarising you with the key terms (such as SUM to add values together, or AVERAGE to find the mean average) – by using the wizard, you can ensure that you get the formula syntax right.

All formulas are preceded with an equals sign, while cells are referenced by column and then row – entering =C2+D2 will add together the contents of cells C2 and D2, for example. While you're building formulas, you can enter cell references manually or select the relevant blocks using the mouse.

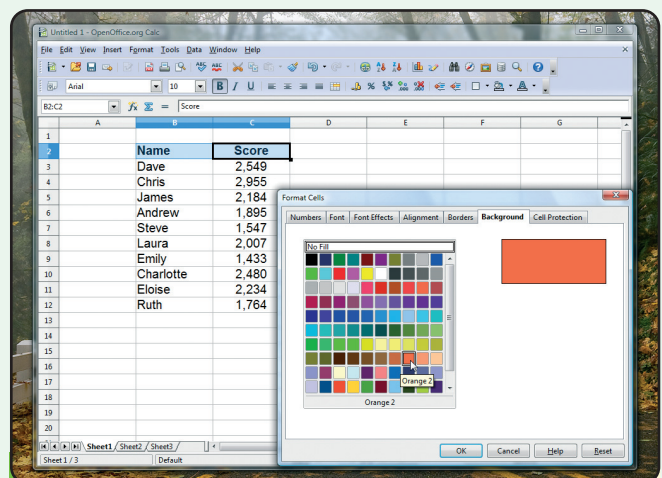
Formatting options

Whether you'll be the only person viewing your spreadsheet or you're showing it off to an audience, the better it looks the easier it will be to see the key information. Adding colours, shading and borders to your spreadsheet can really make a difference, particularly when you're working with a large amount of data that's difficult to wade through.

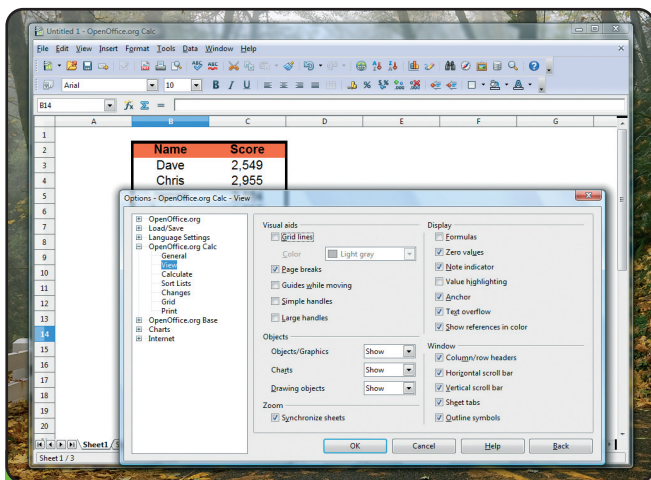
The key formatting options are available on the toolbars at the top of the screen – from here you'll be able to change the text font, size and colour. Additional settings can be accessed via the Format menu. Open up the Format Cells dialog, for example, and you can change the text alignment, word wrapping and even the angle at which the text is displayed (the cells in question will change in size as appropriate). On the toolbar you'll notice a Format Paintbrush icon that can be used to quickly apply the format of the currently selected cells to a new group of data.



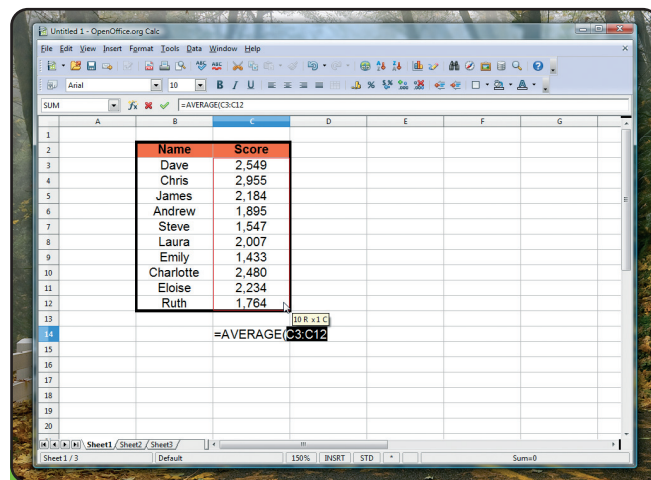
3 More detailed formatting options can be accessed by right-clicking on a cell or a selection and choosing Format Cells from the menu. A wide variety of number and text formats are available in Calc, which can be tweaked as required using the Format code at the bottom of the dialog.



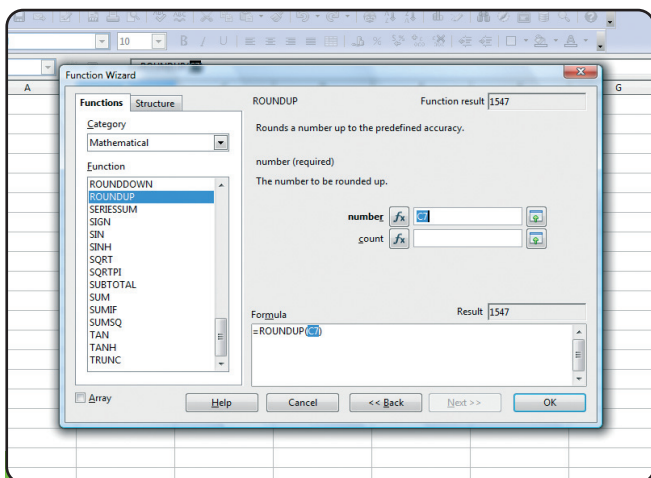
4 Besides the format of the data itself, you can also change the font style and cell effects using the same dialog. Open up the Background tab, for example, and you can change the colour of the cell background. Borders and other settings can also be tweaked. Click on OK to confirm your choices.



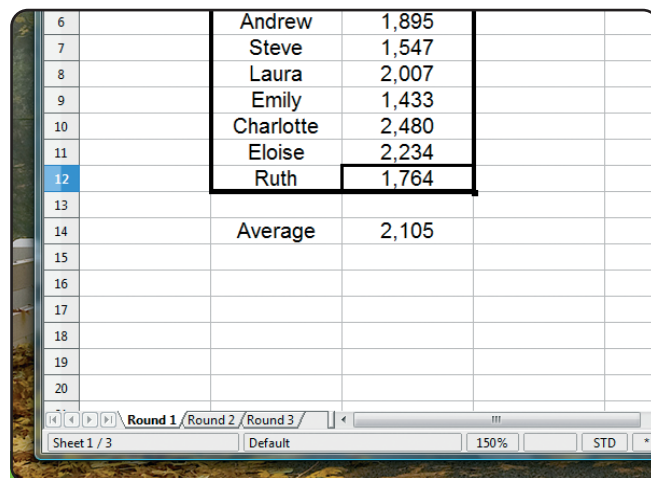
5 If you'd rather not see them, you can turn the grid lines off by selecting Tools/ Options and then finding the relevant option under OpenOffice.org Calc/ View. It's also possible to hide charts, images, column and row headings and a number of other elements from view using the same menu.



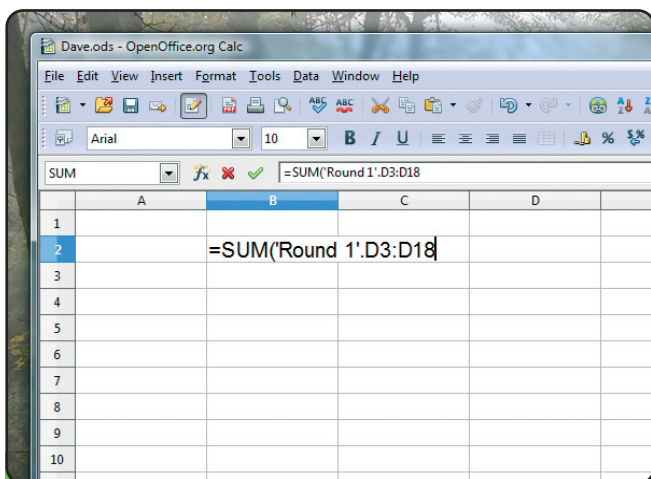
6 Formulas can be entered into Calc by beginning typing with an equals sign symbol. Here we're using the average formula – it's possible to employ the mouse to select the range of cells that you'd like to work with. Hit the Enter key to complete the formula and see the result on screen.



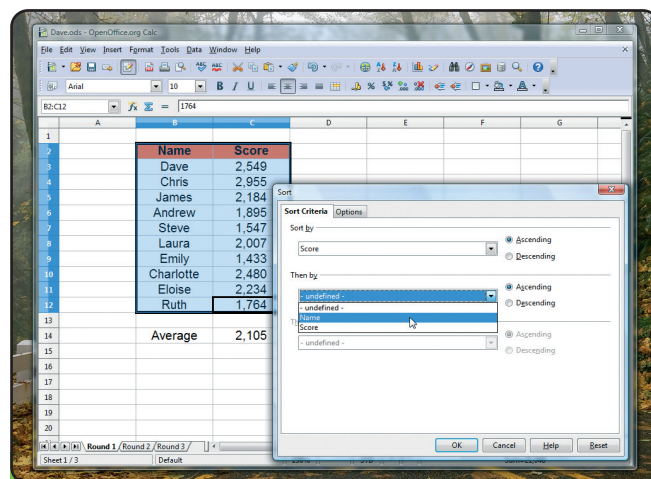
7 It's also possible to build formulas using the Function Wizard, which you can launch using the relevant icon on the toolbar. You can pick from a selection of functions on the left, then complete the formula by picking out cells from your spreadsheet (or entering the cell references manually).



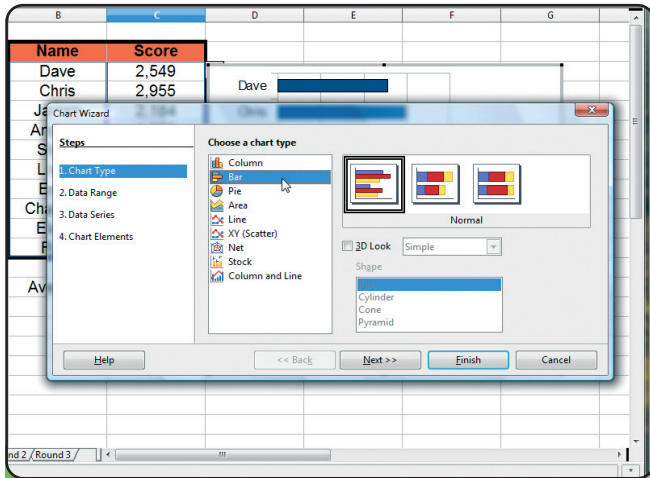
8 Calc supports the use of several 'sheets' inside the same document, and you can switch between them using the tabs down in the lower left hand corner (right-click on a tab for further options). You can reference cells across different sheets, which is helpful if you're working with a lot of data.



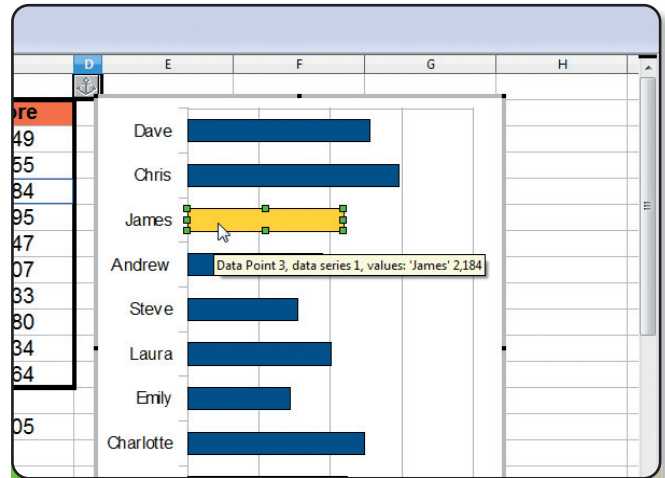
9 Here we're referring to cells located on another sheet – note the use of the sheet name in the cell reference. In addition, the dollar symbol can be used in front of row and column references to ensure that the reference stays fixed even if the formula is copied to other cells.



