

By Jody Gilbert

The [Office](#) section of the [Microsoft Downloads Center](#) contains 1,912 items, at last check, including all manner of service packs, security updates, converters, viewers—and some surprisingly useful add-ins. It's definitely worth a spin through the collection to look for tools that could help you fill some feature gaps. Here are 10 add-ins to get you started.

1. [Read in Microsoft Reader 1.1.3](#)

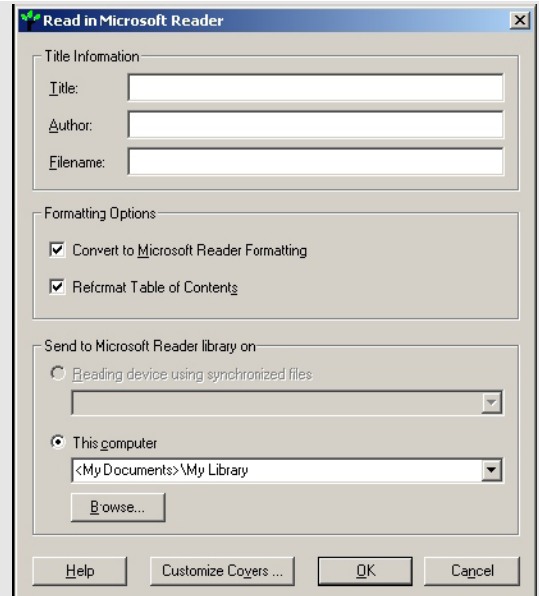
Overview

Read In lets you turn Word documents into eBooks that can be read using [Microsoft Reader](#). The eBook format offers a book-like display with onscreen features such as text-to-speech and library storage. Converting a Word document involves clicking a button to access the options shown here. Once you've made the necessary specifications, Read In will create an eBook file and place it in your My Library folder.

Works with:

- Word 2000/2002/2003

Note: Microsoft recommends that you [install Microsoft Reader](#) to obtain full functionality from the eBooks you create.



2. [Project Report Presentation](#)

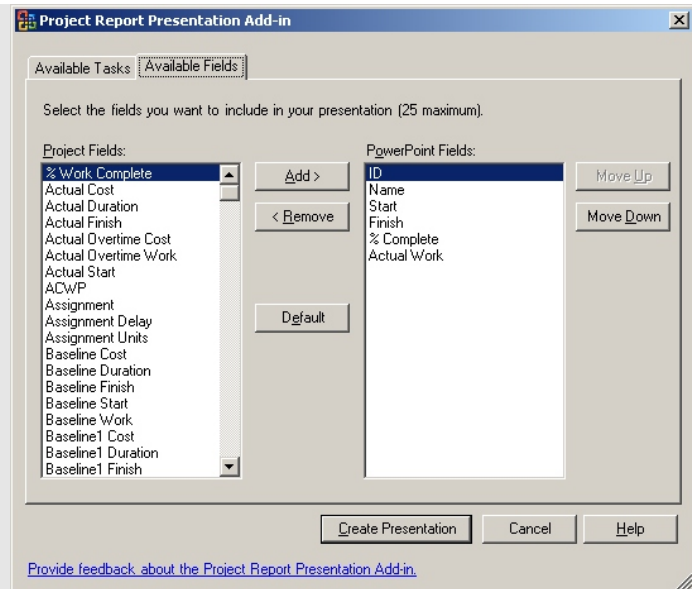
Overview

If you spend a lot of time reporting on project issues, conducting meetings to communicate project objectives or changes with stakeholders, and/or debriefing management and staff on project status and what's needed for successful completion, you should definitely check out this unassuming little tool.

Once you install it, you can open a project and click Create Report Presentation on the Project Report Presentation toolbar. Specify the tasks and fields you want to include and the tool will build a new presentation with a tasks summary table that shows the status of project tasks (e.g., Start, Finish, % Complete). Along with the task summary, the presentation consists of slides for the title, introduction, agenda, overview, outstanding risks and issues, budget, schedule and scope, acceptance review, and next steps.

