

# Microsoft user manual critique assignment

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Microsoft User Manual Critique John Doe ENG/221 June 14, 2010 Instructor  
Name Microsoft User Manual Critique The focus of this paper will be to evaluate the Microsoft Word 2007 manual based on the criteria defined in Comparative User-focused Evaluation of User Guides: A case study (2007). The Microsoft Word 2007 manual is evaluated based on the following criteria: (a) attractiveness, (b) practicality, (c) simplicity, and (d) efficiency. Each of the four criteria are assigned a point value of between zero through five, zero meaning none of the criteria was not meet and five meaning the criteria was completely meet.

Attractiveness A user manual should be attractive to entice the user to use it (Ganier, 2007). Attractiveness is subjective, a matter of personal esthetics, it is difficult to quantify attractiveness as it is defined differently by individuals. For the purposes of evaluating the attractiveness of the Microsoft Word 2007 manual three criteria as defined in Design 101 (2007) are used: \* Proximity: is related information groped together \* Contrast: do the text and headings contrast with one another \* Repetition: are design elements repeated throughout the manual Proximity

To evaluate if related information is properly grouped in the Microsoft Word 2007 manual four main topics: (a) Activating Word, (b) Headers and footers, (c) Creating specific documents, and (d) Page numbers were selected at random from the table of contents. The main topics were checked to ensure that the sub-topics contained only information related to the main topic. In addition each sub-topic should be related to other sub-topics listed.

Activating Word.

The Activating Word main topic contains three sub-topics: Activate Microsoft Office programs, Activate or renew your Microsoft Office subscription from Office Live, and Read the Microsoft Software License Terms. The main topic and all three sub-topics are related to licensing Microsoft Office products. The Activating Word topic fulfills the proximity criteria. Headers and footers. The Headers and footers topic contains one sub-topic: Insert headers and footers. The main topic and the sub-topic are related to the creation of headers and footers in Microsoft Word 2007.

The Headers and footers section fulfills the proximity criteria. Creating specific documents. The Creating specific documents topic contains five sub-topics: Set up a document, Scan and edit a document, Help with blogging in Word, Templates, and Forms. The main topic and all five sub-topics are all related to the creation of documents within Microsoft Word 2007. The Creating specific documents topic fulfills the proximity criteria. Page numbers. The Page numbers topic contains two sub-topics: Remove page numbers, and Remove the page number from the first page.

The main topic and two sub-topics are all related to page numbering in Microsoft Word 2007. The Page numbers topic fulfills the proximity criteria. The selection of four main topics in from the Microsoft Word 2007 manual is a small sample size for the evaluation. However, the sample size is enough to demonstrate that the Microsoft Word 2007 manual meets the proximity criteria. Contrast To evaluate the proper use of contrast throughout the Microsoft Word 2007 manual, several topics were selected at random.

These topics were checked to ensure that text, headings, and sub-headings are well defined and easily differentiated. The Microsoft Word 2007 manual makes good use of colors and text size to differentiate between standard text, headings, sub-headings, and links (figure1). Figure 1. The Microsoft Word 2007 manual makes good use of contrast to separate headings, and text from one another. Although it meets the contrast criteria the use of light gray for informational headings and orange for sub-headings is open to criticism as it could prove difficult to read for low vision or color blind users.

### Repetition

In evaluating the Microsoft Word 2007 manual it was found that the design elements, in particular proximity, and contrast were are throughout the manual. The manual feels polished and well assembled. The Microsoft Word 2007 manual meets the repetition criteria. Conclusion For Attractiveness the Microsoft Word 2007 manual was given a 4. 5, half a point was deducted for the use of light gray and orange headings as they could prove difficult to read for low vision or color blind users. Practicality A manual should be able to be read and used without affecting the use of the equipment (Ganier, 2007).

For the purpose of this critique it is presumed that the reason a user would access the Microsoft Word 2007 manual is to find how to accomplish a specific task, for example, inserting a header into the document. With this type of use it is important that the manual does not interfere with the normal operation of the program, because the use scenario assumes that the user will want to perform the steps for the task as the user reads the manual.

