

# Special Edition Using Microsoft® Word and Excel in Office 2000

## Chapter 3: Making the Most of Word's Proofing Tools

By Bill Camarda © Que, 2000

(Figures not included)

### In this chapter

- Using Automatic Spelling and Grammar Checking
- Disabling or Hiding Automatic Spelling and Grammar Checking
- Checking Spelling Through the Spelling and Grammar Dialog Box
- Reproofing a Document You've Already Checked
- Controlling Spelling Settings
- Custom Dictionaries for Custom Needs
- A Closer Look at the Grammar Checker
- Using the Word Thesaurus
- Counting a Document's Words, Pages, Lines, and Characters
- Displaying Readability Statistics
- Troubleshooting

## Using Automatic Spelling and Grammar Checking

By default, when you open a file in Word 2000, Word's new automatic language feature checks the text to determine which language you are writing in. It then runs a spell and grammar check on all sections that are written in languages for which it has proofing tools. Since you probably write most documents in your default language, Word typically proofs your entire document.

Word flags all possible errors with wavy underline marks, as shown in Figure 3.1. Potential spelling errors are marked with a red wavy underline--including words not in Word's dictionary, repeated words, apparent errors in capitalization, and combinations of words with the spaces missing. Word flags potential grammar errors with a wavy green line.

**Figure 3.1** *Potential spelling and grammar errors flagged automatically by Word.*

To resolve an individual potential spelling error, right-click on the flagged word. A shortcut menu appears (see Figure 3.2), listing any suggestions Word may have about the correct spelling, as well as a set of choices that depend on the error Word has found. If Word has found a word that does not appear in its dictionary, your choices include

- **Ignore All.** Tells Word to disregard all occurrences of the spelling within the current document (and to stop displaying them with red underline).
- **Add.** Tells Word to add the spelling to your custom dictionary; after you add it, Word won't flag the spelling as an error anymore, in any document that uses the same custom dictionary.
- **AutoCorrect.** Enables you to select a way to correct your spelling and add it to your AutoCorrect file, so Word can automatically make the same correction every time you make this mistake from now on.
- **Language.** Enables you to mark the word as being in another language. If you have proofing tools installed for that language, Word uses those proofing tools automatically to check the word. If you do not have the appropriate proofing tools, Word will skip the word--in other words, the word will not be marked as a potential error.
- **Spelling.** Opens Word's spell checker dialog box, which may provide more alternative spellings than the shortcut menu, and can allow you to save a new word in a different custom dictionary, if you have one.

For more information about custom dictionaries, see "Custom Dictionaries for Custom Needs."

**Figure 3.2** *You can access Word's most commonly used proofing features from the Spelling and Grammar shortcut menu.*

If Word shows a green wavy underline indicating a possible grammar error, right-click to see the grammar shortcut menu. Word may propose choices, as in Figure 3.3, or make general suggestions. You can also

- Instruct Word to Ignore the sentence
- Open the Grammar checker to see more options
- Choose About This Sentence to see more information about the potential error Word has flagged

**Figure 3.3** *In some cases, Word presents a specific suggestion for solving the grammar problem.*

For more information about grammar checking, see "Checking Your Document's Grammar."

You can also resolve errors without using the shortcut menu by simply editing the text. Word checks the word or sentence again as you move your insertion point away from it, and if the word is now spelled correctly or the sentence now uses correct grammar, the corresponding wavy underline disappears.

To quickly find the next spelling or grammar problem, double-click the Spelling and Grammar Status icon on the status bar, or press Alt+F7.

**NOTE:** In Word 2000, Microsoft has increased the size of the spelling dictionary, improved the spelling and grammar suggestions it offers, and attempted to reduce the number of "false positive" grammar errors that were reported in Word 97.

If you are upgrading from a version of Word earlier than Word 97, you will also notice several additional improvements. The Word spell checker now recognizes the names of all countries, United States cities over 30,000 in population, all Fortune 1000 companies, and a much wider selection of first names. By default, the spell checker no longer flags words in uppercase letters, words containing numbers, URLs, Universal Naming Convention names for network locations (such as \\server\sharename), email addresses, registered usernames, and organization information.

In addition, Word 2000's *AutoCorrect* feature has been enhanced to correct more of the most common spelling errors and typos writers make.

Together, all these improvements should mean that proofing will take significantly less time and cause much less aggravation than it once did.

