



An Extended Guide · No. 1918

Do You Have to Pay for Word? Free Ways to Write a Letter

Four free, friendly ways to
type, print, and send a letter

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★ The honest answer: no, you don't

If you write a handful of letters a year, you do not have to pay a penny for Word. There are several free, trustworthy ways to type, print, and save a letter. Let me show you the gentle ones.

You can write a letter for free

For years, writing on a computer meant buying Microsoft Word. That's simply not true anymore. Today there are good, free programs that do everything a letter-writer needs — and this guide walks you through them without any rush or jargon.

I'm Bill, from Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County. I help a lot of folks who were told they had to pay a yearly fee just to type a note to a grandchild. You don't. We'll find the option that feels easiest for you.

None of this means Word is bad — it's wonderful. It just means paying for it is a choice, not a requirement. If you'd rather keep your money for something else, you have good company and good options.

The whole guide, on one page

If these few points stick, you'll never feel pressured to pay for Word again.

- ❑ Word itself has a free version you use in a web browser — same look, no charge.
- ❑ Google Docs is free, saves your work automatically, and is very forgiving.
- ❑ LibreOffice is a free program you install once and keep forever.
- ❑ If you have a Mac, iPad, or iPhone, Apple's Pages is free and already there.
- ❑ All of them can open and save the Word files other people send you.
- ❑ For a few letters a year, any one of these is plenty.

✓ Pick one and stick with it

You don't need to learn all four. Choose the one that fits the device you already use, get comfortable with it, and ignore the rest. Simpler is better.

Free Word, right in your browser

Here's the surprise most people miss: Microsoft offers a free version of Word that runs in a web browser, no yearly plan required.

You sign in with a free Microsoft account at office.com, click Word, and type away. It looks and behaves like the Word you remember, just a little simpler. Your letters save online automatically, and you can print them like anything else.

The free web version doesn't have every advanced feature of the paid program, but for a letter — choosing a font, setting margins, printing — it has everything you'll reach for. And it's genuinely free, from Microsoft itself.

✓ Best if you like Word already

If you learned on Word and want the familiar screen without the bill, the free web version is the gentlest landing spot. Same furniture, no rent.

Google Docs — free and very forgiving

Google Docs is a free writing program that lives in your browser. Many folks find it the easiest of all, once they try it.

With a free Google account, you go to docs.google.com and start writing. The thing people love most: it saves every word as you go, all by itself. There's no Save button to remember and no lost work if the computer hiccups.

It opens Word files people email you, and it can save your letter as a Word file or a PDF to send back. If you already use Gmail or an Android phone, you likely have a Google account without even realizing it.

★ The no-lost-work feature is a gift

I steer a lot of worried folks to Google Docs for one reason: it can't lose your letter, because it's always saving. If 'I lost what I typed' is your fear, this is your friend. Want me to set it up with you? Call (330) 200-8042.

LibreOffice — a free program you keep forever

If you'd rather have a program installed on your computer, like the old days, LibreOffice is free, honest, and here to stay.

You download it once from libreoffice.org — and only from there — and it installs Writer (like Word) and Calc (like Excel), with no account and no yearly fee, ever. It opens and saves Word and Excel files, so you can trade documents with anyone.

The screen looks a touch old-fashioned compared to today's Word, but everything a letter needs is right where you'd expect it. For folks who don't want anything to do with online sign-ins, this is often the comfiest fit. We have a whole guide devoted to it.

! Download only from the real site

Type libreoffice.org yourself; don't click a 'LibreOffice download' ad. The real program is free, so any site demanding payment or bundling extra junk is not the one you want.

Apple's Pages — already free on your Mac or iPad

If your computer is a Mac, or you write on an iPad or iPhone, you already own a lovely free writing program called Pages.

Pages comes free with every Apple device. It's clean, friendly, and makes a handsome letter with very little fuss. It can open Word files and save your letters as Word files or PDFs, so sending to a Windows friend is no trouble at all.