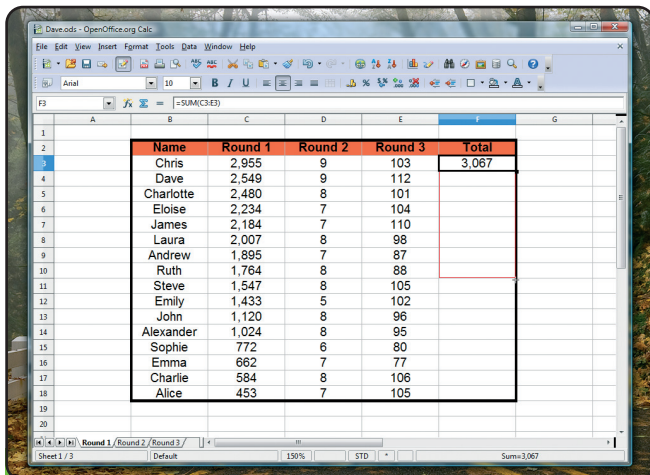
10 You can get Calc to sort long columns or rows of data by selecting them using the mouse then choosing Data/ Sort. The sorting process can be customised as required – if your columns already have labels, then the software can use these to identify how the data is going to be ordered.



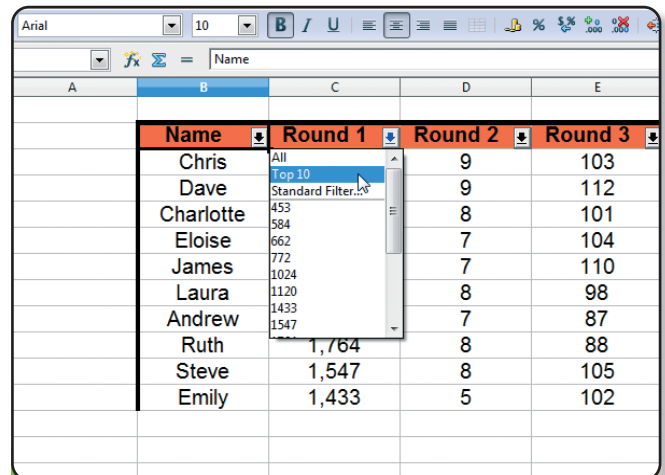
11 Select a range of data in your spreadsheet and then click the Chart icon in the toolbar to start a wizard that will visualise the cells you've chosen. The software enables you to pick from a range of chart types to suit your needs. Click on Next to confirm the source data you've chosen.



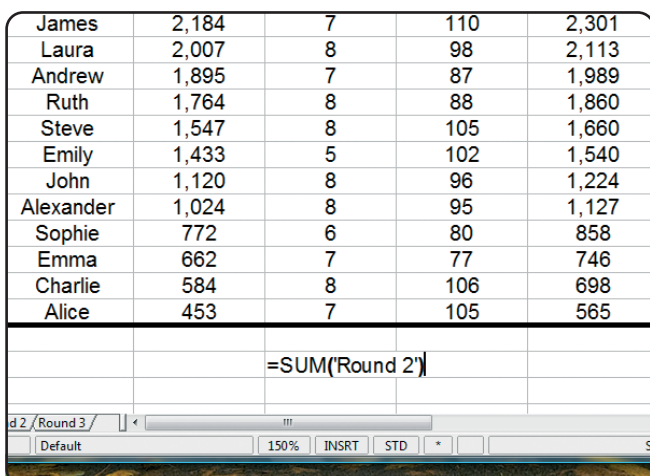
12 Once the chart appears on screen, you can reposition and resize it as required. Double-click on the chart to change its layout and appearance; double-click again, and you'll be able to modify individual elements. Right-click on a chart entry, for example, to change properties such as its colour.



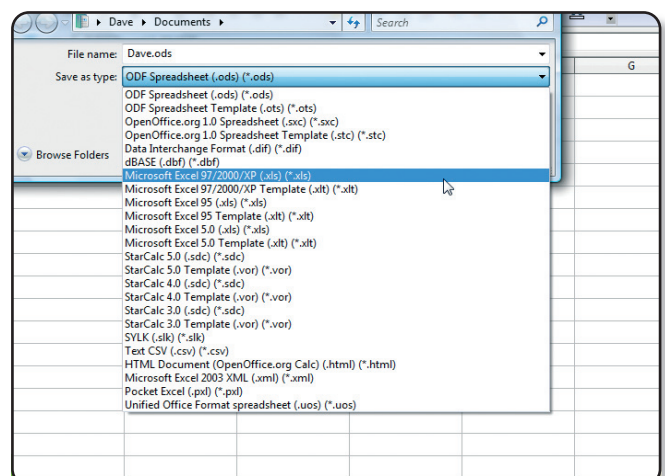
13 Calc is full of useful shortcuts and smaller features that will help you work faster and more efficiently. To copy a standard formula across a series of cells, for example, click the small black square on the bottom right corner of the current cell, and drag the selection out in the required direction.



14 To help you sort through large amounts of data, Calc includes a filter function which you can access by selecting Data/ Filter. Choose the AutoFilter option, as demonstrated here, and you'll be able to change the data being displayed on screen via small icons next to the column headings.



15 Among Calc's advanced features is support for natural language formulas (using labels instead of references) – this means you can refer to cells, columns or rows based on headings. In the example shown here, we're adding together all of the values listed in the Round 2 column.



16 When it comes to saving your work, a whole host of different file formats are available, including popular Microsoft Excel ones. To ensure compatibility with other systems, you might want to save your spreadsheet as a PDF file, which you can do by selecting the File/ Export as PDF option.



Create presentations with Impress



David Nield demonstrates the eye-catching capabilities of OpenOffice.org's professional presentation program



HOW TO GUIDE

SOFTWARE:

OpenOffice.org Impress

LEVEL:

Beginner

ON THE WEB:

www.openoffice.org



While you might associate the word "presentation" with dry, dull business meetings and pie charts, a tool like Impress can be turned to all kinds of uses – you can use it to show off some holiday snaps, for example, tell a story, or run a quiz. The flexibility and power of the features included in this OpenOffice.org component makes it straightforward and fun to create presentations that look great on screen, and it won't take you long to get started no matter what your level of experience. If you have a second monitor attached, or a projector connected to your PC, then Impress can take advantage of this when it comes to displaying your slideshow. It's also possible to configure the program to create slides designed to be printed out as handouts rather than displayed.

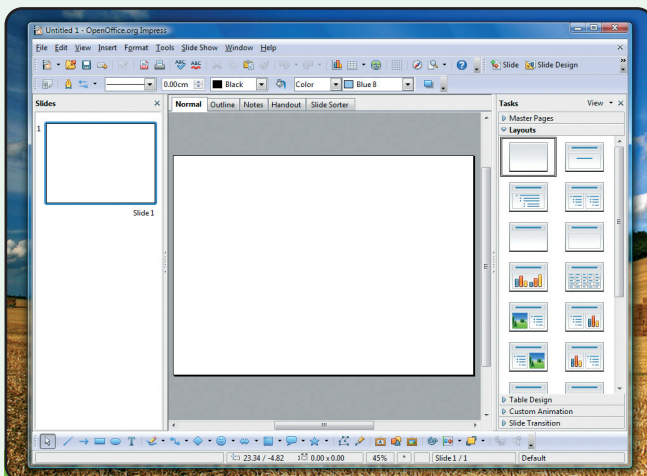
The best way of familiarising yourself with the Impress interface is to jump in and get started. When the program launches, you'll

notice slide thumbnails on the left, the current slide in the workspace in the centre, and a choice of design templates available on the right. At the top and bottom of the Impress interface are the tools that you can use to drop in new objects and modify their appearance as required.

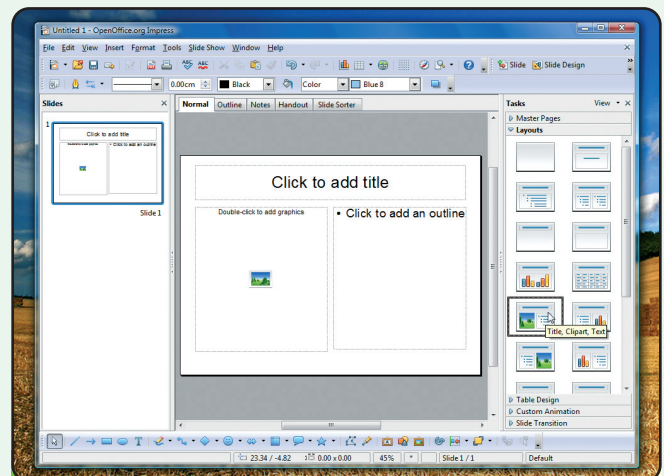
Importing objects

Impress can deal with a broad range of elements, including text, graphics, tables, charts, audio and video. You can import any of these objects using the relevant icons on the toolbar, or by finding the right option on the Insert menu. To modify and customise objects, you can either right-click on them using the mouse, or make changes using the formatting toolbar at the top of the screen. In some cases – when working with charts, for example – a separate interface screen will be launched that enables you to modify the selected object.

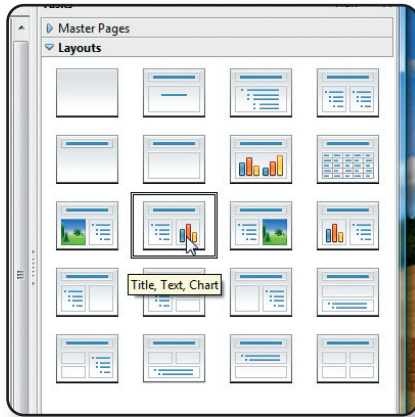
Start a new presentation



1 If you opt to open up a blank presentation rather than a template, this will be the opening screen that greets you when Impress launches. You can keep track of your slides on the left, while a number of pre-set designs are available on the right. In the centre of the screen is the main workspace.



2 Click on any layout on the right hand side to apply it to the current slide – you'll see there are now prompts enabling you to load in the relevant elements. Any of these objects can be repositioned, resized or removed completely, so don't feel you have to stick to the layout provided.



OpenOffice.org Impress has a number of sample layouts and designs that you can use in your presentations

Slide layouts

Impress features plenty of functionality to get your slides looking as good as they can be, whether you're viewing them on your PC screen or on a projector. A number of pre-set designs are available via the Layouts tab on the right hand side, and these provide a useful way of getting elements together quickly. If you want to take a more detailed, manual approach then you can use the Insert menu and the Drawing toolbar to drop in objects as required. The alignment and arrange icons (also on the Drawing toolbar) can be used to line up text and graphics and ensure that the right objects are visible on screen.

OpenOffice.org Impress comes with a number of master page template designs that you can access by opening the Master Pages tab in the right hand pane. A number of different backgrounds and styles are available, and you can apply them with a single click of the mouse. Some of the master pages will make changes to the layout and style of your slide if you already have elements on it.

Transitions and animations

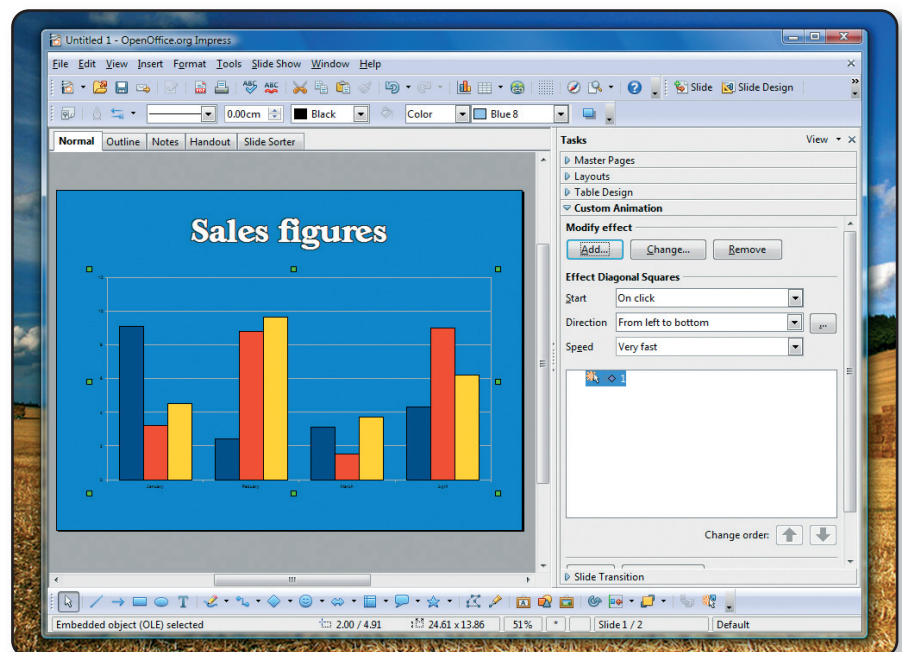
To make your presentation a little more appealing, and to ensure that your audience doesn't drift off to sleep, you can make use of transitions between your slides. To do this, right-

click on a slide in the thumbnail view on the left and choose Slide Transition from the menu that appears. There are 56 different transitions to choose from, and you can customise each one of them to suit your own needs (you can even import sounds to accompany the transitions if you wish to).

