OpenOffice.org
The Open Source Office Suite

Setting up Writer:

Choosing options to suit the way you work

Contents

Overview

The Options dialog controls many settings in OpenOffice.org Writer. This chapter covers some of the setup options, particularly those that are a bit obscure or hard to find when you first start using the program. It does not cover all the options in detail. See the online help for full details.

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Feedback

Please direct any comments or suggestions about this document to:
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Acknowledgments

Much of this material was first published in *Taming OpenOffice.org Writer 1.1*, by Jean Hollis Weber, © 2003.

Modifications and updates

Version	Date	Description of Change
1.0	29 Dec 2004	First published edition.

Choosing options that affect all of OOo

This section covers some of the settings that apply to all the components of OOo and are particularly important when using Writer. Other general options are discussed in the chapter titled "Setting Up OpenOffice.org" in the Common Features Guide.

1) Click **Tools > Options**.

2) Click the + sign to the left of OpenOffice.org in the left-hand section. A list of subsections drops down.

User data

Because Writer's revision features mark your changes and comments with the name or initials stored in User Data, you'll want to ensure that your name and initials appear there. To do this:

1) In the Options dialog, click **OpenOffice.org > User Data**.

2) If anything on the User Data page (Figure 1) is incorrect, delete it and type the correct information.
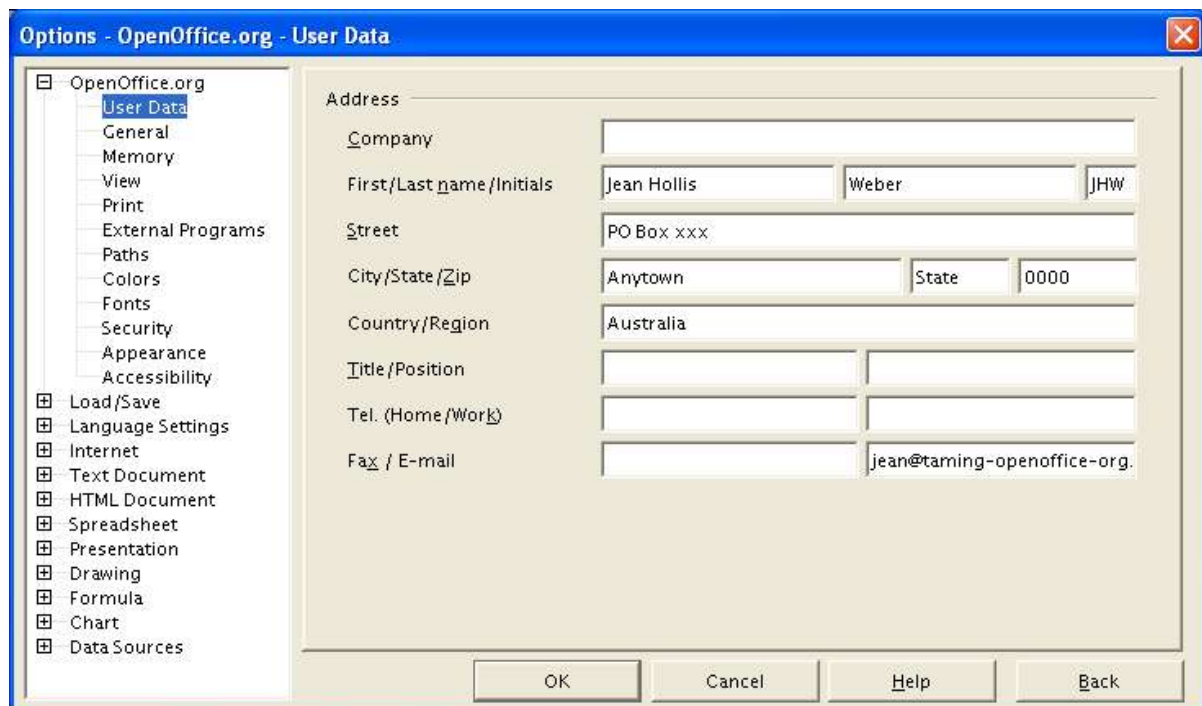
Figure 1. Filling in user data

Note: *The Back button resets options to the values that were in place when you opened OpenOffice.org. This button has the same behavior on all the options dialogs.*

General options

1) In the Options dialog, click **OpenOffice.org > General**.

2) On the Options – OpenOffice.org – General dialog (Figure 2), the options are as described below.
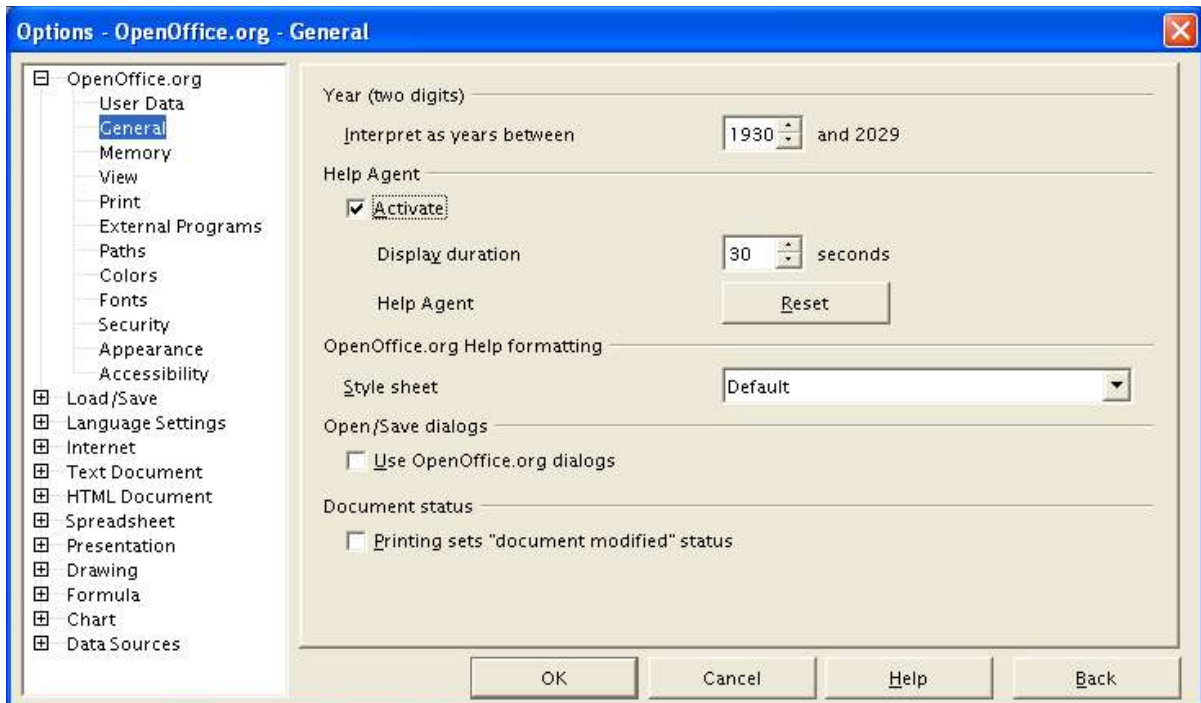
Figure 2. Setting general options for OpenOffice.org

Year (two digits)

Specifies how two-digit years are interpreted. For example, if the two-digit year is set to 1930, and you enter a date of 1/1/30 or later into your document, the date is interpreted as 1/1/1930 or later. An "earlier" date is interpreted as being in the following century; that is, 1/1/20 is interpreted as 1/1/2020.

