

► Windows word processor

## WordPerfect 6.1 battles for best of breed

■ WordPerfect 6.1 and Word for Windows 6.0 now neck and neck in word processor race

By John Lombardi

**F**OR NOVELL INC., the second time's the charm. Version 6.0 of its flagship WordPerfect word processing software stumbled into a distant third place in our last comparison of Windows word processors. (See Feb. 7, 1994, page 66.) The upgraded WordPerfect 6.1, now part of Novell's PerfectOffice suite, fixes the crippling bugs that tripped up the performance of the previous edition and adds enough features to raise its score to almost match that of its archrival, Microsoft Word for Windows 6.0.

This intense battle for first place reminds us of the early days of word processing software, when upstart WordPerfect challenged then-leader WordStar for market dominance. The end result of these battles, both past and present, is better software for end-users.

People with general word processing needs will be satisfied with either product. Both programs offer a strong set of features and are easy to use. Both can handle just about any imaginable word processing task. What distinguishes each is the features it emphasizes, the style of its interface, and its integration with other productivity programs.

## FEATURES

After running our full test suite on Version 6.1, we found substantial positive changes in only a few areas and no new bugs. These positive changes caused us to revise our scoring in six performance categories. Fortunately for Novell, those six categories include ones that Version 6.0 had the most trouble with.

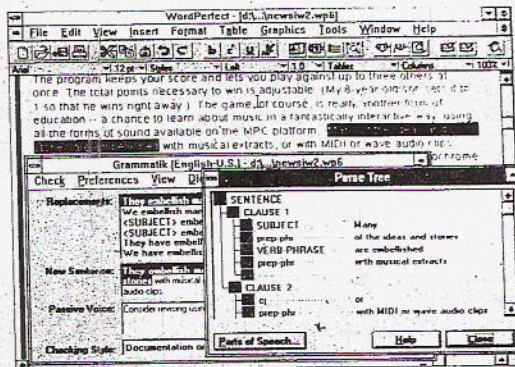
Novell also made minor improvements throughout this release in the cosmetic appearance and consistency of the user interface, the

packaging and contents of the on-line help and the hard-copy documentation, and the operation of various features. Although we appreciated these enhancements, they weren't significant enough to alter our scoring in the affected category. The scores for the following categories remain the same as those in our Feb. 7, 1994, comparison: mail merge, very good; long documents, satisfactory; file management, very good; workgroup and networking, very good; macros, good; documentation, excellent; support policies, very good; and technical support, good. (For a full description of our test suite, see How We Tested, Feb. 7, 1994, page 67.)

## PERFORMANCE

*Basic editing and formatting*

We evaluated basic editing and formatting by performing common



**WORDPERFECT'S** sophisticated grammar checker has gotten even better; it now parses sentences.

editing tasks such as search and replace, drag and drop, and cut and paste. WordPerfect 6.1 earned a higher score than Version 6.0 due to new editing features.

We were able to drag and drop a selection not only within an open document but also between different documents open on-screen and between most Windows-compatible applications. This brings WordPerfect's drag-and-drop capabilities up to the market standard.

WordPerfect added a Make It Fit Expert for those people who have to fill a particular amount of page real estate. Make It Fit takes your text and fits it into as many pages as you specify. For example, if you have 10 pages of text and only eight sheets of paper, the Make It Fit expert shrinks the type face and adjusts the margins until your document squeezes onto those eight pages. WordPerfect has a limit of 50 percent shrinkage or expansion; the equivalent Word for Windows feature can only change the document by one page. Our testing shows that WordPerfect's Make It Fit Expert generally works well. However, complex documents with stylized text or graphics images can end up with layout problems — the Make It Fit expert may move these non-text elements to the wrong place.

Another feature that WordPerfect has but Word for Windows doesn't is the capability to search for word forms. For example, you can search for "go" and the function highlights all instances of "go," "went," and "gone" in your document. We liked this feature and found it useful, being the sort of people who gener-

ally conjugate their verbs. On the other hand, WordPerfect does not have the equivalent of Word for Windows' sounds-alike search, an option we'd like to see added.

WordPerfect also made a slew of ease-of-use enhancements. It improved the word processor's OLE implementation; WordPerfect 6.1 is an OLE client. For example, we were able to use OLE when both the server and client documents were open.

