

Chapter 1

Getting to Know OpenOffice.org

In This Chapter

- ▶ What is OpenOffice.org?
- ▶ Getting started with OpenOffice.org
- ▶ Opening OpenOffice.org
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OpenOffice.org is an exciting new Office suite program that is extremely powerful and completely free to everyone. It operates on Windows, Linux, Macintosh, and Solaris, and it can easily read and write a plethora of file formats, including Microsoft Office. It is currently available in more than 30 languages, and people all over the world are migrating to OpenOffice.org for their entire office suite needs. Over sixteen million people currently use the program, and the total is increasing daily!

You don't have to pay a single dime to use OpenOffice.org — either now or in the future! Sounds too good to be true? The more you learn about OpenOffice.org, the more fascinated you'll become.

What Is OpenOffice.org?

OpenOffice.org, the Office suite, includes the following four major applications:

- ✓ **Writer:** A full-featured word processor that also includes an HTML editor for designing Web pages
- ✓ **Calc:** An extremely capable spreadsheet program that also allows you to link to corporate databases
- ✓ **Draw:** An excellent drawing and graphics program for both 2-D and 3-D
- ✓ **Impress:** A very capable presentation program for creating electronic slide shows

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As its name suggests, OpenOffice.org is also a Web site. The Web site, at www.openoffice.org, is the home of the project that creates, markets, and distributes the applications.

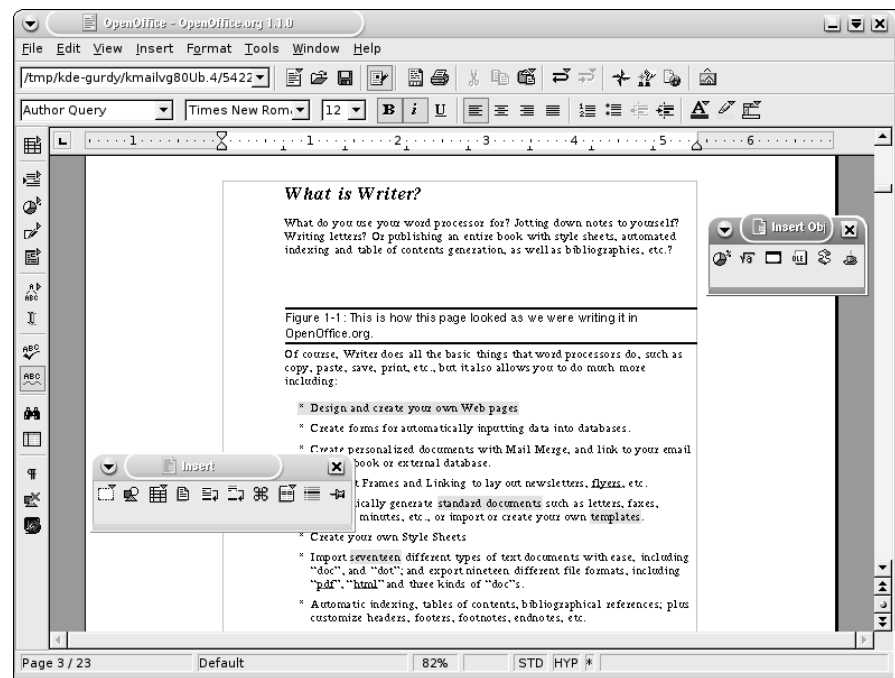
What is Writer?

What do you use your word processor for? Jotting down notes to yourself? Writing letters? Or publishing an entire book with style sheets, automated indexing and table of contents generation, as well as bibliographies? Whether your needs are large or small, Writer is up to the job. Figure 1-1 is an example of a Writer document. Look familiar? This book was written in OpenOffice.org.

Of course, Writer does all the basic things that word processors do, but it also allows you to do much more including:

- ✓ Design and create your own Web pages.
- ✓ Create forms for automatically inputting data into databases.
- ✓ Create personalized documents with Mail Merge, and link to your email address book or external database.

