

5 Things Every Attorney Should Know (How to do with their computer)

Whether a solo practitioner or partner at a large firm, there are basic computer skills every attorney should have.

1. Document Editing Skills

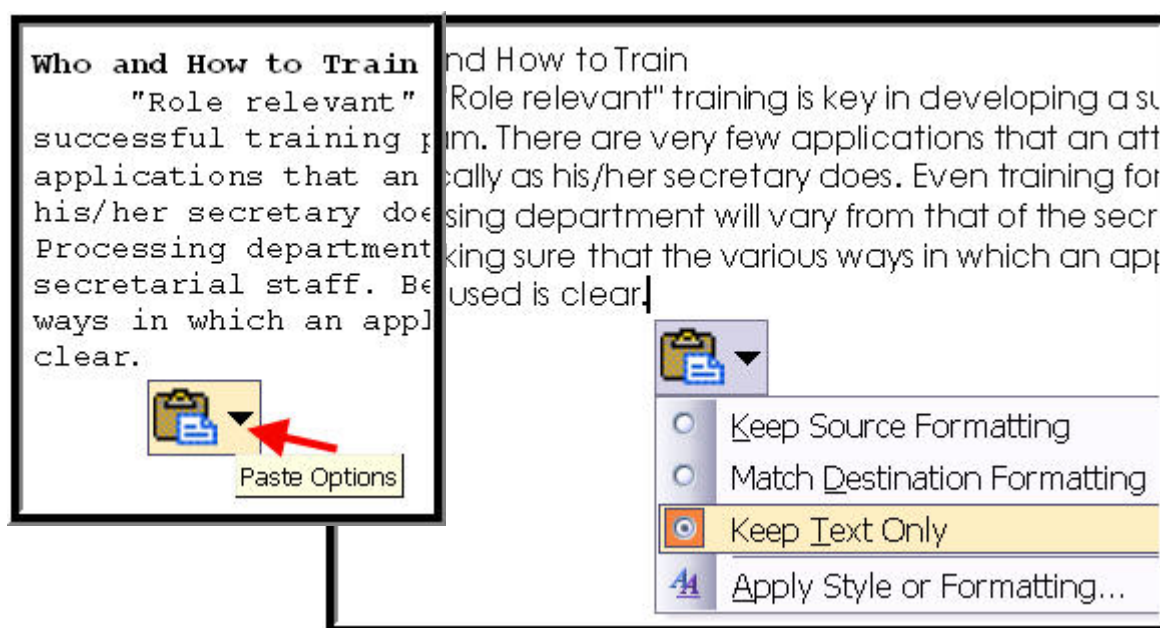
Document creation and editing skills couldn't be any more important these days. Long gone are the days of faxes and copies delivered by courier. Today, the appearance of a word processing document often reveals much about an attorney's skill as the contents of the document itself. A strangely formatted document suggests poor understanding and use of basic technology. Every attorney should, at a minimum understand:

- How a document is formatted (characters, paragraphs, page setup)
- How to add bullets, leveled numbers (1., 1.1, 1.1.1), page numbers
- How to use AutoText to quickly input regularly used phrases, sentences, clauses and paragraphs
- How to use advanced find and replace functions

Understand Cut/Copy and Paste Option in Word

If you only learn one thing make it this: understand how to cut/copy then paste text from one source into your Word (or WordPerfect) document.

When you paste text from another document, an email, or even a web page, the original formatting is retained. That is, if you copy a paragraph from an old WordPerfect document that was automatically numbered, is in Courier New,



and size 12 font then paste it into Word; Word will paste it with its' auto-number

(which by the way you might note even see!) and in Courier New, size 12. In most cases, you will probably want the text to blend seamlessly into your existing document. The Paste Options button allows you to decide how Word should manipulate the text.

Once you've pasted some text, a small icon (a clipboard with a lightning bolt will appear).

Once you click on it, you will be presented with 3 main options.

- *Keep Source Formatting*: keeps the original formatting. Think of it "as-is" – and also add this caveat "without guarantee". This is usually the least desired choice as hidden codes or text can often wreak havoc in Word.
- *Match Destination Formatting*: changes the text formatting of the pasted to match that of the surrounding text and paragraph. This option is better than Keep Source Formatting, but not as good as:
- *Keep Text Only*: strips all previously applied formatting, leaves text good as new as if you had typed it right in yourself.