When open the Microsoft Word 2007 manual opens in a separate window

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that can be moved, resized and minimized independently of the main Microsoft Word 2007 window (figure 2).

Figure 2. In addition to opening in a separate window the Microsoft Word 2007 manual stays in focus regardless if the main Microsoft Word 2007 window is selected. This functionality keeps the manual in focus and readable even while the user is performing actions in the main Microsoft Word 2007 window. However, the default action of the Microsoft Word 2007 manual opening in a separate window means that it will sit on top of the main Microsoft Word 2007 window creating the possibility of the user needing to move the manual indow around to access functions in the main Microsoft Word 2007 window. This type of interaction, while minor interferes with the use of the software. While it is possible for the user to title the main Microsoft Word 2007 and the Microsoft Word 2007 window side-by-side this is not a function readily known by a lay person and therefore is not taken into account. Conclusion For Practicality the Microsoft Word 2007 manual was given a 4, a point is deducted for the possibility that the manual could interfere with the use of the main program.

Simplicity The manual should be read and understood by a diverse audience (Ganier, 2007). For the purpose of critiquing the simplicity of the Microsoft Word 2007 manual, we will assume that the user's knowledge level is that of a lay person. One important factor in regard to simplicity of a manual is the how easily it can be accessed. The Microsoft Word 2007 manual can be accessed in tow ways: by pressing F1 on the keyboard and by clicking the question mark icon in the upper right corner of the Microsoft Word 2007 window.

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The F1 method was dismissed because a keyboard shortcut is not likely to be known by a lay user. The use of the question mark icon (figure 3) is ideal in that its function is clearly defined by the use of the question mark icon. Once the Microsoft Word 2007 manual is opened the default screen lists the table of contents, in addition to common help topics. The Microsoft Word 2007 does not use obscure or overly technical language and uses screen shots and illustrations to help the user locate menus and functions.

In addition step-by-step instructions are given for most tasks. Conclusion For Simplicity the Microsoft Word 2007 manual was given a 5, its use of the question mark icon makes it easy to access the manual for lay users. The language of the manual is accessible and not overly technical. The Microsoft Word 2007 manual also makes use of screenshots and illustrations to reinforce the written instructions. Efficiency The manual should be efficient to encourage progressive learning as well as to allow rapid access to information (Ganier, 2007).

By default the Microsoft Word 2007 manual opens up to a page displaying the table of contents as well as a list of common help and how-to topics. The table of contents is a well organized logically organized list of main topics with nested subtopics. In addition to the table of contents the manual is searchable. Using the table of contents to find help on the topic of bulleted lists on Microsoft Word 2007 was easy: the main topic of Lists was selected in the table of contents, this revealed several sub-topics, and the first sub-topic was on how create a bulleted or numbered list.

Using the search for several help topics returned relevant results in relation to the search terms entered. Conclusion For Efficiency the Microsoft Word 2007 manual was given a 5, information is readily available and easily accessible via the table of contents or the integrated search. Conclusion Based on the scoring system defined in the introduction the Microsoft Word 2007 manual has a final score of 18.5 out of a total score of 20. While the scoring method is arbitrary, for the purposeless of this critique it provides a useful metric to evaluate the effectiveness of the Microsoft Word 2007 manual.

Even with the noted deficiencies in attractiveness and practicality the Microsoft Word 2007 manual meets the outlined criteria. The Microsoft Word 2007 manual is attractive, practical, simple, and efficient. References Ganier, F. (2007). Comparative User-Focused Evaluation of User Guides: A Case Study. *Journal of Technical Writing ; Communication*, 37(3), 305-322. doi: 10.2190/TW. 37. 3. e. Ragsdale, L.. (2007, June). *DESIGN 101*. *New Mexico Woman*, 20(6), 17-18. Retrieved June 15, 2010, from GenderWatch (GW). (Document ID: 1373220721).