## **Disabling or Hiding Automatic Spelling and Grammar Checking**

Automatic spelling and grammar checking isn't everyone's cup of tea. Many people appreciate the way it catches typos and other inadvertent errors as they make them--without going through the trouble of a formal spelling or grammar check. Others find it distracting and want to turn it off immediately--especially the grammar checker, which has improved but is still far from perfect. The feature also slows down Word slightly.

If you prefer not to use automatic spell checking or automatic grammar checking, you can easily turn off one or both of them. Choose **T**ools, **O**ptions, and click the Spelling & Grammar tab. Then, to disable automatic spell checking, clear the Check Spelling as You Type check box. To disable automatic grammar checking, clear the Check Grammar as You Type check box. When you're finished, click OK.

You can also display Spelling & Grammar options by right-clicking the Spelling & Grammar Status icon on the status bar, and choosing **O**ptions from the shortcut menu.

For more information about spelling options, see "Controlling Spelling Settings"

In large documents with many potential errors, Automatic Spelling and Grammar Checking sometimes turn themselves off, displaying a prompt that they can no longer display wavy green or red lines in your document.

Another option is to enable Word to keep checking the document but prevent it from displaying the potential problems with red or green underlines. You can also do this from the Spelling & Grammar tab of the Options dialog box. Check the boxes **H**ide Spelling Errors in This Document and **H**ide Grammatical Errors in This Document.

Later, when you check the document's spelling or grammar using the Spelling and Grammar dialog box, the process goes faster because Word has already found the

potential errors. Or, when you're ready, you can clear these check boxes and fix all your potential errors at once from within the document.

## Checking Spelling Through the Spelling and Grammar Dialog Box

In addition to the streamlined spelling and grammar tools Word makes available through the shortcut menu, Word provides a powerful spelling and grammar checking dialog box that gives you even more options for fixing your current document--and improving the way you check future documents. To access it, click Spelling and Grammar on the Standard toolbar, or press F7.

The Spelling and Grammar dialog box opens, displaying the first potential error it finds (see Figure 3.4).

**Figure 3.4** *The Spelling and Grammar dialog box, showing a spelling error and offering suggestions.*

Word displays both spelling and grammar errors in the Spelling and Grammar dialog box. If you want to check only spelling, clear the Check Grammar with Spelling check box.

The sentence containing the potential problem appears in the Not in Dictionary scroll box; the incorrect word appears in red. You now have several options:

- If one of the words shown in the Suggestions list is correct, click Change; Word changes the spelling to match that suggestion.
- If you want Word to change the spelling wherever it appears in the document, click Change All.
- If you want Word to add the correction to its AutoCorrect database, so Word can fix the error as soon as you make it from now on, click AutoCorrect.
- If the word is spelled correctly, and you want Word to add it to the custom dictionary (so the word will never be flagged as wrong again), click Add.
- If Word hasn't made any acceptable suggestions, but you know how to fix the error manually, edit the word in the Not in Dictionary scroll box, and click Change (or Change All or AutoCorrect).

ë For more information about AutoCorrect, see Chapter 4, "Automating Your Documents: AutoCorrect, AutoFormat, AutoText, and AutoSummarize."

No matter which option you choose, Word follows your instructions and automatically moves to the next potential error it finds. If you've chosen to proof only part of your document (by selecting that part of the document before running spell check), Word offers to proof the rest after it finishes. Otherwise, it reports that the spelling and grammar check is complete.

ë For more information about proofing portions of a document, see "Proofing Only Part of a Document."

If a change you make to fix a word or syntax error affects surrounding text, you can edit any part of the sentence that appears in the Not in Dictionary scroll box--not just the incorrect portion.

Or, if you prefer, you can click inside the document and make your edits there. The Spelling and Grammar dialog box remains open. When you finish, click inside the dialog box and click Resume.

## **Why Proofreading Is Still a Necessity**

Incorrect usage and misspellings are unprofessional. Unfortunately, running a spell check isn't enough to solve the problem: Proofread your documents manually, as well. For example, spell checkers--even those with associated grammar checkers, like Word's--often miss homonyms. If you misspell "sight" as "site," odds are Word won't flag the problem.

### **Proofing Only Part of a Document**

Word enables you to check your entire document or any part of it, including just a single word. If you don't want to check your entire document, select only the text you want to check--even if it's just a single word.