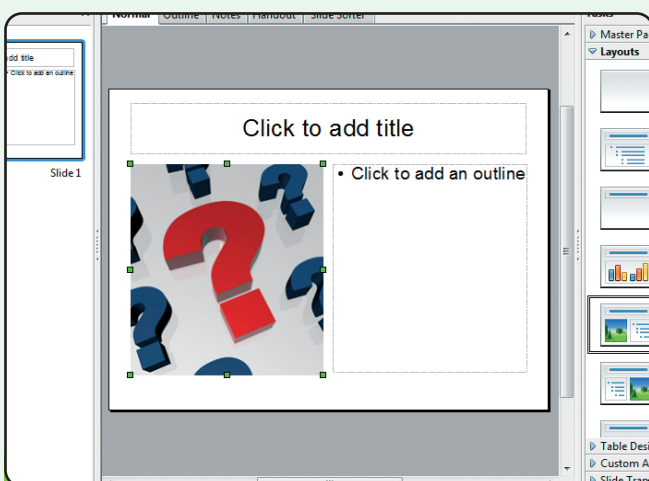
Individual elements on the page can be animated as the slide appears or disappears – you might want to have text fly in from the sides, for example, and these animations can be configured via the Custom Animation in the right-hand pane. This can be helpful in drawing attention to a particular object on a slide. All of the transitions and animations that you apply to a presentation can be previewed, and if you decide that something isn't working then it's easy enough to undo the changes. It's important to remember not to go overboard with your transitions and animations – small embellishments like these will have maximum impact if they are used selectively.

Digital media content

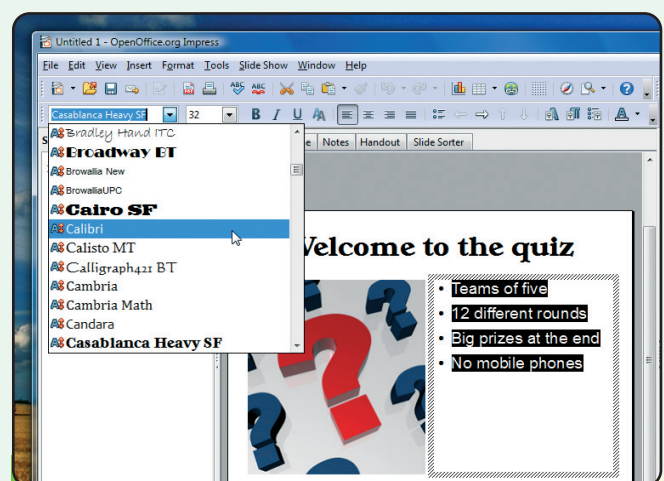
Impress is quite happy dealing with digital media content such as video clips, audio tracks and digital images. These can be used to indicate particular points, showcase your work or provide a soundtrack to the slides as they progress. Images can be loaded via Insert/ Picture/ From File, while video clips and audio can be imported by selecting Insert/ Movie and Sound. You can configure these digital media files to play automatically as slides appear, or as and when you click on them using the mouse.



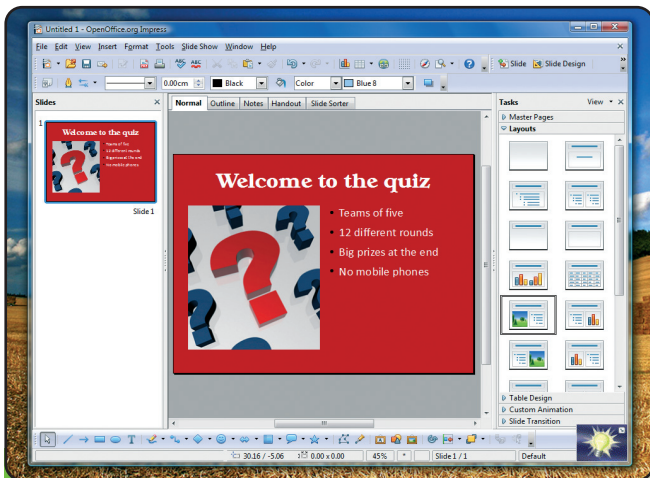
Animations can be used to add impact to your slideshow and to highlight particular objects



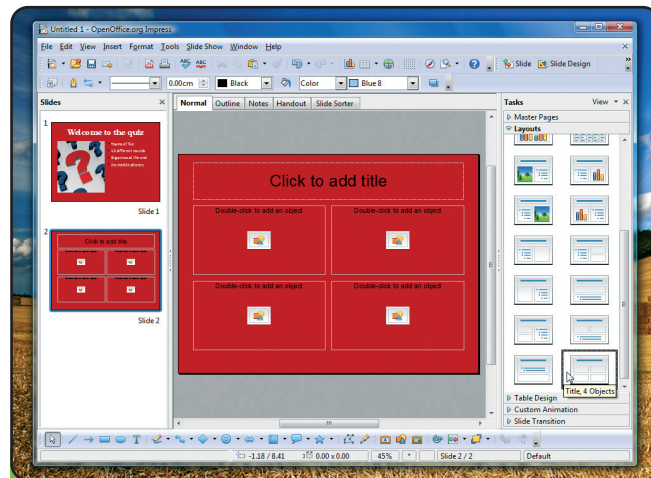
3 Here we've double-clicked on the left hand pane as prompted in order to load a bitmap from the hard drive. The green handles at the side of the image enable you to resize or move it as required. Titles, text and other graphics can be imported into Impress in the same way, or via the Insert menu.



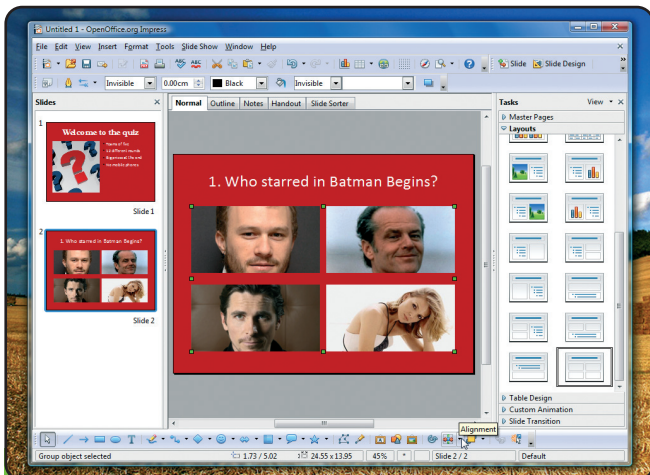
4 Most of the text formatting options you'll need are easily accessible on the toolbar at the top of the screen, though additional settings can be found by choosing Format/ Character from the menus. The Paragraph and Bullets and Numbering options give you more control over the text layout.



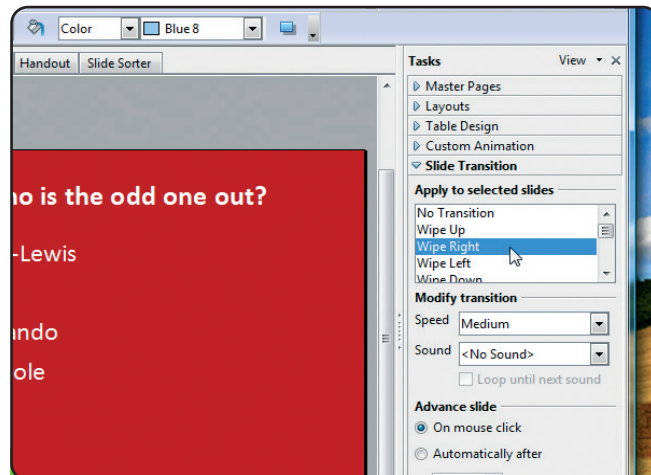
5 To change the properties of the current slide (such as the background colour), right-click on a blank part of the background and choose one of the options from the Slide submenu. To apply a solid colour as the background, for example, choose Slide/ Page Setup and open up the Background tab.



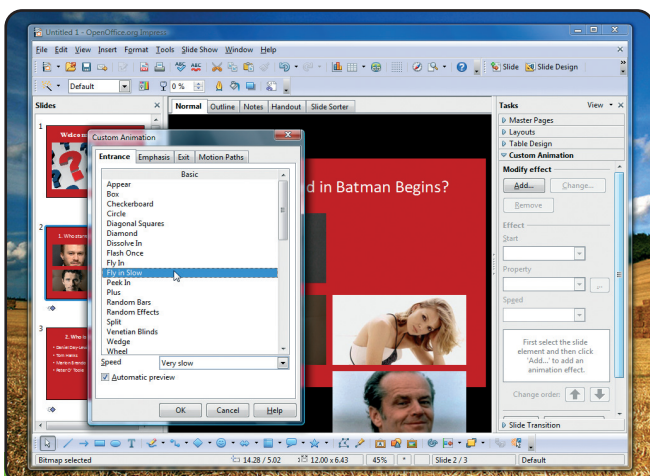
6 New slides can be added to the project by selecting Insert/ Slide or by right-clicking in the left hand pane and choosing New Slide. The layout template employed for the previous slide will be used again. To create an exact copy of the existing slide, select Insert/ Duplicate Slide instead.



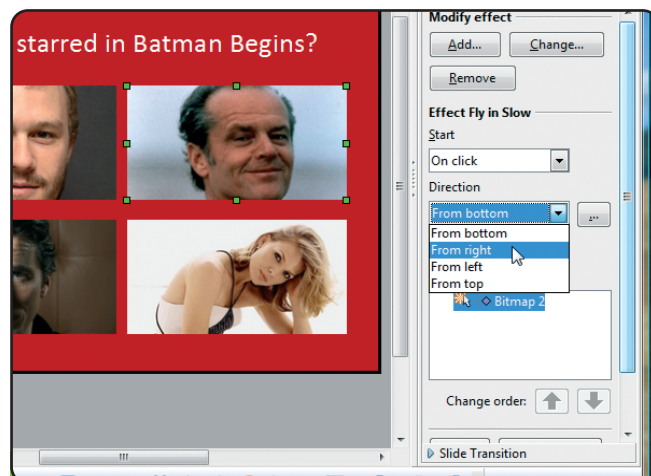
7 If you want your presentation to look professional, it's important that text and other objects are correctly aligned in relation to each other and the slide as a whole. In the Drawing toolbar at the bottom of the screen you'll find an Alignment icon that can be used to get objects to line up.



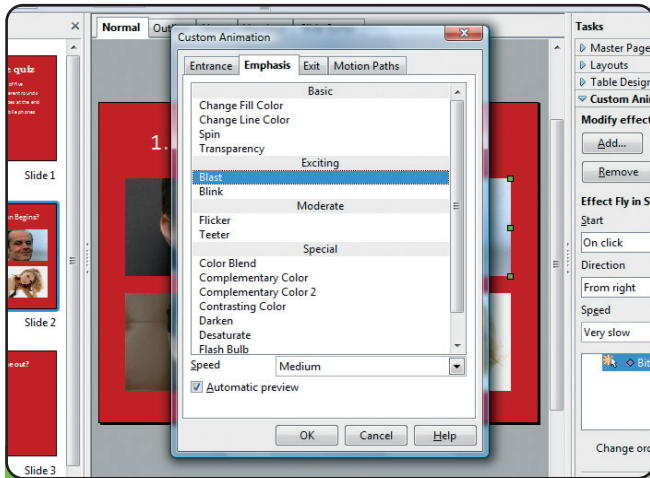
8 Right-click on a slide in the thumbnail view on the left, choose Slide Transition, and Impress will enable you to set which animation is used between the chosen slide and the next. A number of stylish transitions are available, from simple wipes to more advanced fades and shape effects.



