

How to Make PDFs on the Cheap (Without Using Adobe Products)

This tutorial is an introduction to (and evangelism for) a free software program called OpenOffice, available at www.openoffice.org. It is similar to Microsoft Office and other commercially-available office suites, fully-featured, and available without cost.

This tutorial is intended for people who:

- want to create and transfer documents electronically;
- want or need to make PDF files (find out why below);
- are novice users of OpenOffice, and/or other word processors;
- have little or no experience with Adobe Acrobat and other Adobe software;
- can't afford the full Adobe Acrobat (not Acrobat Reader), or other Adobe software;
- don't want to or can't use Adobe's [Create Adobe PDF Online](#) service, which provides the same document-creation features as the full Adobe Acrobat version, but users only get to create five (5) PDFs before it expires and they must subscribe (for a fee).

Note: This tutorial is not intended as a complete guide to OpenOffice. For more detailed information, please see the OpenOffice documentation, support centre, and online tutorials at <http://support.openoffice.org/index.html>.

OpenOffice Writer, the equivalent to MS Word, also incorporates some features that Word does not include, such as the ability to export directly to PDF (Adobe Portable Document Format).

Why Do I Want to Use PDFs?

PDFs have many features that are useful for people who are creating and transferring documents from one computer to another, such as:

- **Portable:** PDF is designed to be *platform-agnostic*, that is, to work on any operating system, on anyone's computer. There are PDF readers available for most of the major operating systems. So if you are sending a file to someone, you know they will be able to open and use it.
- **Professional Look and Feel:** PDFs make very polished, professional-looking documents. The software most people use to make them costs a lot of money or requires a subscription. (This tutorial hopes to change that for some of you.)
- **Perfect Formatting and Fonts Every Time:** One of the *reasons* PDF documents give a professional look and feel is because the fonts, graphics, and formatting are embedded in the actual document itself. That way, you never have trouble with the formatting coming out differently on someone else's machine, the graphics slipping to the wrong place, or someone not having the same fonts as you have. Anyone on any system can read your document -- *exactly the way you intended it*.
- **(Very Nearly) Tamper-Proof Documents:** As mentioned above, your documents will stay exactly the way *you* intended them to be, because PDF documents are not editable unless you have the full version of Acrobat.

What Do I Need?

In order to use this tutorial, you need:

- a computer with OpenOffice installed;

Note: According to the [OpenOffice System Requirements page](#), OpenOffice runs on Microsoft Windows, GNU/Linux ("Linux"), Sun Solaris, Mac OS X (under X11), and FreeBSD. To learn more about installing OpenOffice, please see the [Installation Instructions](#).

- a need or desire to make PDFs,
- and a willingness to learn

How do I do it?

Once you have OpenOffice installed and running (use the same procedures under your operating system as for any other piece of software), you can either:

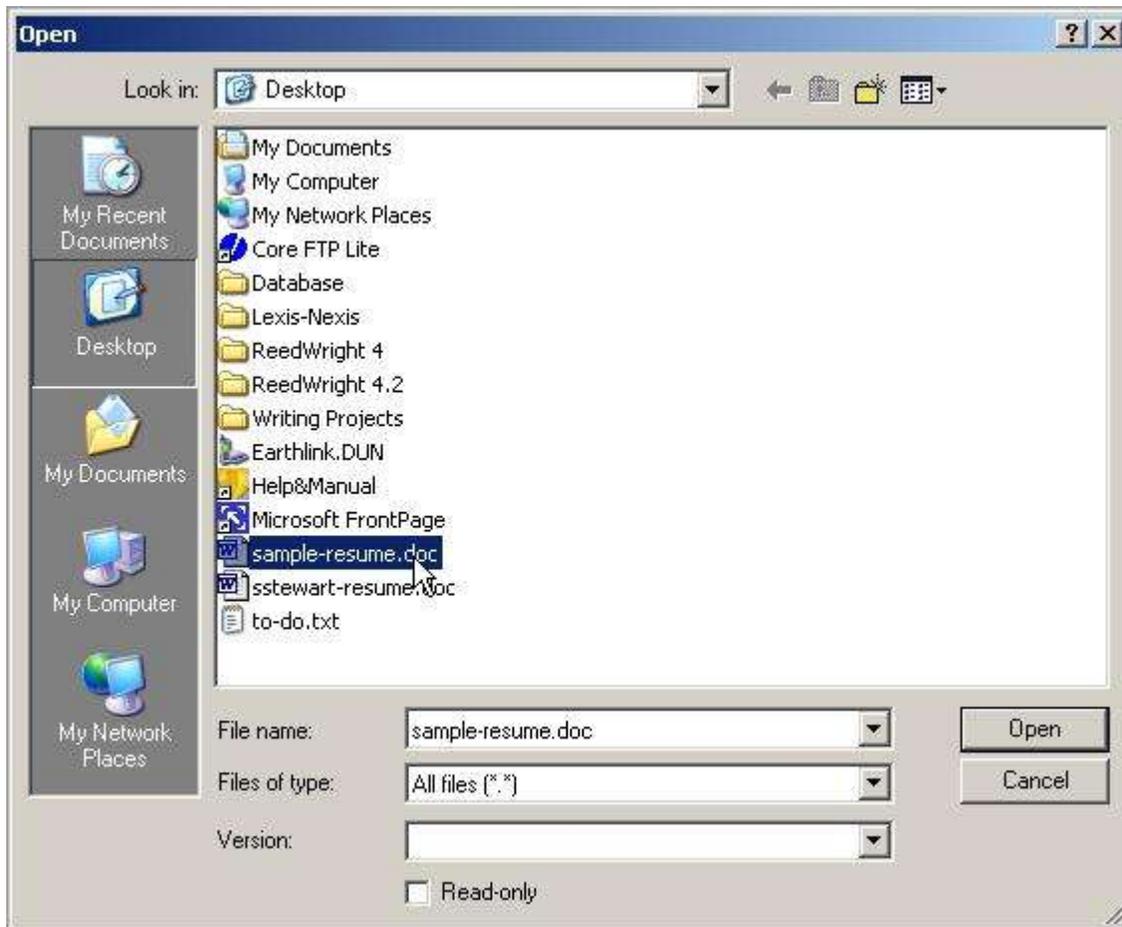
- open your source document in Word, then copy and paste the text into a new, blank OpenOffice Writer document (*not recommended* due to formatting problems), **or**
- open your Word document using OpenOffice Writer (recommended).

