Word processor

Sometimes abbreviated as **WP**, a **word processor** is a software program capable of creating, storing, and printing typed documents. Today, the word processor is one of the most frequently used software programs on a computer, with Microsoft Word being the most popular word processor.

Word processors can create multiple types of files, including text files (.txt), rich text files (.rtf), HTML files (.htm & .html), and Word files (.doc & .docx). Some word processors can also be used to create XML files (.xml).

Tip: A word processor should not be confused with a text editor, such as Notepad, that only allows editing and creating plain text documents.

Overview of Word

In a word processor, you are presented with a blank white sheet as shown below. The text is added to the document area and after it has been inserted formatted or adjusted to your preference. Below is an example of a blank Microsoft Word window with areas of the window highlighted.
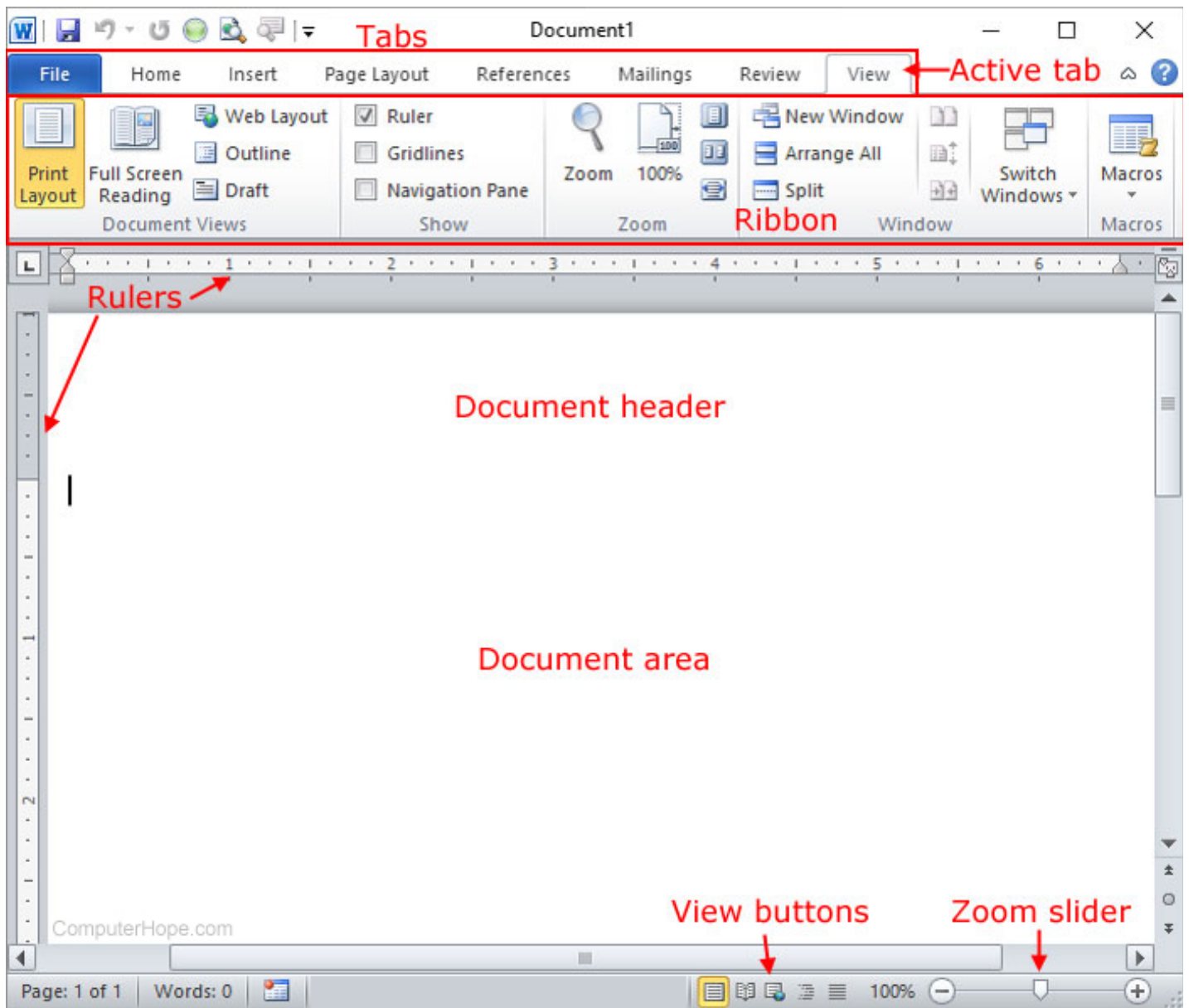
Features of a word processor