You can also tell Word to never proof a portion of your document. To do so, select the text you don't want proofed. Next, choose Tools, Language, Set Language. The Language dialog box opens. Check the Do Not Check Spelling or Grammar check box, and click OK.

This turns off both spelling and grammar: You can't tell Word to avoid spell checking part of a document while still grammar checking it (or vice versa).

### **Undoing Spelling or Grammar Changes You Just Made**

You can always undo your most recent spelling or grammar changes (except for adding words to a custom dictionary). From within the Spelling and Grammar dialog box, click Undo. If you've already finished spell checking, you can still click the Undo button on the Standard toolbar to undo one change at a time, starting with the last change you made.

## **Reproofing a Document You've Already Checked**

If you proof a document a second time, Word doesn't recheck the spelling of words (or the syntax of sentences) you already proofed. If you want Word to catch previously caught errors, reopen the Spelling and Grammar Options dialog box (either choose Tools, Options and click the Spelling & Grammar tab or click the Options button inside the Spelling and Grammar dialog box) and click the Recheck Document button. Word asks you to confirm that you want to recheck text you've already proofed; choose Yes.

## **Controlling Spelling Settings**

The Spelling & Grammar tab of the Options dialog box (see Figure 3.5) gives you extensive control over how you interact with Word's spell checker. You can display this

dialog box by clicking the Options button in the Spelling and Grammar dialog box, or by choosing Tools, Options, and clicking the Spelling & Grammar tab.

You've already learned about the first two options in this dialog box: Check Spelling as You Type and Hide Spelling Errors in This Document. Word also offers you several additional controls:

- **Always Suggest Corrections.** Word's spelling suggestions are often inaccurate in highly technical documents or documents that contain a lot of arcane jargon. For such documents, to save time, you might want to disable Word's suggested spellings feature.
- **Suggest from Main Dictionary Only.** By default, Word looks in all open dictionaries to make suggestions about spelling changes. This can take time. It also means that Word may recognize as correct certain words that are actually incorrect when read in context. If you're sure your current document won't benefit from words you added to your custom dictionaries, check this box.
- **Ignore Words in UPPERCASE.** No spell checker understands all acronyms. Because most acronyms are all caps, you can tell Word not to flag words that are all caps. (This feature is turned on by default.)

**Figure 3.5** *You can control the behavior of spelling and grammar from the Spelling & Grammar tab of the Options dialog box.*

- **Ignore Words with Numbers.** Some product names combine words and numbers. Suppose that you sell a 686MX computer, a DX677 CD player, and a KFE100 fire extinguisher. Word might flag each of these as incorrect--a real problem if you're proofing a long price list. Therefore, by default, Word ignores word/number combinations.
- **Ignore Internet and File Addresses.** Until recently, most spell checkers have incorrectly flagged Internet file addresses such as the Web address `www.microsoft.com` or the filename `c:\windows\system.dat`. If you leave this check box checked, Word doesn't spell check addresses such as these.

The Spelling & Grammar tab can control one additional aspect of Word spell checking: custom dictionaries. These are covered next.

## Custom Dictionaries for Custom Needs

When you use Word's spell checker to add words to your dictionary, Word stores these in a custom dictionary file called CUSTOM.DIC. It then consults CUSTOM.DIC whenever you run a spell check--thereby making sure that it doesn't flag words as incorrect that you indicated are accurate. If you wish, you can also create other custom dictionaries--up to ten--for special purposes. For example, if you do legal editing on only Tuesdays and Thursdays, you can maintain a legal custom dictionary and use it on only those days.

The following sections show you how to work with Word's custom dictionaries.

## Creating a New Custom Dictionary

To create a new custom dictionary, choose Tools, Options, Spelling & Grammar, and click Dictionaries. The Custom Dictionary dialog box appears (see Figure 3.6), listing custom dictionaries that already exist. Dictionaries that are currently enabled--in other words, dictionaries Word is currently using in spell checking--appear checked.

**Figure 3.6** *The Custom Dictionaries dialog box shows the custom dictionaries being used during a spelling and grammar check.*

To create a new dictionary, click New. The Create Custom Dictionary dialog box opens, which is similar to a standard Save As dialog box. Enter a name for your dictionary and click Save. The dictionary now appears checked in the Custom Dictionaries dialog box. Note that words you add to custom dictionaries during a spell check are placed in whichever enabled custom dictionary is listed first.

