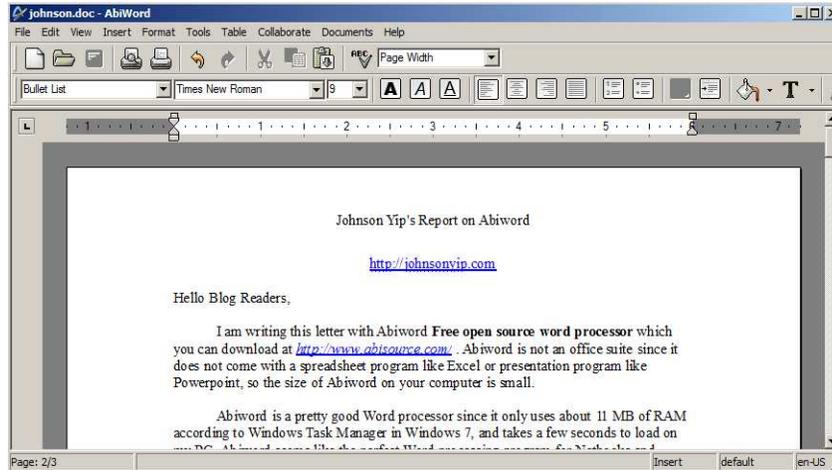


Johnson Yip's Report on Abiword Free Windows & Linux Word Processor

JohnsonYip.com

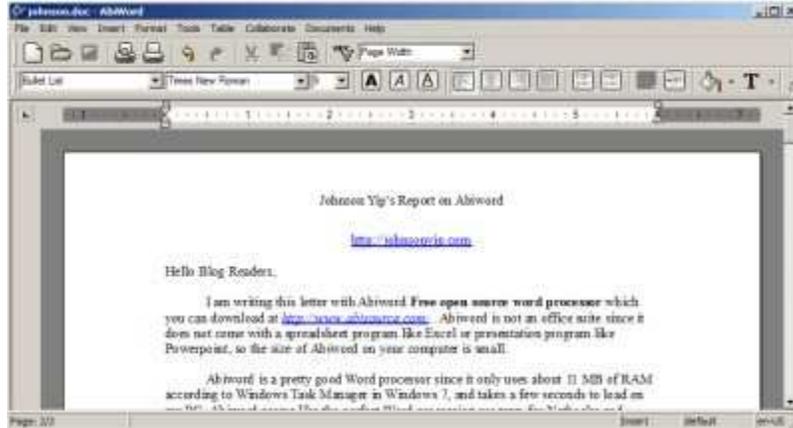


Hello Blog Readers,

I am writing this letter with Abiword **Free open source word processor** which you can download at <http://www.abisource.com/>. It works on both Windows and Linux Computers. Abiword is a great low resource Word processor since it only uses about 11 MB of RAM according to Windows Task Manager in Windows 7. It does not use a lot of CPU System resources. According to the installer it only uses about 25MB on a typical install. You can also set the dictionary/spell checker to English (Canada) from the default English (US) spelling function. It also can open Microsoft word 2003 and 2007 files, OpenOffice files. Abiword seems like a good word processor for students, people who work at home since it has spell check, double and single space, bold, italics, underline, font size, and margin size editing, Find and Replace which is good enough for a lot of people. Abiword also has a built-in Google, Wiki, and dictionary search. However, I notice Abiword tends to crash sometimes when doing simple stuff like print preview, editing tables, and other stuff. There also does not seem to be a document recovery system like MS Word, so once Abiword crashes all your work after the last save point is gone. This is why you should manually save your work often by using the “CTRL+S” shortcut key which saves your work on your document. Auto Save seems to be not working, so I’m stuck manually saving my work by clicking the Save button or “CTRL+S”. I also find making website links kind of frustrating compared to MS Word, since there is no hyperlink button on the main toolbar and you need to enable the extra toolbar in the view > toolbar menu. The P paragraph mark also not available on the toolbar like MS word. I have to go to view menu and click on “Show Formating Marks or press “CTRL+*(on Number pad)”. The spell checker seems to think words like blog, toolbar, and other jargon is misspelled, but the spell check works pretty well since you can add words to the dictionary with the right click menu. It also does not seem to support document password protection. You also have to rely on the right click menu and menu file bar to do more of the regular tasks.