Apple also offers Numbers (like Excel) and Keynote (like PowerPoint) free on the same devices. For most home writing, an Apple owner never needs to buy anything — we cover the Apple apps in their own guide.

✓ If you're an Apple household, start here

There's no reason to download anything or sign up for a plan — Pages is already on your device, waiting. Look for the orange icon with a pen.

Will other people be able to open my letters?

This is the worry that keeps people paying for Word. Set it aside — all of these free programs speak Word's language.

Each free option can open the Word (.docx) files people send you, and each can save your letter as a Word file so the person receiving it sees it perfectly. You are not locked out of anything by going free.

When in doubt, there's an even safer trick: save your finished letter as a PDF. A PDF looks identical on every computer and phone, can't be accidentally changed, and opens everywhere. For a letter you just want someone to read or print, PDF is ideal. Our Word-to-PDF guide shows how.

✓ PDF is the universal handshake

If you ever fret 'will they be able to open this,' send a PDF. It's the one format that opens the same way for absolutely everyone.

Is there a catch? What free leaves out

Honesty matters, so here's the fair trade. For a few letters a year, none of this will bother you — but you should know.

- Free versions skip some advanced, business-style features you'd likely never use for a letter.
- The web and Google options need an internet connection to work; LibreOffice and Pages do not.
- Each looks a little different from the paid Word, so there's a small 'where's that button' learning curve.
- Fancy, heavily formatted documents can shift slightly when passed between different programs.

For writing, printing, and sending letters — the thing you actually do — none of these drawbacks will slow you down. They matter mostly to heavy business users, which is a different guide.

★ If a feature's missing, we'll find a free way

Nine times out of ten, the thing you want is right there under a different name. If you hit a wall, call me and I'll find the free way to do it. (330) 200-8042.

Writing a letter, step by calm step

Whichever free tool you pick, a letter comes together the same gentle way. Here's the whole dance.

- ❑ Open the program and start a new, blank document.
- ❑ Type your letter the way you'd type on a typewriter — just the words.
- ❑ Pick a clear font and make it a comfortable size (12 or 14 is kind to the eyes).
- ❑ Read it back once, slowly, for any slips.
- ❑ Print it, or save it as a PDF to email.

That's the entire process. Don't worry about margins and fancy spacing to start — the default settings make a perfectly proper letter. You can fuss with the trimmings later if you ever want to.

✓ Bigger text while you write

Every one of these lets you zoom the view larger while you type, without changing how the letter prints. Look for a slider or a plus sign near a corner — it's a blessing for tired eyes.

Two kinds of readers, two sets of needs

The easiest free tool depends on what you already use. Pick the one that matches your everyday device and you'll be writing in minutes.

If you mostly use a computer

A Windows PC or a Mac that you sit down at to write. You want something that feels like sitting at a desk, whether online or installed.

- Windows and like Word's look: use free Word on the web.
- Want it installed with no sign-in: use LibreOffice.
- Nervous about losing work: Google Docs saves every word for you.
- On a Mac: Pages is already there and lovely.

If you mostly use a phone or tablet

You tap out notes and letters on an iPad, iPhone, or Android tablet more than on a computer. There are free apps made for exactly that.

- iPad or iPhone: Pages is free and touch-friendly.
- Android tablet: the free Google Docs app fits right in.
- Any tablet: the free Microsoft Word app handles letters nicely.
- A paired keyboard makes longer letters far easier on a tablet.

★ Tell me your device and I'll pick for you

There's no need to compare all four. Tell me what you write on — a PC, a Mac, an iPad — and I'll tell you the single easiest free choice. Call (330) 200-8042.

Saving a letter so you can find it again

The second-biggest worry after 'can they open it' is 'where did it go.' Let's make saving simple and findable.

When you save, the program asks for a name and a place. Give it a plain name you'll recognize — 'Letter to Susan Oct 2026' beats 'Document1' — and save it to your Documents folder, the sensible home for such things.