Figure 1-1:
This is how
this page
looked as
we were
writing it in
OpenOffice.
org.



- ✔ Use Text Frames and Linking to lay out such documents as newsletters and flyers.
- ✔ Automatically generate standard documents such as letters, faxes, agendas, minutes, or import or create your own templates.
- ✔ Create your own Style Sheets.
- ✔ Import seventeen different types of text documents with ease, including “doc”, and “dot”; and export nineteen different file formats, including “pdf”, “html” and three kinds of “doc”s.
- ✔ Automatic indexing, tables of contents, bibliographical references; plus such details as custom headers, footers, footnotes, and endnotes.
- ✔ Track changes; compare documents, Automatic outlining, Spellchecking, and Thesaurus.
- ✔ Automatically correct words, or automatically complete words as you type. (This is all completely customizable, of course.)
- ✔ Insert Dynamic fields (such as date and time) and hyperlinks.
- ✔ Connect to email software.
- ✔ Create and use macros.

What is Calc?

Calc can calculate anything you hand it. It's a full-featured spreadsheet program with all the great bells and whistles you'd expect from the best. While Calc is super at doing all the basic spreadsheet things, such as adding, sorting, manipulating rows and columns, and inserting graphics, Calc also lets you do the following:

- ✔ Link to external databases, such as dBase and MySQL (or even your email address book) and view, query, sort, filter, generate automatic reports and more, as well as input data.
- ✔ Use an intuitive graphical interface to organize your data from your spreadsheets or database.
- ✔ Filter your spreadsheet or database data to locate information quickly.
- ✔ Use automatic subtotaling with outlining capabilities to give you instant information of the big picture, whenever you need it.
- ✔ Use any and all of 364 built-in functions for financial, mathematical, statistical, database and other purposes. Or create your own formulas.
- ✔ Use extensive formatting capabilities, including autoformatting, style sheets, graphical backgrounds, fancy borders, as well as conditional formatting.

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- ✓ Freeze headings, create multiple sheets for a 3D spreadsheet, use split sheets, floating frames....
- ✓ Validate data (for example, require a specified format, such as a date).
- ✓ Save, print, and import and export a variety of formats (including your favorites).
- ✓ Generate 3-D charts, try out goal seeking, protect your documents, create macros, and lots more.

What is Impress?

Impress creates presentations (also known as slide shows) that you display from your computer, often with a projector, so that people can see what is on your screen. Each page of a presentation is called a *slide*. You add slides to a presentation and then add text and graphics to each slide. You also have all you need to create a masterful presentation. Impress allows you to do the following:

- ✓ Create a presentation quickly with AutoPilot or a template.
- ✓ Add notes to each slide that are just for the presenter.
- ✓ View your presentation in several ways using the Drawing, Outline, Slide, Notes, Handout, and Slide Show views.
- ✓ Save, print, and export and import in several formats (including your favorites).
- ✓ Format text characters and paragraphs.
- ✓ Create bulleted and numbered lists.
- ✓ Control the look of the presentation with a master slide.
- ✓ Insert graphics and control them using layers.
- ✓ Create your own graphics, including 3-D graphics.
- ✓ Add text animation and slide transitions.

What is Draw?

Draw is well integrated with the other OpenOffice.org programs but stands completely on its own as well. It's a great drawing program. Of course, it offers the basic drawing functions, such as the ability to automatically create lines, curves, circles, squares, 3-D spheres and more, but you can also use the following more advanced features with Draw:

- ✔ Customize your own glows, transparencies, gradients, bitmaps, or use ready-made gradients and import bitmaps.
- ✔ Use floating toolbars for easy access to create shapes, curves, lines, arrows, dimensional brackets, and more.
- ✔ Merge, subtract, intersect, rotate, and flip your graphics and otherwise modify them in many ways.
- ✔ Edit points to fine-tune curves and polygons.
- ✔ Cross-fade images for animated dissolves and morphing.
- ✔ Create text animation for livening up your Web pages or presentations.
- ✔ Use smart connectors to create flow-charts and organizational charts.
- ✔ Add shadows and 3D effects; create 3-D objects from 2-D objects. (Careful, this is addicting.)
- ✔ Add shading, texture, lighting, and materials to 3-D graphics; rotate 3-D objects in three dimensions.
- ✔ Use layers and groups.
- ✔ Import and export many formats, including SWF Flash Player format.

