

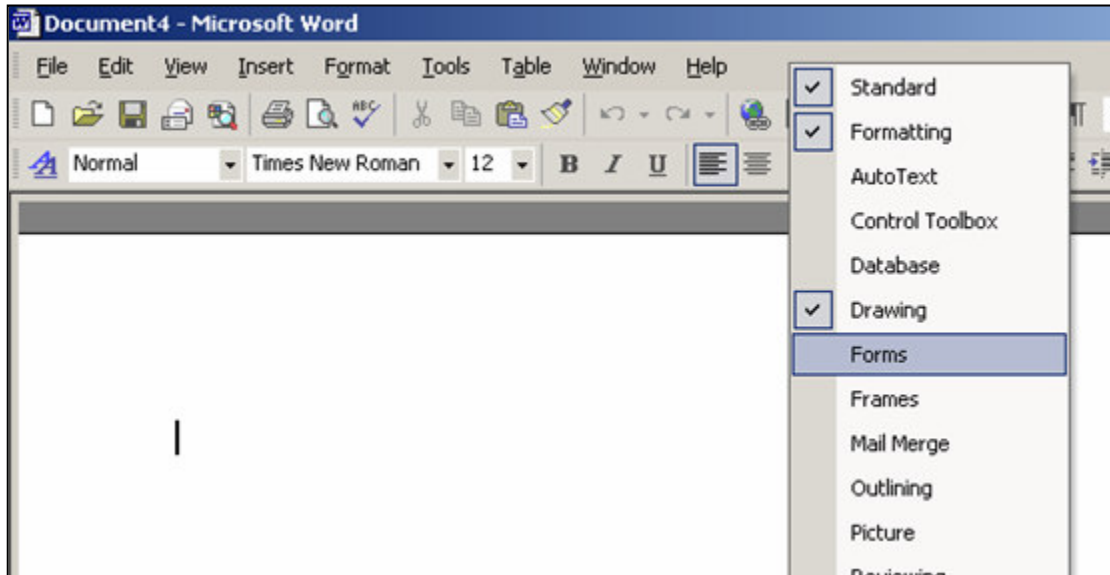
Using Forms in MSWord to Support Writing

The Forms toolbar has some useful features that can help children interact and record their responses in a text format without being slowed down by their typing skills. Of course, there is a place and a requirement for children to use the keyboard as a means of input, but for some children it is daunting the only option for text entry is for them to type.

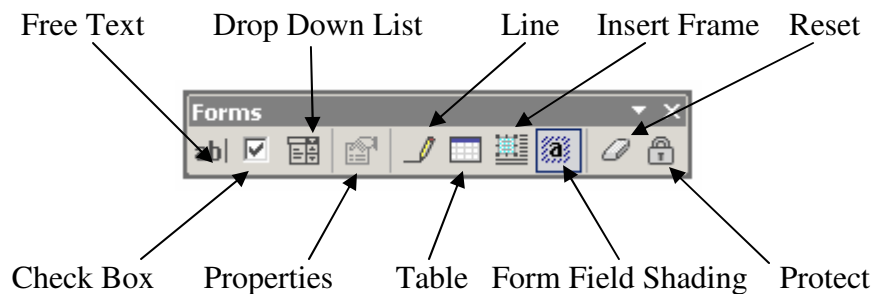
The forms toolbar's tools can offer a compromise and it is easy to mix and match items as appropriate so that children have experience of a range of methods for recording their responses.

Acquiring the Forms Toolbar

Right click on the toolbars at the top of the window and select **Forms** from the menu that appears.



A floating toolbar will appear somewhere on your screen, or it may have been 'docked' alongside other toolbars.



Creating a Form

First, it's helpful if the Form Field Shading button is selected. That way, it will be easy to recognize the fields in your form. Second, you need to make sure the Protect Form button is *not* selected. In other words, form protection should be turned off so you can modify the form as necessary. When you're ready to see how the form fields work, you can click the Protect Form button to turn on form protection.

Check Boxes

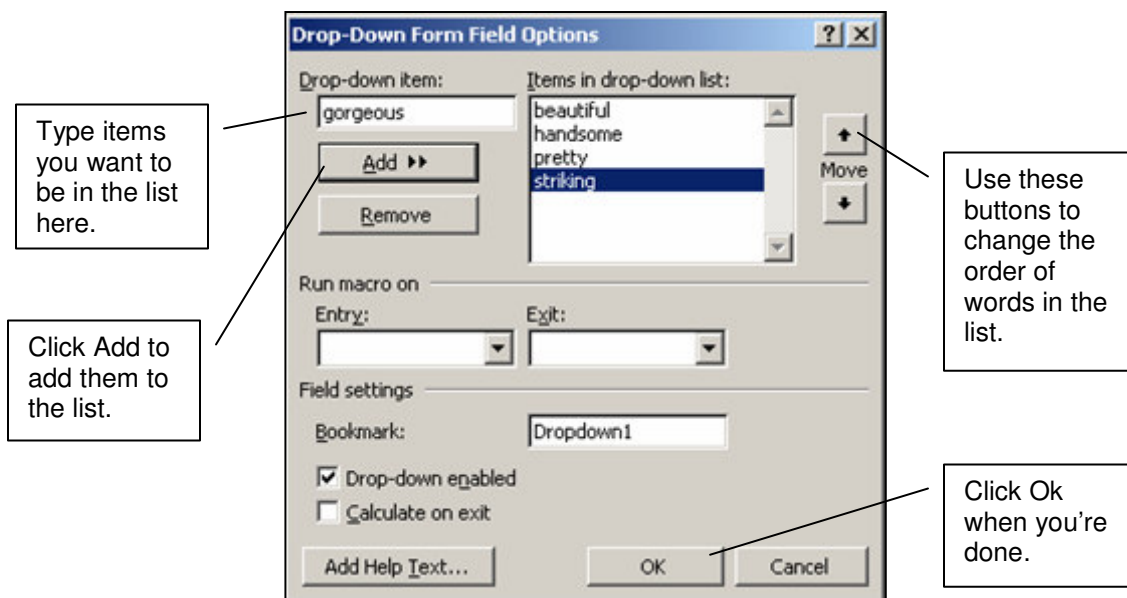
A check box can be used by children to record their choices or their opinions. To insert a check box, place your cursor in the text where you want the box to appear and click on the check box button in the Forms Toolbar.