Google Docs and free web Word save online automatically, so there's nothing to press; you find your letters by signing back in. LibreOffice and Pages save onto your own computer, where the Documents folder keeps them tidy.

✓ Name it like you'd label a folder

A clear, dated name is the whole secret to finding things later. Imagine yourself looking for it next spring, and name it so that future you says 'ah, there it is.'

Printing your letter without a fuss

Printing is the same across all of these, and it's easier than it looks. Here's the reliable path.

Look for the word Print under a File menu, or press the Control key (Command on a Mac) and the letter P together. A preview appears so you can see the page before any paper is used — a lovely way to catch a problem first.

Check that the right printer is chosen and that it says one copy, then print. If the preview looks cramped or spills onto a second page you didn't expect, our Word letters guide explains the margin settings that fix it.

! Always peek at the preview

The print preview is your friend. Thirty seconds of looking saves paper, ink, and the little irritation of a letter that printed wrong.

Keeping your writing safe

A letter you spent an afternoon on deserves a little protection. Good news: free doesn't mean fragile.

The online options — Google Docs and web Word — are automatically backed up, so a dead computer doesn't take your letters with it. That's a real advantage of writing online.

With installed programs like LibreOffice and Pages, your letters sit on your own computer, so it's wise to keep a copy somewhere else too — a USB stick, or a free online folder. Our photo-and-file backup guides cover easy ways to do that.

★ Let's set up a simple safety net

Losing a year of letters because a hard drive quit is a heartbreak I'd love to spare you. On a visit I can set up an automatic backup so you never think about it again. Call (330) 200-8042.

When paying for Word does make sense

Free fits most letter-writers. But I'd be doing you a disservice not to say when the paid program earns its keep.

If you write constantly, juggle long or heavily formatted documents, need every advanced feature, or simply find deep comfort in the full, familiar Word, then a subscription or a one-time purchase may be worth it. Comfort and habit have real value.

Our which-plan guide and our buy-once-vs-subscribe guide lay out the paid choices if you decide to go that way. There's no wrong answer — only the one that fits how much you write.

✓ Try free first, upgrade never or later

Since the free options cost nothing, there's no harm in starting there. If you outgrow them, paid Office is a two-minute sign-up away. Most letter-writers never feel the need.

Steering clear of fake 'free Office' traps

Because so many people search for free Office, scammers crowd in. A little care keeps you on the honest roads.

Stick to the real homes: office.com for web Word, docs.google.com for Google Docs, libreoffice.org for LibreOffice, and your Apple device's built-in Pages. Each is genuinely free and safe.

Be wary of pop-ups and ads promising 'Free Office Download — Click Here.' Those often install junk or ask for payment for something that's free elsewhere. If a site pressures or charges you for a free program, close it and go straight to the real address.

! Free should never ask for your card

None of the honest free options ask for a credit card to write a letter. The moment a 'free' site wants payment details, that's your cue to back away.

A plain comparison of the four

Here they are side by side, boiled down to what a letter-writer actually cares about.

Option	Where	Best for
Web Word	Browser	Word fans
Google Docs	Browser	No lost work
LibreOffice	Installed	No sign-in
Apple Pages	Mac/iPad	Apple owners

There's no champion here — only the one that suits your device and your comfort. Any of the four will write, print, and send a letter perfectly well, free forever.

✓ **Don't overthink it**

If you're stuck choosing, go with the one that matches what you already use every day. Familiarity beats features for a few letters a year.

Getting comfortable without the nerves

New programs feel strange for about a week, then they feel like home. Here's how to shorten that week.

- Write one real, low-stakes letter to practice — a note to a friend, not a tax form.
- Learn just three things: how to start a new letter, how to save, how to print. The rest can wait.
- Make the text big while you learn, so you're never squinting.
- Keep this guide beside the keyboard and work one step at a time.