Why is OpenOffice.org free?

A few years ago, Sun Microsystems, Inc. noticed that it was paying Microsoft millions of dollars for the use of its software, and at the same time, Sun needed office tools for its Solaris operating system. Sun then bought a company called StarDivision, which had created an office suite that was competitive in features with Microsoft Office, with one important difference — the suite ran on GNU/Linux and Solaris operating systems as well as Windows. The product was called StarOffice.

Sun released the StarOffice programmers' source code as an open source program and called it OpenOffice. At the same time, Sun also sells StarOffice as a proprietary program, because some clients requested that Sun provide guarantees and support for the software. StarOffice adds a few proprietary features to OpenOffice, such as licensed templates, extra clip art, and the Adabas D database, along with

24-hour support from Sun, and Sun offers StarOffice at a reasonable price.

By making OpenOffice.org “Open Source”, Sun generated a community of about 100,000 computer programmers and enthusiasts to create new features, improved documentation, and provide great support for the program — and all for free! Everyone is excited about OpenOffice.org and wants to be a part of this historic endeavor.

Everyone is welcome to participate in the project if you want. If you are a programmer, or even just an OpenOffice.org enthusiast, you might find helping out to be almost irresistible.

If you would like a new feature, you can go to OpenOffice.org, the Web site, and request it. If you're a programmer, you can even contribute a new feature of your own.

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What is open source software?

In *open source software*, the source code of the software is freely available to users. If you are a programmer, you can use, modify, and redistribute the code. (The distribution part has a few rules.) You are encouraged to participate in the OpenOffice.org project (actually, one of its many projects) by contributing to the project—writing new code, issuing bug reports, writing documentation, and so on. (You don't need to be

a programmer to contribute.) You can also join mailing lists to read about various aspects of the project on a regular basis.

The OpenOffice.org Web site shows you the many ways that you can contribute to the project and lets you know how to join one or more of the mailing lists.



OpenOffice.org, the organization, asks that all public communications use OpenOffice.org when referring to the suite of applications, even though simply using OpenOffice seems to make more sense. Leave it to the lawyers and trademark laws to complicate things, but that's okay, this way we can always remember where to go for our free upgrades and online support.

Can OpenOffice.org replace my current office suite?

With OpenOffice.org you can most likely do everything you currently do with your office suite, and maybe even lots more. You may find OpenOffice.org to be even more handy than your current Office suite. Users report that OpenOffice.org is extremely robust and can handle very large, complex documents with ease. And many users are fond of having their files take up 25 to 60 percent less space than that of the leading office suite. Also since OpenOffice.org is open source, any security holes are dealt with extremely quickly. Anyone in the OpenOffice.org community can find and fix any problem or potential problem in a flash! No waiting for one company to get around to it. This means it is much less likely that anyone could take over your computer from another location without your knowledge and consent through OpenOffice.org.

OpenOffice.org was created as a Microsoft Office clone, so Microsoft Office users generally experience little or no difficulty making the transition. However some situations do exist where it is not recommended that you switch to OpenOffice.org. They are as follows:

- ✓ If your business requires the Exchange Server capabilities of Microsoft Outlook, This feature allows you to have shared workspaces with other people on other computers. OpenOffice.org has no substitute for it — at least not on Windows or Mac.
- ✓ VBA macros written in Microsoft Office, as well as other macros from other office suites do not convert into OpenOffice.org and must be re-programmed. (It is estimated that this may affect five percent of office suite users.)

