LaTeX Resources for Microsoft Windows

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Except where otherwise noted, all software is available free of charge.

LaTeX

First thing to do: get a LaTeX distribution. I recommend MiKTeX. See also the recommendations at the LaTeX Project.

I am very much opposed to Scientific Word/Workplace. In my opinion, it hides too much from the user. People who use SciWord often do things that "work," but for which there are better solutions (but they don't know about these better solutions because SciWord hides too much from them).

The whole idea of using LaTeX is that you, the writer, should concentrate on the *content* of what you're working on. One of the problems with SciWord is that it tries to give you the best of both worlds: LaTeX, and a WYSIWYG interface. At the end of the day, though, the WYSIWYG interface compromises LaTeX in fundamental ways.

An Editor

I use GNU Emacs with AUCTeX, but some people find Emacs difficult to learn (much less install). XEmacs includes a pretty good installer; I'm not sure of the differences between XEmacs and GNU Emacs.

Viable alternatives include:

- TeXnicCenter
- WinEdt(not free)
- WinShell for LaTeX
- Texmaker
- Bluefish with an add-in
- eclipse with an add-in.

I have not personally used any of these other editors, although I know people who use (and are happy with) TeXnicCenter and WinEdt.

Getting Started

New users are usually pointed to: The Not So Short Introduction to LaTeX.

In general, you do *not* need to know everything about LaTeX in order to get started. In fact, the best way to learn LaTeX is simply to get started, then look up what you need to know.

BibTeX

BibTex is a great way of maintaining your references. You create a database (a "bib" file) that contains all the papers that you reference (in all of your papers). If you correct a reference, you only need to make a correction in one place (your "bib" file).

Another advantage of using BibTeX is that you can change the presentation of the references (the "style") by changing the one line (the call to

Yet another advantage of using BibTeX is that you will never cite a paper that does not end up in the references at the end of your paper. And you will never have papers listed in your references that are not actually cited.

One thing to keep in mind: After running LaTeX, you will need to run BibTeX. You will then need to run LaTeX a couple of times to get all the references straight.

GNU Emacs has a mode for editing .bib files. If you don't want to learn Emacs, you might check out BibEdit.

Graphing Data

I am rather keen on Gnuplot for plotting numerical data.

"Freehand" Figures

I am partial to **Xfig**. However, the easiest way to install Xfig on a MS-Windows system is to first install Cygwin although installing this software is probably overkill if you really only want Xfig. There is a Java version of Xfig called Jfig.

Xfig has a couple of nice features. First, it can export a combined PDF and LaTeX figure so that the fonts for your figures match exactly the fonts used in your paper (and you can use all of LaTeX's mathematics capabilities). Second, it does rather nice splines, something that can be useful if you are trying to draw indifference curves, or production functions.

Presentations (Beamer)

Beamer is installed by default by MikTeX, and is sufficiently popular that SciWord will do Beamer. The Beamer documentation is quite extensive and somewhat daunting. Again, I recommend diving in and read the manual to find the particular items you need.

Writing Letters

It may seem like overkill to use LaTeX to write letters, but why give up all the nice formatting? I use the **newlfm** class. Some of the dimensions don't suit me; here's what I use:

```
\minfoot{1in}
\MinFoot{1in}
\MinHead{1.25in}
\dateskipafter{0pt}
\addrtoskipbefore{0pt}
\dateskipbefore{\baselineskip}
```

Other (Economics) LaTeX Guides

- Stanford Economics Department
- Laudo Ogura's page
- Michle Tertilt's advice for Economics Ph.D. students

Other Guides and Resources

- LaTeX Community
- The Comprehensive TeX Archive Network

In terms of books, I like The LaTeX Companion by Michel Goossens, Frank Mittelbach and Alexander Samarin.