Help Agent

To turn off the Help Agent (OpenOffice.org's equivalent to Microsoft's Office Assistant), deselect *Activate*. If the Help Agent is active, you can specify how long it remains open before it is automatically closed. To restore the default Help Agent behavior, click **Reset**.

Open/Save dialogs

To use the standard Open and Save dialogs for your operating system, deselect the *Use OpenOffice.org dialogs* checkbox. When this checkbox is selected, the Open and Save dialogs supplied with OpenOffice.org will be used. (See the "File Management" chapter in the Common Features Guide for more about the OOo Open and Save dialogs.)

Document status

Choose whether printing a document counts as changing the document. If this option is selected, then the next time you close the document after printing, the print date is recorded in the document properties as a change and you'll be prompted to save the document again, even if you didn't make any other changes.

View options

The choices of View options affect the way the document window looks and behaves.

1) In the Options dialog, click **OpenOffice.org > View**.

2) On the Options – OpenOffice.org – View dialog (Figure 3), set the options to suit your personal preferences. Some options are described below.
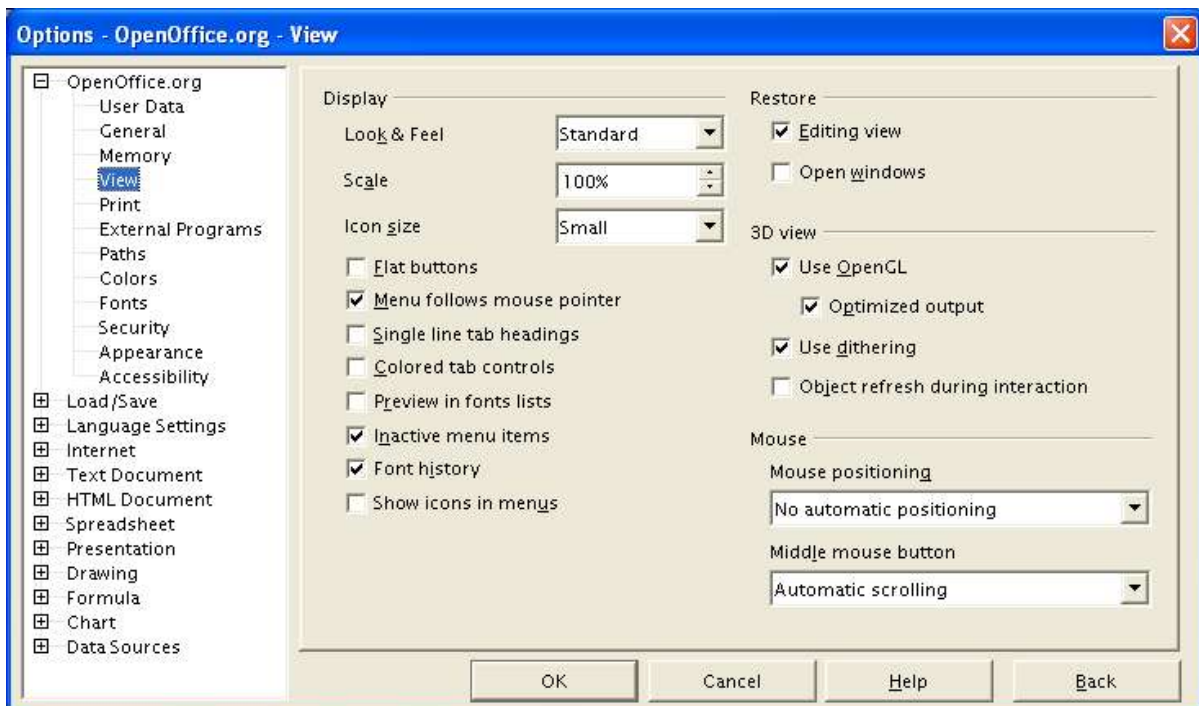
Figure 3. Choosing View options for the OpenOffice.org applications

Preview in fonts lists

When you select this option, the font list looks like Figure 4, left, with the font names shown as an example of the font; with the checkbox deselected, the font list shows only the font names, not their formatting (Figure 4, right). The fonts you will see listed are those that are installed on your system.

Inactive menu items

Select this option if you want inactive menu items to be visible but grayed out. Deselect it to prevent inactive menu items from appearing on the menus.

Figure 4. (Left) Font list showing preview; (Right) Font list without preview

Font history

When you select this option, the last five fonts you have assigned to the current document are displayed at the top of the font list.

Restore – Editing view

Select this option if you want to open documents at the place the cursor was located when you previously closed the document. Deselect this option to always open documents at the first page.

Appearance options

Writing, editing, and page layout are often easier to do when you can see as much as possible of what's going on in your document. For example, you need to know if any tables or graphics are too wide and intrude into the margins of the page.

On the Options – OpenOffice.org – Appearance dialog (Figure 5), you can specify which items are visible and the colors used to display various items.

1) In the Options dialog, click **OpenOffice.org > Appearance**.

2) To show or hide items such as text boundaries, select or deselect the checkboxes next to the names of the items.

   To change the default colors for items, click the down-arrow in the Color Setting column by the name of the item and select a color from the pop-up box.