In other words, unless you are a power-user of another office suite with special needs, converting to OpenOffice.org should be no problem. Chapter 2 explains more about switching to OpenOffice.org.

To write this book with OpenOffice.org, we needed perfect compatibility with Microsoft Word, because the publisher automatically converts Word text and formatting into QuarkXPress to print the book that you are reading. We imported Wiley's custom Word template into OpenOffice.org and wrote the entire book in OpenOffice.org. We checked the document in Microsoft Word. Occasionally, we had to change the document formatting to match what the publisher wanted in Word. However, the actual text transferred perfectly from OpenOffice.org to Word.



Getting Started with OpenOffice.org

Most people who use OpenOffice.org download the program from the Web site of the same name. Other people get it from their friends. But you don't have to do either. The CD-ROM with the complete program for Windows, Mac, and Linux accompanies this book. Check out Appendix A for Installation Instructions.

If you need to go to Appendix A, go ahead. We'll wait for you. Then come back here to continue reading about opening and working in OpenOffice.org.

Once you have OpenOffice.org installed on your system, you are ready to open it and get to work!

To open OpenOffice.org, follow these steps:

- ✓ **Windows:** Choose Start⇒Programs (or All Programs)⇒OpenOffice 1.1, and then choose the application that you want from the submenu. For example, to open the word processor, choose Text Document.
- ✓ **Linux:** The procedure depends on the Linux distribution that you have.

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Linux has several different desktop environments. If you are using KDE, then choose **K**→OpenOffice.org 1.1.0 and then choose the application that you want from the submenu. If you are using Gnome, then choose **A**pplications→Office and then choose the application that you want from the submenu. Most Linux desktop environments have a relatively straightforward way of finding OpenOffice.org.

- ✓ **Macintosh:** Navigate to the folder that contains OpenOffice.org (which should be called `OpenOffice.org1.0.1`), and double-click the Start OpenOffice.org icon to open a blank Writer document. To open another application, choose **F**ile→New and choose the type of document that you want to open.

Of course, you can place an alias on your desktop and double-click that or drag the alias to your dock.



The first time you open OpenOffice.org, you see the OpenOffice.org Registration dialog box. To register, choose Register Now and click OK. The OpenOffice.org Web site opens, so that you can register.

Facing the Interface

Each application in OpenOffice.org has a somewhat different look, of course, but many features of the interface are common throughout the suite of applications.

In the following sections, we use Writer, the word processor, as an example. However, the principles apply to all the applications. For more details, refer to the parts of this book that explain the applications that you want to use.

Tooling through the toolbars

A *toolbar* is a bar of small buttons with pictures on them that you click to execute commands or otherwise complete the task that you are working on. All applications have three commonly used toolbars: the Function Bar, Main toolbar, and Object Bar, as shown in Figure 1-2. The toolbar buttons are shown on the Cheat Sheet at the front of this book.

The following sections describe OpenOffice.org's three main toolbars.

Function Bar

The Function Bar is the most similar toolbar across all the applications. This toolbar contains basic commands that apply to most types of tasks. You can find the toolbar at the top of the OpenOffice.org application window.