It's easy to insert special, foreign-language, or graphic characters in the text, and bullets require only a single click to insert.

On the down side, our test that moves tabbed columns from one place to another continues to suffer from the clumsiness of WordPerfect's special in-stream codes. Although the program does a good job of automatically locating its codes within the text stream, we still risked unanticipated results if we selected columns with one set of tabs and moved those columns to a location that had different tab settings. We had to use the Reveal

## Report Card

## Windows word processors

	Weightings	WordPerfect Version 6.1	WordPerfect Version 6.0	Word for Windows Version 6.0			
<b>Performance</b>							
Basic editing and formatting	125	Very Good	93.75	Good	78.12	Excellent	125.00
Pasting tables	100	Very Good	75.00	Good	62.50	Very Good	75.00
Mail merge	75	Very Good	56.25	Very Good	56.25	Very Good	56.25
Layout	125	Excellent	125.00	Poor	31.25	Good	78.12
Tables	50	Excellent	50.00	Very Good	37.50	Good	31.25
Font formats	75	Satisfactory	37.50	Satisfactory	37.50	Very Good	56.25
File management	75	Very Good	56.25	Very Good	56.25	Very Good	56.25
Workgroup and networking	50	Very Good	37.50	Very Good	37.50	Excellent	50.00
Import and export	75	Very Good	56.25	Poor	18.75	Very Good	56.25
Macros	50	Good	31.25	Good	31.25	Very Good	37.50
<b>Support and value</b>							
Documentation	50	Excellent	50.00	Excellent	50.00	Excellent	50.00
Support policies	25	Very Good	18.75	Very Good	18.75	Excellent	25.00
Technical support	25	Good	15.62	Good	15.62	Excellent	25.00
Value	100	Excellent	100.00	Very Good	75.00	Excellent	100.00
Final score		8.0		6.0		8.2	

\*Reviewed Feb. 7, 1994, page 66.

## GUIDE TO REPORT CARD SCORES

InfoWorld reviews only finished, production versions of products, never beta-test versions.

Products receive ratings ranging from unacceptable to excellent in various categories. Scores are derived by multiplying the weighting (in parenthesis) of each criterion by its rating, where:

**Excellent** = 1.0 = Outstanding in all areas.

Excellent = 1.0 – Outstanding in all areas.  
 11. 6 and 0.75. Meets all essential criteria.

Very Good = 0.75 – Meets all essential criteria and offers significant advantages.

**Good = 0.625** – Meets essential criteria and includes some special features.

**Satisfactory = 0.5** – Meets essential criteria.

**Poor = 0.25** – Falls short in essential areas.

**Unacceptable or N/A = 0.0** – Fails to meet minimum standards or lacks this feature.

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## PRODUCT REVIEWS

Codes screen to show the location of the tab-set codes before we made our selection to ensure that we included the column tabs in the move. This is an extra step we're not fond of performing.

WordPerfect 6.1 still has room for improvement (more options for the Replace function would be a good place to start), but overall, the expanded feature set and better ease of use raise its score for basic editing and formatting from good to very good.

### Proofing utilities

Running the product's spelling checker, grammar checker, and thesaurus through their paces revealed solid improvements in WordPerfect's spelling and grammar checking.

Grammatik, the integrated grammar checker, is significantly better. In reviews of earlier versions, we liked Grammatik better than Word for Windows 6.0's grammar checker, but we didn't experience any extraordinary benefit from its existence. This version, however, made its presence known with

*The product is vastly improved in the area of layout. With WordPerfect 6.0 we could not complete our layout task, but we have only praise for WordPerfect 6.1's layout capabilities.*

sophisticated functionality that makes it much better than its previous incarnations. For example, Grammatik now lets us display parts of speech and parse sentences so we can produce practically perfect prose.

We found that the spelling checker in the previous version would not accept an accented character in the spell-check window unless we used the Alt-keypad method. Version 6.1 provides a graphical method for handling accented characters but it has some pitfalls. The new method pops up the Insert WordPerfect Characters box while spell-checking. However, our tests proved that when the Insert Characters box is brought up after the spelling checker is launched, the inserted character ends up in the text at the point of the cursor, not in the spell-check window. Going through the process a second time

resulted in the accented character appearing in a field in the spelling checker. We were able to reproduce this problem at will, which indicated that it is a minor bug that needs fixing. Despite this bug, we're glad to see a more graphical method applied to this task.