3) To save your color changes as a color scheme, type a name in the *Scheme* box and click **Save**.
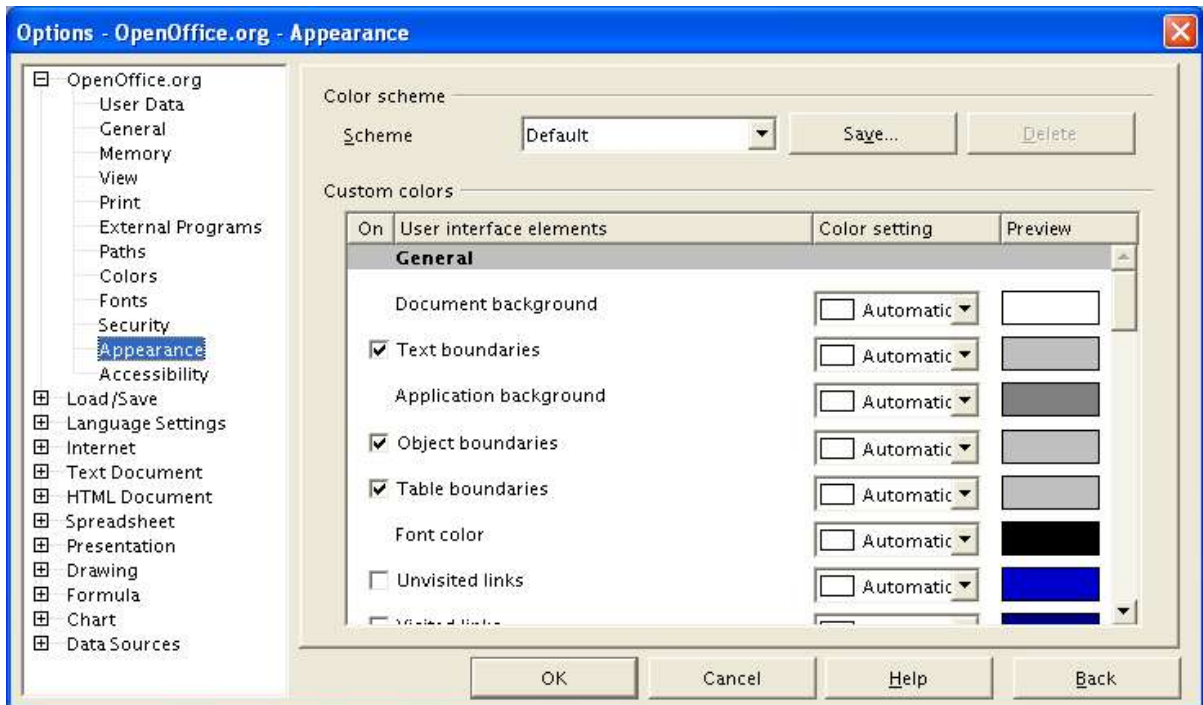
Figure 5. Showing or hiding text, object, and table boundaries

Choosing options for text documents

Settings chosen on the dialogs in the Text Document section of the Options dialog determine how your text documents look and behave while you are working on them.

1) If the Options dialog is not already open, click **Tools > Options**.

2) Click the + sign to the left of Text Document in the left-hand section. A list of subsections drops down.

General options for text documents

The choices on the Options – Text Document – General dialog affect the updating of links and fields, the units used for rulers and other measurements, whether captions are automatically added to selected objects such as tables or figures, paragraph spacing, and tab stop behavior.

1) Choose **Text Document > General** on the Options dialog (Figure 6).

2) Keep in mind the following considerations when selecting options on this dialog.

Update links when loading

Depending on your work patterns, you may not want links to be updated when you load a document. For example, if your file links to other files on a network, you won't want those links to update when you are not connected to the network.
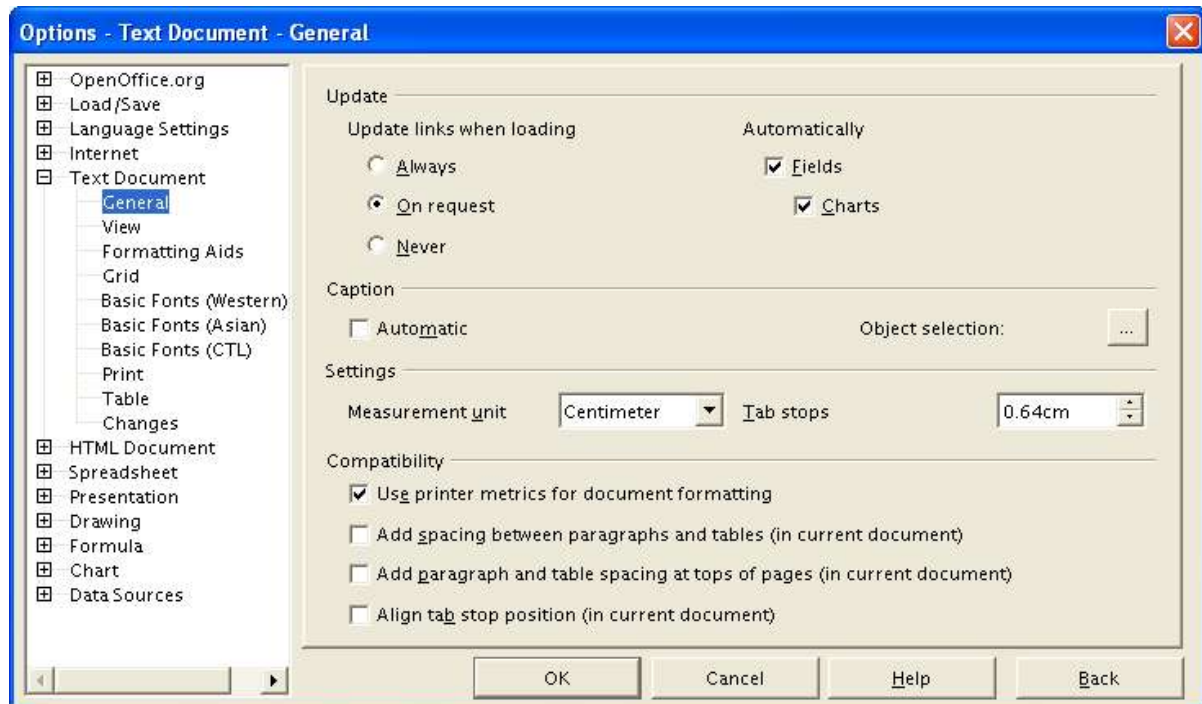

Figure 6. Choosing general options for text documents

Update fields and charts automatically

You may not want fields or charts to update automatically when you are working because that slows down performance.

Compatibility

Do you want your Writer documents to be compatible with Microsoft Word? If so, you may want to select some or all of these settings.

Note: Unlike some other options, the compatibility settings are valid only for the current document and thus must be defined separately for each document.

Settings – Tab stops

The Tab stop setting is also used for the indent distance applied by the **Increase Indent** and **Decrease Indent** icons on the Object Bar.

Captions

Do you want OOo to automatically insert captions for tables, graphics, frames, and OLE objects that have been inserted in a text document? You may not always want captions for every table, for example, if you use tables for layout as well as for tables of data. You can always add captions to individual tables, graphics, or other objects.

If you do want automatic captions on one or more object types:

a) Select Caption – Automatic, then click the **Object Selection** button.

b) On the Caption dialog (Figure 7), choose which objects will be automatically captioned, and specify the characteristics of the captions. If the term you want for the caption label is not in the drop-down Category list, type the required term in the box; you are not limited to the supplied categories. In the example shown, I have added the category "Figure" to the list.