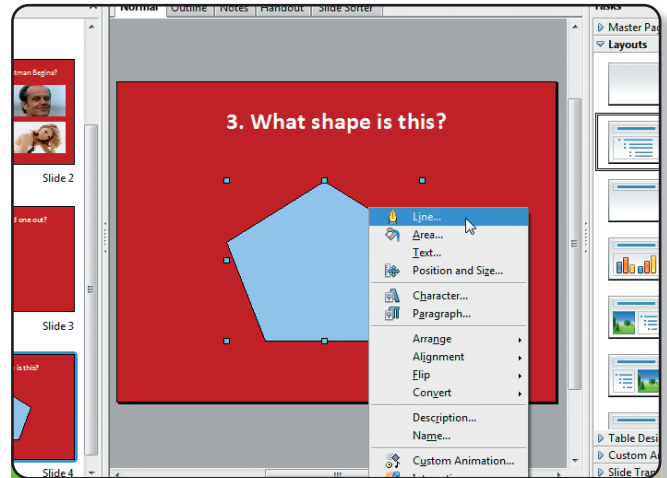
9 Individual elements can be animated too, so that objects can fly in from the sides of the screen or slowly appear from the background. To set this up, select the relevant option then open up the Custom Animation menu on the right. Click on Add and make a choice in the dialog that appears.



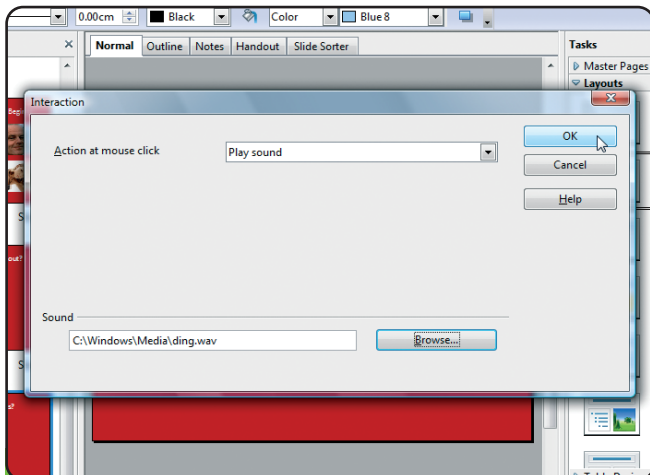
10 The animations listed in the Custom Animation dialog can be customised as required using the drop-down lists in the right hand pane. It's possible to change the speed and direction of the animation that you've set up, for example. Each element on the slide can have its own custom animation.



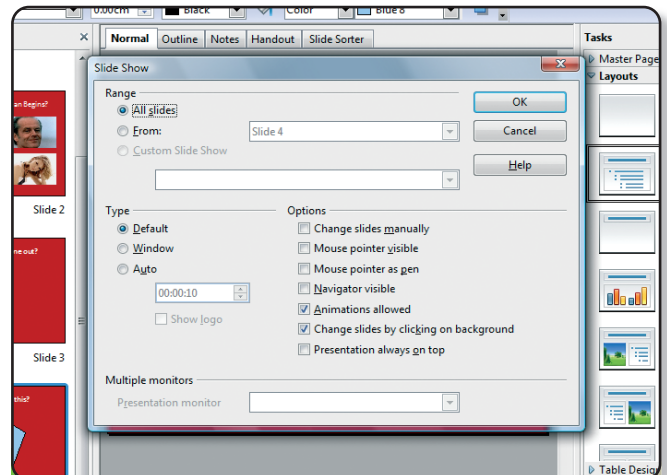
11 For each object, you can set up an entrance animation and an exit animation. You can also specify an effect to use while the object is on screen by opening up the Emphasis tab in the Custom Animation dialog. As you select the various options, they'll be previewed in the main workspace.



12 Via the drawing toolbar at the bottom of the screen you can drop in shapes of your own, which you can customise by right-clicking and choosing one of the options from the menu that appears. Double-click on a shape that you've created and you'll be able to enter text into it.



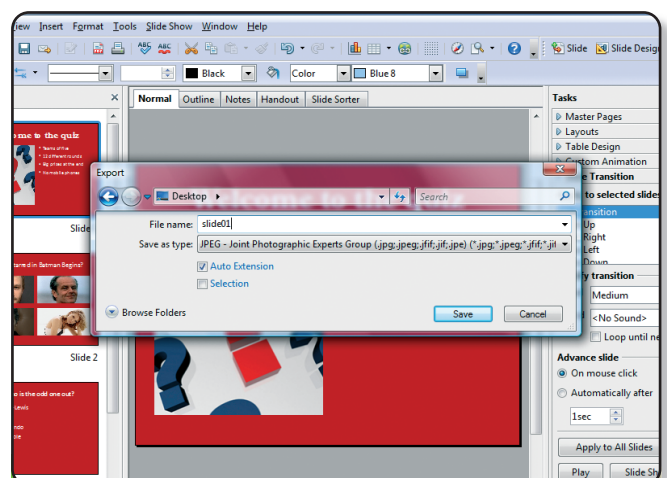
13 Impress enables you to interact with your presentations while they are running too. Right-click on an object and choose Interaction – you could play a sound when an element is clicked for example, or set up a series of arrow shapes that enable you to navigate through the slides.



14 To configure the slideshow that appears on screen, select Slide Show/ Slide Show settings. Slides can be set to advance on a mouse click, or after a certain amount of time has elapsed. Using the drop-down list at the bottom you can choose between output screens if you have a multi-monitor setup.



15 When you're ready to launch the slideshow, hit the F5 key or select Slide Show/ Slide Show. The slideshow will start with the currently selected slide, and by default will run in full screen mode. To access the slideshow navigation controls or to prematurely end playback, right-click with the mouse.



16 Impress offers a number of ways in which you can share or export your finished presentation to use away from your PC. You can save it as an HTML file to be viewed in a Web browser, for example, or individual slides can be exported as images or PDFs to be used in other applications.



Start a simple database in Base



David Nield shows you how to take your first steps with OpenOffice.org's powerful database application



HOW TO GUIDE

SOFTWARE:

OpenOffice.org Base

LEVEL:

Beginner

ON THE WEB:

www.openoffice.org



For many of us, database applications can be daunting – they tend to assume a certain familiarity with database technology, and if you're only looking to set up a simple series of records then it can be a struggle to find a way in. The guide we've put together here is designed to make it easy for beginners to get started with Base, OpenOffice.org's database application, and once you've mastered the basics then you'll be able to move on to more advanced tools and features.

Up against some stiff competition in the form of Microsoft Access, Base manages to pack in a wide range of powerful features to make life easier for the user. It can scale from small databases to large ones without too much difficulty, so you can employ the same program to keep track of your DVD collection or produce quarterly sales figures for your company's staff. Those who are less than confident with database software will be grateful for the

inclusion of a number of step-by-step wizards that introduce some of the key concepts and functions that you need to be aware of. For more advanced users, there's support for a variety of multi-user database engines (such as MySQL and MS Access).

Getting started

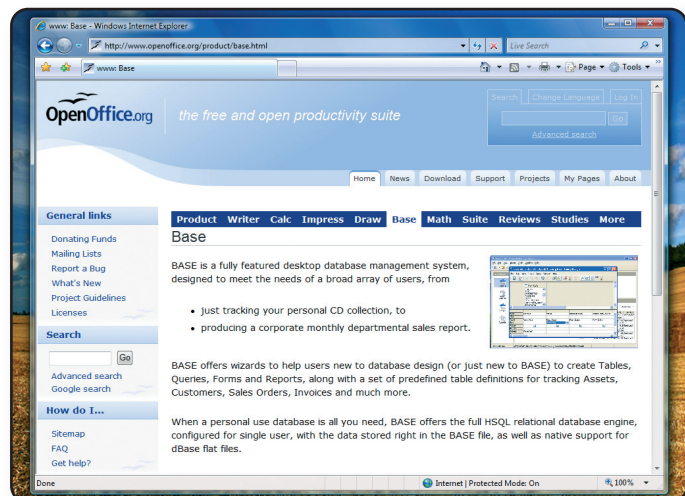
When you first choose the database option from the OpenOffice.org splash screen or the system tray icon, you'll be faced with a short wizard that will help you get started. On the second step you'll be asked if you want to register the database with OpenOffice.org – this simply means that the data it contains will be more readily available to other parts of the suite (such as Writer and Calc) should you want to perform a mail merge or another similar operation. Finally, you'll be prompted for a filename and location, and the blank database will be opened on screen.

Base basics

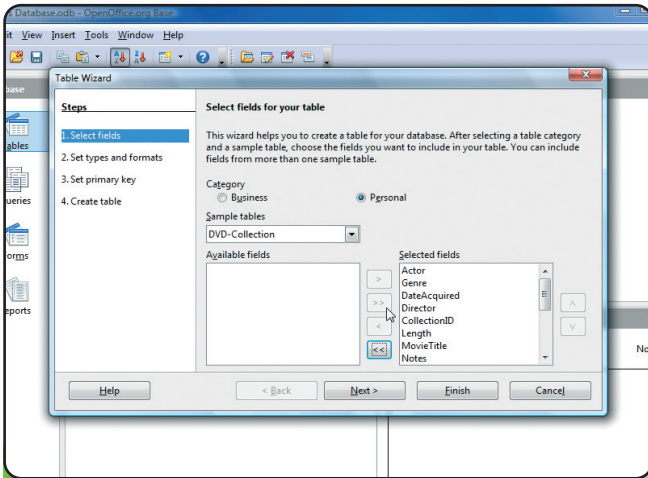
Every database is made up of four different views or perspectives on the same raw data – tables and forms (for displaying and entering data), and queries and reports (for searching through some or all of the information). While first timers may find this confusing, you'll soon get the hang of how they work, and you can access these four key sections using the icons on the left of the Base interface.

Most users will spend most of their time in the tables and queries sections of the program, but all four components include wizards that can help you get started quickly. Try using one of the examples provided by OpenOffice.org Base to see how the different parts fit together and how you can record and analyse your data. Once you've mastered the basics, you'll be able to build up to more complex commands and searches.

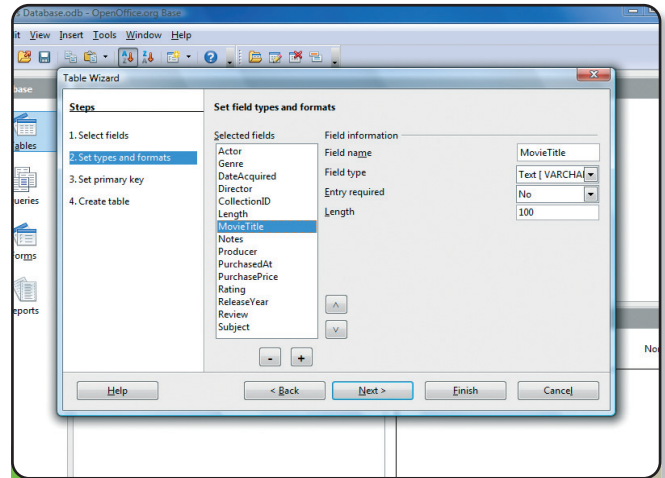
If you're still somewhat confused by databases and how you can start your own Base project, there are a number of excellent tutorials and resources at www.openoffice.org that should be able to point you in the right direction. The key is to start small to learn the ropes and then move on from there.



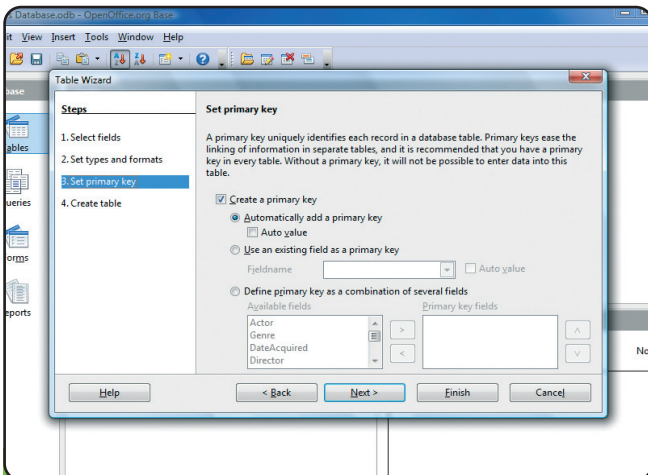
There's plenty of help and assistance available for users of Base at the official OpenOffice.org website



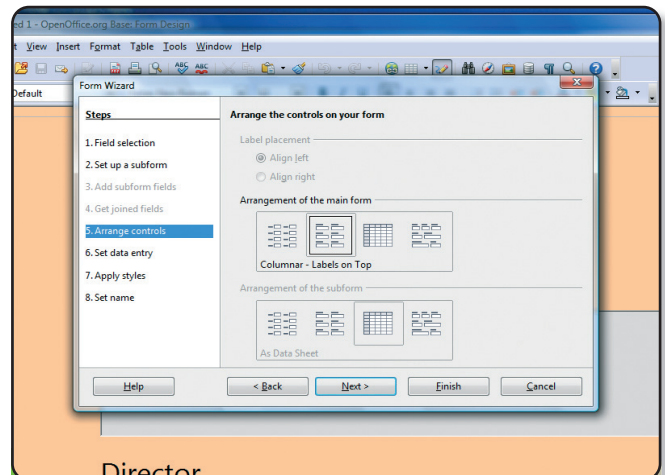
1 The best way of understanding how databases in OpenOffice.org work is to use Base's wizards to produce tables and forms. Click the Use Wizard to Create Table link on the Tables screen and you'll be prompted to choose a selection of fields from the example tables included in Base.



