

# Book Review

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Title	Word Pocket Guide
ISBN	0-596-00445-1
Publisher	O'Reilly
Author(s)	Walter Glenn
Edition	First
Copyright date	2003
Number of pages	143, includes table of contents and index
List Price	\$12.95
Comments	<p>This little book (sized for a large pocket) provides brief but adequate reminders for experienced users of Microsoft Word 97 and higher. A handy convention indicates which higher version each item applies to (00+ for Word 2000 and higher; 02+ for Word 2002 and higher).</p> <p>In my opinion, those new to Word would not find enough information in this guide to be efficient users. But for users who need a reminder about a little-used feature or about the structure of Word, the book is ideal. In my quick browsing, I solved two vexing questions, one about the hierarchy of Word's styles and another on how to rotate the text in a table column header.</p> <p>The table of contents is organized in just three levels, and the index is not as complete as one might wish. For example, I had to read through the whole section on Tables to find the "rotating" item because it isn't listed. Also, not every single possible feature and function of Word is included. It's a little book! The author does not explain how he chose what to include and what to omit. But, if you don't find it here, try the built-in Help or go to one of the huge, third-party manuals.</p> <p>On the other hand, the contents are easy to read even though the type is quite small. The book contains four parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Part I, Understanding Word (interface, templates, documents, an overview of formatting, an explanation of shortcut menus, and Word's automatic features)</li><li>• Part II, Tasks (files, printing, moving around, entering and editing text, formatting, controlling flow, fields and reference items, graphics, tables, spelling and other tools, customizing Word, collaborating, and macros)</li><li>• Part III, Reference (commands, native formats (file extensions), startup switches, wildcards, find codes, file locations, and keyboard shortcuts)</li><li>• Part IV, Word Resources (internet sites, books, tools, and the index).</li></ul>

Read Part I to learn about the structure of Word and why Word does some of the weird things it does. Once you know the whys and wherefores, it's easier to work with the application.

Part II, the "guts" of the book, is arranged in Q & A format. Under a task heading, such as Working with Tables, an introductory question sets up the answers. For example, "How do I ..." is followed by the rest of the question (in italics), and that is followed by the answer. You scan the section to find what you what to know. Here's how it looks:

### **Working with Tables**

How do I ...

*Make a group of rows or columns a uniform size?*

Select a group of cells in the row (or column) and use Table \_ AutoFit \_ Distribute Columns Evenly or Table \_ AutoFit \_ Distribute Rows Evenly.

The book has a few shortcomings:

- Items under "How do I ..." are not arranged in any discernable order.
- There's rather a lot of passive voice.
- There's no explanation for the selection of contents in each part.
- Some items in Part I say, "more in Part II or III" but then they aren't listed in the table of contents so you have to read the text or search the index for relevant page numbers to find them.
- There's nothing about the change in bullet and number functions in later versions of Word. This is one of the most maddening "updates" and this book would do all technical writers and other Word users a service by providing an explanation and a workaround.

I didn't find everything I wanted. For example, in one of my documents, I couldn't select a graphic by rolling the cursor over it and getting it to change to the four-handle shape. I couldn't find anything about this question in this book. In fairness, I didn't find anything in either the built-in Help or my third-party manual. After much puzzling, I remembered on my own! You click on the selection arrow in the drawing toolbar. That might be an item to add to the second edition. Or, if this topic is in the book already, a change in terminology might help readers find it.

O'Reilly's Word Pocket Guide is a useful addition to my library, and I recommend it to others who need reminders about how to do things in Word from time to time.