We also discovered that Novell still chose to implement the Skip Always option in the spelling checker so that it overlooks target words that don't have the same capitalization as the original source word. We still find this

annoying.

WordPerfect 6.1's spelling checker now matches that of Word for Windows, and its grammar checker continues to outshine Word's. We raise its score for proofing utilities to very good.

### Layout

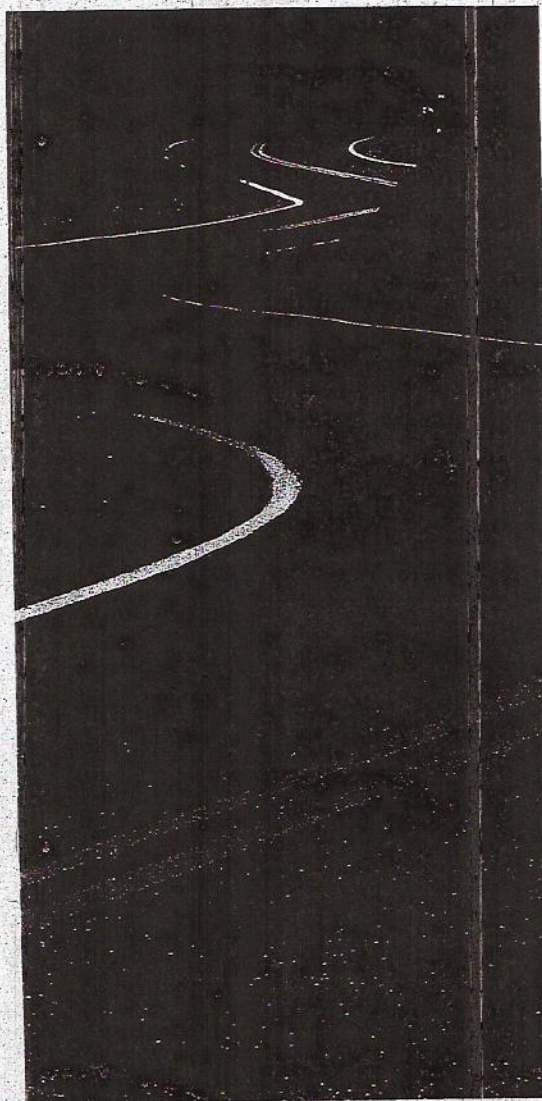
For this task we created a complex newsletter layout that pushed these products into acting

like a desktop publishing program. We have only praise for WordPerfect 6.1's layout capabilities.

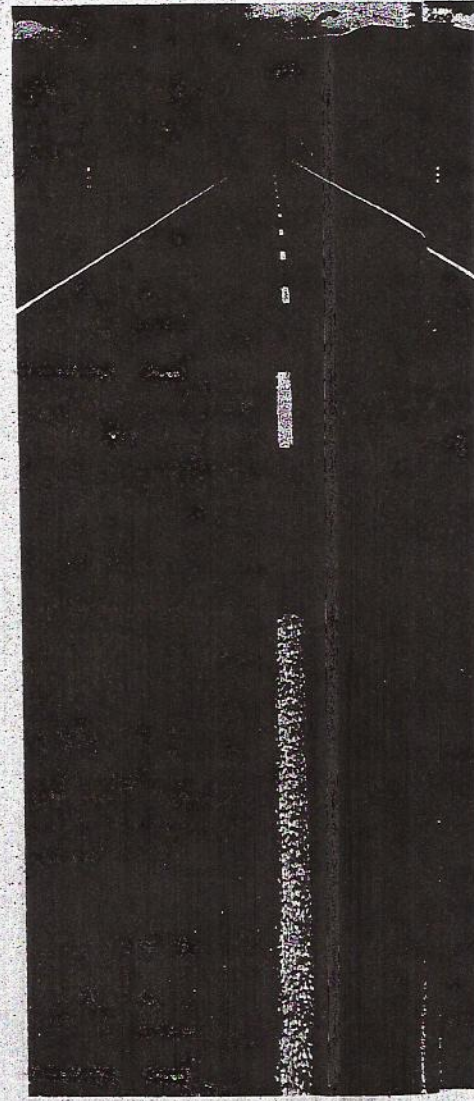
We could not finish this task when we evaluated WordPerfect 6.0 because we experienced consistent and repeatable General Protection Fault errors when using the layout tools.