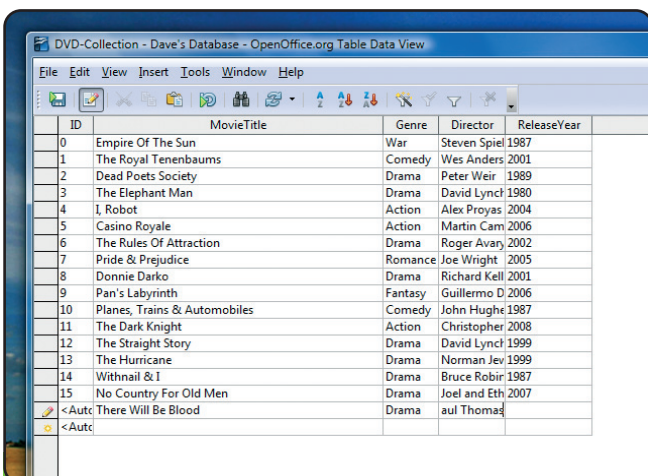
2 Each field can have a number of properties, such as the type of data it accepts, its maximum length, and a default value that can be entered without any input from the user. You can set up these parameters on the next step, shown here, or you can opt to leave the default values in place.



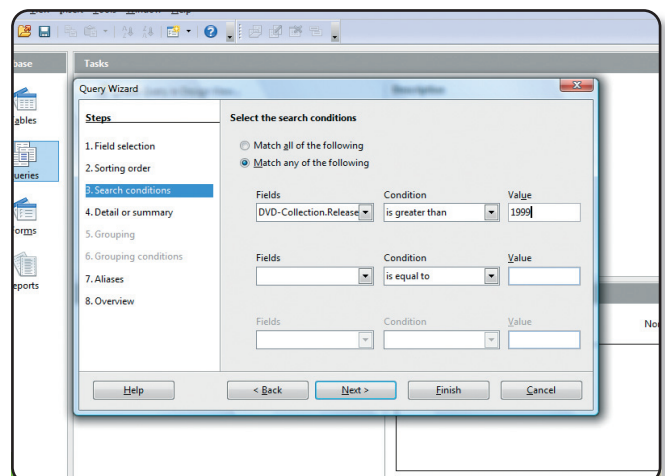
3 Every record in your database needs a unique primary key that will distinguish it from the other records being stored. The next screen in the wizard enables you to set up a primary key – this can be generated automatically, or by using one or more of the fields that you've configured.



4 Once you've defined some of the framework of your database, you can use the Tables or Forms screens to start entering the data itself. The Forms component, like the Tables one, includes a wizard available which can help you – it will produce a basic design displaying the fields you specify.



5 There are a number of ways to enter information into your database – you can use one of your tables, for example, which will be laid out like a simple spreadsheet. It's also possible to import data straight from an actual spreadsheet that you've created in the Calc component.



6 With some data stored, the reports and queries functions come into play, and again there are wizards available that will help you understand the basic concepts. In this example we've run a wizard to generate a query that will find all movies in the database released in the year 2000 or later.



Make your own artwork in Draw



Produce graphics, logos and clip-art of your own with this vector drawing program, as David Nield demonstrates



HOW TO GUIDE

SOFTWARE:
OpenOffice.org Draw

LEVEL:
Beginner

ON THE WEB:
www.openoffice.org



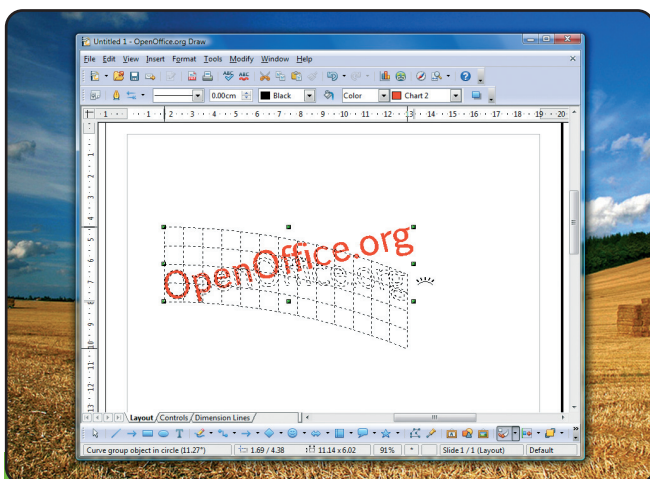
As its name suggests, Draw is the drawing component of OpenOffice.org. It's a vector-based graphics package, which means that it stores images as a series of related points and shapes rather than a long series of pixels – think clip-art and CAD drawings rather than holiday photos. One of the key advantages of a vector-based drawing program is that it can scale pictures without any loss of quality, which makes Draw an ideal package for producing anything from a poster to a complicated flow chart. After spending some time working with the various tools and features on offer, you'll find it's possible to create many different eye-catching effects.

You can get started with Draw in the usual way, by launching the component from the OpenOffice.org splash screen or system tray icon (right-click and choose Drawing from the list that appears). All of the key drawing tools that you're likely to need are displayed on the lower toolbar,

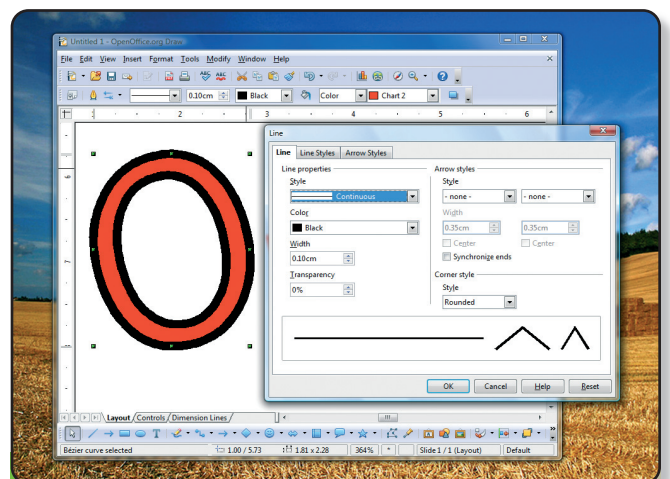
with formatting controls and other key functions available at the top. More formatting options can be found via the aptly named Format menu, while the Insert menu enables you to drop a range of different objects into your project.

Being creative

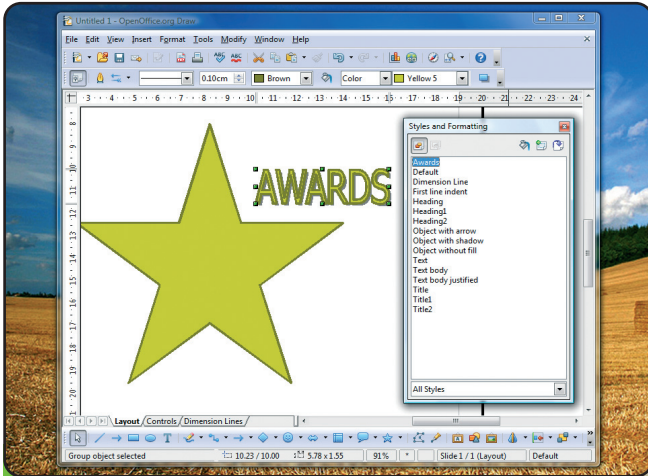
You'll find that OpenOffice.org Draw features a host of tools and options that can inspire your creative side, even if you've never tried creating any artwork before. Load in a bitmap graphic, for example, and the Filter tool will become active – you can use this to create anything from a charcoal sketch to an aged photograph. Via the settings on the toolbars around the side of the workspace you'll find it's possible to modify transparency, rotate objects and even create 3D projections from two-dimensional shapes. You can import tables, charts and other objects into your drawings as well, making this a useful and flexible tool ready for all kinds of projects.



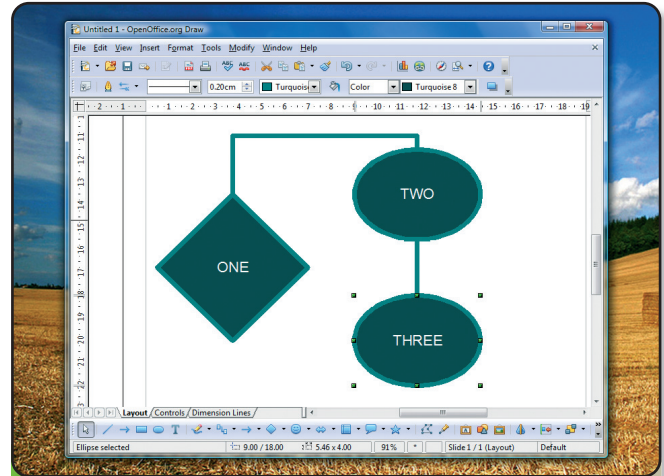
1 OpenOffice.org Draw concentrates on shapes and artwork, but it can also do great things with text – your words can be rotated and stretched and manipulated in all kinds of ways. This is the Set to circle (slant) tool, which you can find by opening up the Alignment menu on the Drawing toolbar.



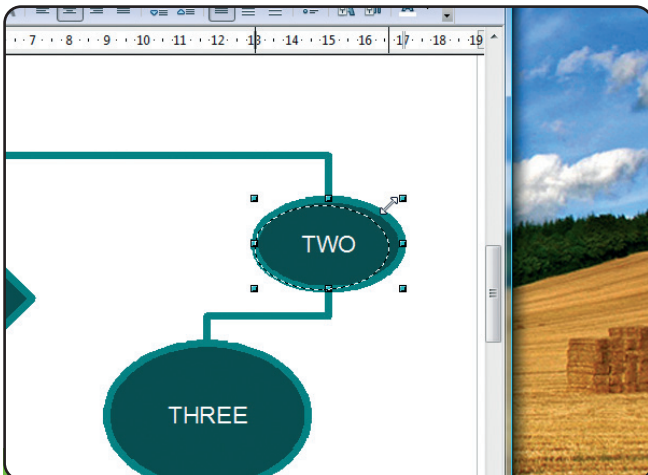
2 By converting your text into shapes (right-click then choose Convert/To Curve), you won't be able to change the lettering, but you will be able to take more control over the way it's positioned and the way it looks. Right-click on a shape to access the Line and Area formatting options.



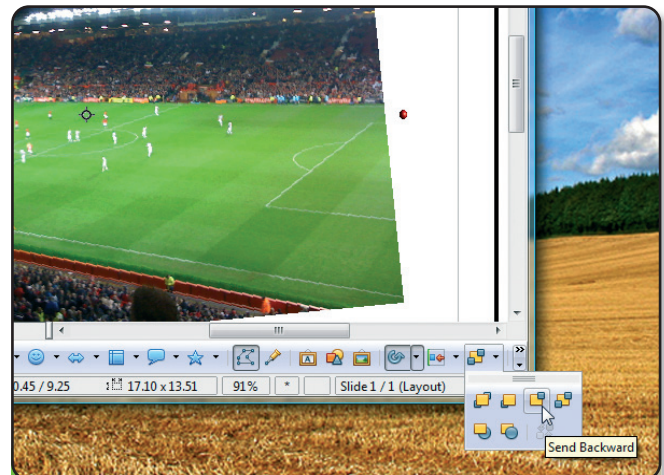
3 As with the Writer and Calc components, you can set up groups of formatting options as styles, enabling you to apply them again and again to a series of shapes. Click the Styles and Formatting button on the left of the toolbar to create a new formatting style or apply an existing one.