Works with:

- Project 2003
- PowerPoint 2003



3. [International Characters Toolbar](#)

Overview

This is a simple tool but it has big timesaving potential if you frequently enter special symbols or foreign characters into your documents. It's one toolbar with 26 language options (each of which is its own toolbar) so you can just click to enter the character you need. The Most Recently Used toolbar stores your more common selections, and you can create additional toolbars and put your own special characters on them. Microsoft touts this tool as being particularly convenient because you don't have to change any keyboard or language settings.

Works with:

- Outlook 2003 (if you have Word 2003 set as your e-mail editor)
- PowerPoint 2003
- Word 2003

4. [Word Redaction](#)

Overview

If you're looking for a simple but effective way to mask portions of text in a document before allowing others to view it, the Redaction tool might be worth checking into. It's the online analog to taking a big black marker and obscuring text passages on printed copy. The Redaction tool bookmarks text you've selected and then adds gray shading to show you what you're about to redact. Click Redact Document, and it creates a new document with your selection blacked out. The tool will prompt you to protect the new document. When you click Yes, you'll have a redacted document that is password-protected against any changes.

Works with:

- Word 2003

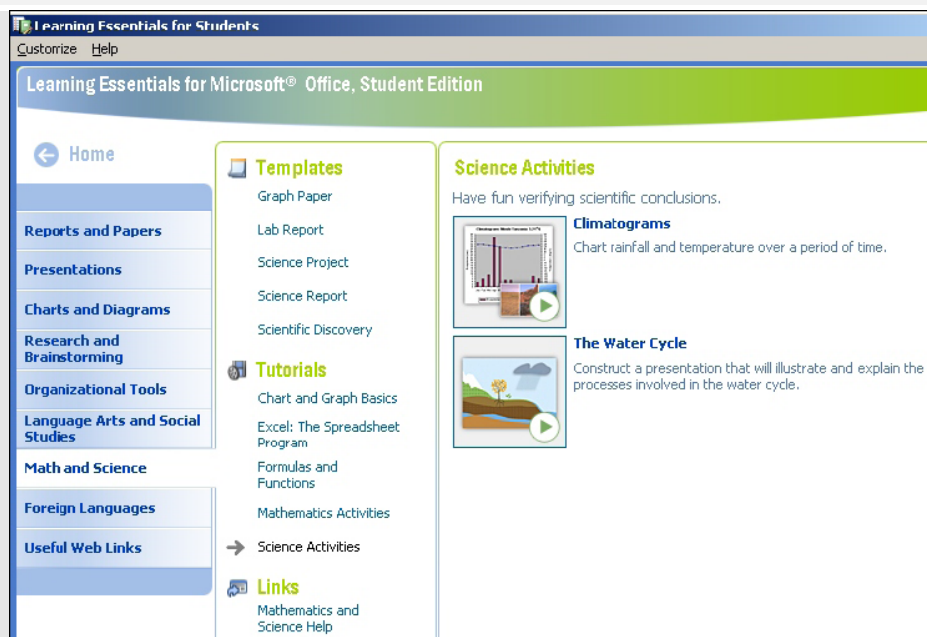
5. [Learning Essentials for Microsoft Office](#)

Overview

Learning Essentials comes in two flavors: one for students and one for teachers. Both versions include Office-integrated sets of templates, tools, and tutorials, along with supporting information and links to resources designed to help students work through their school assignments and to help teachers put together effective lessons and handle administrative tasks. More impressive still, you can download the [Content Development Kit](#) and use it to build your own project-based teaching tools.

Works with:

- Word 2002/2003
- Excel 2002/2003
- PowerPoint 2002/2003



6. MSN Money Stock Quotes

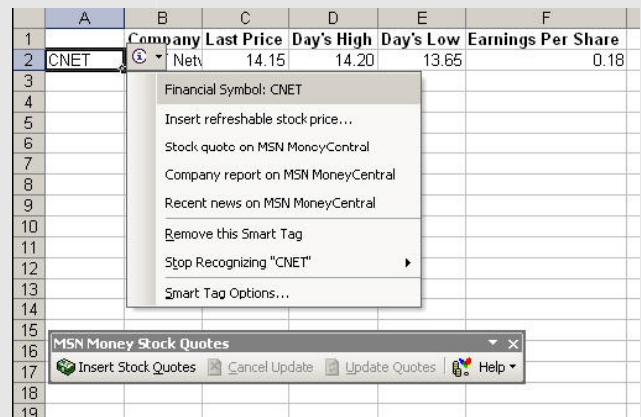
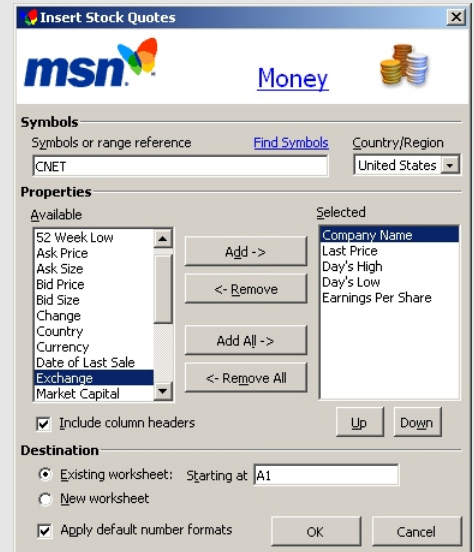
Overview

Here's a handy little tool for keeping your finger on the pulse of your favorite stocks. It's an Excel add-in that makes it easy to retrieve dynamic stock info from the MSN Money Web site. You can enter the stock symbols of interest into a worksheet and create a named range from those entries. Then, just launch the tool and specify the range (or enter any stock symbol you want to look up). Choose the information you want to retrieve and where you want to insert it. Click OK and the tool will insert the specified data in your worksheet. The tool also inserts stock symbols as smart tags, offering a variety of options as shown in the figure below.

You can click Update Stocks on the MSN Money Central Stock Quotes toolbar to get the latest information. (You have to wait at least five minutes before updating the information.)

Works with:

- Excel 2002/2003



7. Outlook 2003 Add-in: Video E-mail

Overview

If you have a Web camera, you can use this tool to quickly record and send a little video e-mail. Just make sure your camera is connected, click the Video Message button, and click Record. You can stop the recording manually or set the timer to 5, 10, or 15 seconds. Click Insert Video To Email and then send the message as you normally would. If Word is your e-mail editor, the video will be sent as an attachment. Otherwise, it will be send in the body of the message.

Works with:

- Outlook 2003

8. Remove Hidden Data

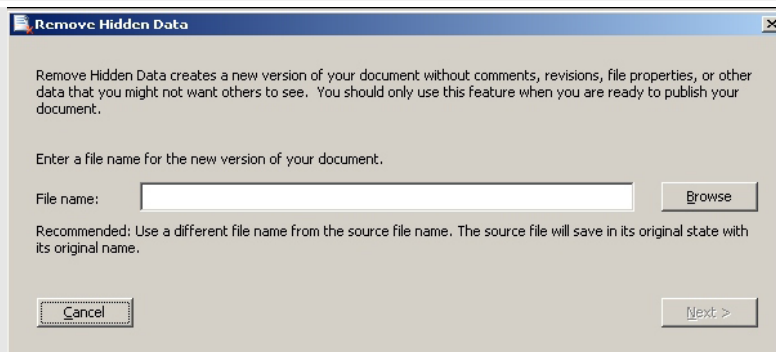
Overview

The Remove Hidden Data tool lets you eliminate hidden data, such as comments, tracked changes, and various types of metadata, from your Office files. You can run the tool on individual files or on multiple files from the command line. The tool removes these types of data:

- Comments
- Previous authors and editors
- User name
- Personal summary information
- Revision marks
- Deleted text
- Versions
- VB macros (descriptions and comments are removed from the modules)
- Document ID number
- Routing slips
- E-mail headers
- Scenario comments
- Unique identifiers (Office 97 documents)

Works with:

- Excel 2002/2003
- PowerPoint 2002/2003
- Word 2002/2003



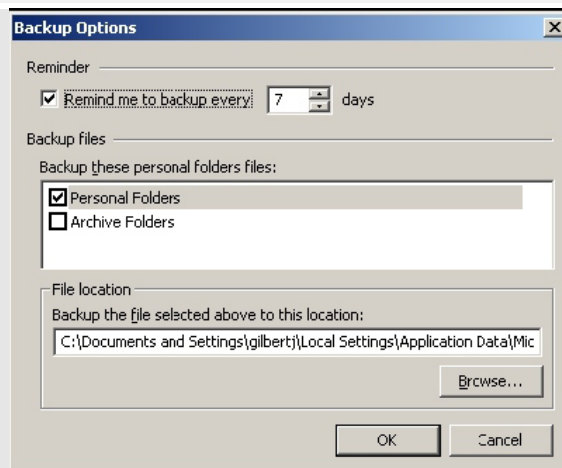
9. Outlook 2003 Add-in: Personal Folders Backup

