

# WriteBoard™

Jack Lyon



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Many thanks to Forrest Leeson, whose NoteBox Disorganizer software provided the inspiration for WriteBoard and got me through many a writing project:  
<https://archive.org/details/notebox-disorganizer>

# Contents

<b>WriteBoard .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Brainstorm, Organize, Write.....	3
Welcome to WriteBoard! .....	4
WriteBoard.....	8
Hyperlink.....	10
Export .....	11
Size.....	12
Cursor .....	14
Projects.....	14
<b>Writing with WriteBoard .....</b>	<b>16</b>
Brainstorm .....	16
Organize .....	16
Write .....	16
Export.....	16
<b>Keyboard Shortcuts .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Navigate > Cursor.....	17
Organize .....	18
File > Hyperlink.....	20
View > Size .....	20
General Guidelines .....	21
<b>Registration .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Getting a Password .....	22
Using Your Password.....	23
<b>Resources.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Questions?.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Terms of Agreement .....</b>	<b>26</b>

# WriteBoard

High school English class. Freshman year. The teacher explained how to:

1. Write a thesis statement.
2. Create an outline of arguments supporting your thesis statement.
3. Write a paper based on that outline.

That's actually a terrible way to write! It requires you to *organize* your thoughts *before you know what those thoughts actually are*. But there is a better way.

## ***Brainstorm, Organize, Write***

Before you can organize your thoughts, you need to know what they are. In the days before computers, you'd find out like this:

1. Get a package of index cards.
2. On each card, write an idea related to your thesis (the fancy word for whatever it is you want to write about). Do *not* try to do this in any kind of order; you're *brainstorming* here: good ideas, bad ideas, *any* ideas—they all go down on the cards. When your brain is empty, stop.
3. On a big desk or table, spread the cards out in front of you. Keep them messy.
4. Read the cards and stack those on a certain subject together until you have several stacks. Discard (pardon the pun) those that don't belong anywhere or that now seem irrelevant or stupid.
5. Put the cards in each stack in some kind of order. Importance? Chronology? You choose.
6. Put the stacks in some kind of order. Each stack represents a section of your paper.
7. Write your paper, starting with the first card and ending with the last. Each stack gets a subheading. Each card gets a paragraph.
8. Edit your paper as needed.

Again, that was in the days before computers. Now we have much better ways of doing what I've just described, with new card-based writing programs popping up all the time. Some of my favorites are:

- [Notebox Disorganizer](#)
- [Milanote](#)

- [Sppeare](#)
- [SuperNotecard](#)

“But,” you say, “I’m used to working in Microsoft Word. Isn’t there a way to do card-based writing in Word?” Yes, there is!

## Welcome to WriteBoard!

WriteBoard is like a giant whiteboard on which you place sticky notes while constructing your literary masterpiece, allowing you to see your whole novel (or other work) laid out in front of you. For example, here’s a bit of J. K. Rowling’s planning sheet for *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*:

NO	TIME	TITLE	PLOT	PROPHECY	Cho/Ginny	D.A.	O of P	Snape/Harry + father	Hagrid + Gramp
13	OCT	Plots and Resistance	Harry has a lesson scheduled with Snape, but he skips it to go to Hogsmeade with Ron and Hermione. They meet Lupin and Tonks but can't talk because Umbridge is talking to them, so they pass a note. Harry, Ron, and Hermione are recruiting for Dumbledore's Army. Hagrid has fresh injuries.	Harry sees the Hall of Prophecy (in a dream). Voldemort is still formulating his plans; none of his Death Eaters are able to get in, so he sends his snake Nagini on a recon mission.	Cho is in Hogsmeade and wants to join Dumbledore's Army.	Tonks and Lupin	recruiting	Harry skips his lesson to recruit for Dumbledore's Army.	Hagrid's still being injured and has blood stains. ("He's feeding something that's not his blood.")
14	NOV	The Order of the Phoenix	First meeting of the Order of the Phoenix		Cho and Ginny are both present.	Umbridge is now reading their mail.	First meeting	Harry's still skipping his lessons.	
15	NOV	The Dirtiest Tackle	Harry is suspended from Quidditch after he attacks Malfoy because Malfoy taunted him about Cedric. That night Harry is restless and unable to sleep; he worries about Umbridge, Cho, and his scar. Harry sees Nagini attack Mr. Weasley (in a dream).	Nagini attacks Mr. Weasley.	Cho is now madly in love.	Firehead			
16	NOV	Black Marks	Harry rows about skipping his lessons with Snape; Harry is in the doghouse and he's angry. An overview of Christmas. Hermione contacts Rita. Another lesson with Snape.	Nagini gets into the Hall of Prophecy. Voldemort has confirmation of Bode's story - that only he and Harry can touch the prophecy.	Cho kiss? Ginny is concerned about her father.	Ron and the rest of the Weasleys are told about their father's injury.	Reactions to the attack - another meeting and an overview?	A row about Harry not going to his lessons	Hagrid's still getting injured.
17	DEC	Rita Returns	Harry, Ron and Hermione go to Hogsmeade for their Christmas shopping and meet with Rita.	Rita supplies information.	Harry is now avoiding Cho a bit. Ginny is with someone else?		Another lesson	Hagrid's in the hospital wing.	