You do not have to master the whole program. You only need the handful of moves a letter requires, and those are the same friendly steps in every option.

★ A gentle first lesson

If a brand-new program feels daunting, I'll sit with you for a first, patient walk-through — no rushing, no 'you should know this.' That's exactly what I'm here for. Call (330) 200-8042.

Common mistakes, and how to sidestep them

A few small snags trip up newcomers. Knowing them ahead keeps the whole thing pleasant.

- **Paying for Word by habit** without knowing the free options exist — the very reason for this guide.
- **Trying to learn all four** at once instead of picking one.
- **Forgetting where a letter saved** — fixed by naming it clearly and using the Documents folder.
- **Clicking a 'free download' ad** instead of typing the real address.
- **Not using print preview** and wasting paper on a letter that printed oddly.

✓ Mistakes here are cheap

None of these cost anything but a moment. Go slow, and you'll glide right past all of them.

You really can do this

If computers have made you feel behind, let me say plainly: writing a letter on one is well within your reach.

Every person I've helped who worried they were 'too old for this' was writing and printing letters within a single visit. The tools are made to be simple now, and the free ones are no harder than the paid ones — often easier.

Take it one calm step at a time. There's no clock, no test, and no silly question. The letter will get written, and you'll feel a little more at home with the computer for having done it.

★ I believe you've got this

And if you'd like a patient hand along the way, that's precisely what I do. We'll go at your pace until it feels easy. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

Questions worth asking yourself

A few honest answers point you to the easiest free choice.

Q: What do I already use every day?

Match your free writing tool to it — a Mac points to Pages, a Google account to Docs, a love of Word to web Word.

Q: Do I want it online or installed?

Online (Docs, web Word) backs itself up and needs internet. Installed (LibreOffice, Pages) works offline and lives on your computer.

Q: Will I send letters to others?

All four can save as Word or PDF, so yes — and a PDF opens perfectly for everyone.

Q: How often will I really write?

A few times a year means free is ideal. Daily writing might one day justify paying — but start free and see.

✓ Start small, grow if you must

Pick one, write one letter, and judge from there. You can always change your mind — nothing here locks you in.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most from folks who'd rather not pay for Word.

Q: Is the free Word really the same as paid Word?

Very close for a letter. The free web version has the familiar look and all the everyday tools; it only leaves out advanced business features most people never touch.

Q: Can people open my free letters in regular Word?

Yes. Save as a Word file and it opens perfectly for them. Save as a PDF and it opens perfectly for absolutely everyone.

Q: Do I need the internet to write?

For Google Docs and web Word, yes. LibreOffice and Apple Pages work offline, with no connection needed.

Q: Which is easiest for a beginner?

Many beginners find Google Docs the gentlest, because it saves automatically and can't lose your work. But the best one is whichever matches the device you already use.

★ Still unsure where to start?

Helping folks write that first free letter is one of the happiest parts of my week. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll pick the easy path together.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made writing a letter for free feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site — installing Office, sorting out a sign-in, setting up a document — I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