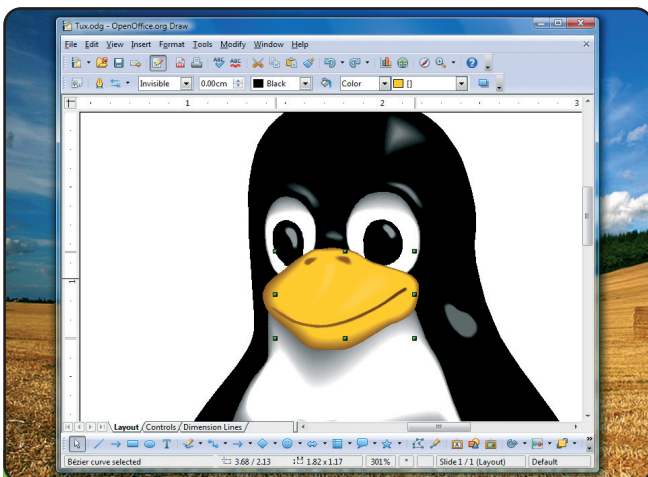
4 Despite its name, Draw isn't just for drawing – you can use the program to produce business charts and flow diagrams as well, which can be formatted and modified as required. The Connector icon menu on the Drawing toolbar will come in useful for linking objects together.



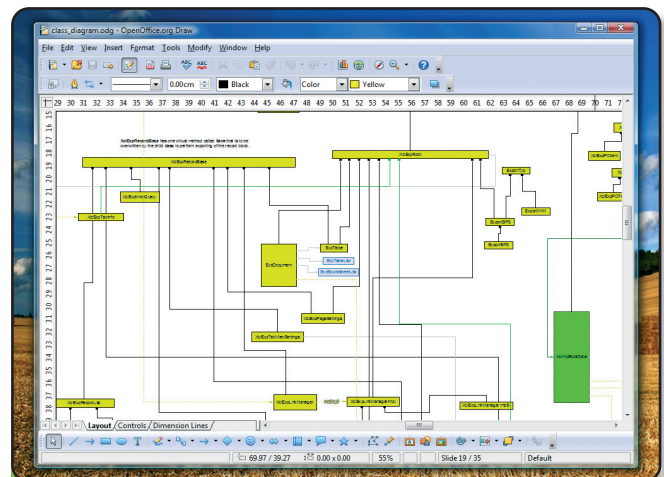
5 One of the advantages of using the Connector tool over simply drawing standard lines is that the connectors can modify themselves automatically as you move shapes around. If you try and resize one of the elements, for example, the connectors will adjust as required and keep the chart coherent.



6 Draw is a vector-based graphics package, which means that the quality doesn't degrade as objects are resized. However, you can still import standard bitmaps into your project and apply a range of different effects to them. Use the Alignment and Arrange icons to position your objects.



7 With enough time and effort it's possible to create some advanced looking effects. Eye-catching artwork can be produced by layering different coloured shapes on top of each other to create the illusion of depth and lighting. You can group and ungroup objects too, to make manipulation easier.



8 Whether you're working on a landscape or a scientific diagram, you should find Draw intuitive and enjoyable to use. When it comes to saving your work, you can export the finished page as a PDF, use the native Draw format, or save the image as a standard bitmap file on disk.

Get productive with OpenOffice.org 3.0



There's a new version of the popular office suite out and in this month's tips section we'll show you how to get the most from it.



There are a number of excellent free alternatives to Microsoft Office, including browser-based tools such as Google Docs, Zoho and ThinkFree Online. These are great if you're happy to entrust your data to the cloud but if you'd prefer to stick with a desktop suite, OpenOffice.org (www.openoffice.org) - so named because the OpenOffice trademark is owned by someone else - is the perfect choice.

The suite comprises a word processor (Writer), spreadsheet (Calc), presentation creator (Impress), vector drawing program (Draw) and a database (Base). These can be launched individually via the Start menu or accessed through the software's opening splash screen.

The latest version of OpenOffice.org has been three years in the making and while it doesn't offer anything earth shatteringly new, you do get a whole bunch of useful tweaks and functionality improvements. These include a new linear optimisation solver for Calc, 1,024 column support in worksheets (there was a 256 limit in previous versions) and handy collaboration features.

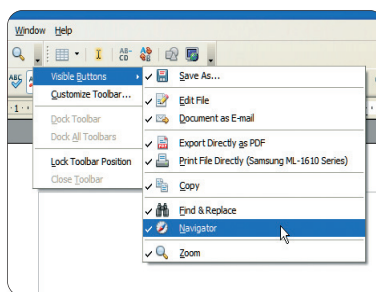
The software saves files in the OpenDocument format (.odf) by default but it can read and write to the standard Microsoft Office formats (.doc, .xls etc.) without problem. The new version can also open files saved in Office 2007's XML formats (.docx, .xlsx and .pptx), although it does sometimes struggle with more complex documents.

In this month's tips section we'll look at some of the more useful features found across the entire suite.

Wayne Williams

1 Customise the toolbars

You can add and remove commands from any toolbar by clicking the down arrow to the right of it and selecting Visible Buttons. A list of commands for that bar will appear. Click one with a tick to remove it, or one without a tick to add it. You can rearrange the toolbars by clicking and dragging on the dotted lines. Pulling a toolbar out will detach it and leave it floating above the application. Drag it back up to the toolbar area to return it to its original position. Set which toolbars are visible by going to View/ Toolbars.



▲ Add and remove commands from the various toolbars with ease

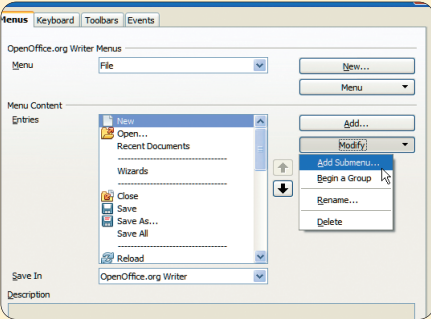
2 Make slideshows with Impress

OpenOffice.org's PowerPoint equivalent is Impress. It lets you create presentations using text, lists, tables and charts, clip art and graphics. When you launch the program you have the option of starting with an empty presentation, adapting a template, or opening an existing file. It's very similar to PowerPoint, so if you've used that, you'll have a good idea of what to do in Impress. There are five view tabs - Normal (the main view), Outline (shows topic titles and bulleted and numbered lists), Notes (lets you add comments to a slide, which aren't shown in the presentation), Handout (prints the slides in a thumbnail view), and Slide Sorter (lets you rearrange your slides).

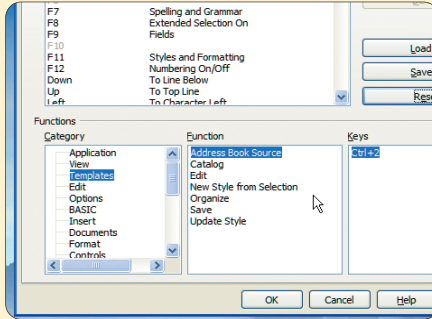
3 Share database content with other modules

When you launch Base it will open the wizard and give you the option to create and register a new database. Registration lets you access database content through other OpenOffice.org modules, such as Writer and Calc. If you

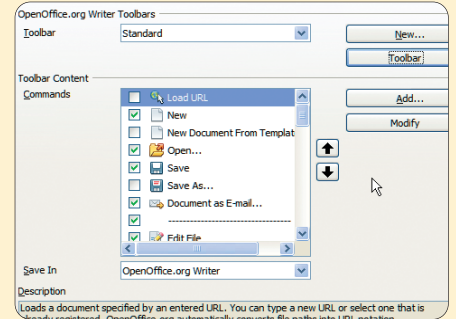
4 CUSTOMISE OPENOFFICE.ORG



1 Go to Tools/ Customize and click the Menus tab. From here you can add, remove and modify entries in any of the suite's menu bars. Select a Menu to edit in the drop-down box then make the required changes. You can reorder items, rename them, add submenus or begin a group.



2 Click the Keyboard tab to customise existing shortcuts or create new ones. Choose whether you want to edit global shortcuts, or ones relating to the current module. To remove a shortcut, select it and click Delete. The Events tab enables you to assign macros to particular actions.

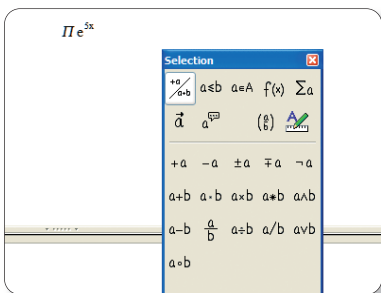


3 Click the Toolbars tab then select a toolbar to customise. You can add or remove commands from the bar by ticking or unticking them. You can also reorder them, and make additional changes by clicking Modify. The Toolbar button changes the view to show just icons, just text, or both.

don't want to register it yet you can skip this option for now. To set it up later, go to Tools/ Options/ OpenOffice.org Base/ Databases. Click New, navigate to the saved file and click OK. To access your database in another module go to View/ Data Sources (or hit F4).

5 Use Math to create equations

Math is used to write mathematical equations. To open it in Writer, go to Insert/ Object/ Formula. The equation editor window will open at the bottom of the screen. To enter symbols you can either use the Selection window (if this isn't visible go to View/ Selection), Math's markup language (this is very



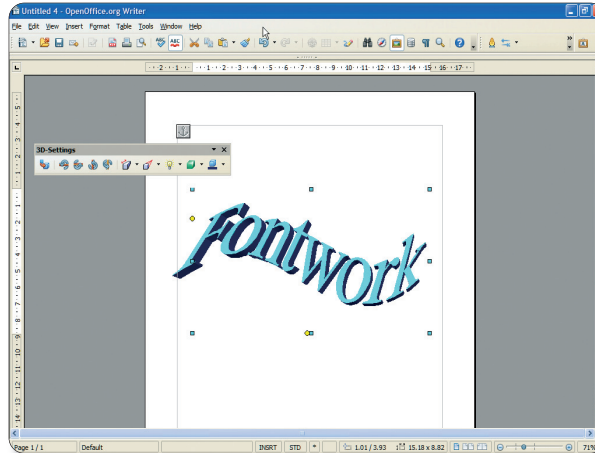
Math makes it easy to write mathematical formulas in symbolic form

easy once you get to grips with it - type %alpha for example and the Greek character for alpha will appear), or right-click the window and select the symbol you want.

If you wish to use Math as a standalone tool, go to New/ Formula.

6 Produce fancy text with Fontwork

WordArt is useful for producing fancy headings and stylised text in Microsoft Office documents. OpenOffice.org has an equivalent feature called Fontwork.



To access it in Writer go to View/ Toolbars/ Fontwork. When you want to add an effect to a document, click the Fontwork icon (the picture frame with the letter A). Select a style to use and click OK. Double-clicking the object will let you edit the text. You can make changes to the look of a heading by playing around with the options in the 3D Settings toolbar.

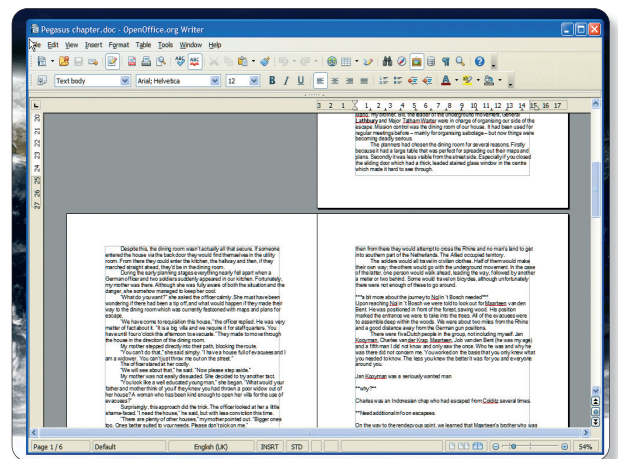
7 Send files by email

OpenOffice.org lets you send email attachments directly from inside any module. Open the document you want to attach then go to File/ Send. You have a choice of options. Document As E-mail will open a blank message using your default email client and attach the file in OpenDocument format. (You can configure your email program in Tools/ Options/ Internet/ E-mail.) E-mail As OpenDocument Text/Spreadsheet/ Presentation (depending on the program you're using) all do the exact same thing. E-mail As Microsoft Word/Excel/Powerpoint will attach a document in the relevant Microsoft

Office format. E-mail As PDF generates a .pdf file using the standard settings then attaches this to the new email.

