HELP! for templates

**Taming Templates by Nate Keyes**

**A template can't become all you want it to be if you find yourself befuddled by how to personalize it. What can you do about a seemingly untamable template? Fear not. Help is on the way.**

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| **Applies to...** | **In...** |
| Microsoft Word Microsoft Excel Microsoft PowerPoint | Microsoft Office 2003 Microsoft Office XP Microsoft Office 2000 Microsoft Office 97/98 |

Hello, template compatriots. I say this kindly but frankly: it’s about time you sought help. I know, I know… “Doctor, heal thyself.” Well, in my opinion I am quite well-heeled, thank you very much. Those shock collars are a wonder. As for following my own advice, people tell me almost daily to seek help, and I can’t help but giggle when they say that because they don’t realize my invisible friend tells me to ignore them.

But enough about that. Let’s talk about template help. The helpfulness of any helper is, as you know, tied to the helper’s capacity to understand exactly how to be helpful. For instance, you may find this yammering very unhelpful.

Or here’s another example. When I had house guests for a seemingly interminably long time during the holidays, I knew exactly how to help them. And I’m sad to report that my house guests started taking advantage of my accommodating spirit with their complaining.

First, they began whining about the guest room with none–too–subtle comments like, “Can you let us out,” and “It’s hard to breathe in here.” What next? Run the entire house their way? Then they started muttering about my meals. At least, it sounded like muttering, coming, as it was, through the door. Stuff like, “We need more than just bread and water.” Oh, but here’s the kicker. You'll love this. They then started playing the semantics game—you know—making an issue about what this word or that word really means and trying to turn it all to their selfish advantage. I could almost see one of my guests using his hands to make quote marks in the air when he said through the door, “Mold is not a ‘food group’.” Like he’s a nutritionist! The idea! I know. I thought it was unbelievable too.

The big challenge about getting good help

But what if the need isn’t so easy to pin down, like when you are trying to do something very specific in Excel that’s hard to describe? For instance, “I want to make a list of days starting with January 1, 2006, putting the next day on the row below it and so on, without typing out each date by hand.”

It reminds me of a time I tried to describe to a mechanic what was wrong with my car by imitating the noise it was making, knowing all the while that my grunts and gurgles didn’t sound anything like my car’s problem. Much more like an ailing copy machine. The mechanic just looked at me as though a little lost and said, “Did… did you check the toner?” I rolled my eyes and said, “The toner! Don't you recognize a cracked primary feed spindle when you hear one? He-LLO!”

But you distract me from what I’m trying to say, which is: The stumbling block to getting the help you need comes down to, well, semantics. It’s about vocabulary, about language, about bridging the gap between the way you describe the problem and the name of the feature in Office that solves it. “In Word, I want to move this paragraph so that it starts on a new page.” If you searched Help in Word using this question, a list of a couple dozen or more files come up in the results. Would you know that your solution is covered by the Help topic *Insert a manual page* break?

Well, I—along with so many others here behind this firewall—am determined to change all that. We’re taking strides, particularly with Office Online templates, to close the communication gap between your help needs and Microsoft help solutions. Here are four key ways to discover the Help that is just right for you.

# New in Office 2003: personalized template help

If you have Microsoft Office 2003, many templates for Word, Excel, and PowerPoint that you download from Microsoft Office Online come with Help tailored specifically for them. These personalized Help topics, which appear in the Template Help task pane, help you discover and master powerful Microsoft Office 2003 features. *“The Template Help what where?”* you may be asking. I know that simply repeating the term won’t make it any clearer, but that’s what they always do on TV and in the movies: “Why yes, the Template Help task pane.”

In the technical jargon of the software industry, the Template Help task pane is a thingamabob. You know: a doohickey. It appears in Word, Excel, or PowerPoint along the right side of the window and lists all kinds of great, um… helpy stuff.

To be specific, when displayed, the Template Help task pane can tell you what features are used in the template that you just downloaded. It can also tell you how to put those features to work to get the results you want. And it can point the way to other helpful resources such as training, similar templates, and any number of useful Web sites in Microsoft Office Online and beyond. Very cool, indeed.

# Displaying (or for that matter turning off) template Help

To display the Template Help task pane when you download a template, do the following.

1. In either Microsoft Office Word 2003, Microsoft Office Excel 2003, or Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2003, click **Options** on the **Tools** menu.
2. On the **General** tab, click **Service Options**.
3. Click **Online Content** in the **Category** pane
4. Now do the thang you came here to do:
5. Click **OK**, and then click **OK** again.

You will not immediately notice anything different, but I tell you, with the next template you download that has template Help, the Template Help task pane will appear. You may also find that your breath stays mintier longer, that kitchen spills clean up in a snap, and that beverages are just a tad more refreshing than before. Nothing is quite as pleasant as a refreshing beverage. “Thank you, Template Help task pane! Thank you!”