Four Free Ways to Write

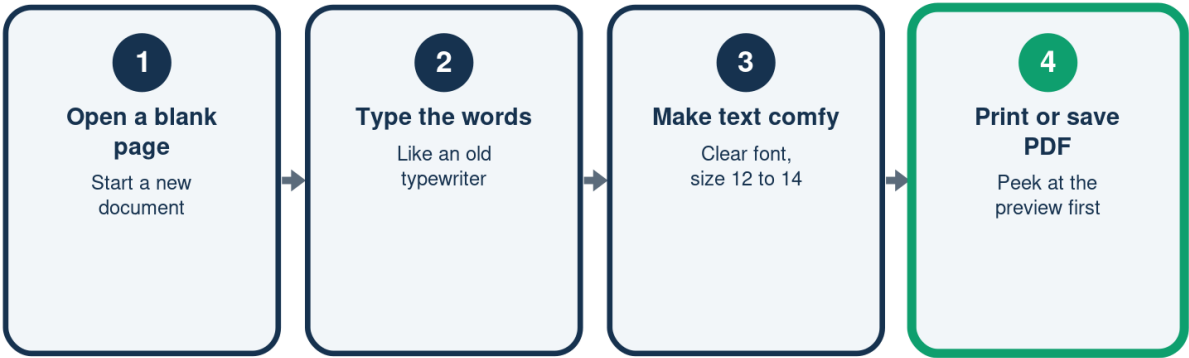
Pick the one that matches your device

	Where it is	Best for
Web Word	In a browser	Word fans
Google Docs	In a browser	No lost work
LibreOffice	Installed free	No sign-in
Apple Pages	On Mac/iPad	Apple owners

Any of the four writes, prints, and sends a letter – free forever.

A Letter in Four Steps

The same gentle path in every free tool



The default settings make a perfectly proper letter.

Will Others Open It?

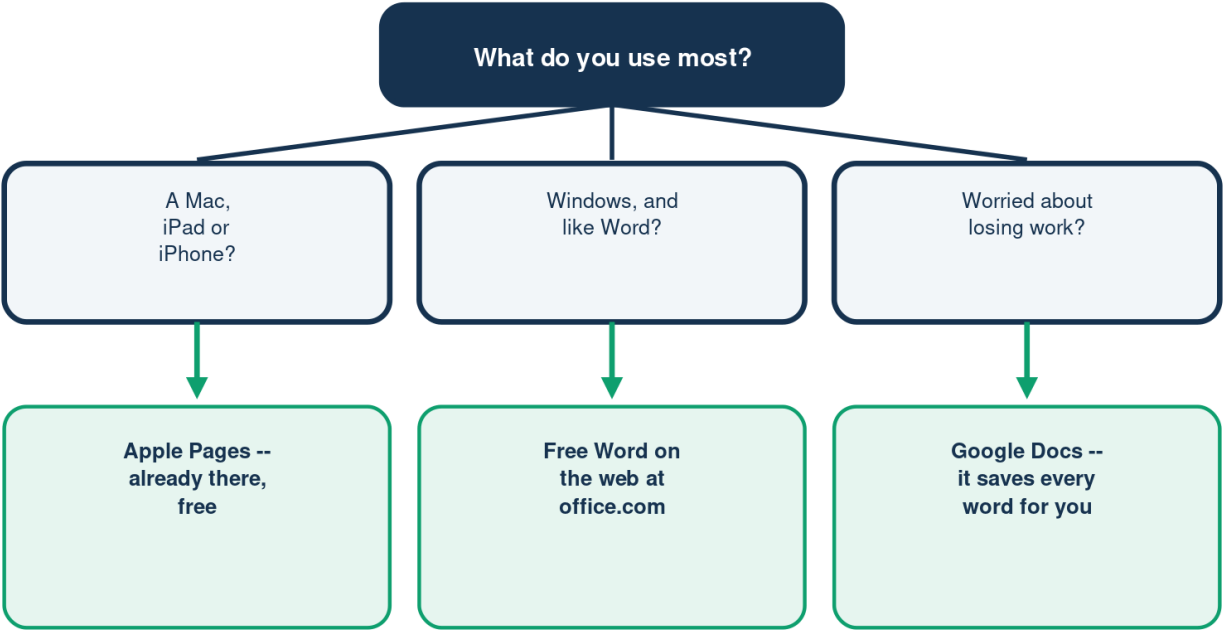
Yes -- here's how to be sure

	Save it as	So that
Word (.docx)	Word users	see it fine
PDF	Everyone	sees it fine
Print it	They hold	paper

When in doubt, send a PDF -- it opens the same for everyone.

Which Free Tool Is Easiest?

Let your everyday device decide



Download LibreOffice only from libreoffice.org -- never a pop-up ad.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.



Need a Real Person?

You do not have to remember all of it.
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Prefer help without a visit?

Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

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