Chapter 23

In Depth: Writer

The word processor is arguably the most popular element within any office suite. That said, you’ll be happy to know that OpenOffice.org’s Writer component doesn’t skimp on features. It offers full text-editing and formatting functionality, along with powerful higher-level features such as mail merge.

In this chapter, we’ll take a look at some of Writer’s most useful features. As with all of the components in the OpenOffice.org suite, describing the features within Writer could easily fill an entire book. You should do some exploring on your own by clicking around to discover new features, as well as make judicious use of the help system. To start Writer, click Applications ➤ Office ➤ OpenOffice.org Word Processor.

Formatting Text

You can format text within Writer using several methods. Here, we’ll look at using the Formatting toolbar, the context menu, and the Style and Formatting palette.

The Formatting Toolbar

Formatting text is easy to do via the Formatting toolbar, which is just above the ruler and main document area. Using the toolbar buttons, you can select the type of font you wish to use, its point size, and its style (normal, bold, italics, and so on). The range of fonts is previewed in the Font drop-down list, making it easy to select the right typeface.

In addition, the Formatting toolbar lets you justify text so that it’s aligned to the left or right margin, centered, or fully justified. You can also indent text using the relevant icons. As with elsewhere in Ubuntu, a tooltip will appear over each icon when you hover the mouse cursor over it, as shown in Figure 23-1. To the right of the indentation buttons are tools to change the text background and foreground colors, and also a tool to create highlighter pen-style effects.
Context Menu

Rather than use the Formatting toolbar, you can format text using the context menu. Right-click the text you want to format, and a context menu will present options for the font, size, style, alignment, and line spacing. The context menu also allows you to change the case of the highlighted characters—from uppercase to lowercase, and vice versa.

By selecting the Character option from the context menu, you get ultimate control over the font formatting. This will present a dialog box that includes every possible option, such as rotating the text and altering the individual character spacing (look under the Position tab for these options).

Tip  The Character dialog box lets you create interesting typographical effects. The Paragraph dialog box has many options for formatting paragraphs. These tools open up the possibility of using Writer for simple desktop publishing work.

Selecting Paragraph from the context menu displays the Paragraph dialog box, as shown in Figure 23-2. This gives you control over paragraph elements, such as line spacing, indentation, and automatic numbering. Here, you will also find an option to automatically create drop caps, so you can start a piece of writing in style!