## Disabling a Custom Dictionary

From the Custom Dictionaries dialog box, you can also make a custom dictionary unavailable by clearing its check box. While the dictionary is unavailable, keeping it in the list allows you to make it available again without first browsing your system to locate it.

To make the dictionary disappear entirely from the list of dictionaries, select it and click Remove. Note that this doesn't erase the dictionary file; you can use the Add button to locate it, place it back on your list, and make it available again.

## Choosing a Custom Dictionary While Spell Checking

Suppose, during a spell check, that you find a word that you want to add to a custom dictionary other than the default CUSTOM.DIC file that Word normally uses. To select a different custom dictionary

1. Make sure the word you want to add appears highlighted in the Spelling and Grammar dialog box.
2. Click Options.
3. Click Dictionaries.
4. Select the custom dictionary you want to use, and make sure it is checked.
5. Click OK twice to return to the Spelling and Grammar dialog box.
6. Click Add to add the word to the dictionary you've selected. Any additional words you add to the custom dictionary will be placed in the dictionary you've selected, until you choose a different one.
7. Continue checking spelling and grammar as usual. If you want to add words to a different custom dictionary, change the custom dictionary by following steps 1-5 again.

## Editing a Custom Dictionary

While you're spell checking, it's easy to mistakenly add words to the custom dictionary that shouldn't be there. If you do enter words in a custom dictionary by mistake, however, it's easy to delete them. You can also manually add lists of words to a custom dictionary--you don't have to wait for them to show up in your documents. For example, you might want to add the last names of all the employees in your company or the company names of all your clients.

Word dictionary files are ASCII (text only) lists of words with a .DIC extension. When you open a custom dictionary, you can add as many words as you want--either manually, or by cutting and pasting them from another file. The only limitation is that you must save the file as Text Only (TXT) and place only one word on each line.

Word stores words in custom dictionaries in alphabetical order, with all capitalized words appearing before all lowercased words. However, you do not need to store your words in this order--you can insert them any way you want. Word reorganizes your list automatically the next time you add a word to this dictionary during a spell check.

To edit a custom dictionary, display the Spelling & Grammar tab of the Tools, Options dialog box; then follow these steps:

1. Click Dictionaries.
2. Select the dictionary you want to edit.
3. Click Edit.
4. Word displays a dialog box telling you that it must stop automatic spell checking, and that you'll have to re-enable it manually. Click OK to acknowledge this.
5. The dictionary opens in a new Word editing window.
6. Make your edits, and click the Save button on the Standard toolbar.
7. Choose File, Close to close the dictionary file.

*If you cannot edit your custom dictionary, see "What to Do If You Can't Edit Your Custom Dictionary," in "Troubleshooting" at the end of this chapter.*

When you edit a custom dictionary, Word turns off automatic spelling and grammar checking. After you close the dictionary file, you must turn these features on again. Do so by choosing Tools, Options, clicking the Spelling & Grammar tab, and placing checks in the Check Spelling as You Type and Check Grammar as You Type check boxes.

## Flagging "Correct" Words as Potential Errors

Occasionally, you might want to have the spell checker flag a word as a possible misspelling even though the word is in the dictionary. Imagine that you noticed you often mistype "liar" as "lira," both of which are spelled correctly. Because you write crime novels, not reports on European currency exchange, wouldn't it be nifty if the spell

checker would always question *lira* as a misspelling, rather than assume that you know what you're doing?

You can't remove a word from Word's basic dictionary. You can, however, create a supplemental file called an *exclude dictionary*, which includes words you want to flag as problems even if they're spelled correctly.

When you create an exclude dictionary, all your Office applications will use it, flagging the words in the exclude dictionary as possible errors even if they are actually correct.

Like custom dictionaries, exclude dictionaries are ASCII files with one word on each line. Exclude dictionaries use the same file name as the main dictionaries with which they're connected, except they have an EXC extension. They are stored in the same folder as the main dictionary.

If you're using the default dictionary for American English, the name of the exclude dictionary you create will be MSSP3EN.EXC.

In Office 2000, the default location for the exclude dictionary is the following path: `_<winversion>\<profile>\application data\microsoft\proof`, where `<winversion>` is your main Windows folder, and `<profile>` is the user profile associated with this installation of Office. Since this is a different location from the location used by previous versions of Office, if Word is installed over an existing version, your preceding custom and exclude dictionary files will be copied to the new proof folder. To create an exclude dictionary, edit it manually and save it as Text Only with the correct name and extension in the correct folder. (Make sure Word doesn't append a TXT extension to the filename, or it won't work.)