It did the job, but it’s not easy to read. In WriteBoard, it might look like this:

No.	Time	Title	Plot	Prophecy	Cho / Ginny	Order of the Phoenix	Dumbledore's Army	Snape / Harry + Father	Hagrid + Gramp
13	Oct	Plots and Resistance	Harry has a lesson scheduled with Snape, but he skips it to go to Hogsmeade with Ron and Hermione. They meet Lupin and Tonks but can't talk because Umbridge is talking to them, so they pass a note. Harry, Ron, and Hermione are recruiting for Dumbledore's Army. Hagrid has fresh injuries.	Harry sees the Hall of Prophecy (in a dream). Voldemort is still formulating his plans; none of his Death Eaters are able to get in, so he sends his snake Nagini on a recon mission.	Cho is in Hogsmeade and wants to join Dumbledore's Army.	Tonks and Lupin	Recruiting	Harry skips his lesson to recruit for Dumbledore's Army.	Hagrid's still being injured and has blood stains. ("He's feeding something that's not his blood.")
14	Nov	Dumbledore's Army	First meeting of Dumbledore's Army		Cho and Ginny are both present.	Umbridge is now reading their mail.	First meeting	Harry's still skipping his lessons.	
15	Nov	The Dirtiest Tackle	Harry is suspended from Quidditch after he attacks Malfoy because Malfoy taunted him about Cedric. That night Harry is restless and unable to sleep; he worries about Umbridge, Cho, and his scar. Harry sees Nagini attack Mr. Weasley (in a dream).	Nagini attacks Mr. Weasley.	Cho is now madly in love.	Firehead			
16	Nov	Black Marks	Harry rows about skipping his lessons with Snape; Harry is in the doghouse and he's angry. An overview of Christmas. Hermione contacts Rita. Another lesson with Snape.	Nagini gets into the Hall of Prophecy. Voldemort has confirmation of Bode's story - that only he and Harry can touch the prophecy.	Cho kiss? Ginny is concerned about her father.	Ron and the rest of the Weasleys are told about their father's injury.	Reactions to the attack - another meeting and an overview?	A row about Harry not going to his lessons	Hagrid's still getting injured.
17	Dec	Rita Returns	Harry, Ron and Hermione go to Hogsmeade for their Christmas shopping and meet with Rita.	Rita supplies information.	Harry is now avoiding Cho a bit. Ginny is with someone else?		Another lesson	Hagrid's in the hospital wing.	

You might use each WriteBoard column to plan a chapter, with each cell in the column representing a scene. Then if you want to move a scene in chapter 1 over to chapter 4, you can do so with a couple of keystrokes. You can move, insert, or delete cells, rows, and columns until everything is arranged exactly the way you want it. WriteBoard makes it easy.

You can use WriteBoard to plan and keep track of all kinds of things. For example, you can use it as a kanban (look it up) to keep track of your projects and where they are in production:

Possible projects	In progress	Finished	Final review	Submitted
Great American Novel				
				Crossword puzzle for the NY Times
			Paper on nuclear fusion	
Article on chimps for Atlantic magazine				
	Try out WriteBoard			

You can use it to plan your week, especially useful if you're into time stacking:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Do laundry	Outline novel	Sleep in	Write chapter introducing ancient castle	Clean garage
Finish article for <i>Rolling Stone</i>		Lunch with Marie		Wash car
	Dr. visit, 3:00	Research for screenplay		Clean up hard drive
	Outline novel		Call potential clients	
	Call Mom			Date night

For planning your chapters, consider something like this (fill in the blanks):

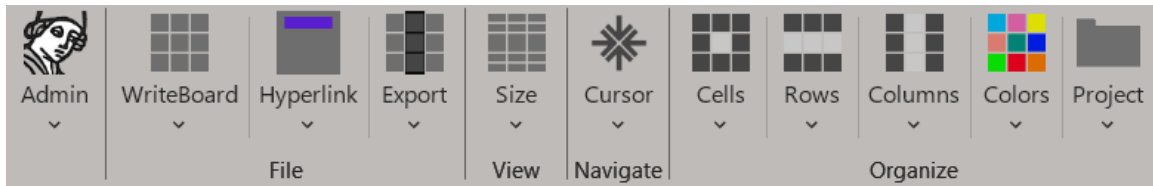
Chapter	Striking beginning	Setting	Characters	Action	Cliffhanger ending
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

You can also use it to keep track of characters in your novel:

Character	Appearance	Personality	Background	Goal
Brad the Impaler	Ugly little spud. Red hair, yellow eyes, long scar on left cheek.	Nasty. Hurts people just for fun.	Orphaned. Grew up in a camp of robbers.	Kill his enemy, the Duke of Castille.
Duke of Castille	Tall, thin, black hair, dark eyes.	Aloof and demanding.	Wealth and privilege. Son of royalty.	Become king of Castille.
Belinda the Fair	Blond, blue eyes. Fairly beautiful.	Kind to all. Especially loves animals.	Daughter of peasants. Lives in the village of Fitzroy. Works as a baker.	Marry her true love, Norman the Normal, and raise little Belindas.
Norman the Normal	Chubby, nondescript. Brown eyes and hair.	Timid and kind, always hopeful.	Son of peasants. Lives in the village of Fitzroy. Works in the stables.	Become the owner of his favorite horse, Sparky.
Sparky	Black horse with white stripe on face.	Skittish, energetic.	Raised in the stables of Fitzroy.	Escape from Fitzroy.

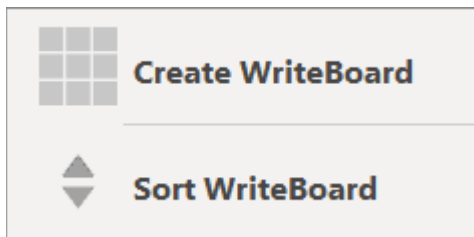
WriteBoard provides a great way to see the big picture of almost anything.

WriteBoard's ribbon interface looks like this:



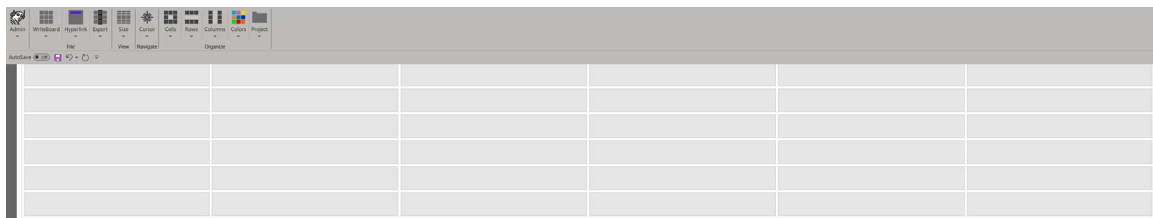
Most of the items under each tab on the ribbon are self-explanatory (for example, “Move cell right”), but a few of them need explanation.

## WriteBoard



### CREATE WRITEBOARD

*Create WriteBoard* creates a new WriteBoard document, which is really just an enormous Microsoft Word document (22 by 22 inches) containing a specially formatted table. It looks like this:



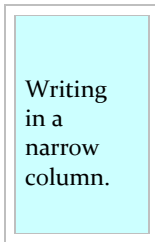
Each cell in the table is the equivalent of an index card or a sticky note, and you can type in the cells and arrange them at will.

You can do anything with this table that you can with a regular table, using Word's usual features. And, of course, you can use it with all of the special features included in the WriteBoard program.

When you create a WriteBoard, the program will ask how many columns and rows you want to include in the WriteBoard table. You can have as many rows as you like, but Word supports a maximum of 63 columns. I recommend starting with a more reasonable number, such as 6 or 8. You can always add more if you need them.



The more columns you specify, the more WriteBoard reduces the point size in those columns, ensuring that your text is legible and doesn't look like this:

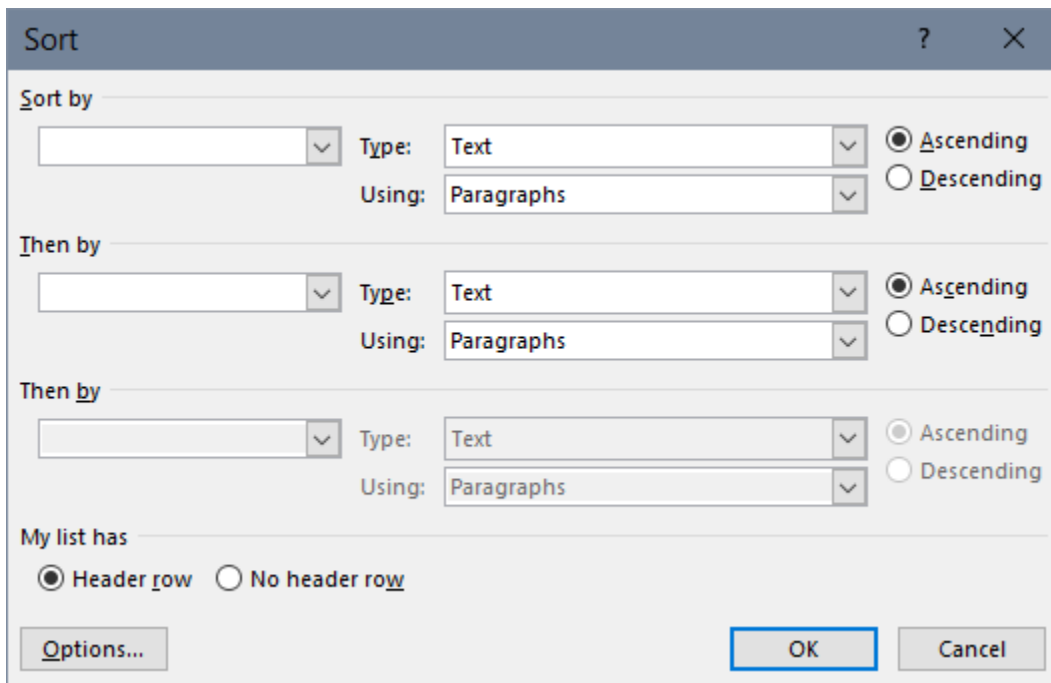


To make up for the reduction in point size, it automatically enlarges the zoom percentage so your text is always easy to see.

NOTE: After creating your WriteBoard, save it in its own folder dedicated to your project. *Don't just save it in your general Documents folder.* You'll soon see why.

### **Sort WriteBoard**

*Sort WriteBoard* displays Word's standard Sort dialog, which you can use to sort the cells in your WriteBoard table:



The WriteBoard table includes a header row, so you can sort by that if you need to.

## Hyperlink



### ADD CELL HEADING

*Add cell heading* styles the first paragraph in a cell as a heading. If the cell is at the top of the column, its first paragraph is styled as Heading 2. (Think of this as a chapter heading.) If the cell is anywhere else, its first paragraph is styled as Heading 3. (Think of this as a subheading within the chapter.) This works no matter where your cursor is in the cell; it doesn't have to be in the first paragraph. If the cell is empty, this adds a paragraph break and styles it, ready for you to type.

You don't need to add a heading to every cell, but doing so to some of them will help you better organize your writing.

### OPEN HYPERLINKED DOCUMENT

If a cell includes a heading, *Open hyperlinked document* creates and/or opens a document that is linked to the heading and uses the heading as its filename. For example, if a cell has a heading of "Chapter 1," *Open hyperlinked document* creates and/or opens a document named "Chapter 1." You're given the option of including the cell's text in the document.

If you select the linked cell and cells below it in the same column, the program gives you the option of including the text from those cells in the linked document.

The point of this feature is to *plan* your writing project in WriteBoard but do your actual writing in separate documents that are linked to the corresponding cells in your WriteBoard. The documents are kept in the same folder as your WriteBoard, so they're all in the same place and not just scattered about.

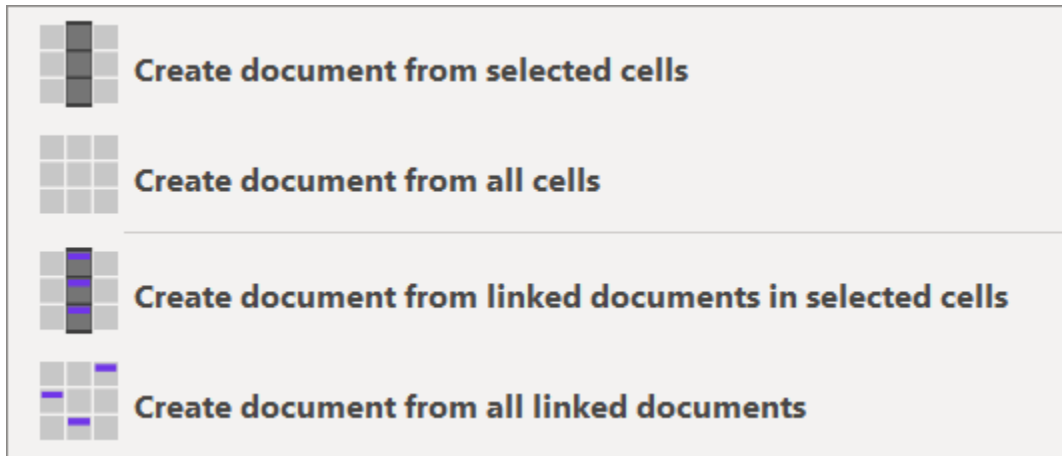
Of course, you don't *have* to do your writing in separate documents. If you like, you can do all of your writing in the WriteBoard table itself, chapter after chapter, section after section.

### REMOVE HYPERLINK

This feature removes the hyperlink from a cell's heading.

## Export

After you've finished writing, either in separate documents or in the WriteBoard table, you'll want to export your masterpiece as a single document. That's where the export features come in:



### CREATE DOCUMENT FROM SELECTED CELLS

*Create document from selected cells* creates a new document containing the *text* from the cells you've selected, so you can do your actual writing (as well as planning) in the cells themselves and then export various parts of your writing (such as a chapter or section) into a new document.