Version 6.1 no longer dies during this test—in itself a great improvement. That Version 6.1 does a superior job at desktop publishing

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### Product summary

#### WordPerfect 6.1

Novell Inc., Orem, Utah  
(800) 451-5151 or (801) 225-5000

This is the product that Version 6.0 was meant to be. Novell fixed the bugs and made a host of feature and minor usability enhancements that indicate that WordPerfect for Windows has come of age.

Price: \$395; \$99 for upgrade; \$129 for competitive upgrade.

Pros: Can't go wrong with this product for general word processing needs; table capabilities and complex layout capabilities are the best of the bunch.

Cons: Limited Replace options, small bugs in the spelling checker, twisted translations of other word processors' files, Reveal Codes feature required to make sure that things get moved with formatting intact.

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## PRODUCT REVIEWS

is an extraordinary bonus. We had no difficulty at all completing the newsletter, including resizing, rotating, cropping, placing, and moving text and graphics.

You can now manipulate the boxes (WordPerfect's name for frames) that contain graphic elements as effortlessly as you do the frames in Word for Windows 6.0. And where WordPerfect 6.0 had an inferior drop-cap feature, this new version has outstanding drop-cap capabilities.

TextArt, a WordPerfect feature, flexibly and effectively manages fancy display-type elements used for titles and banner headlines. Finally, WordPerfect 6.1 includes a contour text-wrap feature that flows text around the graphic itself rather than wrapping it around the rectangular frame that encloses the graphic. Word for Windows does not have this feature.

WordPerfect's layout capability earns a score of excellent.

### Tables

Testing a product's table functions involved importing data from an Excel spreadsheet and checking to see what properties were retained. Version 6.0 had extensive table capabilities, but WordPerfect still managed to improve them in Version 6.1.

Tables in WordPerfect mimic the capabilities of a real spreadsheet, which makes them far superior to the tables found in competing

products. Our chief complaint with the tables in Version 6.0 was that you had to interact more through dialog boxes than by on-screen dragging.

This interface style made Version 6.0's tables downright clumsy to use. Version 6.1's ease of use is considerably better. For example, now you can set column widths by dragging column boundaries with the mouse. However, as before, if you set the option to display gridlines, you cannot see the table's shading or borders on the screen.

Based on its overall improvement in usability, we raise WordPerfect 6.1's tables score to excellent.

### Import and export

We tested import and export functions by swapping a complicated document between WordPerfect 6.1 and WordPerfect 5.2. Word



**WORDPERFECT 6.1** comes with better layout capabilities than Version 6.0. One advanced feature is contour wrapping, a capability that Word for Windows lacks.

for Windows 2.0, and Ami Pro 2.0. This time WordPerfect did a fine job, which raised its score dramatically.

Our tests of Version 6.0 revealed that it was incapable of accurately translating documents created with earlier versions of WordPerfect, a sin for which we severely penalized it. This version of WordPerfect fixed those problems; graphics stayed with the document and in the correct location. Column widths were kept intact during translation, and fonts made the trip intact from one version of WordPerfect to another.

However, the translation from WordPerfect 6.1 to Word for Windows 2.0 is still idiosyncratic and requires considerable reformatting to get graphics and text elements placed correctly in the translated documents. Also, the translation from Word for Windows 6.0 to WordPerfect 6.1 does not always handle fonts or align text correctly.

Nevertheless, we consider the improved importing and exporting between WordPerfect 5.2 and WordPerfect 6.1 documents significant enough to merit raising its score from poor to very good.

### SUPPORT AND VALUE

#### Value

A host of minor changes to the look of the interface, and the consistency of menus, dialog boxes, and mouse actions, as well as considerable improvements to the content of the help files, add to our more favorable opinion of this version of WordPerfect. These changes, on top of the major improvements that increase WordPerfect 6.1's report card scores, make it a better buy at \$395 than the bug-laden Version 6.0. We raise its score for value to excellent.

JANUARY 30, 1995 INFO WORLD 89

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