



# Invisible writing

Make sure your **words stay deleted** and don't come back to haunt you, says Tim Nott.

**C**uriosity may have terminated the lives of domestic felines, but it certainly saved the career of a reader, who for reasons that will become clear, wishes to remain anonymous. 'I was curious to see why a simple one-page letter took up nearly 30Kb as a Word document. So, I opened it in Notepad. There was a lot of gobbledegook (which I presume is to do with formatting); vast amounts of white space; bits that seemed to have something to do with the document properties; and finally, scattered around in random clumps, my text.

'The big shock came when I saw some text I was sure I'd deleted. On checking, it wasn't visible when opening the document in Word, but the file itself still contained it and was accessible to anyone as curious as me.

'I have been known to vent my anger by starting a letter to my boss with "Dear stupid", then substituting a more respectful salutation before emailing the final version. I don't save versions or track changes, so what's happening? Not only am I now in fear for my job, but this harmless yet satisfying safety valve is denied me.'

**With regard** to the 'vast amounts of white space', this is normal. I have actually heard a Microsoft spokeswoman describe Word files as being 'mostly air'.

The other problem is rather more worrying. Fortunately, there's an easy answer. Go to the Save tab under Tools, Options and uncheck the box 'Allow fast saves'. If you don't do this, Word doesn't always bother to purge deleted text —

it just leaves it somewhere in the 'air'.

You'll also find that fast-saved documents can be

substantially larger, and the speed difference is really noticeable only on very long documents.

There's a related problem in the

***The big shock came when I saw some text that I was sure I had deleted***

original version of Word 97. When you delete a file — even if you empty the Windows Recycle Bin — the data isn't

actually removed from the disk.

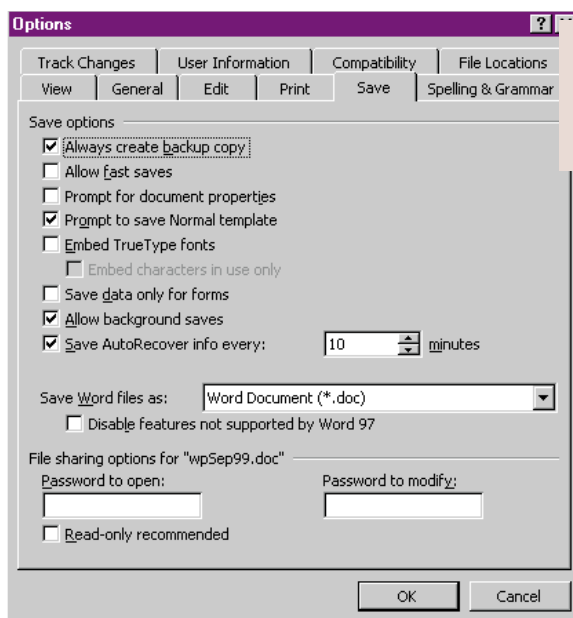
Instead, the File Allocation Table marks the physical disk sectors as unused and free to be overwritten.

The original Word 97 didn't 'clear the air' when saving a new file, so it was possible that chunks of deleted files could be

included in the .DOC file without appearing when opened in Word itself. The SR1 update cured this problem.

#### ➔ Button it!

Here's a Word 97 quirk kindly brought to my attention by Alex Halpounds. If you left-click on one of the up-arrows in any of the measurement boxes in File, Page Setup, the values will

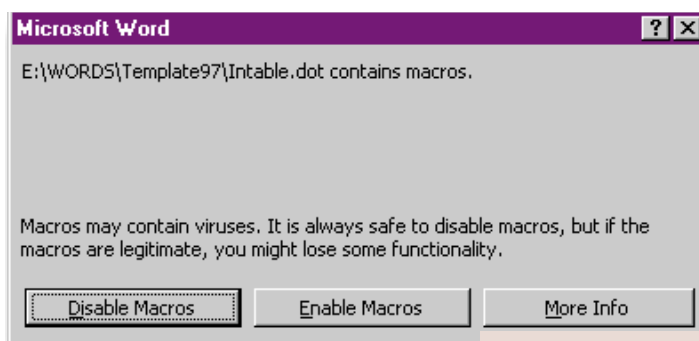


➔ **AVOID FAST SAVES — 'DELETED' TEXT MAY STILL BE THERE**

change incrementally until you release the mouse button. So far, no surprises. But if you press the right-button (with the left still held down) then release both, the numbers will continue to increment on their own. It seems to work in other dialogues as well, and I've found a left-click anywhere in the dialogue stops the count. I wonder if this is design or accident?

#### ➔ The danger zone

One good thing about Word 2000 is the protection against possibly dangerous



▲ **WATCH OUT, THERE'S A MACRO ABOUT**

macros. In the Tools, Macro menu there's a Security item which opens a dialogue giving three choices. The highest security level will disable all macros that don't have a 'digital certificate' from a trusted source. Medium level will warn before enabling uncertified macros, and Low will leave you to your doom. If however you have an existing collection of true and tried (but not digitally signed) macros, then there's an option to 'Trust all installed templates and add-ins'.