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Like inserting an image or Inserting tables in Abiword.



| | |
|-------------|------------|
| Good | Bad |
| Free | Expensive |

However, if you format the tables too much, sometimes word can't draw it properly. I also notice there is no save to PDF function built-in to Abiword like MS Word or OpenOffice, so you need to install <http://sourceforge.net/projects/pdfcreator/> on your computer to print your file to PDF from the print program in Abiword. Word Count and Editing Margins on your documents is very easy to use. You can also make numbered and Bullets lists in Abiword.

- bill
- john
-
- 1. service
- 2. car

There is even Superscript 2nd and Subscript 2_{nd} in Abiword. I have not tried the mail merge function, but you can use CSV, xml, and tsv for mail merges. I don't like how there are grey boxes on bullet and number list, mail merge fields, page numbers, and other special fields. I notice I also have some trouble with adding and editing headers in Abiword. Sometimes the headers do not add the next page number and other info when a new page is created, so I have to add it manually by going to insert menu > Header or Footer. You can also insert page breaks like in MS word. I don't like how I can't search for fonts in the font drop down menu by typing in the font name in the drop down menu for fonts. You can also **high light** text in Abiword which can be useful if you are editing or studying your notes. You can also add comments or Annotations to your document by selecting text and from the right click menu go to annotation then New annotation to annotate your highlighted text. There also seem to be an Online Collaboration function in Abiword, but I haven't tried it since I don't have any documents which I need to use for Collaboration with others, and I rather use Google Docs if I do.

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Abiword is a good light weight word Processor for people who just need a word processor for typing out documents, and printing them on their own computers. Abiword is not so great if you need to share documents with people who use MS Word since Abiword documents saved as DOC files sometimes are formatted weirdly when open with MS Word 2007 when showing tables, and links. The only problems I have with Abiword is header, footer, adding words to dictionary, ignoring words, occasional crashed during print preview or editing tables. Auto-save does not work. Abiword need a 3rd party virtual PDF printer program to print files directly to PDF, link forming have to be done manually like making the link blue and underlined, so it is displayed correctly in MS word or a PDF file. Mail merge does not support XLS Excel spreadsheet program. I also find the buttons on the toolbars kind of confusing since I'm so used to the MS Word and Open Office Buttons and symbols. I wish there was a way to make a custom toolbar with the features of Abiword I use most often. It would also be cool if I can move the toolbar buttons around. I notice you can also change the location of the toolbars, so you can combine all four toolbars into 2 rows or 1 instead of using 4 rows of toolbars which can use a lot of space on a computer or netbook with a smaller screen like 7"-15" inches. I notice sometimes when you use MS Word to edit Abiword doc files it can ruin the formatting when opening the file back in Word, so I recommend only using MS Word to view the file, and use Abiword to edit it unless you plan not to use Abiword to edit the file anymore and just use Word to edit a file and send it to someone else with the same version of MS Word for maximum compatibility. If you just plan on sending a file made in Abiword, I recommend either installing a PDF printing program like the one I listed above, or using MS Word or Open Office to export your file as a .pdf file in the export wizard since PDF files are basically very big image files which look the same on every computer with Adobe Acrobat reader or a 3rd party program like FoxIT PDF Reader which you can get at <http://www.foxitsoftware.com/pdf/reader/> unlike document files which can look different on every computer because of different settings, versions, and brands of documents. Plus, almost every modern computer can open a PDF file if it has a PDF reading software. It also looks more professional to have a PDF file since fewer people send PDF files and PDF files are less likely to contain macro files, embarrassing revision history, and document meta data which Tech Savvy people can find very easily. Plus, people can't see the red and green wiggly lines since PDF readers don't spellcheck.

I also recommend buying a Flash Drive to store a backup copy of your documents onto in Abiword since when testing new software. It can be unstable on some computers, or you might lose all your homework because of a computer crash, power outage, and other unexpected computer problems. It is best to have one copy of your document on your hard drive, another copy on a flash drive or external drive. For extra backup protection, You can also use Google Docs for your online storage needs. I been using Google Docs to store, and edit my files for about 2 years. It worked great for me. Losing homework and work is frustrating, so having part of your finish work from your last back up point on your hard drive, Google docs, or flash drive make you do less work since you do not have to start fresh again like losing everything because you forgot to save or a power surge corrupted your document files...