8 Change the page layout in Writer

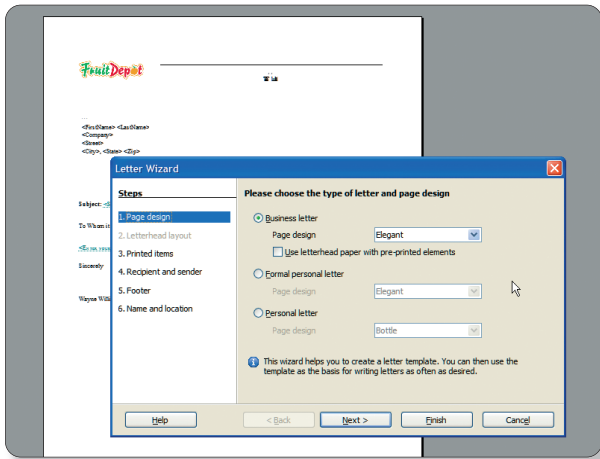
The latest version of Writer enables you to choose how pages are presented on screen. If you have a widescreen monitor you may prefer to have them displayed side-by-side. Click the option you require at the bottom right. The first icon displays pages in single file, the second lays them out continuously (side-by-side) and the third in print layout (facing) - pages appear on the left and right just as they would in a book or magazine. You will probably need to use the slider to zoom out so that the pages will fit properly.



Writer enables you to view your pages side-by-side, just as if they were in a book

9 Use wizards to create documents

OpenOffice.org simplifies the process of creating letters, faxes, agendas, presentations and webpages. Go to Files/ Wizards and choose the style of item you want. With the Letter wizard you can create business, formal or personal

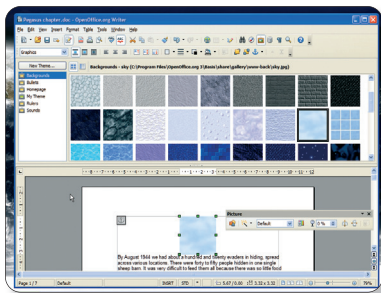


letters and choose a page design style. If you're printing to pre-designed letter-headed paper, you can customise the layout to take this into account. Typical elements can be added automatically for you. As you fill in details, the letter will be constructed in the background. The other wizards work in the same way, although the Web wizard is (understandably) slightly more involved.

▲ *Creating a stylish (and correctly laid out) letter is easy using the built-in wizard*

10 Add content from the gallery

Documents or webpages can be quickly spruced up by adding some graphics or a background to them. Go to Tools/ Gallery and a list of themes will appear on the left. Browse the collection (you can switch between Icon and Detailed views) then click and drag an item to add it to

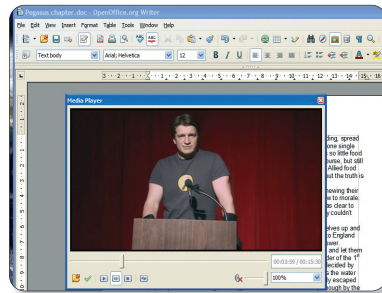


▲ *Add colour backgrounds and graphics to your documents using the Gallery*

your page. Once it's there simply move it around and resize it as required. To build your own themed collection of graphics, click New Theme then click the Files tab in the Properties box and browse for the items you want to add.

12 Play music and videos

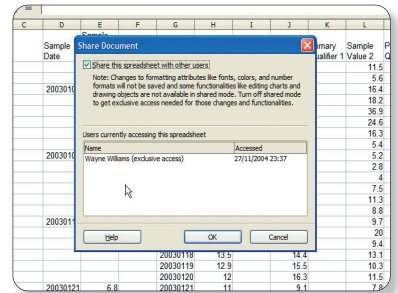
Writer comes with its own built-in media player. To run it go to Tools/ Media Player and browse for the file you want to play. Video clips can be resized using the percentage drop-down box (the default choices are 50%, 100%, 200% or Scaled - the video resizes to match the window's dimensions). Clicking the Apply button will insert the item into your current document. A play bar will appear at the bottom of the screen.



► *You can watch videos and play music using the built-in Media Player*

13 Collaborate on spreadsheets

One of the more useful new features in the latest version is the ability to collaborate on Calc spreadsheets with other users. Save your spreadsheet to a networked drive, go to Tools/ Share Document and tick the option to Share This Spreadsheet with Other Users. Click OK. The word (shared) will be added to the title bar. Anyone with access to it can now open and make alterations to the file. Changes are only made when a document is saved so you (and anyone else editing it at the same time) will need to remember to save on a regular basis.



▲ *Multiple users can now collaborate a single spreadsheet, provided you share it first*

14 Add notes to documents

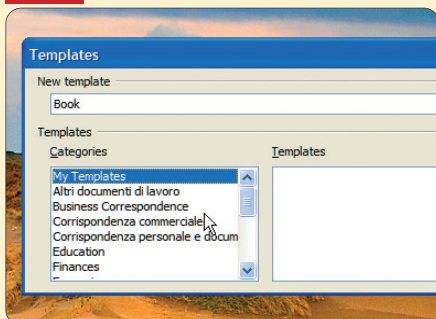
You can add handy Post-it-style notes to the margin of any Writer document by positioning your cursor where you want the note to link to, then going to Insert/ Note. It will appear on the right-hand side. You can change the username in the note by going to Tools/ Options and clicking User Data under OpenOffice.org. If you're sharing a document with someone, they can also add their comments to it. You'll be able to see who has written what, as each user's notes are assigned a different colour.

15 Keyboard shortcuts

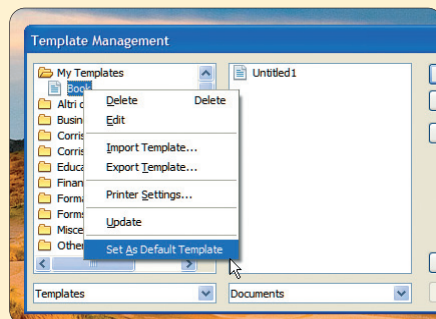
OpenOffice.org makes use of a lot of shortcuts; these are some of the more useful.

- Ctrl+F4** Closes the currently open document
- Ctrl+Shift+Spacebar** Removes formatting from selected text
- Ctrl+N** Creates a new document
- Ctrl+O** Opens a document
- Shift+Ctrl+N** Opens Templates And Documents
- Ctrl+S** Saves the current document
- Ctrl+Q** Closes OpenOffice.org
- Ctrl+F** Opens Find And Replace

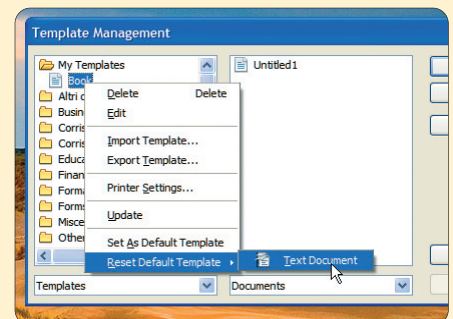
11 CREATE A NEW DEFAULT TEMPLATE



1 *Rather than going into File/ New/ Templates And Documents every time you want to use your favourite template, you can set it as the default choice (so it opens every time you go to File/ New/ document type). Customise your chosen template as required then go to File/ Templates/ Save.*

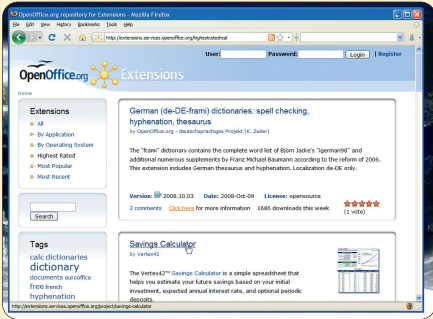


2 *Give it a name and select a category in the list. Click OK. Now go to File/ Templates/ Organize. Navigate through the directories to find your template, right-click it and select Set As Default Template. Click Close. From now on, every time you go to File/ New/ document type that template will open.*



3 *If things don't work out and you want to revert back to the original choice, go to File/ Templates/ Organize. Right-click the current template (the new default) and select Reset Default Template/ document type. This design will still be available, but you'll now need to browse to open it.*

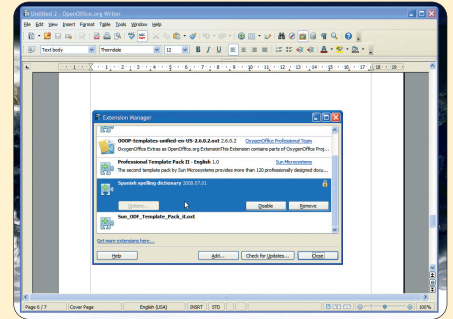
16 INSTALL ADD-ONS



1 Either click the **Add New Features To OpenOffice.org** button on the program's splash screen, or go to <http://extensions.services.openoffice.org/>. You can browse the full list; narrow it down by application; or view the highest rated, most popular or most recent. Click an add-on's name to find out more about it.



2 If you find an extension you like the sound of, install it by clicking the **Get It** button at the bottom of the screen. You will be asked to confirm that you want to install that item. Click **OK** and accept any licence terms. Once installed you'll be able to use the add-on immediately.



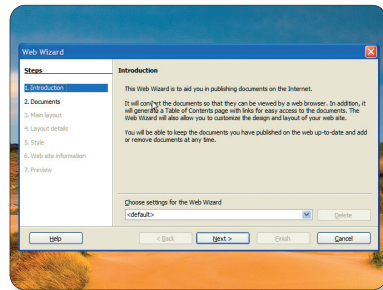
3 To manage or disable your add-ons, go to **Tools/ Extension Manager**. You can temporarily disable an extension or remove it permanently. Options lets you configure it, although more often than not this will simply be greyed out. The **Check For Updates** button will look to see if there are any newer versions available.

- Ctrl+Shift+F** Repeats the previous search
- Ctrl+Shift+J** Toggles window/fullscreen mode in Writer and Calc
- Ctrl+Shift+R** Refreshes the document
- Ctrl+I** Italicises the selected word or phrase
- Ctrl+B** Boldes the selected word or phrase
- Ctrl+U** Underlines the selected word or phrase

the item to select all of the pieces, then right-click it and select **Group**.

18 Create webpages

The easiest way to create new pages from scratch is to go to **File/ Wizards/ Web Page**. This will step you through the publishing process. You can also save existing documents as webpages in Writer, Calc, Draw or Impress. Go to **File/**

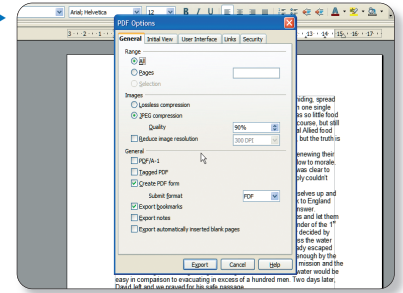


▶ *The Web Wizard lets you create HTML documents ready for uploading*

Save As and select **HTML Document** as the file type. To see how a page will look beforehand go to **View/ Web Layout**. Alternatively you can open it in your browser by going to **File/ Preview** in Web Browser.

Impress presentations can be saved in **Macromedia Flash** format as well as **HTML**. Go to **File/ Export** and choose **Macromedia Flash** as the file type.

▶ *The Export As PDF enables you to choose various settings before outputting the file*

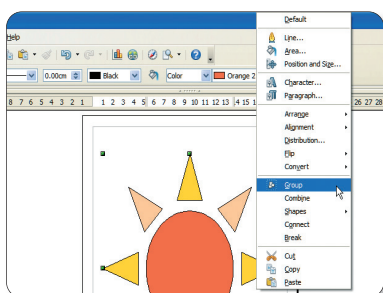


magnification and more. You can also encrypt a document or restrict permissions through the **Security** tab.

20 Get new templates

Although the suite comes with a collection of ready-made templates, you can easily add more. Click the **Get More Templates For OpenOffice.org** button on the opening splash screen, or go to <http://tinyurl.com/6ck8dw>. Template collections are installed in the same way as other extensions.

Browse the new designs by clicking the **Templates** button on the splash screen or going to **File/ New/ Templates And Documents**. Navigate through the directories, select the template you want then click **Open**. You can remove or disable the new templates through the **Extension Manager**. You can also manage them by going to **File/ Templates/ Organize**.