Web Resources:

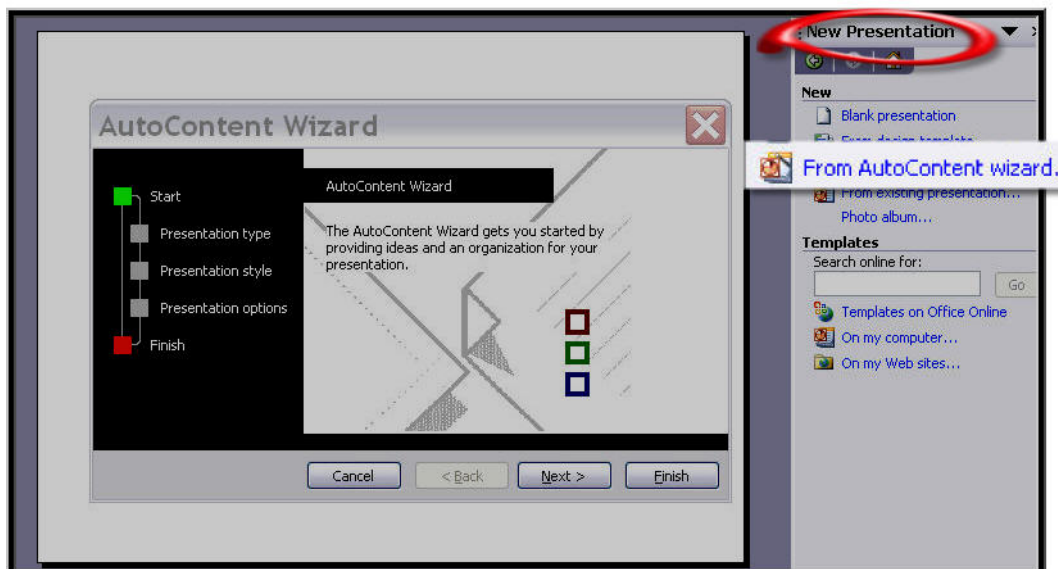
- www.microsoft.com/word
- <http://wordprocessing.about.com>
- www.lawtechpartners.com/wordforlawyers.htm

2. Create a PowerPoint Presentation

"I want to practice law not create pretty presentations in PowerPoint," many attorneys say. Okay, but remember you are in a profession that values communication. And PowerPoint is now a mainstream business communication tool. Unless you understand a little bit about how it works then you really can't use it very effectively. At a minimum learn how to use the AutoContent Wizard. It will get you started quickly.

Here's how.

1. Go to File > New. The **New Presentation** Task Pane will open on the right side of your screen.
2. Under **New**, click **From AutoContent Wizard**, and then follow the instructions in the wizard.
- 3.



4. In the presentation, replace the text suggestions with the text you want, and then make any other changes you want, such as adding or deleting slides, images, clip art, etc.
5. When you finish, on the **File** menu, click **Save**, type a name in the **File name** box, and then click **Save**.

Regardless of *who* creates your presentation, you should be an absolute expert on delivering them. You should be able to set up and troubleshoot the laptop, projector, mouse and pointer. There is no reason that you or your firm shouldn't own a projector. Don't always count on getting a loaner from the client or the group you are presenting to. Many old laptops don't display well with new projectors or vice-versa. Bottom line, you should get a projector to call your own and become familiar with it.

Web Resources:

- <http://www.beyondbullets.com/>
- <http://www.thinkoutsidetheslide.com/powerpointseminars.htm>
- http://www.craigball.com/PowerPersuasion_February%202006.pdf

3. Use Adobe to Create and Comment Documents

Consider this tip mandatory: Adobe Acrobat should be on every computer in your office. Acrobat can be very pricey and there may be some economical alternatives out there but this tool is so important that you should get stingy somewhere else in your budget. Adobe Acrobat adds a virtual printer to your computer that allows you to "print" anything you can send to your regular printer as a PDF file. As more courts adopt e-filing PDF files are going to be used even more than they are now. Wise lawyers will try to stay ahead of this trend by learning as much about PDF files as they can.