So I did, and was rather surprised

## Questions & answers

**Q** I have a table at the beginning of a Word document and would like to put some text before it, but I can't get the insertion point 'out' of the top of the table, despite trying both mouse and keyboard.

JEREMY QUINTON

**a** Put the insertion point at the beginning of the first cell and press 'Enter' or, should that fail, 'Table, Split Table'. This should solve the problem and you will find yourself back in the body of the document. If you have Word 2000, you'll find you can pick up the whole table with the cursor and move it down the page, creating usable space above.

**Q** Is there a way to use the VBA editor that comes with MS Word to create standalone programs?

JOAN MARTINEZ

**a** No, they can be run only from within a document or template. To create

standalone executables, you need Visual Basic, which is a separate application.

**Q** Is it possible to run another program from a button on a toolbar within Word (not the Office toolbar)?

DAN GREENFIELD

**a** Yes. The trick mentioned in June's column for opening the folder containing the current document in Explorer works with other executables. For example:

```
Sub Skive()  
Dim boredstiff  
boredstiff =   
Shell("C:\windows\   
sol.exe" ,   
vbNormalFocus)  
End Sub  
will start Solitaire. The  
vbNormalFocus means that  
the window will be both the  
default size and active. You  
can then use Tools, Customise,  
Commands, Macros, and drag  
the macro 'Skive' onto a  
toolbar. Before you close the  
Customise dialogue, right-click  
on the button: setting the style  
to 'Default' removes the text,  
and you can 'Change button
```

image' to select from a range, or 'Edit button image' to create your own.

**Q** If I start Word by double-clicking on a document (from Explorer) it loads fine. But if I try to start it from the Start menu, or via a shortcut to Word itself, or from Windows Start, Run... it crashes.

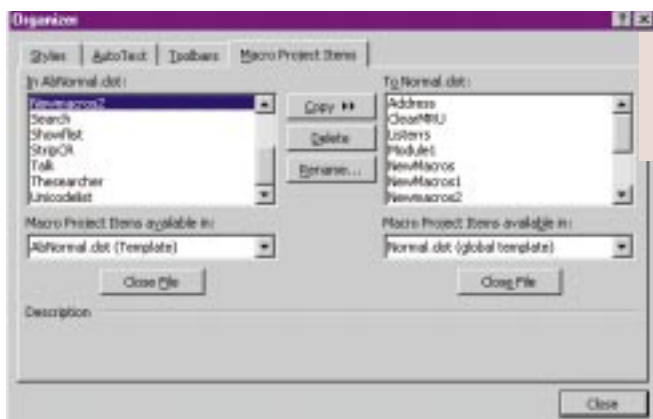
MALCOLM WALTON

**a** This sounds as if it could be due to a corrupt default template — normal.dot. With Word closed, rename normal.dot to, for example, abnormal.dot. Start Word, and it will create a new normal.dot based on the default settings. If this works, you can use the Organiser (Tools, Templates and Add-ins) to transfer custom styles, autotext entries, toolbars and macros from abnormal.dot to the new normal.dot. If the problem then returns, you'll have to delete the new normal.dot (to let Word create another one), then repeat the Organiser transfer in stages: it's most likely to be an Autotext or Autoexec macro that is causing the problem.

**Q** I often have to divide a (landscape) sheet of A4 into four, to create four invitations, for example. This is simple in WordPerfect 8 (File, Page Setup, Divide Page), but I can find nothing similar in Word.

STEPHANIE JENKINS

**a** There are several ways you can do this, though none quite as elegantly simple as the WordPerfect approach. The easiest way is to go to File, Page Setup to set the page to landscape and decrease the page margins. Then create a 2x2 table, which should by default span the page width in two equal columns. You'll have to format the row height to a suitable value to fill the page vertically, and adjust the cell margins to compensate for the offset caused by the page margins. You'll probably also want to turn off all borders. You can then create the invitation in one cell, and copy and paste it into the others. Another way would be to use Word's custom labels feature, but this can be a hideous struggle.



### ◀ RESCUING MACROS FROM A DAMAGED DEFAULT TEMPLATE

Happily, this was a false alarm. When I installed the Word 2000 Beta, I created a new templates folder and

an essential step in upgrading from Word 6/7 to 97, as the latter would automatically and irrevocably convert WordBasic macros to VBA: if you wanted to revert to the

former, the macros would be lost. The warning came because 'installed templates' refers only to those in the current template folder. So, documents based on templates in my original 97 templates folder triggered the warning.

### PCW CONTACTS

Tim Nott welcomes your comments on the Word Processing column. Contact him via the PCW editorial office or email [wp@pcw.co.uk](mailto:wp@pcw.co.uk)

when opening some of my own files to get a warning that the template on which they were based contained macros which might themselves contain viruses.

copied my most frequently used templates into it from the old Word 97 templates folder, keeping the originals safe if I wanted to revert to 97. This was