c) Click OK to return to the Options dialog.
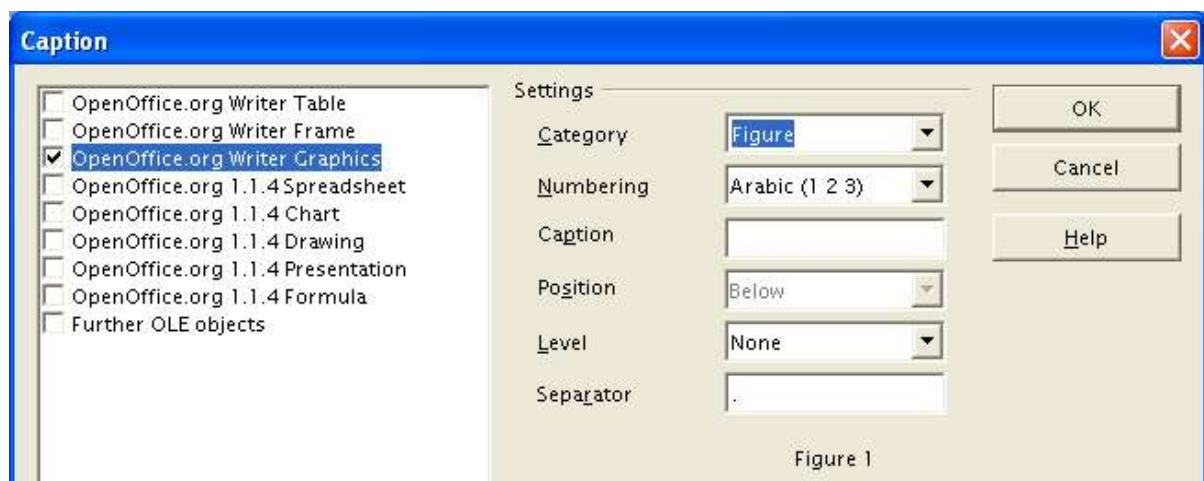
Figure 7. Choosing settings for automatic captions on graphics

View options for text documents

Two dialogs of options set the defaults for viewing text documents: View and Formatting Aids (described on page 9).

1) Choose **Text Document > View** on the Options dialog (Figure 8).

2) If the items on this dialog are not self-explanatory, you can easily test their effect in a blank document.

This is a good dialog to check if, for example, you can't see graphics on the screen, or you see field codes instead of the text or numbers you are expecting.
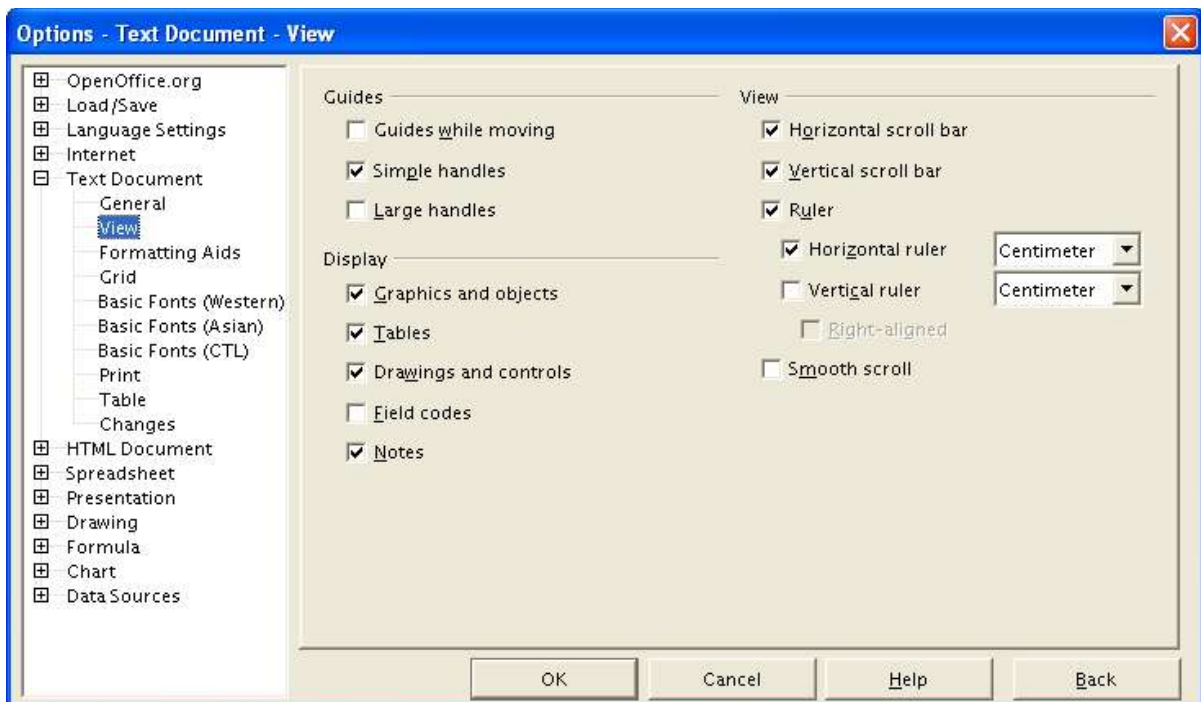
Figure 8, Choosing view options for text documents

Formatting aids options for text documents

The display of symbols such as paragraph ends and tabs help you when writing, editing, and doing page layout. For example, you might want to know if any blank paragraphs or tabs are included, or if any tables or graphics are too wide and intrude into the margins of the page.

On the Options – Text Document – Formatting Aids dialog (Figure 9), select the required checkboxes.

Figure 9. Choosing formatting aid options for text documents

Tip: *Direct cursor enables you to enter text at any position within the type area in your text document. This feature is incompatible with rigorous use of styles and can lead to many formatting oddities, so it should be avoided by professional writers.*

Grid options for text documents

Specifying "snap to grid" can be very helpful when you are trying to align several objects such as graphics or tables. If the grid intervals (subdivisions) are too large, you may find that you don't have enough control in placing the objects.

On the Options – Text Document – Grid dialog (Figure 10), you can choose whether to enable this feature, and what grid intervals to use.
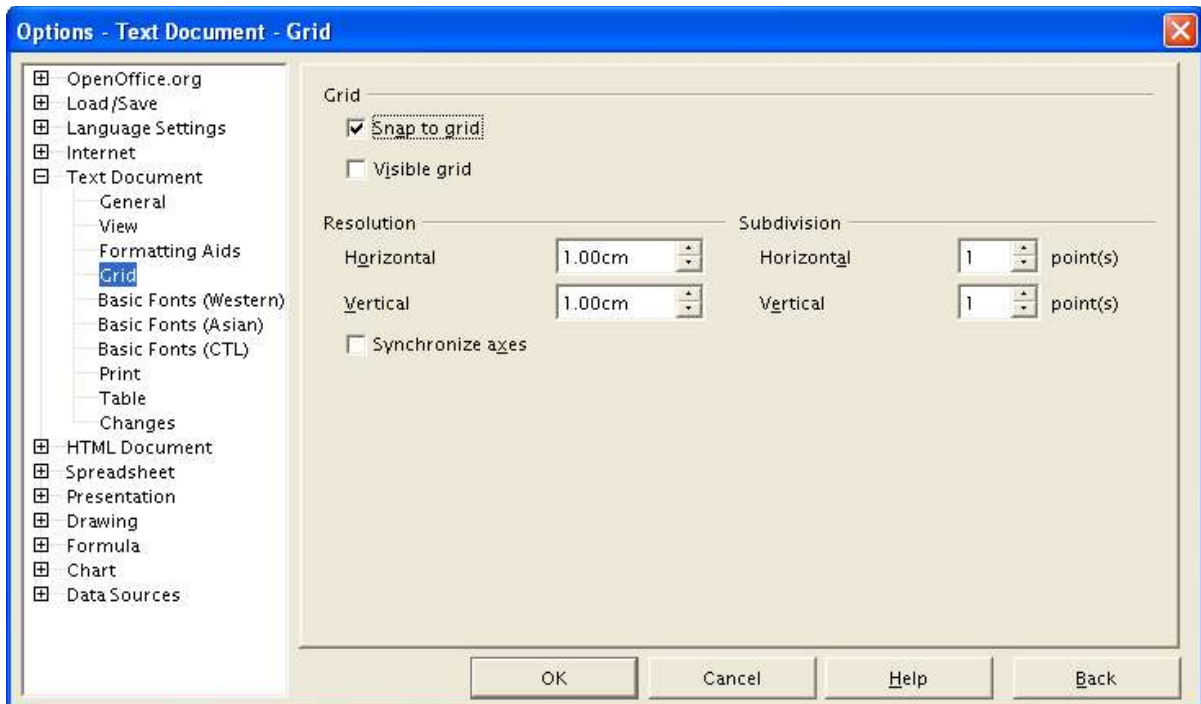