### **Communicating with Word: Avoid Clipped Words**

When working in an industry with its own jargon, it is easy to fall into the trap of using truncated or clipped words: saying "lab" instead of "laboratory," or "specs" instead of "specifications." When writing, use the formal word, unless you're positive the clipped version will be understood by your audience.

For instance, if you're communicating with a colleague in your laboratory, "lab" is acceptable; if you are communicating with a Congressman investigating your safety procedures, it isn't.

As clipped words are not abbreviations, they should not be followed by periods, nor preceded by apostrophes. Never use clipped "slang," like *thru* (through) and *nite* (night).

## **A Closer Look at the Grammar Checker**

Word's grammar checker, like all contemporary grammar checkers, follows rules that identify potential writing problems. Word's grammar checker has gradually been refined; however, it still cannot "understand" your documents, so it's best to have modest expectations.

On a good day, the grammar checker might pleasantly surprise you--catching things you would never have noticed. On another day, it may flag many "errors" that are, in fact, not

errors at all. Later in this chapter, you'll learn to personalize the grammar checker to catch only the types of errors you actually make, with fewer false alarms.

## Checking Your Document's Grammar

As you learned earlier in this chapter, Word flags potential grammar problems as you work, displaying them with a green wavy underline. To get Word's suggestions, right-click anywhere in the underlined text. Word displays either potential solutions or a general description of what it thinks is wrong. For example, in Figure 3.7, Word recognizes that you've used the wrong word-- "their" instead of "there."

**Figure 3.7** *Viewing Word's suggested solutions for a potential grammar problem. If you don't agree with Word's grammar checker, click Ignore, and the green wavy underline disappears.*

If you want to take a closer look at your document's grammar, choose Grammar. The Spelling and Grammar dialog box opens, with the questionable phrase displayed in green (see Figure 3.8). The text box is named after the rule Word believes you have broken.

**Figure 3.8** *The Spelling and Grammar dialog box, displaying a potential grammar error.*

Word displays possible improvements in the Suggestions scroll box. The category of problem it has identified appears above the flagged text. Often, none of Word's suggestions are ideal; you can then edit the text manually until the green wavy underlines disappear.

It's also possible that you won't agree there's a problem at all. To tell Word to ignore the sentence, click Ignore. To tell Word never to flag problems for the same reason it flagged this one, click Ignore Rule. To leave the sentence alone without making any decisions, click Next Sentence.

Word follows your instructions and moves to the next potential error it finds--either a spelling or a grammar error. If you've chosen to proof only part of your document, after Word finishes, it offers to proof the rest. Otherwise, it reports that it has finished proofing.

*If Word keeps checking grammar during a spell check even after you've turned it off, see "How to Completely Disable Grammar Checking," in "Troubleshooting" at the end of this chapter.*

## Avoiding the Passive Voice

Word's grammar checker is especially useful for detecting sentences written in a passive voice. In almost all cases, active voice is superior, for two reasons. First, passive voice is wordier and usually more convoluted. Second, it is often ambiguous and uninformative.

One key to avoiding passive voice is to avoid the use of the word "it" whenever possible. For example, don't say: "it has been reported." Rather, say "three of our top customers report."

## Strategies for Making Grammar Checking Work More Effectively

Word's grammar checker contains 26 fundamental rules that it can check in your document, ranging from identifying the passive voice to recognizing cliches. Word has incorporated five writing styles into its grammar checker, which proof based on varying combinations of these rules. These five writing styles are: Standard, Casual, Formal, Technical, and Custom. For example, Word's built-in Casual style checks documents against only five rules, whereas Formal checks for 24 of 26 rules--excluding only gender-specific and first-person usage.

You can change the settings for any of these writing styles to apply a "mix and match" of grammatical rules to the grammar check of your document. Word provides a Custom writing style you can use to build the rules you want to use for the way you write.

One strategy for deciding how to deal with the grammar checker is to run a full grammar check on a few of your documents, noticing which type of errors you make most often, and then customize the grammar checker to flag only those errors. The grammar checker is especially good at catching passive sentences, subject-verb disagreements, incorrect punctuation, and cliches.

Writing style preferences are stored with *templates*, so you can set different preferences for different templates. Once you've done so, the appropriate settings are automatically used when you create a document based on the template.

