



April 9, 2003

Text to tables and back in Word, Burning Your LP's to Disc, and more!

Manipulating Text in Microsoft Word

Microsoft Word has some **amazing text manipulation** options that you can use. For a more detailed explanation of this topic, go to the tutorials section of my website. You will find these manipulations explained further there, with graphics to illustrate the steps. The tutorials can be found in the "Classroom" at http://steve.maurer.net/tutorials/tutorials_main.htm. From there go to the Classroom table of contents. These three manipulations are covered by three separate tutorials.

1. **Turning text into a table** - If you have some text that is basically a list, separated by commas or other delimiter, like a slash or tab, you can turn that text into a nice, neat table very quickly. Just highlight the text, then go to "**Table**" on the menu bar, then scroll down to "**Convert Text to Table**". You will get a dialog box to help you format your table. In my tutorial example, I use a fictional sporting league with team names and standings, to illustrate. Here is the list:

Team Name, Wins, Losses, Ties, Bulldogs, 10, 1, 0, Indians, 5, 5, 2, Tigers, 6,, 4, Cowboys, 3,7,1, Mustangs, 4, 4, 2

Type or copy and paste the above line(s) into a Word document. By the way, the second comma after the 6 is not a mistake. You will need it for a place holder. Include a comma for all missing data in your list.

Highlight the entire list and follow the above mentioned steps. Amazingly, your comma separated list will be turned into a **beautifully formatted table**, complete with grid lines.

2. **Turning a table into text** - You can use the same table you created above to try out this item. Select the entire table. Now, go back to the "**Table**" item on your menu, scroll down and select "**Convert Table into Text**". You will get a dialog box to help you format your text. If you accept the default settings, your table will be converted, not back into a comma separated list, but into a **wonderful tabbed list!**

If you have trouble figuring out where to set your tabs, like I do, then using step 1 and step 2 will be a **time saver** for you. Type out your list, separated by commas, turn into a table, and then back into tabbed format *in a few seconds*.

3. I will warn you up front, this tip is going to sound a little strange at first, but bear with me. You will find this as fascinating (and useful) as I do. We are going to select text "**Right down the middle**" of a Word document. "*What ever for?*" you might ask. You will find out in a minute, so be patient.

If you kept your tabbed list you created in item 2, you can use that. Place your cursor in front of the first item in the second column (Wins). Now hold down on the [ALT] key, press and hold the **left** mouse button and move the cursor to highlight the entire column of "Win" statistics. Let go of the [ALT] key and mouse button. All the text in that column should be highlighted. Now right click in the highlighted area and choose copy. You have now copied just the information in that column and will be able to paste it elsewhere.

Why? Well...open Excel or another spreadsheet program. Click into a cell, right click and choose "**Paste**". Your column data is now pasted into individual cells, and you can do all sorts of spreadsheet stuff with them. Add, subtract, whatever you want. If you go back to your Word document, you can select just the Teams and Wins columns and paste them into a spreadsheet. If you have sales figures in a Word document report, you can select the data you want, *paste it into a spreadsheet and do all sorts of calculations on it*. Try this one out and have fun with it.

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Burn your Memories (onto disk, that is!) hardware

Just wanted to tell you about my current personal project, you might find that you want to do something similar. I am probably going to date myself on this, but I have a ton of music records from the '60's and '70's. As you may have found, it is difficult to find a stereo system, or any kind of home entertainment system for that matter, that will play the old "**vinyl**". LP (long play) records have gone the way of the 8-track tape (*if you don't remember them, don't worry. You didn't miss much!*) but you can still find the turntables to play them on, at least for now.

My project is that I am taking all my old record albums and transferring them (burning them) to **CD ROM disks**. It is a rather time consuming project, but it is a lot of fun. And I seem to be taking a little walk down memory lane while I am doing it. Some of the records I am recording were those we listened to when Mary and I were dating. So how do you get your old LP's and 45's to CD? Well, you are going to need some special **hardware**, some **software**, and...some **time!**

The **hardware** you will need depends on your music system and on your computer. The computer part is easy and you probably already have what you need there. Of course, you will need a sound card with a "**Line IN**" jack. Most sound cards will have three places to plug in, one for a microphone, one for your speakers, and one for "Line IN". You will want to use the last one, as it can accept stereo input. I believe the microphone jack will be mono.

To play your records, you will need a **turntable** of some kind, either in a stereo system or a stand alone component. *The quality of your recording will be affected by the condition of your turntable, especially the needle.* I had a component turntable that worked, but the needle was in bad shape. The sound was noisy, with a lot of pops and hisses, so I was going to have to do a lot of cleanup on the recordings. And a bad needle can damage your albums. I looked around for a needle, but couldn't find one, so I went to my friendly neighborhood Radio Shack store and found an RCA turntable for about \$100. It is a pretty good turntable with a belt drive, which means it is very smooth and quiet. The short spindle means I can only load one album at a time,

but that suits my mixing needs perfectly. It also includes a **pre-amplifier**, which I will talk about in a minute.

Alright, you have a turntable and you have a computer with a sound card. How do you hook them up? Well, that depends on your turntable. You will need a **cable** with a 1/8" stereo mini-plug on one end to connect to your sound card. If you have a component turntable (stand alone) it probably has a cord that connected to your stereo system. Or it may have just had phonograph jacks (connectors) in the back to plug into. They are also called **RCA jacks**. So obviously, the other end of your connecting cable needs to have plugs to match that.