Figure 10. Choosing grid options for text documents

Default fonts for text documents

The default fonts specified on the Basic Fonts dialog apply to both text documents and HTML (Web) documents.

1) If you want to change the defaults, do so on the Options – Text Document – Basic Fonts dialog (Figure 11). You can, of course, choose other fonts for use in specific documents, either by applying direct formatting or by defining and applying styles in those documents.

2) When choosing fonts in this dialog, you are not limited to single fonts or to the ones shown in the drop-down list. You can specify a "font family"—a set of fonts that includes those suitable for Windows, Macintosh, Linux, and other operating systerms. These choices are particularly important in HTML documents.

   If the document is viewed on a system that does not have the first font specified, it will use one of the other fonts if that one is available. Otherwise, it will substitute a font that is available on the system.

3) Type the list of fonts, separated by commas, in the boxes. If you want these defaults to apply to the current document only, select that checkbox. The Default button at the bottom of the dialog (not shown) resets the values on this dialog to the defaults installed with OpenOffice.org.
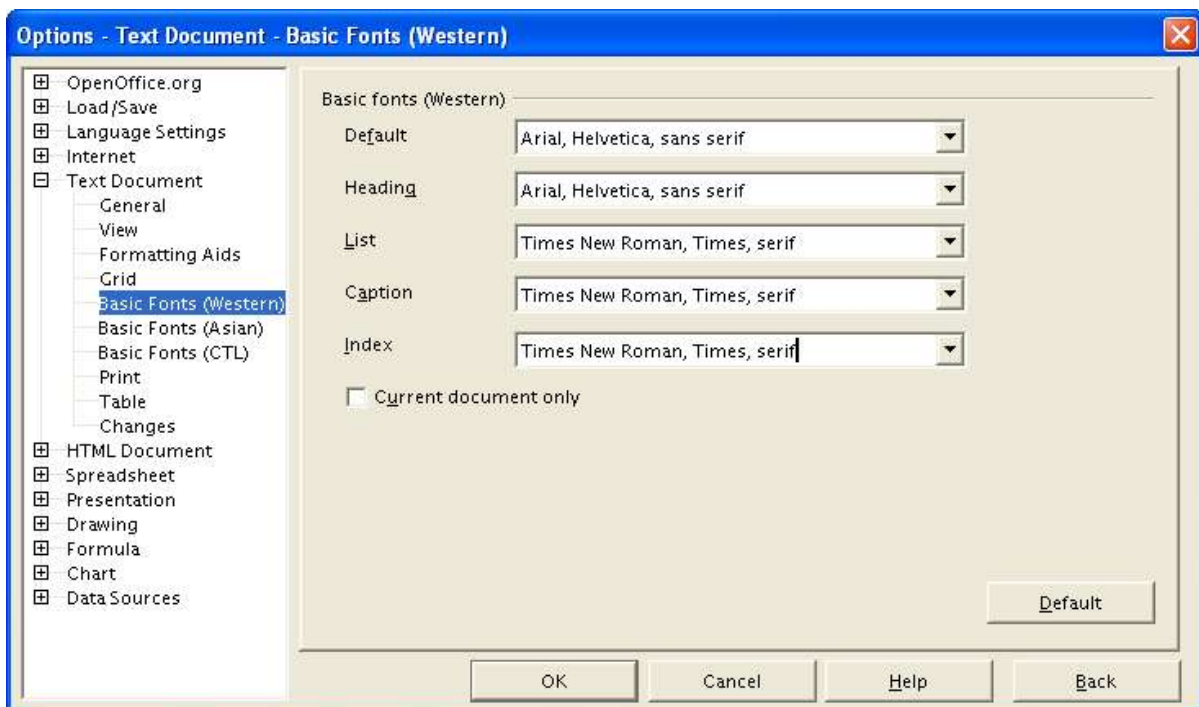

Figure 11. Choosing default fonts for text documents

Print options for text documents

On the Options – Text Document – Print dialog (Figure 12), you can choose which items are printed with the document by default.

Some considerations:

- When you are working on drafts, and you want to save printer ink or toner, you might want to deselect some of the items in the Contents section.

- The Print black selection causes color text (but not graphics) to print as black on a color printer; on a black-and-white printer, this option causes color text to print as solid black instead of shades of gray (dithered).

  Contrast with *Convert colors to grayscale* on the Options – OpenOffice.org – Print dialog, which prints all graphics as grayscale on color printers. (On black-and-white printers, color in graphics normally prints as grayscale.)

- If you're printing double-sided on a non-duplexing printer, you might choose to print only left or right pages, then turn the stack over and print the other pages.

- Depending on how your printer ejects pages (face up or face down), you might need to print the pages in reverse order so they stack in the correct order as they are printed.