Overview

This add-in turns .PST backups into a regular routine, prompting you at periodic intervals to make sure your Outlook folders are backed up. You specify the folders you want to back up and the interval using the Backup Options dialog box. [This article](#) offers instructions for using the tool.

Works with:

- Outlook 2000/2002/2003



10. [Microsoft Producer for Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2003](#)

Overview

Producer lets you put together rich media presentations, capturing and synchronizing audio, video, slides, and images. After you create and preview a Producer presentation, you can publish it so that it can be viewed in a browser.

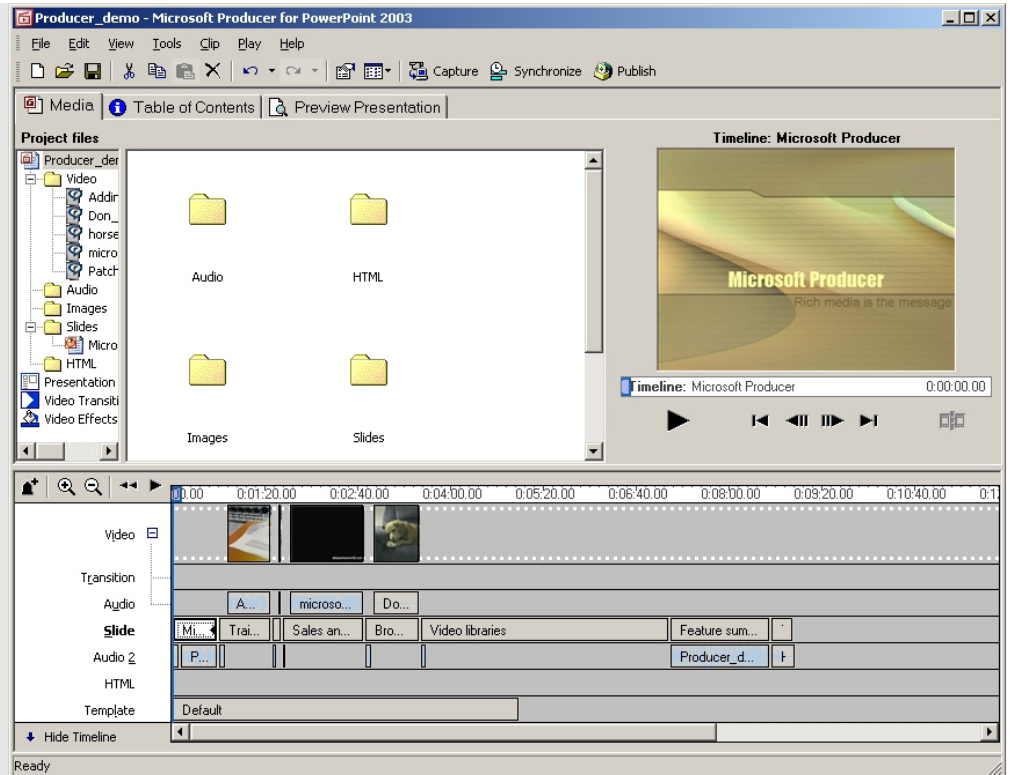
Among other things, Producer lets you:

- Import a variety of audio and video formats, images, and HTML
- Capture and integrate live audio and video
- Automate PowerPoint slide conversion
- Use PowerPoint slide timings and animations
- Synchronize audio and video with slides and still images to create rich-media presentations
- Select various video effects and transitions
- Define sections in your presentation by using a table of contents
- Share your presentation on a corporate intranet, on the Web, or by CD
- Create a project archive by using the Pack and Go Wizard
- Integrate your presentation in a FrontPage Web

For more details, check out the [Producer product support page](#).

Works with:

- PowerPoint 2002/2003



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- The BNET Team