Beyond Word Writer 1.1 Is a Competitive Executive WP

A sleeper perched at the top of executive word processing, it is effective and easy to use.

By John Lombardi
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

In the highly charged word processing marketplace, filled with more bells, whistles, and gadgets than a Ferrari's instrument panel, an executive-class, competitive executive word processing tool such as Beyond Word Writer can easily get lost. But to miss this program would be a mistake.

Beyond Word Writer offers a well-chosen set of word processing features. While not up to the office/professional level, this program is a powerful competitor with such executive word processing packages as Professional Write and Q&A Write, and it can easily handle all but the most demanding word processing tasks.

FEATURES:

- In addition to the full complement of editing commands, Beyond Word Writer has a full-screen, pull-down menu system, which contains commands, context-sensitive help system, handles footnotes or endnotes, will show up to three windows at once, and has a simple outline. The program produces indexes and tables of contents, has a reasonable spelling checker and thesaurus, column addition or subtraction, and a simple calculator. In addition, there is a good set of file-conversion utilities drawn from the Word-for-Word conversion system from MasterSoft.

Beyond Word Writer is remarkably flexible and includes macros, abbreviation expansion, a non-linear text editor, a user-defined or user-selectable non-printable character set, and a wide array of features.

- Missing from this impressive list is a powerful text manipulation tool. The simple merging system in Beyond Word Writer will do most of the merging, but it requires many custom selection criteria. Fonts and proportionally spaced printing are supported only minimally. In memory, your system holds documents or combinations of documents that can fit within 64K, but it does not recognize additional memory above 64K. There are multiple buffers for cutting and pasting, but not in separate lines. However, it can be adjusted to allow accommodating multiple memory configurations.

Beyond Word Writer easily meets most features requirements for solid executive word processing, and for the vast majority of word processing tasks it will do a fine job. A further advantage is that it will easily run on a laptop, and its monochrome default orientation works well in an LCD environment.

PERFORMANCE:

- As a correspondence tool, Beyond Word Writer performs well with quick recovery from movement and an easy and versatile cut-paste-paste facility. Also, cut and paste works easily within newspaper columns and the system for setting margins uses standard ten-point-inch-units, no matter which font is selected. Using the very complete opening defaults menu, Beyond Word Writer can be set to insert or overwrite, word wrap can be turned off, indentation can be changed, and other settings can be adjusted. Tabs are left, right, and decimal; you can insert the system date automatically, and the program produces clean ASCII files.

On the downside, all line spacing is done at six lines per inch. There is no table or column move or copy, the program does not automatically renumber sections, and the program does not automatically renumber sections, and the process of reformatting a long file appears slower than should for a program with data held entirely in memory.

The strong basic features of a complete program contribute to a very good score in correspondence. The spelling checker performs well, although you may not like the program's scanning the entire document for misspelled words before generating an index.

The best scores for this review come from Beyond Word Writer, which has many more features than not included in the spelling checker. The 100,000-word dictionary is good and the spelling checker can search for matches using the regular dictionary or phonetically. Unfortunately, the output from the phonetic system comes unalphabetized, a minor irritation. Like most phonetic searches, the selections often include the bizarre as well as the relevant. You can also choose to have the system check spelling while you type, a very quick system that won't slow down even the quickest typer.

Beyond Word Writers' thesaurus works well, and a good proofreading feature looks for too many words, doubled words, and capital words in the middle of words. Also, it checks for proper nouns, common phrases, brackets, and tenses. Using the Fog index, you can get a word count and an indication of reading difficulty. It will also flag all words that are too words for the essay at hand.

The mail-merge facility does a basic job of merging text into form letters, mailing labels, or forms. Mail merge also supports spreadsheet-type formatting with columns and rows. Common errors are not trapped and automatic options are limited, but what's here works rather well at a simple level.

EXECUTIVE WORD PROCESSORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Beyond Word Writer Version 1.0</th>
<th>Word Version 1.0</th>
<th>Professional Write Version 2.0</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>File</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edit</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Save &amp; continue</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career move</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>Top to bottom</td>
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Beyond Word Writer supports only manual merge satisfactory. Fonts and styles work well, with bold, italic, sub- and super- scripts, double-width characters, condensed type, and double-spacing automatically produced for supported printers. There is a binding width option, fonts and attributes can be changed in the middle of the document, and parts of the document can be printed or just an index or table of contents. Beyond Word Writer will also print pages in reverse order to facilitate collection.

Unfortunately, and common to many executive-class word processors, printer support for the HP Laserjet is minimal at best. No soft fonts are supported, no "true" justified proportionally spaced text can be produced (it can approximate it with the microspacing option), and the range of fonts available is limited. While there may be a way to change printer definition files to accomplish some of these things, there is virtually no useful printer information provided with the program. While it does not have a true preview capability, there is a feature in Beyond Word Writer that lets you preview your file to the screen, which shows your document as it will print. We rate both fonts and styles good.