BUT...you may need one other bit of hardware if you are using a stand alone, component turntable and that would be a **pre-amplifier**. You see, the signal from a component turntable is not "**loud**" enough to be "**heard**" by the computer, so you need to **amplify** it (you don't need to amplify it if you are connecting to your entire music system, however, but that is another story). You can get a pre-amp, as they are called, at most places they sell electronic supplies. I got one at Radio Shack for \$25. They are small, this one was battery powered, and you plug your turntable into one side and your computer into the other side. If you are going to buy a new turntable, like I had to, see if you can find one with a **pre-amplifier built in** to the component. The one I bought had that feature, which means I can plug the turntable directly into my computer. (*Say, that means I have a little old pre-amp just laying around...hmmm!*).

So now you have your turntable connected to your PC and you're ready to "rock and roll" so to speak. Or cruise with the classics. **You can just play your records** through your PC, which can be a nice experience. I am listening to some soothing Beethoven right now, as I write this newsletter. That may be all you want to do, but if you want to transfer your music to disk, then read the next topic which will explain a little about CD burning software. One further note, if you don't hear anything coming through your speakers when playing an album:

1. Check to make sure they are **turned on and turned up** (I forget myself sometimes).
2. Make sure that the "Line IN" jack is enabled on your sound card. This will be different on various PC's, so I won't be able to tell you exactly what to do. But basically, look for either a mixer icon or the volume icon in your system tray (the little place where your clock is found, usually at the bottom). Double clicking the icon will should bring up the mixer dialog box or volume control dialog box. You can turn on or turn up your "Line IN" option from there.
3. If that doesn't work you may have to consult your sound card documentation for more information.

The next topic will briefly describe what software you will need to record your albums onto a disk.

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Burn your Memories (onto disk, that is!) software

Hopefully you have been able to hook up your turntable to you computer and can hear your old vinyl albums through your computer now. So it's time to turn those albums into CD's. You might want to do this to **preserve your music collection** and be able to play them when the old turntable finally becomes extinct. One last bit of hardware you will need is a CD burner. Just a CD player won't work (unless you just want to play them on your PC), you need to have a drive that will write to disk. If you don't have one, you can still copy your album to your hard drive,

but understand that this will take up a **lot** of space. It takes approximately **10 Mega Bytes** of space to record **1 minute** of music in WAV format. So be sure you have the space on your hard drive for it.

If you have a **CD burner** (a DVD burner will also work) it probably came with some free software to burn CD's. Depending on the software included, you may or may not be able to copy your record album with it. One of my CD burners came with **Roxio CD Creator 5, Standard Edition**. Good software, but the part needed to copy albums was not enabled. I like Roxio, so I bought the full version, Roxio Easy CD Creator 5 Platinum Edition, which is fully enabled. Version 6 is available now, which included some software to burn to DVD's. Not only will you be able to burn your music with this software, but you can also make video "post cards", photo albums on disk, data CD's to back up your computer documents and many other options. I'm not saying it's the only software out there. There are other good programs, like **NERO**, that you can use. Make sure, however, that if you are going to spend some money on burning software that you get all the options you need or will need in the future. And make sure that the software will convert and save your CD so that it can be played in home and car CD players. (*Note, however, that not all non-computer CD players will play computer made CDR or CDR-W media. Most of the newer ones will, I even have an old "boom box" that will play them.*)

I can't go into a lot of detail about using the software, you will need to read your software's documentation to find out the specifics for your software. But most will have a recording section (it is called "**Soundstream**" in Roxio). In Soundstream, there is an option that is called "**SpinDoctor**", which is the actual software used to record the LP album. SpinDoctor will take out much of the pops and hisses in the old album. The program also has a **sound editor** that will allow you to make further changes after you have recorded your song to your computer. You can record directly to CD, but I recommend you save to your hard drive first. It is more reliable and you can make changes before the final burn.

After I have recorded all the songs to my hard drive as single WAV files, I open up another section of Roxio Easy CD Creator called "**Music CD Project**". This allows me to pick the tracks I want to include on the CD, change the order they will play in, and add or remove gaps between them, make "fade-ins" between songs, and other things. I have found that I can often record two of my old albums on one CD, which is great if I have a two volume album with two records.

One last note on CD burning software. You may want to make sure that **DLA** capability is available with the software. What is **DLA**, you ask? DLA stands for **Drive Letter Access** and basically means that the software can format a CD so that you can drag and drop documents directly from Windows Explorer, or even save your documents directly to the disk. It turns your CD into another drive that acts like a floppy or Zip Drive, but with way more capacity. Easy CD Creator has this capability, even in the standard edition.

I am working on a tutorial that will include pictures for both the hardware and software topics for saving your albums to disk. Check my website for this information, which should be posted sometime this month

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Quote-ables

He who asks is a fool for five minutes, but he who does not ask remains a fool forever. -Chinese proverb

Cool Links

- ❖ The Classroom (on my site) at http://steve.maurer.net/tutorials/tutorials_main.htm contains online lessons, like those mentioned above.
- ❖ To check out the CD burning software I use, go to Roxio at <http://www.roxio.com>
- ❖ If you ever played the old text based games, you might want to check out this page: <http://www.alltooflat.com/geeky/engine/>. As they say on there page: "No more pictures, no more motion; just you, your keyboard, and the game". You can even download the game engine and create your own text based games.

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