To open your Word document in OpenOffice Writer, click on File, then select Open, as shown below:



Selecting Open on the File menu, under Windows XP.

A dialogue box will appear, and you can select the Word document you wish to convert to PDF, as shown below.



Selecting a Word document to convert, under Windows XP.

Click "Open." Your Word document will appear in OpenOffice Writer.

Check to make sure that your document's formatting is correct. Sometimes formatting and spacing, or special characters like [dingbats](#) and bullets don't appear in OpenOffice Writer exactly as they do in MS Word, so you may have to fix some minor problems. I have noticed that Word's templates tend to appear in OpenOffice Writer with their formatting intact, so if you use Word templates, you can convert them easily.

Once you have fixed any formatting problems that may have cropped up, and otherwise gotten your document in its finished form, you are ready to transform it into a PDF. To do so, you can either

- use the "Export as PDF" option under the File menu (as shown below), **or**
- click on the Export Directly as PDF button in the Standard toolbar (as also shown below).

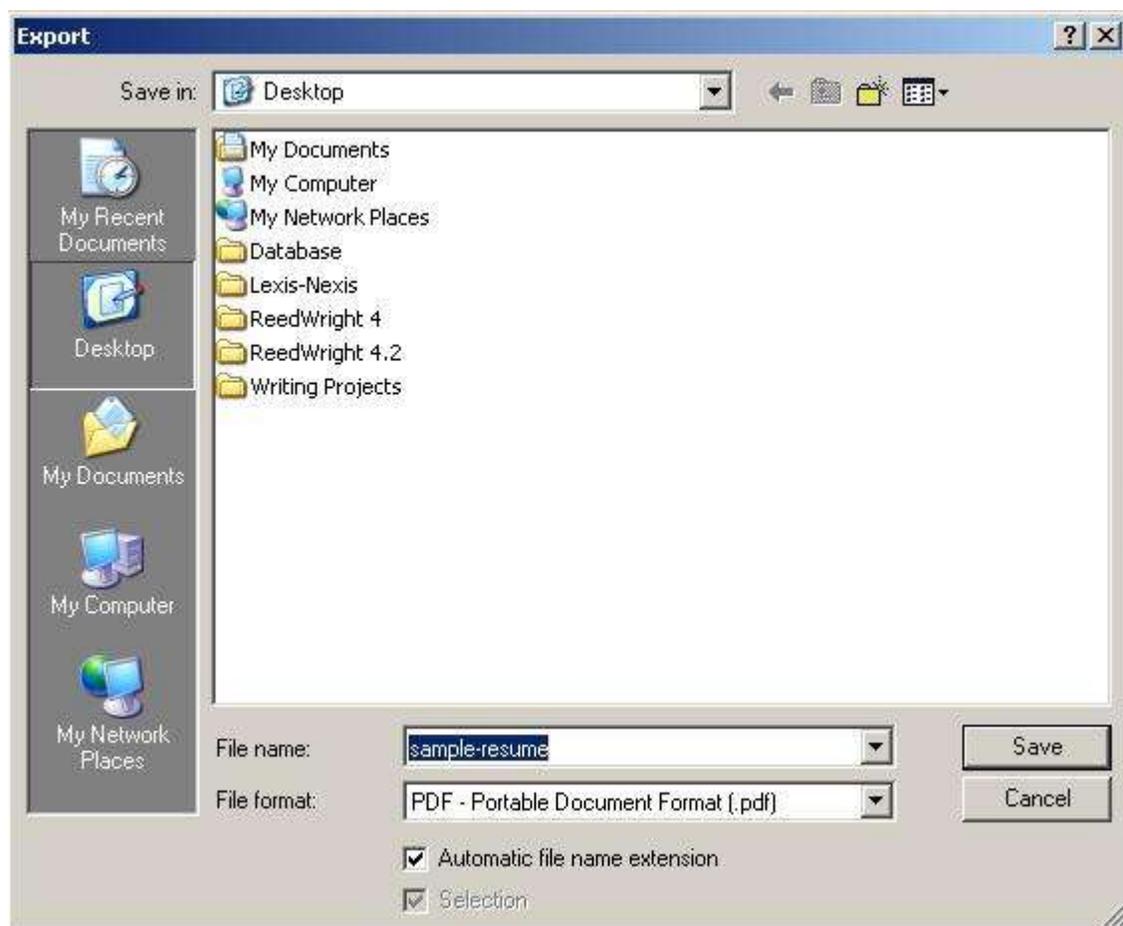


Selecting the Export as PDF option under the File menu.



Clicking the Export Directly as PDF button on the Standard toolbar in OpenOffice Writer.

After you select one of these two options, the Export dialogue box will appear, as shown below. At this time, you can rename the file (the original filename, minus .doc extension, appears in the Filename field by default), although this isn't required. Click on Save as shown below, and OpenOffice Writer will generate a PDF from your Word document.



Clicking Save to export the example file to PDF.

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