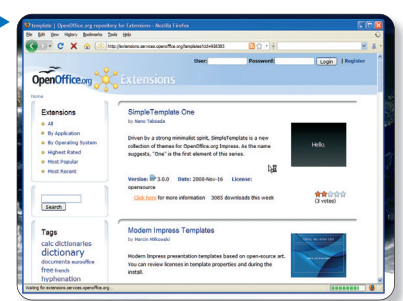


▶ *Breaking a shape down into its individual components enables you to colour the pieces separately*

19 Output to PDF

There are two ways to output documents and spreadsheets to **PDF** format. The easiest is to click the **Export Directly As PDF** button on the toolbar. This writes the file using the default options. If you require greater control over the finished document go to **File/ Export As PDF**. This provides a range of options including being able to choose which pages to output, the quality of any .jpps, the opening layout,

▶ *If the standard templates aren't enough for you, you can always download some additional ones*



The problem with OpenOffice.org



Stephen Copestake explains how to get smart with quotes, create self-loading Calc templates and dock/undock windows

Getting smart



I've used Microsoft Word in the past and always found the "smart quotes" feature both useful and easy to use. However, I've recently switched to OpenOffice.org, largely because it's free, and haven't found this feature anything like as intuitive. For one thing, there seem to be several different ways to implement smart quotes in Writer, none of which seem to work properly. Can you shed some light?

Gillian Cox

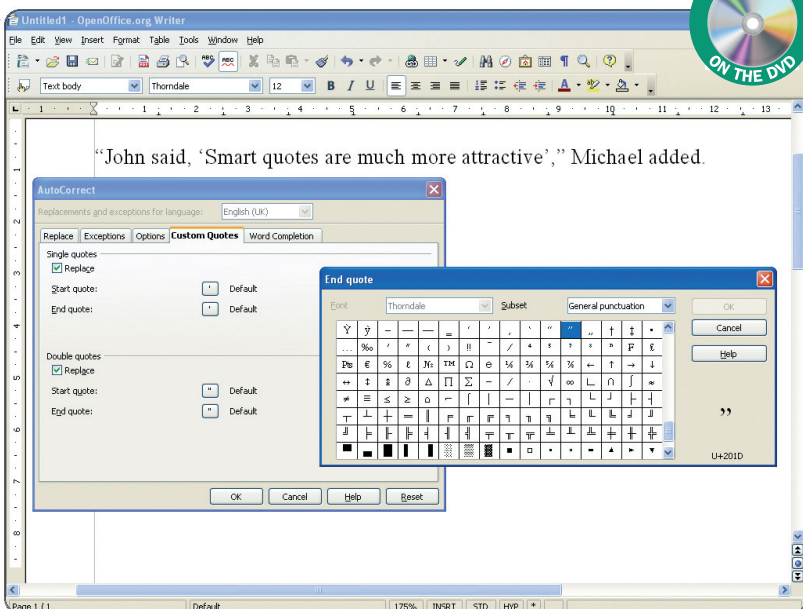


The quotation marks shown on PC keyboards are typewriter-style and unattractively straight. These should only be used in certain situations - in ASCII files or programming code, or to represent feet and inches (eg 8' or 16" for 8ft and 16in) or minutes and seconds (5' and 32" for 5min and 32sec). Smart quotes are curved and look better in most situations.

The way Writer implements smart quotes is rather cumbersome but it actually provides considerably more

Writer has more smart quotes functionality than Word, once you know where to look

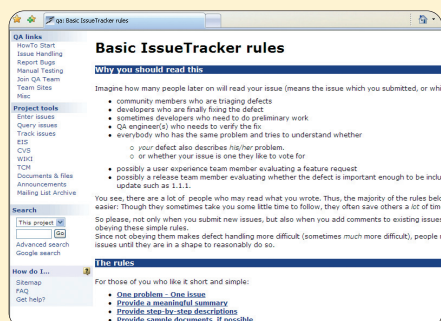
"Smart quotes are curved and look better in most situations"



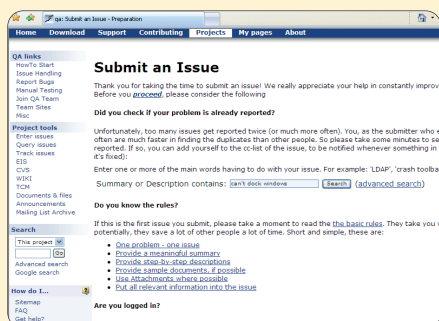
functionality than Word, once you understand the way it works. The first step is to go to Format/ AutoFormat and make sure While Typing is ticked (if it isn't, none of the subsequent changes

you make will take effect). Now go to Tools/ AutoCorrect to launch the AutoCorrect dialog. Activate the Custom Quotes tab. You should now see that OpenOffice.org is automatically set up

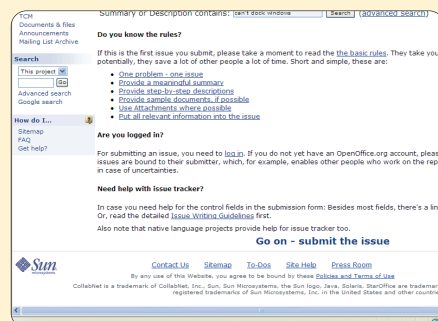
HELP THE DEVELOPMENT OF OPENOFFICE.ORG



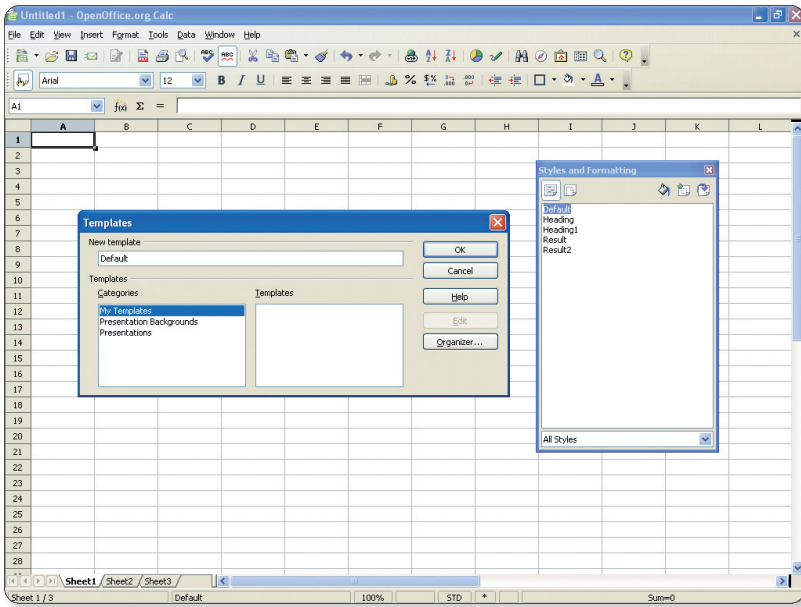
1 You can help the OpenOffice.org project by reporting any persistent bugs ('issues') you encounter. First, go to www.openoffice.org/servlets/Join and open an account. Now go to http://qa.openoffice.org/issue_handling/basic_rules.html for a description of basic submission rules. It's a good idea to read through these.



2 Log in at the top of the screen and go to http://qa.openoffice.org/issue_handling/pre_submission.html to check your problem hasn't already been reported. Enter a brief description and click Search. You'll be given a lot of links and may find your bug has already been addressed.



3 If your bug is new, return to the Submit An Issue screen. Click the Go On - Submit The Issue link. There are various ways bugs can be reported; the easiest is by application. Select a method and, in the next screen, enter full details of the bug. Finally, click Submit issue.



◀ You can force Calc to apply formatting to all new spreadsheets, but the process is cumbersome

“Difficulty in docking windows has been a sore point with OpenOffice.org for some time”

heading called My Templates. Double-click this to reveal your new template. Right-click this and select Set As Default Template in the drop-down menu. Click Close.

Now, pressing Ctrl+N together will produce a new spreadsheet with the amended formatting in place.

Impress-ive



I've been using OpenOffice.org for some time now. Different versions have had their strengths and weaknesses but, overall, the suite has improved a lot. One area where the improvement has been sketchy, though, is the area of docking windows. My question relates specifically to Impress. I have trouble docking windows on the left or right of the screen. This problem used to happen more often in earlier versions but still occurs from time to time. I've tried the usual solutions: holding down the Ctrl key while dragging the window and double-clicking the window's title bar. When Impress refuses to dock a window, nothing will make it. Even more annoying, it will sometimes dock a window and then refuse to undock it. What am I doing wrong?

Peter Matthews

to use smart quotes when it comes to double quotes. However, smart single quotes aren't enabled (the probable reason is that America uses double in preference to single quotes) so the next stage is to tick Replace under the Next smart quotes section. Note that, unlike in Word, you can specify which characters OpenOffice.org uses as opening and closing smart quotes - just click any of the four boxes and select one in the new dialog (which looks remarkably like Word's Symbol dialog). Click OK.

This will implement smart quotes for new text you type in. To convert existing text to smart quotes, select it and then go to Format/ Apply (for this, it doesn't matter whether smart quotes are turned on in the AutoCorrect dialog).

What's the point?



When I create new spreadsheets in Calc, the default font font shown is Albany/10 point. However, I have some visual impairment and really need a sans serif font with a larger type size, say Arial/12 point. Ideally, I'd like Calc to apply this automatically whenever I create a new spreadsheet. A friend of mine using Excel 2007 can do this from within the Excel Options dialog but this facility isn't present in Calc. Is there an alternative route?

Simon Quigley



As is often the case with OpenOffice.org, there is a way to do this in Calc but it isn't at all intuitive; in fact, it's a three-stage process. First, create a new, blank spreadsheet and press F11 to display the Styles And Formatting window. Right-click the Default style and select Modify. This will produce the Cell Style: Default

QUICK TIP

In the OpenOffice.org online forum, select any program you're having trouble with. The Sticky items at the top of the page often contain links to useful tutorials.

dialog box. Select the Font tab, apply the typeface and type size you want and then click OK. This has redefined the font and type size for all sheets within the open spreadsheet. So far, so good.

In the second stage, you need to save your new spreadsheet as a template. Go to File/ Templates/ Save (or just press Shift+F11). In the Templates dialog, name your new template (we suggest you call it Default, or something equally clear and memorable) and click OK.

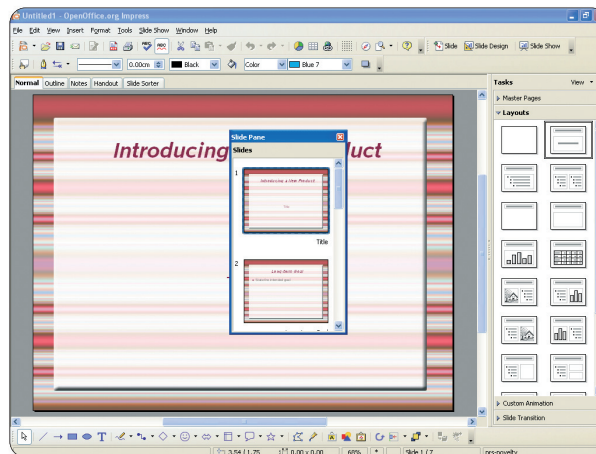
Finally, you need to instruct Calc to automatically base new spreadsheets on your newly-created template. Go to File/ Templates/ Organize to launch the Template Management dialog (strongly reminiscent of Word's Organizer). The large field on the left should be set to display templates; here, you'll see a

Useful links

The OpenOffice.org Forum
www.ooffice.org

Free OpenOffice.org user guides
<http://documentation.openoffice.org/manuals/index.html>

More tips on reporting bugs
<http://tinyurl.com/2lh5gd>



▶ Pressing Ctrl+Shift+F10 will undock even the Slide Pane in Impress

Difficulty in docking windows has been a sore point with OpenOffice.org for some time. The latest version appears to have reduced the tendency without eliminating it. We tested docking procedures in most of the OpenOffice.org modules and found them more or less problematic in each; the exception was Base, which doesn't allow docking at all (presumably, because there are far fewer windows). Sometimes, just dragging the window to the left or right edge of the screen produces an on-screen box; releasing the mouse docks the window. On other occasions, this doesn't work. The Impress Help system recommends holding down the Ctrl key and double-clicking, not on the Title bar but instead on any blank area in the body of the window. We found that this worked on some windows but not others. It worked whenever we tried it with the Impress Styles and Formatting window. However, with the Slide Pane (normally docked on the left of the screen), the recommended method refused to undock it.


This situation is unsatisfactory. Fortunately, we did manage to locate another solution. Selecting the window (by clicking its Title bar) and then pressing Ctrl+Shift+F10 will infallibly dock or undock just about any Impress window. It works in the other OpenOffice.org modules, too.

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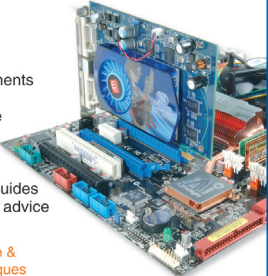
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