Tip: *You can override any of these defaults when printing a document. Click File > Print, then click the Options button on the Print dialog to display the dialog in Figure 1-19.*
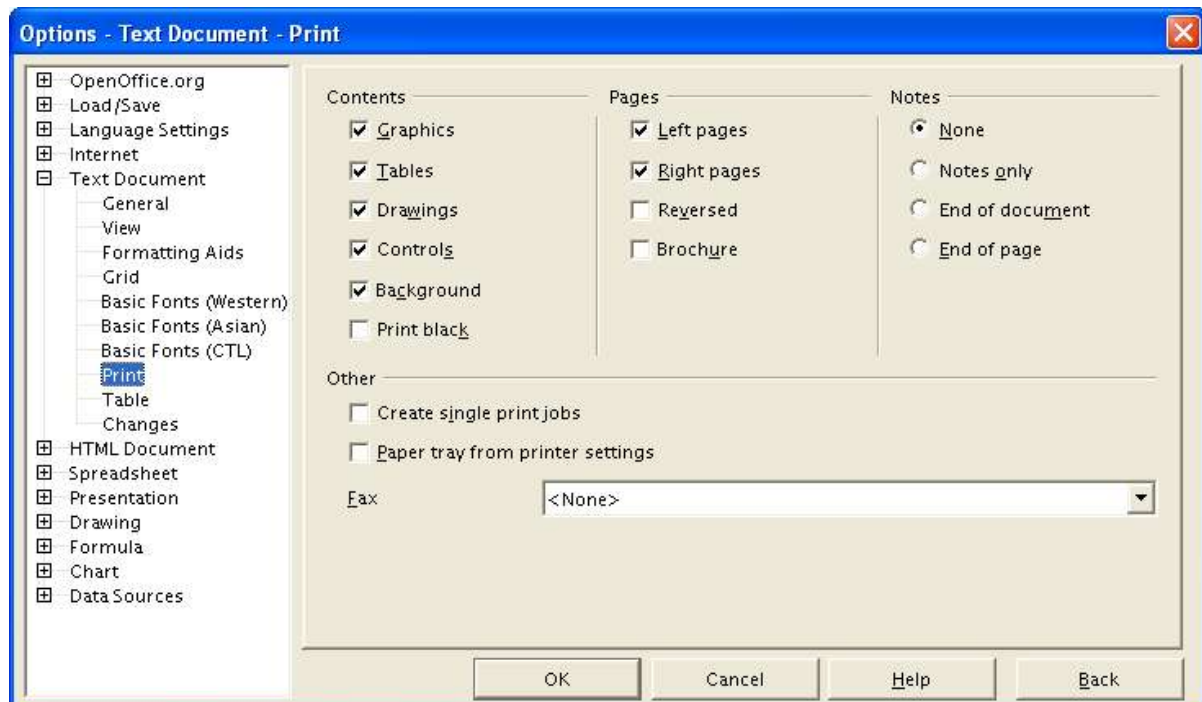

Figure 12. Choosing print options for text documents

Default table options for text documents

On the Options – Text Document – Table dialog (Figure 13), you can specify the default table behavior.

Some considerations:

- If most of your tables will require borders or headings, select those checkboxes; most of my tables are used for page layout, so I don't use either borders or headings.

- *Number recognition* can be very useful if most of your tables contain numerical data; Writer will recognize dates or currency, for example, and format the numbers appropriately. However, in many cases you want the numbers to remain as ordinary text, so this feature can be quite irritating. I generally deselect it.

- The *Keyboard handling* section specifies the distances cells will move when you use keyboard shortcuts to move them, and the size of rows and columns inserted using keyboard shortcuts.

- The choices in the *Behavior of rows/columns* section determine the effects that changes to rows or columns have on adjacent rows or columns and the entire table. You may need to test these selections to fully understand the effects.
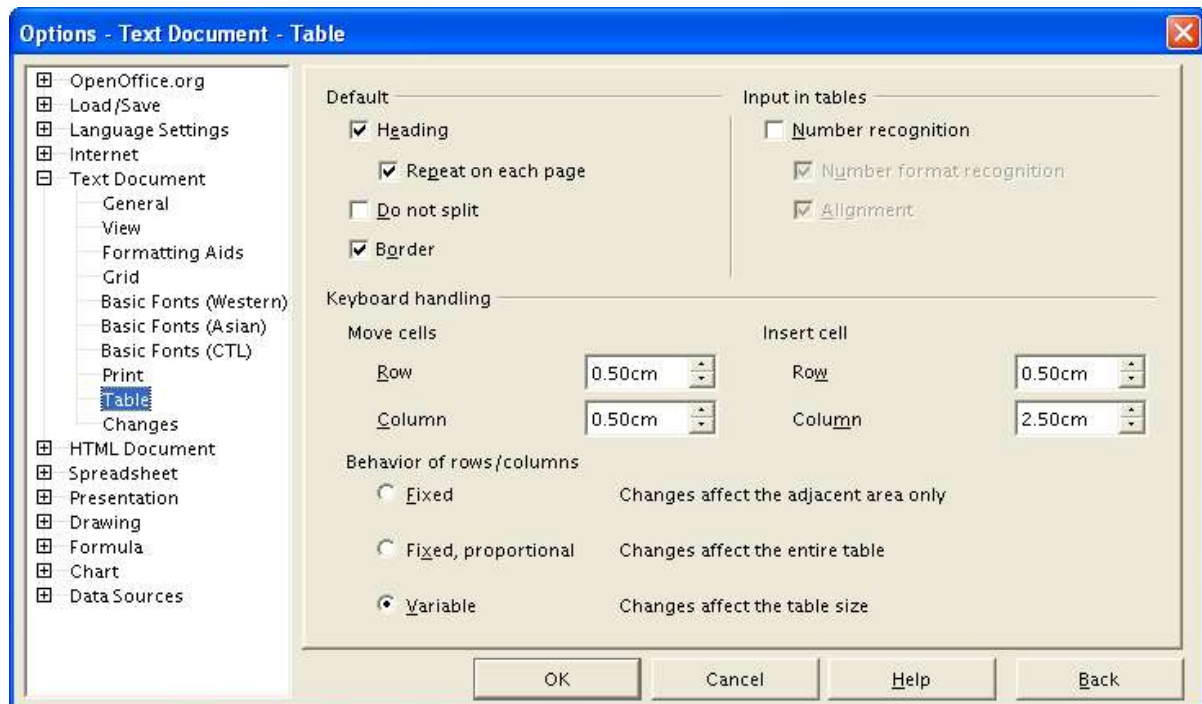

Figure 13. Choosing default table options for text documents

Change tracking options for text documents

If you plan to use the change-tracking feature of Writer, use the Options – Text Document – Changes dialog (Figure 14) to choose the way inserted and deleted material is marked, whether and how attribute changes are marked, and whether and how change bars are marked in the margins.
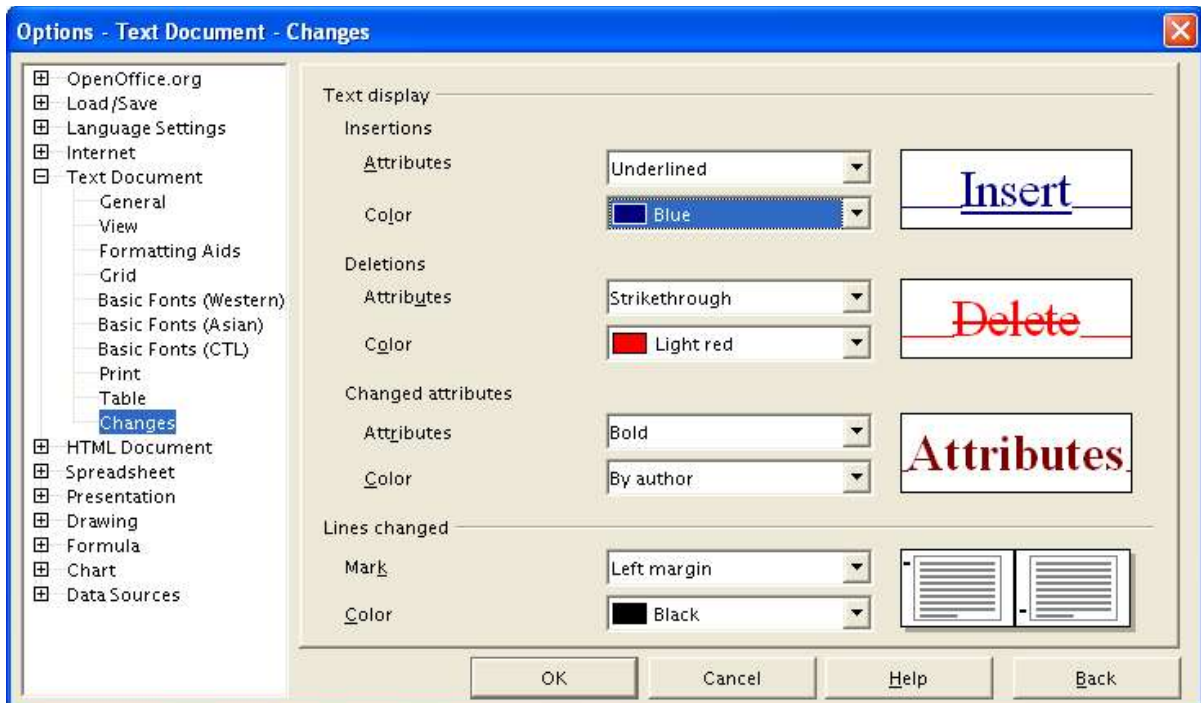