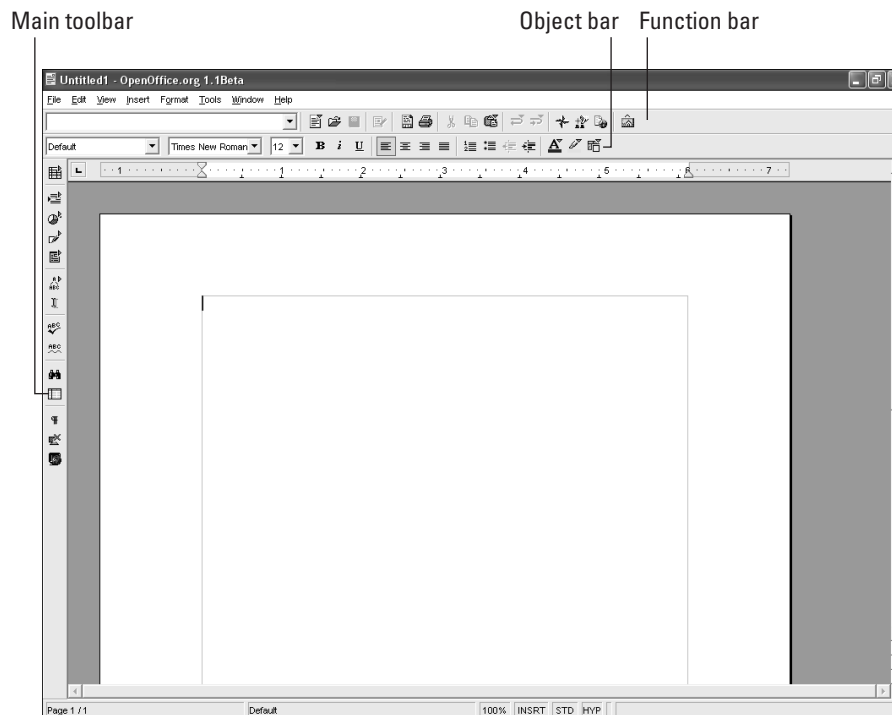


Figure 1-2:
Like other
OpenOffice.
org appli-
cations,
Writer
contains
toolbars.

When you open a window, such as Navigator, Stylist, Gallery, or Preview (in Impress), you can let it float on the desktop or you can *dock* it. The following points explain docking and undocking:

- ✓ To dock a window, press Ctrl and drag the window by its title bar to the right side of the application window.
When docked, you can use the arrow icon in the window to collapse the window to a tiny bar that takes up little screen space. Click the arrow again when you need to see the window.
- ✓ To undock a window, use the same procedure (press Ctrl and drag the window by its top toolbar).
- ✓ You can also click the Pin icon in the window to change the window from floating to *stick* (docked).

Main toolbar

The Main toolbar resides along the left side of your screen and contains many often-used commands.

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You can turn any fly-out toolbar into a floating toolbar. Click the Insert button on the Main toolbar and hold down the mouse button for a second. You can then drag the fly-out toolbar from its title bar to any location.

Object Bar

The Object Bar changes depending on the type of objects that you have in your document or have selected. In general, the Object Bar has tools for formatting objects. In Writer, you usually see the Text Object Bar, because you most often work with text in Writer. The purpose of the Text Object Bar is to help you format text. Other Object Bars have tools for formatting other types of objects, depending on the application that you are using and the object that you have selected.

Other toolbars

OpenOffice.org has the following additional toolbars:

- ✓ **Hyperlink Bar:** Use the Hyperlink Bar to search the Internet or edit existing hyperlinks. To display or hide the Hyperlink Bar, choose View⇨ Toolbars⇨Hyperlink Bar.
- ✓ **Formula Bar:** Use the Formula Bar to create formulas in your documents. For example, you can create a table, enter numbers, and then add the numbers. To display or hide the Formula Bar, choose View⇨Toolbars⇨Formula Bar or press F2.
- ✓ **Status Bar:** The status bar at the bottom of the screen displays information about your current document. You can change your display zoom, change from insert to overwrite mode, and so on. If you have made changes to your document since you last saved, you see an asterisk on the status bar. You can display or hide the status bar by choosing View⇨Status Bar.

Working with toolbars

You can add buttons to or remove buttons from any toolbar so that you can more easily find the tools that you need quickly. The easiest way to add or remove buttons is to right-click the toolbar that you want to modify; then choose Visible Buttons from the submenu that appears. Figure 1-3 shows the menu's button options for the Text Object Bar in Writer. You can see, for example, that you could add buttons for line spacing.