For example, you can make sure that contracts are proofed using the Formal style while your personal correspondence is proofed using Casual by selecting the correct template for each document.

For more information about creating templates, see Chapter 1, "Templates, Wizards, and Add-Ins."

### Choosing Which Writing Style to Apply

The easiest decision you can make about grammar checking--aside from whether to use it at all--is which writing style to apply. To match Word's grammar checking style with the type of documents you create, choose Tools, Options; then click the Spelling & Grammar tab. In the Writing Style drop-down list box, choose Standard, Casual, Formal, Technical, or Custom; then choose OK.

### Choosing Which Rules of Grammar to Apply

You can edit any of Word's five writing styles. You might generally like one of Word's existing writing styles, but you want to tweak it a bit. Or you might want to create your own Custom writing style from scratch. To edit a writing style, display the Spelling & Grammar tab of the Options dialog box, and click Settings. The Grammar Settings dialog box opens, as shown in Figure 3.9. Then, follow these steps:

1. In the Writing Style drop-down box, choose the writing style you want to edit. Notice that the Custom writing style highlights every potential problem except the use of first-person language.

2. Check the boxes corresponding to rules you want the grammar checker to enforce; clear the boxes corresponding to rules you want to ignore.
3. When you're finished, click OK.

**Figure 3.9** *The Grammar Settings dialog box gives you control over how Word checks your grammar.*

For an excellent explanation of Word's grammar and style rules, click the Office Assistant, and ask: "How do I set Grammar and Writing Style Options?"

If you later decide that you would prefer to use Word's default grammar settings, reopen the Grammar Settings dialog box, choose the writing style you want to reset, and choose Reset All.

## **Additional Grammar Settings**

Word's grammar settings include three settings you may be interested in even if you never use grammar checking for anything else. They are listed at the top of the Grammar and Style Options scroll box in the Grammar Settings dialog box:

- **Comma Required Before Last List Item.** Some individuals swear by serial commas; others swear against them. If you're a professional writer, you may find that some of your clients feel each way, making it very easy to make mistakes! You can instruct Word to make sure you always use a serial comma before last item a list, or make sure you never use one, or ignore the issue completely (don't check).
- **Punctuation Required with Quotes.** You can specify whether you prefer to place punctuation inside or outside your quote marks, or whether Word should ignore how you punctuate quotes.
- **Spaces Required Between Sentences.** If you are of a certain age, your typing teacher taught you always to place two spaces between sentences. Now, in this era of typeset and desktop published documents using attractive fonts, the standard has changed: You should generally use one space between sentences. You can use this setting to specify one or two spaces between sentences, or to instruct Word to ignore the issue \_altogether.

You might decide that one or more of these three settings are all the grammar you ever want to check. In that case, create a Custom Writing style with all the Grammar and Style Options boxes cleared, and with the settings of your choice for commas, punctuation, and spaces between sentences.

## **Using the Word Thesaurus**

As you write, you may sometimes find yourself getting into a rut--using the same word or phrase repeatedly when another word might make your point more clearly. That's what a thesaurus is for. Word 2000 comes with a significantly enhanced thesaurus--one that you might find much more effective than the version you've used before.

To use the thesaurus, right-click on the word for which you would like to see synonyms (similar meanings), and choose **S**ynonyms on the shortcut menu (see Figure 3.10). Or, select the word and press Shift+F7. Select an option to use in place of the existing word.

**Figure 3.10** *Choosing a synonym from the shortcut menu.*

Word may need to install the thesaurus the first time you use it.

If you don't like any of the options Word presents, and you want to explore more, choose **T**hesaurus from the shortcut menu. Word's Thesaurus dialog box opens, displaying a list of synonyms--often a longer list than the one you already saw (see Figure 3.11).

**Figure 3.11** *Looking up a synonym for a word.*

If the word you want to look up isn't in the document yet, click on a blank area in the **\_**editing window, and press Shift+F7. Word displays the Thesaurus dialog box with all its text boxes empty.

The word you select appears in the **L**ooked Up combo box. To the right, in the **R**eplace with **S**ynonym box, Word proposes the most likely equivalent term. The example in Figure 3.11 asks for synonyms for the word "place," and Word provides "put" as the most likely synonym. It also provides several additional alternatives in the **R**eplace with **S**ynonym scroll box. When you find the synonym you're looking for, select it, and click on the **R**eplace button. Word substitutes the synonym for the original word in your document.