Beyond Word Writer supports only manual merge satisfactory.
Sprint — makes keystroke commands match a number of popular word processing programs, enhancing compatibility. The file-exchange program works easily, but we were able to hang it when we tried to convert a complex, two-column, proportionally spaced Word Perfect 5.0 document into Beyond Word Writer format. A simpler but longer Word Perfect 5.0 document converted easily. With all the extras taken in stride with the minor problem we encountered, compatibility adds up to a very good score.

DOCUMENTATION:
Documentation is clear and easy to read with a good index and examples. There is an excellent on-screen, in-context help system that reproduces most of the reference manual, prompts, pull-down menus, and error messages are informative. The absence of reasonable printer information describing printer drivers, not included with the program and the lack of a discussion of memory limitations detract from otherwise excellent documentation, earning a very good score.

EASE OF LEARNING:
It will take you about 50 minutes to have Beyond Word Writer installed and running, and in another half hour you can be producing documents with ease. The full on-screen help and the combination of control keys and pull-down menus make navigation and command selection very easy. We rate ease of learning excellent.

EASE OF USE:
Another hour or so will bring most users up to a reasonable level of competence. Mail merging and outlining may take a bit longer, but its clean user interface and robust compatibility make control of the program relatively easy. Mouse support is flexible, but if you have a variable-resolution mouse, you'll want to run it in a slow mode because Beyond Word Writer's pull-down menus seem especially sensitive to mouse movement. As you gain expertise, the pull-down, spelling checker, thesaurus, and proofreading tools, as well as the customizable keyboard with macros and abbreviation expansion, all add to its integrated and easy to use. Ease of use is very good.

ERROR HANDLING:
Beyond Word Writer handles errors nicely. Although it's an in-memory system and likely to lose all unsaved work if a power failure occurs, the timed backup guarantees whatever level of security you desire. All destructive acts require a second prompt to warn you, whether you want to delete a file or erase a line. The undo buffer captures all but single-letter deletions, and its size is user-selectable, taking up space under the Window or cut-and-paste buffers. This program may conflict with some memory-oriented utilities such as WordEdit, which can freeze the screen and cause data loss. The manual does not warn about this. Error handling is very good.

SUPPORT:
While the official warranty for Beyond Word Writer guarantees nothing except the media, the vendor offers an unusual, but complicated, return policy. If you don't like the product you can return it with receipt for the purchase price and the company will apply what you paid for it toward the cost of the word processing program you prefer (which the company buys for you at the lowest possible price). There is also a system for trading in the program for any other TimesWrite program and a policy for upgrades. There is a free newsletter and limited technical support. We rate support policies good.

We suggest contacting technical support. We asked a variety of questions about fonts, laser printer support, and maximum line lengths. Each time the answers were correct, and we rate technical support satisfactory.

VALUE:
Given its full set of word processing features, good collection of word tools, and quick and effective operation, at $199.95 Beyond Word Writer is a very good value. As for price, it competes effectively with some fine executive products such as Professional Write and Q&A Write and the more complete and powerful PC Write. We rate value very good.

REPORT CARD INFO WORLD

EXECUTIVE WORD PROCESSOR

Beyond Word Writer

VERSION 1.0

Criteria: (Weighting: Score)

Performance
Correspondence: (180) Very Good
Spelling checker/thesaurus: (75) Very Good
Mail merge: (25) Satisfactory
Fonts and styles: (22) Good
Graphs: (29) Poor
Speed: (80) Good
Comprehensibility: (60) Very Good
Documentation: (100) Very Good
Ease of learning: (125) Excellent
Ease of use: (125) Very Good
Error handling: (75) Very Good
Support
Support policies: (50) Good
Technical support: (50) Satisfactory
Value: (75) Very Good

Final score: 7.3

PRODUCT SUMMARY

Company: Trimedia, Inc., 444 Lake Cook Road, Deerfield, IL 60015-4919; (312) 945-5970.

Last Price: $199.95.

Systems: IBM PC or compatible, MS-DOS 2.0 or later, 256K of RAM; one floppy drive, supports monochrome and color monitors.

Pros: Good selection of features and strong performance highly adaptable to user keystroke preferences; fine word tools; nice help system; easy to learn and use.

Cons: Mail merge could be stronger; problems with some memory-oriented programs; minimal HP LaserJet support.

Summary: A great executive word processor with strong compatibility features, Beyond Word Writer is easy to learn and use. Especially strong in word tools, it is a powerful, adaptable program. A fine product, Beyond Word Writer is ideal for all but the most sophisticated office/professional tasks.

RELATED REVIEWS

EXECUTIVE WORD PROCESSORS

ValuWriter 4, April 3
Beyond Word Writer (Impression), February 27

Professional Compatibility: Executive Word Processors, September 28, 1988:
Doc.Easy Word II, 1.0
TandyWriter Assistant, 1.00
MIS Windows Write, 3.1
PC Plus Plus
PC Write, 2.71
Professional Write, 2.00
Q&A Write, 1.00
Feastra, 6.0
Volkswriter Deluxe Plus, 1.0
Webster's New Word Writer II, 1.0
Word Perfect Executive, 1.0