Your selection can be arbitrary, even spanning columns, but the selected cells must be contiguous. For example, if you select cell 3 in column 6 and cell 4 in column 12, only the text in cell 3 is exported. But if you select cells 3 and 4 in both the adjoining columns 6 and 7, the export includes the text from all the selected cells, column by column.

### CREATE DOCUMENT FROM ALL CELLS

*Create document from all cells* creates a new document containing the text from *all* of the WriteBoard cells, whether they're selected or not, column by column.

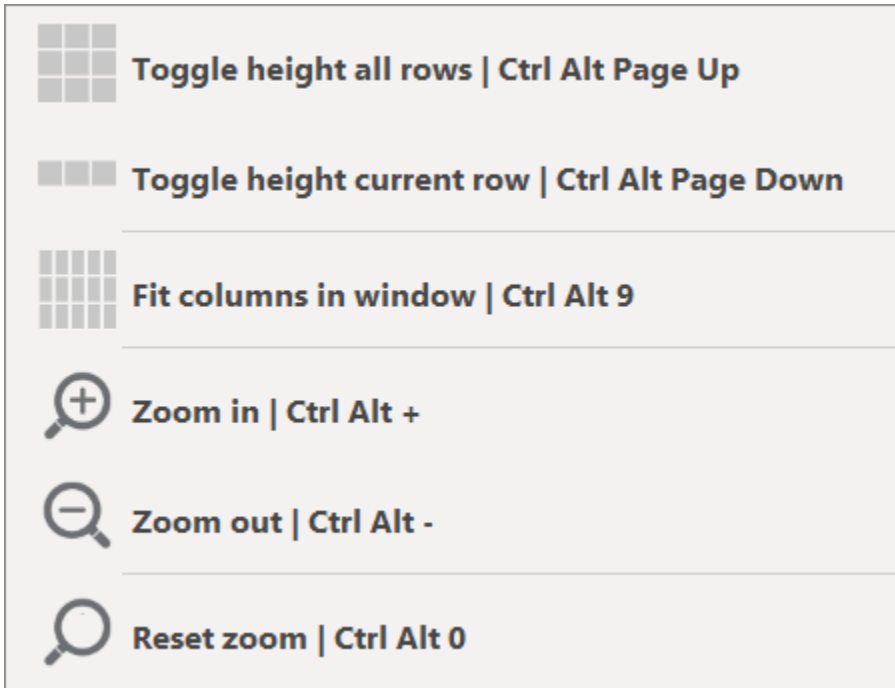
### CREATE DOCUMENT FROM LINKED DOCUMENTS IN SELECTED CELLS

*Create document from linked documents in selected cells* creates a new document containing the text from the *documents* that are hyperlinked in the cells you've selected, column by column. For example, if you want a document that includes the linked documents for chapters 1 through 3, you could select columns 1, 2, and 3 and then use this feature. Again, selected cells must be contiguous.

## CREATE DOCUMENT FROM ALL LINKED DOCUMENTS

*Create document from all linked documents* creates a new document containing the text from *all* of the documents that are linked in the WriteBoard table, whether they're selected or not, column by column.

## Size



The “Toggle height” features let you see all of your text in all of the rows at once, or all of the text in one row at a time, making it easier to understand the big picture or focus on a single detail. The purpose of the other features is obvious.

NOTE: Remember to “Reset zoom” to your default settings when you’ve finished using WriteBoard.

## TOGGLE HEIGHT ALL ROWS

The height *compressed* for all the rows looks like this:

Character
Brad the Impaler
Duke of Castille
Belinda the Fair

And the height *expanded* for all the rows looks like this:

Character
Brad the Impaler This sentence shows what happens when you toggle the height of all rows.
Duke of Castille This sentence shows what happens when you toggle the height of all rows.
Belinda the Fair This sentence shows what happens when you toggle the height of all rows.