Web Resources:

- www.pdfforallawyers.com
- <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/legal.html>

4. Send and Receive Emails from Any Device

These days there is little excuse for not getting an email. One of the most valuable tech tricks you should make the time to learn and understand is that of email setup. You should know how to set up incoming and outgoing emails on any device (desktop, laptop, cell phone).

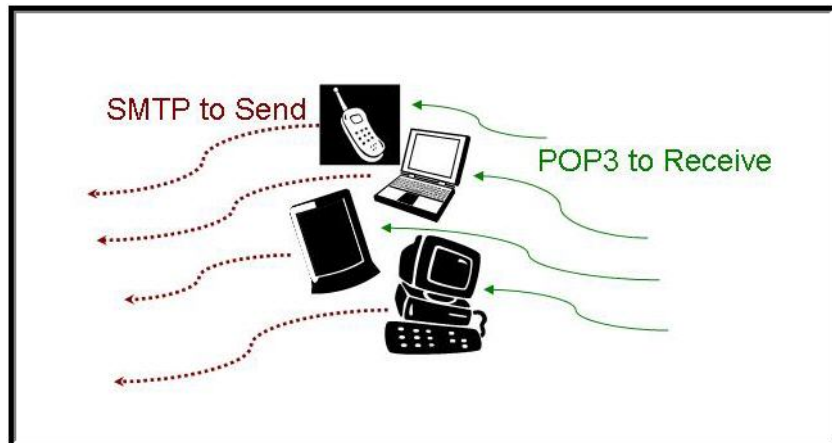
When it comes to this topic, there is a lot that you *could* know but who has time for that? Here is what you *need* to know.

First, like a street, there are two lanes for your email: one coming and one going.

Email comes into your inbox through a pipe called POP3 (Post Office Protocol, if you must know). It goes out through a different pipe called SMTP (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol).

The addresses for those "pipes" can and often are the same. For example, if you use EarthLink - both POP3 and SMTP are: *mail.earthlink.net*.

On the other hand, if you use Gmail and want to download to Outlook or Entourage you would set up POP3 as *pop.gmail.com* and SMTP as *smtp.gmail.com*. You need to know both of these addresses.



The screenshot shows a 'Edit Account' window with the following details:
- Account name: alinares@lawtechpartners.com
- Include this account in my "Send & Receive All" schedule
- Personal information: Name: Adriana Linares, E-mail address: alinares@lawtechpartners.com
- Receiving mail: Account ID: alinares@lawtechpartners.com, POP server: mail.lawtechpartners.com, Password: [masked], Save password in my Mac OS keychain, [Click here for advanced receiving options](#)
- Sending mail: SMTP server: smtp.secureserver.net

The second and third bits of information you need to know are your user ID and password for that email account and how you are expected to input that data. Some service providers require you to always include the domain name when you input the ID (*alinares@lawtechpartners.com*). Other providers might not require the domain so you might just enter *alinares* for the user ID.

5. Nothing But 'Net

The Internet could be one of your most valuable resources when you start using it for everyday tasks. To run a more efficient practice (and life!) you should be taking advantage of many web-based applications. Such as:

- **Web-based email.** You should have a web-based email address or email alternate that you can use and where your clients can reach

you during a crisis or emergency. After Katrina, many attorneys were left email-helpless because their firm email servers were down.

- **Internet Faxing.** There is little use for a traditional fax machine these days. An Internet based fax number will deliver faxes to your inbox as a PDF file and a scanner will allow you to scan paper documents to a file that you can “fax” over the Internet. The recipient is none-the-wiser.
- **Online banking** (especially if you are a solo or small firm that doesn’t have a sophisticated accounting package). You would be hard pressed to find a bank that doesn’t offer statement download and bill payment services that integrate into programs such as QuickBooks or Quicken.
- **Road Warrior?** Learn how to book air and hotel reservations over the Internet. More importantly, learn how to check-in online (or at a kiosk at the airport). The time you won’t be spending in lines at the airport will be spent enjoying a pre-flight cocktail at the bar.
- **Searching.** Learn to efficiently search for court records, public records, on tax appraiser websites and many other online databases.

Technology can be overwhelming and client expectations of how attorneys are using technology don't seem to be waning. Taking the time to learn one tip or tool at a time will not only make you more efficient and less frustrated, but will also impress your clients.

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