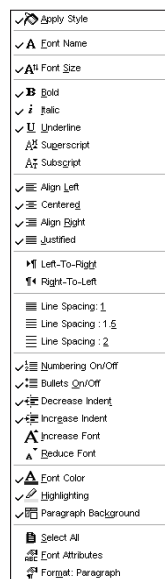
You can add your own buttons and create your own toolbars. For more information about customizing toolbars, see the bonus Chapter on the CD-ROM, "Writer: Fine Tuning Your Preferences."

Using the menus

A few details may help make your menu experience more fruitful. The following menu items are standard across all the programs:

- ✓ **File:** Provides functions for the file as a whole, including open, save, print, export, AutoPilot, and templates
- ✓ **Edit:** Provides editing functions, including cut, copy, paste, undo, redo, AutoText, and Find & Replace
- ✓ **View:** Provides functions for viewing your document, including zoom, the ruler, toolbars, and nonprinting characters
- ✓ **Insert:** Inserts such items as page breaks, special characters, hyperlinks, headers, footers, tables of contents, indexes, tables, and graphics
- ✓ **Format:** Formats characters, paragraphs, and pages; adds numbering or bullets; changes case (as in uppercase or lowercase); and specifies styles (collections of formatting instructions)
- ✓ **Tools:** Provides Spellcheck, the thesaurus, hyphenation, AutoCorrect, the Gallery, data sources, mail merge, macros, and customization
- ✓ **Window:** Switches among open documents so that you can see what is in documents, copy data from one document to another, and so on
- ✓ **Help:** Get help!

Figure 1-3:
You can add buttons to or remove buttons from toolbars by clicking one of the items on the Visible Buttons submenu.



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Each major application has an additional menu, described as follows:

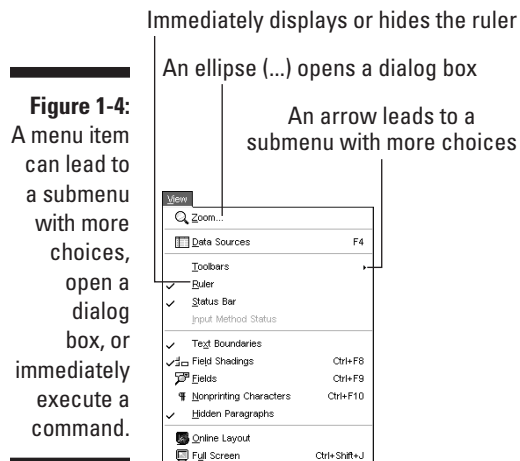
- ✓ Calc has a Data menu for sorting, filtering, and analyzing the data in your spreadsheet.
- ✓ Impress has a Slide Show menu for specifying how your presentation runs when you deliver it full-screen.
- ✓ Draw has a Modify menu for rotating, flipping, aligning, and otherwise changing your drawing objects.

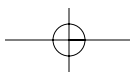
When you open a menu, you can tell whether a menu item has a submenu, opens a dialog box, or simply executes a command, as shown in Figure 1-4.

Cutting it short with keyboard shortcuts

OpenOffice.org has a huge selection of keyboard shortcuts; you can also create your own shortcuts. Keyboard shortcuts are especially useful in Writer, where your hands are on the keyboard most of the time.

When you open a menu, you can see the keyboard shortcuts listed along the right side of the menu. For example, in Figure 1-4, you can see that pressing Ctrl+F10 toggles nonprinting characters on and off.



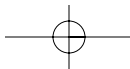
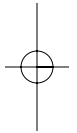
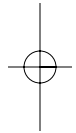


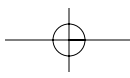
Closing OpenOffice.org

When you have finished creating a document, spreadsheet, or presentation, you can close OpenOffice.org. It will be waiting for you when you return.

To close OpenOffice.org, do one of the following:

- ✓ Choose File→Exit.
- ✓ Press Ctrl+Q.
- ✓ Click the Close button at the upper-right corner of the window.





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