

Toss Your Typewriter!

by Loui Tucker - Submitted by Santa Clara County Legal Professionals Association

It seems every law office has a typewriter somewhere, on an out-of-the-way shelf in the workroom, in the receptionist's area, or in a spare office. The only time anyone uses the typewriter is to fill in a form required by some government agency, a financial institution, or perhaps a title company. Sometimes forms are available on line, but you cannot save them, retrieve them, and revise them. And then there are the delivery services and court runner forms that you're stuck filling in by hand! Why aren't you filling them in on the computer?

You just need to learn a trick using a scanner and Word or Word Perfect's header feature and it's possible to put those forms on your computer. You'll retrieve them, fill them in, print them, save them – just like any other word processing document.

First, scan the form to a file on your computer. You do not have to run it through an OCR (optical character reader) software to turn it into text. Just scan it to a picture file with a ".jpg" extension.

Start from a blank screen.

Set the margins as small as your printer will allow.

Word 2003 - Click File, Page Setup, make all margins as small as possible

Word 2007 - Click Page Layout, Margins, Custom Margins, make all margins as small as possible

Word Perfect - Click Format, Margins, make all margins as small as possible

Set a small, fixed line spacing

Word 2003 - Click Format, Paragraph, Line Spacing, Exactly, 5 pt

Word 2007 - Click Home, Paragraph, Line Spacing, Exactly, 5 pt

Word Perfect - Click Format, Line, Spacing, .3

Move into the document header and reduce margins again

Word 2003 - Click View, Header, use mouse to reduce left and right margins

Word 2007 - Click Insert, Header, Blank header

Word Perfect - Click Insert, Header/Footer, Header A, Create, use mouse to reduce left and right margins.

Insert the scanned image of the form

Word 2003 - Click Insert, Picture, From File, locate scanned form, Insert button

Word 2007 - Click Insert, Picture, locate scanned form, Insert button

Word Perfect - Click Insert, Graphic, From File, locate scanned form, Insert button

Re-size and format the image

Word 2003 - Use the mouse to resize the image if needed to fill the page. Right-click on the image, select Format Image, click the Layout tab. Select "Behind Text" and click OK

Word 2007 - Use the mouse to resize the image if needed to fill the page. On the Ribbon, select "Text Wrapping" and then "Behind Text."

Word Perfect - Use the mouse to resize the image if needed to fill the page. Then right-click, select "Wrap" from the menu and select "Behind text."

Exit to the main screen

Word 2003 - Click "Close" on the Header/Footer toolbar. The form image will fade to gray.

Word 2007 - Press the Escape key to return to the main document. The form image will fade to gray.

Word Perfect - File, Close (which closes the header window) and return to the main document.

Now you're ready to type on the form which appears on your screen. Just pretend you're sitting at a typewriter and use the Enter key to move down the page and the tab key and space bar to move across the page. Print and save your completed form when you're done as you would any word processing document.

If you need to edit your answers, you don't need to use White-Out and your typewriter. Just retrieve the file and edit as you would any document. Oh, and if you think you might need this form again, store the blank form in your Forms directory.



In the mid-1980s Loui Tucker combined her early years as a public school teacher with three years as a legal secretary when she joined a company that sold, serviced and trained people how to use the then-hot new technology – word processors. When that company closed its doors, she opened her own.

Over the years she assisted her clients with the transition from word processors to computers, then connected them via a network, adding complex printers, scanners, and fax machines, and eventually hooking them up to the Internet. She got them through the Y2K crisis, aided them in their battles against viruses and spyware, and trained them on the ever-increasing array of software that came into use in law offices. She cross-trained Word Perfect users who needed to learn Word, and Word users who needed to learn Word Perfect.

She is well known for developing elegant systems using templates, macros, and customized menus in both Word and Word Perfect that give law office staff easy access to the forms, text inserts and processes they use the most. She frequently gives workshops and seminars on the many tips and tricks she knows that increase efficiency and reduce strain.

Visit her website at www.louitucker.com for more tips and tricks!