Unlike a basic plaintext editor, a word processor offers several additional features that can give your document or other text a more professional appearance. Below is a listing of some of the most popular features of a word processor.

Tip: Some more advanced text editors can perform some of these functions.

- **Text formatting** - Changing the font, font size, font color, bold, italicizing, underline, etc.
- **Copying, cutting, and pasting** - Once text is entered into a document, it can be copied or cut and pasted in the current document or another document.
- **Multimedia** - Insert clip art, charts, images, pictures, and video into a document.

- **Spelling and Grammar** - Checks for spelling and grammar errors in a document.
- **Adjust the layout** - Capable of modifying the margins, size, and layout of a document.
- **Find** - Word processors give you the ability to quickly find any word or text in any size of the document.
- **Search and Replace** - You can use the Search and Replace feature to replace any text throughout a document.
- **Indentation and lists** - Set and format tabs, bullet lists, and number lists.
- **Insert tables** - Add tables to a document.
- **Word wrap** - Word processors can detect the edges of a page or container and automatically wrap the text using word wrap.
- **Header and footer** - Being able to adjust and change text in the header and footer of a document.
- **Thesaurus** - Look up alternatives to a word without leaving the program.
- **Multiple windows** - While working on a document, you can have additional windows with other documents for comparison or move text between documents.
- **AutoCorrect** - Automatically correct common errors (e.g., typing "teh" and having it autocorrected to "the").
- **Mailers and labels** - Create mailers or print labels.
- **Import data** - Import and format data from CSV, database, or another source.
- **Headers and footers** - The headers and footers of a document can be customized to contain page numbers, dates, footnotes, or text for all pages or specific pages of the document.
- **Merge** - Word processors allow data from other documents and files to be automatically merged into a new document. For example, you can mail merge names into a letter.
- **Macros** - Setup macros to perform common tasks.
- **Collaboration** - More modern word processors help multiple people work on the same document at the same time.

Examples and top uses of a word processor

A word processor is one of the most used computer programs because of its versatility in creating a document. Below is a list of the top examples of how you could use a word processor.

- **Book** - Write a book.
- **Document** - Any text document that requires formatting.
- **Help documentation** - Support documentation for a product or service.
- **Journal** - Keep a digital version of your daily, weekly, or monthly journal.

- **Letter** - Write a letter to one or more people. Mail merge could also be used to automatically fill in the name, address, and other fields of the letter.
- **Marketing plan** - An overview of a plan to help market a new product or service.
- **Memo** - Create a memo for employees.
- **Report** - A status report or book report.
- **Résumé** - Create or maintain your résumé.

Examples of word processor programs

Although Microsoft Word is the most popular word processor available, there are other word processor programs. Below is a list of some popular word processors in alphabetical order.

- Abiword.
- Apple iWork - Pages.
- Apple TextEdit - Apple macOS included word processor.
- Corel WordPerfect.
- Dropbox Paper (online and free).
- Google Docs (online and free).
- LibreOffice -> Writer (free).
- Microsoft Office -> Microsoft Word.
- Microsoft WordPad.
- Microsoft Works (discontinued).
- SoftMaker FreeOffice -> TextMaker (free).
- OpenOffice -> Writer (free).
- SSuite -> WordGraph (free).
- Sun StarOffice (discontinued).
- Textilus (iPad and iPhone).
- Kingsoft WPS Office -> Writer (free).

Word processor advantages over a typewriter

See our typewriter page for a listing of advantages a computer with a word processor has over a typewriter.