The thesaurus also enables you to find synonyms for the particular usage of a word that can be used in multiple senses. For example, in Figure 3.11, the word "place" can be used in several senses, which are listed in the **M**eanings box. If you want to use it as a noun ("That was a great place we had dinner.") you might select "location (n.)" in the **M**eanings box. When you do, new synonyms for "put" appear in the **R**eplace with **S**ynonym box to the right: "space," "spot," "area," and so on.

When Word presents a list of synonyms, you might decide you would like to review the meanings and synonyms of one of those words. To do so, select the synonym and then click the **L**ooked Up drop-down list box. Sometimes you might follow a trail of several suggested replacements before arriving at the word you want.

If you want to return to a previous thesaurus request, you can. Click the down-arrow on **\_**the **L**ooked Up drop-down list box to show all the requests you've made since opening **\_**the Thesaurus dialog box. Click on the word you want, and the synonyms for that word reappear.

## **Finding Antonyms**

In many cases, the Word thesaurus can show you antonyms (opposite meanings) of a word or phrase. Antonyms are followed by the word *Antonym* in parentheses. As with synonyms, you can select an antonym and click **R**eplace to place it in your document.

## When Word Can't Find a Synonym or Antonym

Sometimes Word can't find a synonym for a word. Then, in case you might have misspelled it, Word presents you with an alphabetical list of words with similar spellings. If you spelled the word wrong, you can pick the correct word from this list and search Word's thesaurus for its synonyms.

## Counting a Document's Words, Pages, Lines, and Characters

Often, you need to count the words, characters, lines, paragraphs, or pages in your document. For example, in creating your document, you might have been given a word limit you aren't permitted to exceed. To get an accurate estimate of your document's current size, choose Tools, Word Count. Word reads your document and displays the Word Count dialog box (see Figure 3.12).

**Figure 3.12** *The Word Count dialog box.*

By default, Word does not include footnotes and endnotes in its count. If you want them included, check the Include Footnotes and Endnotes check box; Word recounts immediately.

**TIP:** Word displays an approximate character count in the status bar whenever it opens an existing document.

You can also count words, characters, paragraphs, and sentences by running Readability Statistics, as discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Counts of pages, paragraphs, lines, words, and characters are also available through the Statistics tab of the File, Properties dialog box.

**TIP:** You can't print the results from the Word count dialog box, but you can use the NumChars, NumPages, and NumWords fields to insert that information in your document.

The project at the end of Chapter 18, "Automating Your Documents with Field Codes," shows how to build a cover sheet that includes this and other information at the beginning of any document you want.

## Displaying Readability Statistics

Sometimes word counts aren't enough: you want to know how readable your document is, and whether it is suitable for the audience that is to read it.

To display readability statistics, choose Tools, Options, and click the Spelling & Grammar tab. Check the Show Readability Statistics check box, and click OK. Then, check spelling and grammar in your document by pressing F7 or choosing Tools, Spelling and Grammar. Allow Word to check your document completely; at the end, it displays a dialog box similar to the one in Figure 3.13.

## Interpreting Readability Statistics

The statistics listed in the Readability Statistics dialog box are based on an estimate of the number of words in an average sentence, and the average number of syllables in each word. The Flesch Reading Ease score in the Readability field of the dialog box rates text on a scale of 1 to 100; the higher the score, the more understandable the document. You should generally shoot for at least 60 points.

The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level score rates text based on the average United States grade level of education needed to understand it. For example, a score of 7.0 means an average seventh-grader should understand the document. If you write a nontechnical document for a general audience, and it receives a score much higher than 8 or 9, consider editing to make the document simpler.

**Figure 3.13** *A sample Readability Statistics dialog box as it appears after checking spelling and grammar in a document.*

## Troubleshooting

### What to Do If You Can't Edit Your Custom Dictionary

Two causes are possible. First, your custom dictionary might be empty: You can't edit it until it contains at least one word. Second, if you're running Word across the network, your network administrator may have set CUSTOM.DIC or its folder as Read Only. Ask permission to create your own local copy of CUSTOM.DIC and store it where you can access it.

### How to Completely Disable Grammar Checking

You may have hidden grammar mistakes rather than disabled grammar checking. Or, you may have disabled Check Grammar as You Type. To completely disable Grammar Checking, choose Tools, Options, and click the Spelling & Grammar tab. Then, remove the checks from the Check Grammar as You Type and the Check Grammar with Spelling check boxes.