#### **TOGGLE HEIGHT ONE ROW**

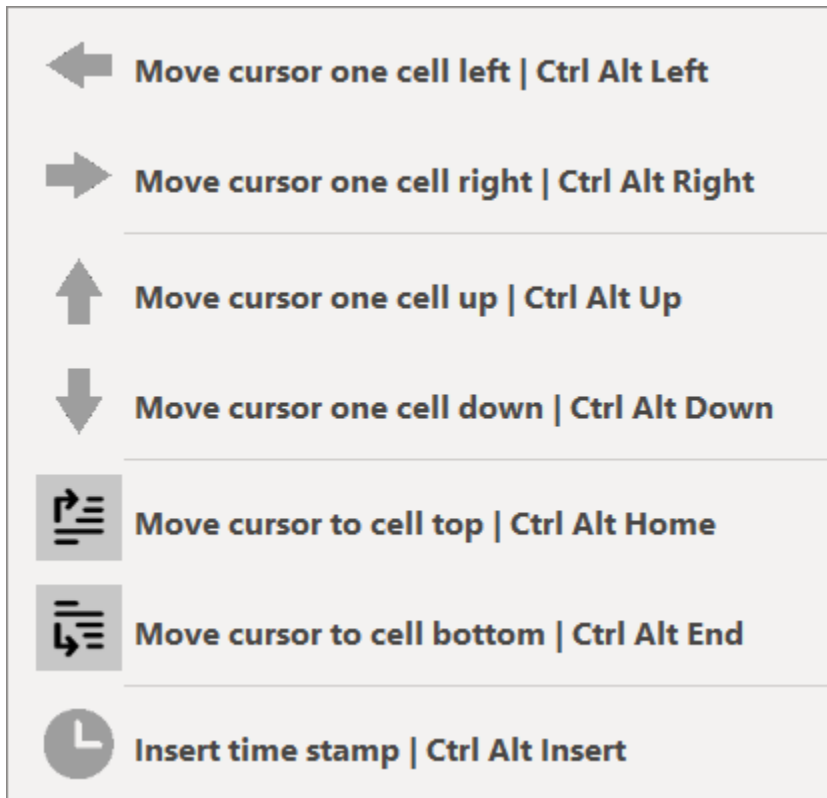
The height *compressed* for a single row looks like this:

Character
Brad the Impaler This sentence shows what happens when you toggle the height of one row.
Duke of Castille This sentence shows what happens when you toggle the height of one row.
Belinda the Fair

And the height *expanded* for a single row looks like this:

Character
Brad the Impaler
Duke of Castille
Belinda the Fair This sentence shows what happens when you toggle the height of one row.

## Cursor



The only feature here that needs explaining is *Insert time stamp*. It inserts the current date and time in this format:

year.month.day hour.minute.second (using a 24-hour clock)

For example, here is the time stamp as I write this:

2024.03.28 13.12.52

That's March 28, 2024, at 1:12 (and 52 seconds) in the afternoon.

Time stamps are useful for tracking when you've worked on a particular item or if you're keeping journal entries. If you use a time stamp at the top of your cells, you can later sort the cells by time stamp. You can also use this feature to create Zettelkasten entries. (Look it up.)

## Projects

*Projects* provides a way to save and open all the Microsoft Word documents related to a project. For example, let's say you're writing a 3,000-page fantasy

trilogy along the lines of *Harry Potter*. For each volume, you have the chapters themselves, plot outlines, scene lists, character profiles, maps, notes, and much more, all organized in various folders. While working, you keep several of these documents open at the same time—for example, all of the documents related to chapter 23. Using the Projects feature, you can save those documents as a named project (“Chapter 23 Documents,” for example). Then the next time you need to work on chapter 23, you simply call up that project, which automatically opens all the associated documents in Word.

If you move or delete a file associated with a project, it won’t be opened when you open the project (naturally).

You can close or delete a project after you’ve finished working on it. Note that deleting a project does not delete the files associated with the project; it simply undoes their association *as* a project.

# Writing with WriteBoard

There are lots of ways to write with WriteBoard. One way is to follow the basic steps you'd use when writing with index cards, using the cells in the WriteBoard table. When you're finished, export your work.

## *Brainstorm*

In each cell, write an idea you want to include in your paper or book. Do *not* try to do this in any kind of order; you're *brainstorming* here: good ideas, bad ideas, *any* ideas—they all go into the cells. When your brain is empty, stop.

## *Organize*

Move the cells around, grouping those on a certain subject together, with one subject per column. Give each column a heading, and delete any ideas that now seem unnecessary.

Put the cells in each column in some kind of order. Importance? Chronology? You choose.

Put the columns in some kind of order. Each column represents a section or chapter of your paper or book.

## *Write*

Write your paper or book, starting with the first cell and ending with the last. Each cell gets at least a paragraph.

You can write in the cells themselves, or you can open the document that is hyperlinked to a cell heading and then write in that document.

## *Export*

Whether you write in the cells themselves or in documents linked to the cells, you can export your masterpiece as a single document after you've finished writing. Your text will be exported in the order of your cells, column by column from top to bottom.







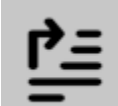
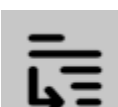

# Keyboard Shortcuts

WriteBoard is best used with its keyboard shortcuts, which are well organized and systematic. You can learn to use them quickly and easily by opening the document named “Keyboard Practice.docx” included with WriteBoard.

Start with your left ring finger on the CTRL key and your left thumb on the ALT key, which is where they’ll often be when using WriteBoard’s features. Then put your right index finger on the LEFT arrow key. Now try some of the shortcuts listed below. You’ll get the hang of things in no time.

