Apple's iWork Apps

This month, we review Apple's free office applications: Pages, Numbers, and Keynote.

Microsoft Word is my go-to application when I need to write stuff, but Apple's iWord suite of Pages, Numbers, and Keynote are all capable office applications included on iPhones, iPads, and Mac computers. (As in free. No cost. Bupkis.)

iWork applications will open Word, Excel, and PowerPoint files created by their Microsoft counterparts and can save them in those formats. Of course, you can also create a PDF version of any iWorks document, which is a universal format that virtually anyone can open on virtually any device. [1]

Steve is writing his memoirs using Pages. (Steve is a dog.)

Pages

Apple's Pages word processor uses the same paragraph styles concept as Microsoft Word, which makes formatting a document simple. You can set font type and size for body text, subheadings, headers and footers, captions, etc., and changing a style carries through your entire document.

iWork menus don't use the "ribbon" icon layout that you see across the top of the Microsoft Office apps, and if you're a seasoned Word user, Pages can seem awkward at first. But iWork menus are context-sensitive, which means they automatically adjust to the part of the document you're working on.

As a testament to my claims, I'm using Pages for this edition of "Guru." No muss. No fuss. (And there's no aftertaste.)

Numbers

Numbers is Apple's spreadsheet application. It works like Excel but uses the same context menu format as Pages (and Keynote). Defining cell formats is more flexible in Numbers, and charts and graphs are a snap.

On the other hand, Numbers isn't as sophisticated as Excel, which Microsoft festoons [2] with new functions every week. If you're preparing corporate asset evaluations or performing "what-if" analyses for an IPO, you should probably use Excel. If these tasks are not on your to-do list, Numbers will do nicely.

Keynote

I started using Keynote for some of our Evergreen Forum classes last year, and I'd argue it's better than PowerPoint. Keynote lets you define multiple text box styles, a feature that PowerPoint lacks. You can attach titles and captions to graphics, instantly reformat slides using templates, and use Keynote's top-notch slideshow manager to present your slideshow.

PowerPoint handles some animation and slide transitions better than Keynote, but Keynote excels at keeping slides consistent and removing backgrounds from graphics. All in all, I find Keynote easier, faster, and doesn't upset your stomach like aspirin. (Oops. I may have strayed from the topic.)

If you need assisstance, visit the **Tech Lab – Center for Modern Aging Princeton** (**cmaprinceton.org**). We'll be glad to help you out.

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1   I find that "virtually" is overused. I mean, like, virtually everyone uses it.
2   I used "festoon" in a recent Guru article and received excellent reviews, so I thought I'd use it again.