

Between The Book Ends: Word 2003 Personal Trainer
by Custom Guide, Inc.; Publisher O'Reilly
433 pp, and CD Tutorial Disk, ISBN: 0-596-00936-4, \$29.95

Book Review By Veronica C. Valero, GGCS Member*

This series was created by instructors who were dissatisfied with the “dry and technical nature of computer training manuals...they decided to write their own series of courseware that would be fun and user-friendly.” *Word 2003 Personal Trainer* gives you two ways to learn: (1) Use the excellent CD to get an overview of topics with audio/visual demonstrations and then practice using the hands-on interactive tutorials, or (2) Read the book and follow its step-by-step exercises, using the sample files to explore the topic in more depth. Either method is an effective way of learning. An added benefit of the CD is that it is a stand-alone; you don't need to own MS Word while learning how to use the software.

The book includes 15 chapters with anywhere from 4 to 18 lessons per chapter. Many lessons include practice documents that are found on the companion CD, which you install on your computer. Personal Trainer assumes its chapters are read in order, and some chapters build on one another.

The book does cover each area in-depth, more so than many introductory volumes. In addition to the basics, it teaches you how to create tables, work with templates, and use styles effectively. It gives good instruction on using drawing tools, WordArt, and inserting and working with graphics. Important business tools also are covered, such as: setting up mail merge, creating forms, using the document collaboration tools, and using the outline feature. You also learn how to create Excel worksheets and charts in a Microsoft Word document. Other unexpected features are covered too, like creating web pages, sending faxes, and creating macros. To read a sample chapter and view an interactive tutorial go to www.oreilly.com/catalog, locate and click on *Word 2003: Personal Trainer*.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT: Although the book is easy to read and the instructions are clear, most screen shots are extremely small and impossible to read. The font size is also too small for a book that is supposed to be used side-by-side with the computer. Transitions from one lesson to another are also a bit rough: Some lessons actually work together, but you don't realize this until you read the instructions in the next lesson. There are also some unacceptable editing errors in the first chapter: a duplicate paragraph, a wrong diagram, and inconsistent formatting styles. This book fails to give adequate instructions on how to install the CD, how to use the interactive software, and how to locate the sample files when they are needed for a lesson.

Previously I reviewed *Excel 2003 Personal Trainer* of this series. I was so impressed with that series that I rated it 4 stars. Although I give the CD in *Word 2003 Personal Trainer's* 4 stars, the book doesn't fair as well. If the editing mistakes are cleaned up, screen shots are enlarged, and better transitions are worked in, this can be a 4 star book. In the mean time, I rate it: **two stars**.

***GGCS:** This book review was written for the Golden Gate Computer Society www.ggcs.org