Figure 14. Choosing options for tracking changes in text documents

Choosing language settings

You may need to do several things to set the language settings to what you want:

- Install the required dictionaries
- Choose the dictionaries and spelling options
- Change the default language for documents
- Set the version of English to be checked

Install the required dictionaries

OpenOffice.org 1.1.x automatically installs several dictionaries with the program. To add other dictionaries, you can use the AutoPilot (not available in versions of OOo before 1.1.1) or install them manually.

Using the AutoPilot

1) Click **File > AutoPilot > Install new dictionaries**. OOo opens a file (DicOOo.sxw) containing instructions in several languages and macro buttons to start the download and installation process. (The available dictionaries are for many more languages than those used in the instructions.)

2) Click the macro button and follow the instructions in the wizard to download a list of available dictionaries, select the ones you want, and download and install them. This process proceeds automatically.

Installing a dictionary manually

See http://lingucomponent.openoffice.org/ for instructions and dictionaries.

Choose the dictionaries and spelling options

After installing the dictionaries (either automatically or manually), you need to register them with OOo:

1) Start OOo (if it's not already running) and click **Tools > Options**.

2) Expand *Language Settings* and choose *Writing Aids* (Figure 15).

3) Make sure **OpenOffice MySpell SpellChecker** under *Available language modules* is selected, then click the **Edit** button at the top right of the dialog.
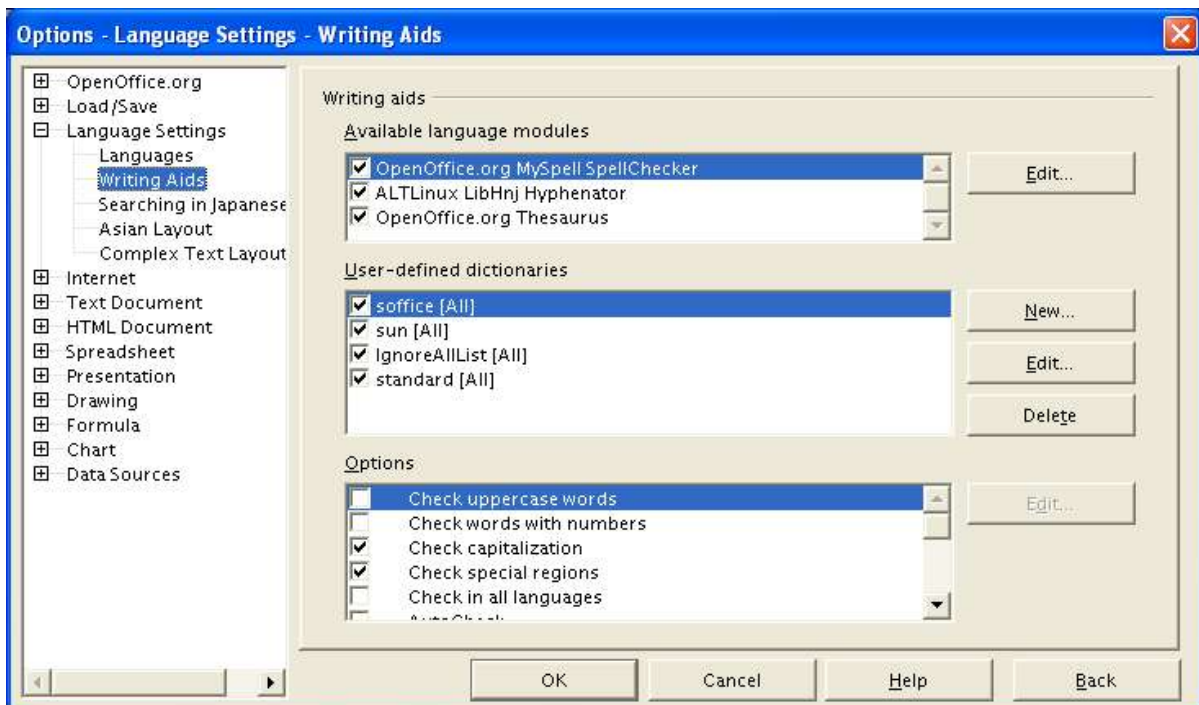
Figure 15. Choosing languages, dictionaries, and options for checking spelling

4) In the Edit Modules dialog (Figure 16), select the language from the list at the top, then select OpenOffice MySpell SpellChecker under Spelling. Click **Close**.

Figure 16. Registering a new dictionary

5) Back on the Writing Aids dialog (Figure 15), choose the settings that are useful for you. Some considerations:

   • If you don't want spelling checked while you type, select *Do not mark errors* and deselect *AutoCheck*. (To find these items, scroll down in the Options list.)

   • If you use a custom dictionary that includes words in all uppercase and words with numbers (for example, AS/400), select *Check uppercase words* and *Check words with numbers*.

- *Check special regions* includes headers, footers, frames, and tables when checking spelling. If this checkbox is not selected, text in those parts of the document are not checked for spelling.

- On this dialog you can also select which user-defined (custom) dictionaries are active by default, and add or remove dictionaries, by clicking the **New** or **Delete** buttons.

Change the default language for documents

1) Choose **Languages** under *Language Settings* on the left-hand side of the Options dialog.

2) On the right-hand side (as shown in Figure 17), change the Locale setting, Default currency, and Default languages for documents. In the example, English (Australia) has been chosen as the locale, and the Australian dollar (AUD) for the currency. Although an English (Australia) dictionary exists, the English (UK) dictionary has been selected as the default language.

3) If you want the language (dictionary) setting to apply to the current document only, instead of being the default for all new documents, select the checkbox labelled *For the current document only*.