You will not be able to click in the check box to select it until you protect the form.

Drop Down Lists

A drop down list can be used for children to make a selection from a number of choices. This could be a variation on a closed activity. Remember, the choices don't have to always be one right response among a list of wrong ones. The list could be a selection of adjectives to help improve children's vocabulary; a list of synonyms; even a list of the properties of a shape.

To create the list, click in the text where you want to add the list and then click the Drop Down List button on the Forms Toolbar. Then right click on the box created by this action (will only be showing if Form Field Shading is on).

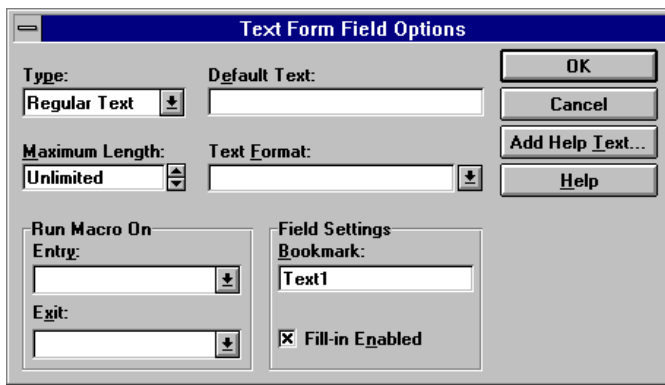


Free Text

Free text can be used when you want users to be able to type their own words. It might be that they are finishing sentences or paragraph starters. In designing the form you will have to indicate where they can type. If you save the form with Shading left on then they will see a grey box. Another useful way to indicate they can type is to put the Free Text box inside a larger box (highlight the line and use Borders and Shading in the FORMAT menu). The spell checker doesn't work with free text (which is actually a useful thing sometimes since we rely on spell checkers too much at times)

Again, click on the Free Text button on the Form Toolbar when your cursor is where you want the text to go.

Once you enter the free text box, you can set options that govern the text that goes in this part of the form. To access options for the field, you can click the Form Field Properties button on the Forms Toolbar or right click it and select Properties. However, you may find it quicker to simply double-click the field itself.



Let's take a moment to look at a few of the options in this dialog box. The Type dropdown list allows you to dictate what kind of information will go in the field. Your choices are Regular Text, Number, Date, Current Date, Current Time, and Calculation. The names are pretty self-explanatory, but it's important to note that each category comes with its own formatting options.

If you select Regular Text (the default), Word offers the Text Format dropdown list. This list consists of capitalization options (Uppercase, Title Case, and so forth). If you select Number or Calculation, Word provides the Number Format dropdown list. In this list, you'll find options such as #,##0 and 0.00, which you can use to specify the format you want for numbers entered in your form. And if you choose the Date, Current Date, or Current Time option, Word will change the list to Date Format or Time Format. As you'd expect, these lists contain options that are appropriate for formatting the date or time (such as M/d/yy and H/mm).

In addition to specifying a type of text and (optionally) its format, you can supply a default entry for the field. Word will automatically insert that text in the form. If you need to change the text, you simply type over it.

You can also limit the amount of text that appears in your text form field. In the Maximum Length text box, just enter the number of characters (up to 255) you want to allow in the field.

The remaining options in the Text Form Field Options dialog box are available to all three types of form fields. They enable you to add further functionality to your forms (through macros and help displays), but we'll focus on those features in a future article. For now, let's format our text field and move on.

Protecting the form

When you've inserted all the necessary fields in your form template, you can protect it. The easiest way to do this is to click the Protect Form button. By protecting the template, you ensure that all documents based on that template will also be protected. As we mentioned earlier, Word safeguards the contents of a protected document by limiting the actions you can perform on it. For example, you can move the insertion point marker only from one field to another; if the form contains boilerplate text, you won't be able to modify it. Similarly, Word deactivates formatting commands in a protected document so you can't change its appearance.

Colours

It might be a good idea to use coloured writing to help children know where they are required to interact with the form. In the following example each section has a different colour and children are required to do different things in each section.

(To use this form, first click Protect on the Forms Toolbar)

Causes of the Great Fire of London

I think The Great Fire of London spread so quickly because

- they couldn't carry water fast enough to put the fire out.*
- the water squirters were too weak to quench the flames.*
- a strong wind blew the flames to other houses.*
- there were only a few fire engine carts.*
- the buildings were very close together.*
- there had been no rain, so London was very dry.*
- the buildings were mostly made of wood.*
- the houses had tar on their roofs.*

The fire started in **Fish Street** on **1st September 1666** and lasted for **one** days.

Samuel Pepys kept a diary. In it he said