

WordPerfect Office X4

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WordPerfect X3, the previous version of *WordPerfect*, was the successor to version 12, and Corel apparently called it X3 instead of 13 so as not to lose as customers those people who are afraid of the number 13. X4, the current version, continues that tradition of using the Roman numeral X in place of the 1 to indicate ten – why Corel is doing that, instead of going back to the old number scheme and calling it 14, I don't know.

Those of you who know me probably know that I have long been a fan of the *WordPerfect* word processor. I started using *WordPerfect 4.0* under DOS on my first personal computer, back in the mid-1980s, and have used almost every version since then.

I have long thought it to be the best of all word processors, continue to feel that way, and enjoy the improvements and new features in each new version.

Although *WordPerfect* used to be available as an individual word processing program, for some years now it has been sold as an office suite, like Microsoft *Office*.

Beside the *WordPerfect* word processing program, the standard edition of the X4 suite (the one reviewed here) now contains a presentation program (Presentations), a spreadsheet program

(*Quattro Pro*), an e-mail client (*WordPerfect Mail*), and *WordPerfect Lightning*, a program somewhat similar to Microsoft Office OneNote. The Professional edition also includes Paradox, a database program, and several other more minor components.

Although I'm reviewing the suite here, in the interests of space, and the time of the reader, this review will concentrate on the flagship product of the suite, the *WordPerfect X4* word processor.

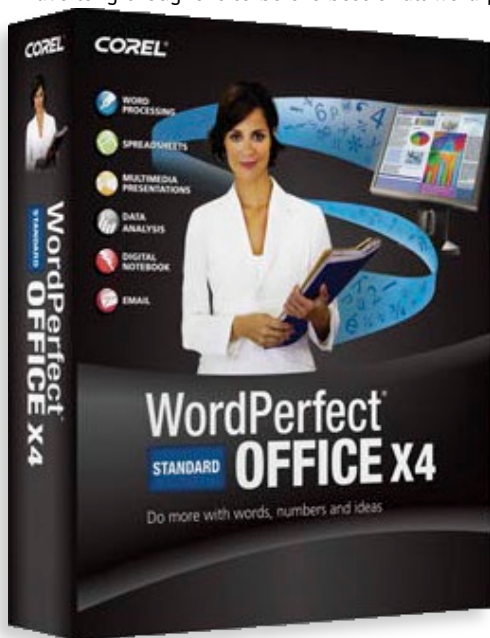
The product ships with three CDs: the installation CD for all the software (including Firefox, even though it's not part of the suite); a CD containing clipart, fonts, photos, watermarks, and sounds; and a CD of training videos. It also ships with what they call a "guidebook," a slim pamphlet of 90 pages, mostly consisting of tutorials, replacing the much larger manuals that used to ship with *WordPerfect* as well as with lots of other software.

The guidebook is almost entirely about *WordPerfect*. One tutorial in it (five of its 90 pages) is about *Quattro Pro*, one (eight pages) is about *Presentations*, and one (6 pages) is about *Lightning*. Nothing is about *WordPerfect Mail*.

Since the guidebook does not have an index, its usability is greatly decreased. As an example, while browsing through the guidebook, I thought I saw something about redaction (a new feature – more below), but couldn't find it again without being able to look it up in an index. Fortunately however, I was able to look up "redaction" in Help, and found out how to turn it on.

The training video CD requires a recent version (at least 7) of Apple *QuickTime* to view its .mov files. I personally find *QuickTime* to be an intrusive program, and refuse to have it on my computer, so I did not view the training videos.

So what's new in *WordPerfect* version X4? How does it differ from X3? The basic word processing style and functionality remains almost exactly the same. Differences are more additions than changes, and are primarily in two areas: enhanced compatibility with Microsoft Word, and enhanced .pdf functionality.



For those of you who don't know *WordPerfect* at all, and want to know why I prefer it to other word processors (regardless of what *WordPerfect* version it is), the main reason has to do with what *WordPerfect* calls "Reveal Codes." Reveal Codes is a feature that lets you see all of the formatting codes that are buried within the document.

You can turn Reveal Codes on or off, and if it's on, the text with the codes in it appears in a separate sub-window beneath the main text window. That text lets you understand exactly how your document is formatted. It helps solve any formatting problems and it lets you delete formatting codes as necessary while still keeping the text that's involved.

That concept may sound like it's clumsy to use, but it's not; it's exactly the opposite. It's easy to use, and in my view, for anyone creating a document with substantial formatting, gives you much better and easier-to-use control.

WordPerfect X4 still provides the ability to have two different types of toolbars: one is called a toolbar and the other a property bar, but they are very similar and most of the buttons can be on either one of them. It's also the user's choice as to where they are located, what buttons appear on them, in what order, whether to have text along with the graphics on them, and if there is text, how the text reads.

I choose to have one bar on the left of the window and the other at the top, and I choose the buttons (which are essentially menu choices) that represent the features I use most often. It's great to be able to do this the way that works best for me and the result of having them is that I rarely have to go to the menus to make choices.

Quick comments on the other programs in the suite: *Quattro Pro* runs in any of three modes, *Quattro Pro* Mode, Microsoft *Excel* Mode, and *Lotus 1-2-3* Mode.

Although the *Excel* mode doesn't look like the current version of *Excel* (for example, there's no Ribbon), in all the modes it seems to adequately handle the simple kinds of spreadsheets that I might use it for. I can't comment on how well it can handle more complex spreadsheets, since I don't have enough spreadsheet experience to try one and judge.

My comments on *Presentations* are similar. It runs in native *Presentations* Mode, or in Microsoft *PowerPoint* mode, and seems to adequately create and handle simple presentations in either mode.

WordPerfect Mail doesn't have multiple modes. It looks and works much like Microsoft *Outlook*, doing both e-mail and calendars, but does not let you maintain a task list, as does *Outlook*.

The final program in the suite is *Lightning*. It's a program for making notes, and I said earlier that it seems to be somewhat similar to Microsoft *Office OneNote*. I found trying to use it non-intuitive and difficult, so it's difficult to provide even a capsule commentary on it here.

So the final question is whether or not I recommend the *WordPerfect Office X4* Suite. To me, its strength is primarily as a word processor rather than with any of the other programs in the suite.

The answer, as far as I'm concerned, depends on what word processor you have been using. If it has been Microsoft *Word* or some other non-*WordPerfect* product, I recommend *WordPerfect X4* without hesitation. It's the best version of the best word processor ever, and moving to *WordPerfect* may make you more productive.

But if you have been using *WordPerfect X3*, and the question is should you upgrade to *X4*, for most people my answer would be probably no. Most people will see very little that's new or improved in *X4* over *X3*.

About: *WordPerfect Office X4*

Vendor: Corel Corp.
www.corel.com

Price: Full: \$299.99; Upgrade: \$159.99

Requires: <http://www.corel.com/servlet/Satellite/us/en/Product/1207676528492#tabview=tab4>