4) If necessary, select the checkboxes to enable support for Asian languages (Chinese, Japanese, Korean) and support for CTL (complex text layout) languages such as Hindi, Thai, Hebrew, and Arabic. If you choose either of these checkboxes, the next time you open this dialog, you will see some extra dialogs under Language Settings.
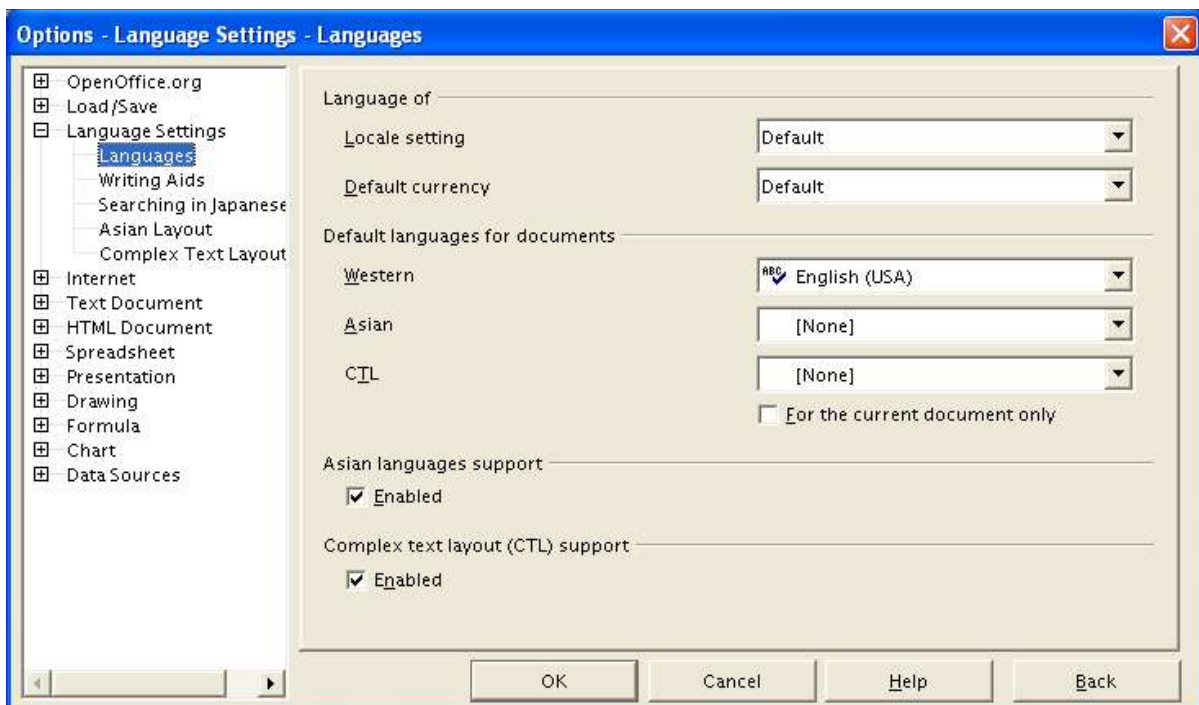

Figure 17. Choosing language options

Controlling Writer's AutoCorrect functions

You may find that some or all of the items in Writer's AutoCorrect feature are very annoying because what you type will often change when you don't want it to. Many people find some of the AutoCorrect functions quite helpful; if you do, then select the relevant checkboxes. But if you find unexplained changes appearing in your document, this is a good place to look to find the cause.

To open the AutoCorrect dialog, click **Tools > AutoCorrect/AutoFormat**.

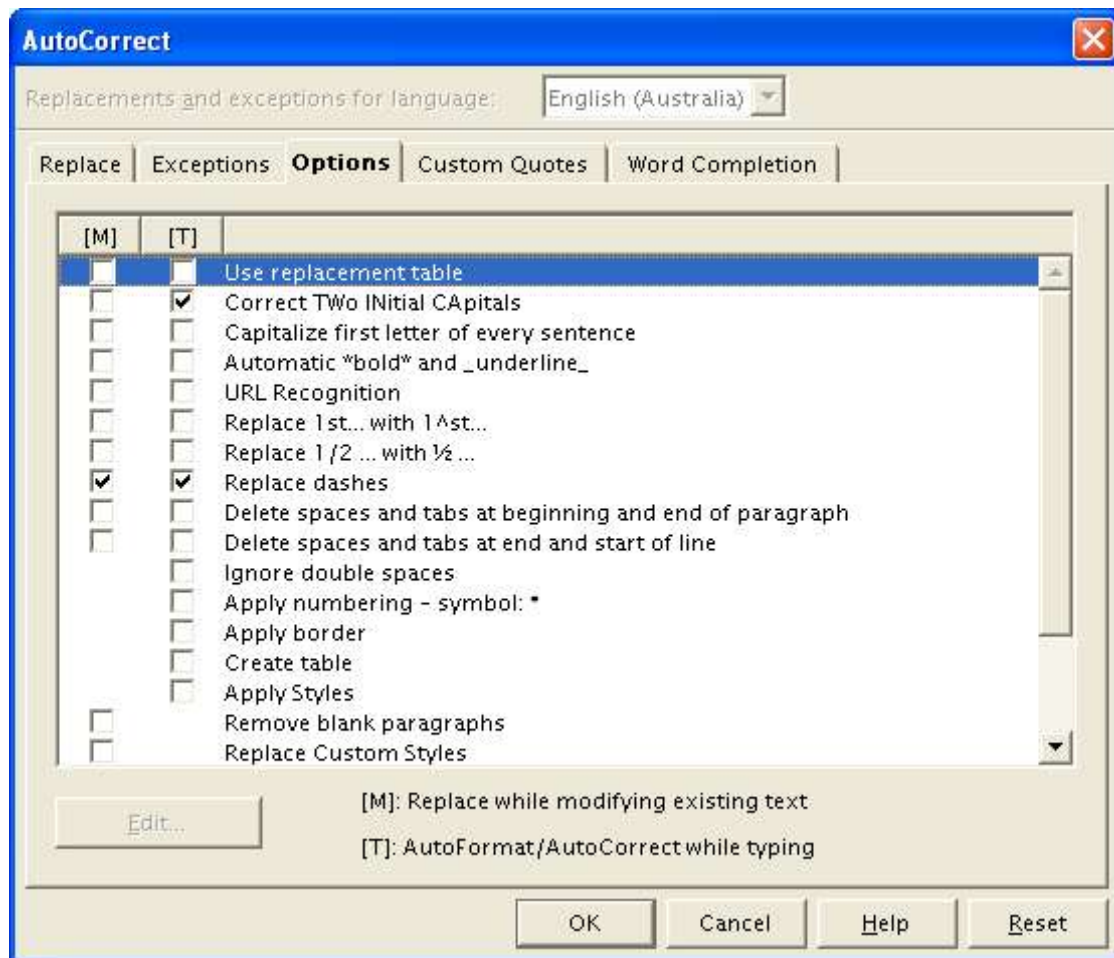In Writer, this dialog has five tabs, as shown in Figure 18.

Figure 18. The AutoCorrect dialog in Writer, showing the five tabs and some of the choices on the Options tab