## *Navigate > Cursor*

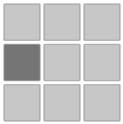
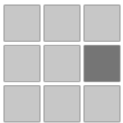
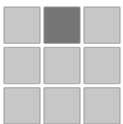
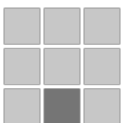
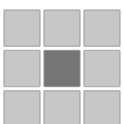
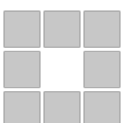


**CTRL ALT.** With an ARROW key, moves your *cursor* from cell to cell. With HOME and END, moves your cursor to the cell’s top or bottom. With INSERT, inserts a time stamp.

	CTRL ALT LEFT moves your cursor one cell to the left.
	CTRL ALT RIGHT moves your cursor one cell to the right.
	CTRL ALT UP moves your cursor up a cell.
	CTRL ALT DOWN moves your cursor down a cell.
	CTRL ALT HOME moves your cursor to the top of the cell.
	CTRL ALT END moves your cursor to the bottom of the cell.
	CTRL ALT INSERT inserts a time stamp.

## Organize

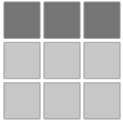
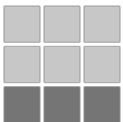
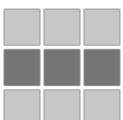

### CELLS

**SHIFT ALT.** With an ARROW key, moves a *cell* to a new location. With INSERT and DELETE, inserts or deletes cells. With HOME and END, selects or clears a cell's text.

	SHIFT ALT LEFT moves a cell left.
	SHIFT ALT RIGHT moves a cell right.
	SHIFT ALT UP moves a cell up.
	SHIFT ALT DOWN moves a cell down.
	SHIFT ALT INSERT inserts a cell.
	SHIFT ALT DELETE deletes a cell.
	SHIFT ALT HOME selects a cell's text.
	SHIFT ALT END clears (deletes) a cell's text.

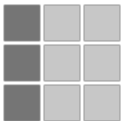
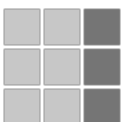
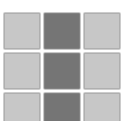
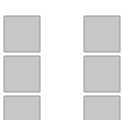
## Rows

**CTRL SHIFT ALT.** With an **ARROW** key, moves a *row* up or down. With **HOME** and **END**, inserts or deletes rows.




	CTRL SHIFT ALT UP moves a row up.
	CTRL SHIFT ALT DOWN moves a row down.
	CTRL SHIFT ALT HOME inserts a row.
	CTRL SHIFT ALT END deletes a row.

## COLUMNS



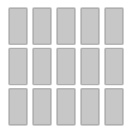



**CTRL SHIFT ALT.** With an **ARROW** key, moves a *column* left or right. With **PAGE UP** and **PAGE DOWN**, inserts or deletes columns.

	CTRL SHIFT ALT LEFT moves a column left.
	CTRL SHIFT ALT RIGHT moves a column right.
	CTRL SHIFT ALT PAGE UP inserts a column.
	CTRL SHIFT ALT PAGE DOWN deletes a column.

## *File > Hyperlink*

	CTRL ALT H adds a cell heading.
	CTRL ALT O creates and/or opens a hyperlinked document.
	CTRL ALT L removes the link from a cell's heading but leaves the heading and the linked document intact.

## *View > Size*

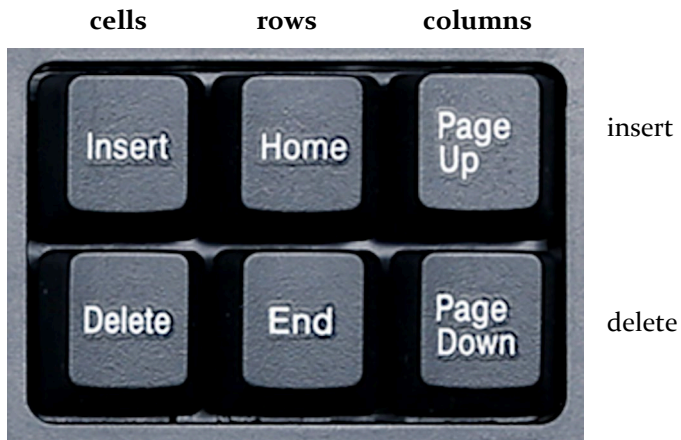
	CTRL ALT PAGE UP toggles the height of all rows.
	CTRL ALT PAGE DOWN toggles the height of the current row.
	CTRL ALT 9 fits all of your WriteBoard columns into your Word window.
	CTRL ALT + zooms in.
	CTRL ALT - zooms out.
	CTRL ALT 0 resets the zoom to your default settings, as they were before you used WriteBoard.

## General Guidelines

- CTRL ALT is used with your *cursor* (also hyperlinks, zoom, and time stamps).
- SHIFT ALT is used with *cells*.
- CTRL SHIFT ALT is used with *rows* and *columns*.



- INSERT and DELETE insert and delete *cells*.
- HOME and END insert and delete *rows*.
- PAGE UP and PAGE DOWN insert and delete *columns*.



# Registration

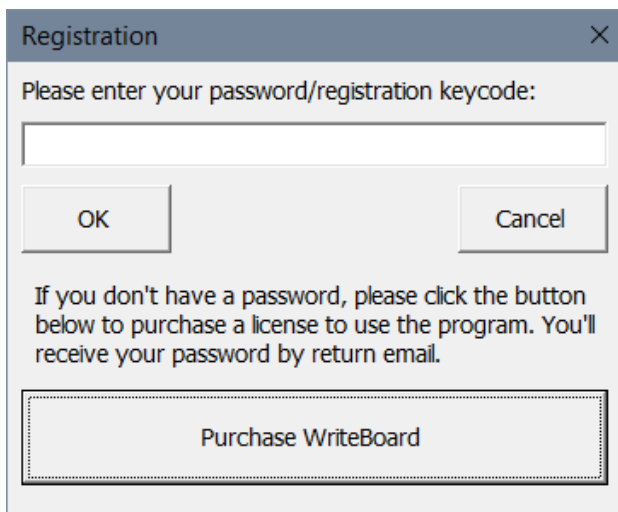
If you like WriteBoard and plan to continue using it, you must purchase a license to do so. If you don't, your copy of the program is for evaluation purposes only, and it will stop working after 45 days. After you purchase a license to use the program, you'll automatically receive a password (by email) that unlocks the program to run without limitation on time or use.

The terms of your license prohibit you from giving your program password to someone else or using it on someone else's computer. However, you may use the password on up to *three* of your own computers. For example, you could install WriteBoard and use your password on your computer at work, your computer at home, and your laptop. However, you may run the program on only one of your computers at a time. If you need to run the program on more than one computer at a time (for example, for use by a family member or employee), you must purchase another license and get another password for the program. This is the honest and legal thing to do. Besides that, the Editorium is a *very* small business that needs your support. Thanks for your cooperation.

## *Getting a Password*

Here's how to purchase a program license so you can get your password:

1. Go to <http://www.editorium.com/register.htm> and click *WriteBoard*. Or, in Word, just click *WriteBoard > Register WriteBoard > Purchase WriteBoard*.

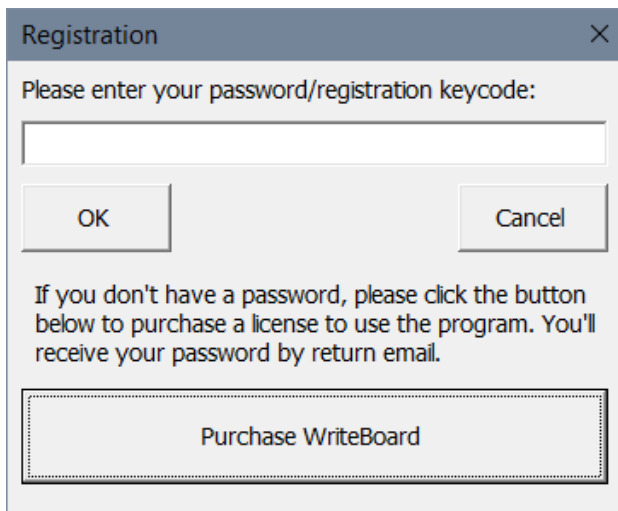


2. Follow the online instructions.

You'll receive your password automatically by return email as soon as your payment is processed. If you're paying by credit card, you'll receive your password almost immediately. Just check your email as soon as your online registration is complete.

## *Using Your Password*

Once you've received your password from the Editorium, you'll need to enter it into the WriteBoard program. To do so, click *WriteBoard > Register WriteBoard*. The Registration dialog will appear on your screen:



Carefully type (or, better, paste) the password into the box labeled "Please enter your password/registration code." Then click the *OK* button.

If you have a valid password and enter it correctly, the program will tell you that your registration was successful. After that, the program will run without limitation on time or use.

# Resources

You can find lots of articles about card-based writing online. Here are some good ones:

[The Note Card System](#)

[Organize & Plan Your Book Using Index Cards](#)

[Writing With Index Cards: A Low-Tech Way To Plan Your Book or Novel](#)

[The Amazing Index Card Technique](#)

[How to Outline a Story with Index Cards](#)

[Create Structure in Your Fiction Using Index Cards](#)

[Build Your Plot – My Index Card Method](#)

[The 60 Index Card Method: How To Outline Your Novel In 3 Simple Steps](#)

[Zero Draft Thirty: Story Prep Fun With Index Cards!](#)



# Questions?

I hope you find WriteBoard to be immensely useful. If you have questions, comments, or thoughts about how it could be improved, please let me know.

support@editorium.com  
[www.editorium.com](http://www.editorium.com)

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