

# xp workshop



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## Writing tablet

What makes the Tablet PC edition of Windows XP different from its desktop predecessor is the accuracy of its handwriting-recognition feature. Alex Katz puts it to work

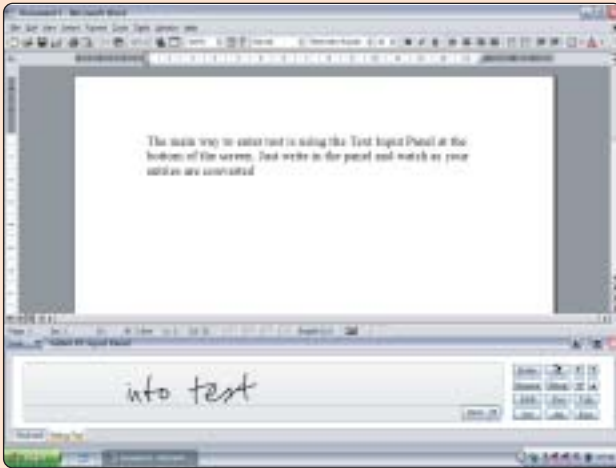
**A**ll tablet PC devices run the full version of Windows XP Professional, so their basic operation will be familiar to most existing PC users. But what makes a tablet PC special is the additional features in Windows XP, enabling you to use a pen to enter text and work with the device in a range of new ways. Over the following pages, we'll show you how to get to grips with the basic methods of interacting with a tablet PC.

These steps are universal to the Tablet PC software and will work just the same whether you're using a pure tablet,

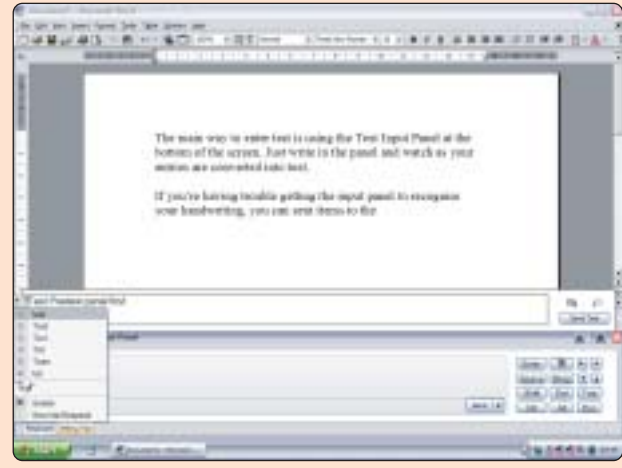
such as the Compaq TC1000 or the Fujitsu-Siemens Stylistic ST4000, or a convertible device with an optional keyboard, such as Toshiba's Portege 3500 or Acer's TravelMate C100. It's the hardware-specific features that vary between different machines: for example on the convertible machines, you can use the keyboard for text entry while simultaneously using the pen to control your cursor.

There can also be variation in the design and functionality of the pen from model to model. Some have pressure-sensitive tips so the harder you press on

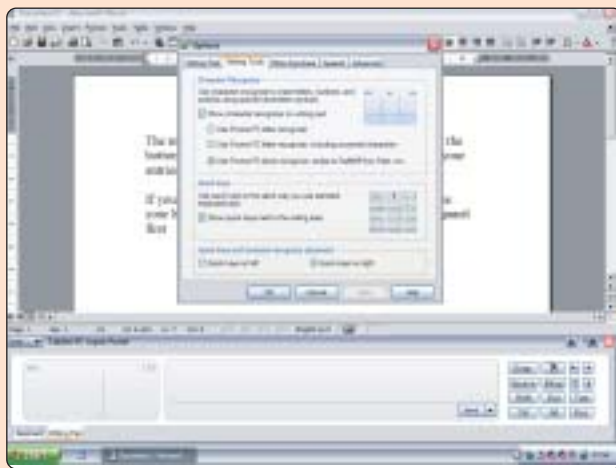
## Basic text input methods



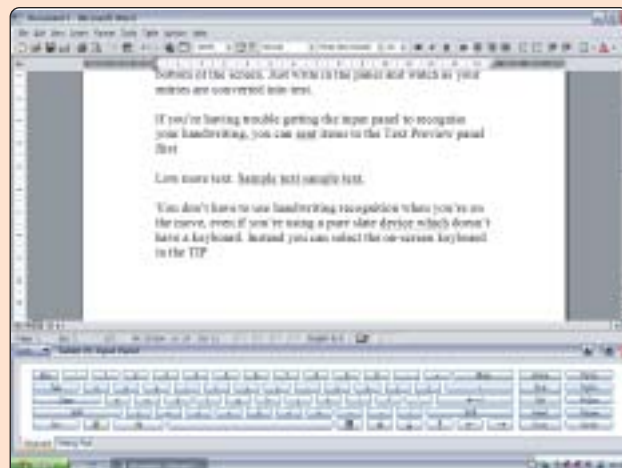
**1** The principal method of entering text with a tablet PC is using the TIP (tablet PC input panel), which by default is docked to the bottom of the screen. If the TIP is hidden, you can bring it up using the TIP gesture – making a rapid back and forth movement with the pen across the screen. You write on the line in the panel, and after a customisable delay period, your handwriting will be converted into text and entered at the insertion point of whatever document you're working on. If you would rather not wait, you can press the send button and the recognition will be carried out instantly



**2** If you're having trouble getting the TIP to recognise your writing, rather than sending text straight to the document you can set the TIP to send text to the Preview Panel first. Here you can make sure the words have been recognised correctly. If they haven't, click on the word and a small green triangle appears next to it. Click this and you are presented with a list of alternatives. Just select one to replace the incorrect word. Some applications, such as Office XP – provided you've installed the Office XP pack for Tablet PC – will allow you to make corrections such as this in situ, doing away with the need for the Preview panel



**3** If you're used to inputting text on a PDA, you may prefer the single-character method of text entry. To do this, open the Tools menu in the TIP (Tablet PC input panel) and select options. Here you can choose whether to display the Pocket PC letter recogniser, which allows you to enter text one letter at a time as you would on a Pocket PC device. Alternatively, select the Pocket PC block recogniser which uses similar inputs to Graffiti on Palm-based devices. Selecting either of these adds a new input area on the left of the TIP where you can write letters and numbers one-by-one



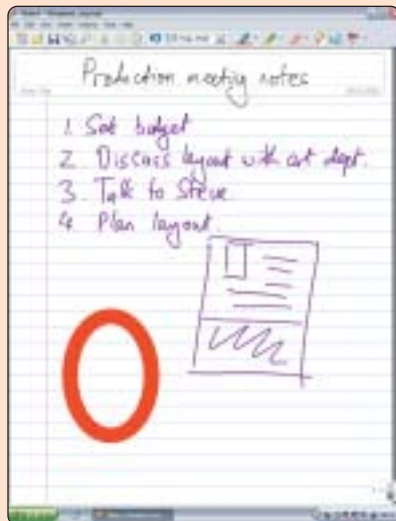
**4** If handwriting recognition just isn't your thing, do not despair – a keyboard is at hand, even on pure slate devices which don't have a physical keyboard. Select the onscreen keyboard by choosing the bottom lefthand tab.

- Tip Be warned that typing on this keyboard can be a bit fiddly, especially if your tablet PC is in landscape mode where the buttons are long and thin, so that they can fill the full width of the screen

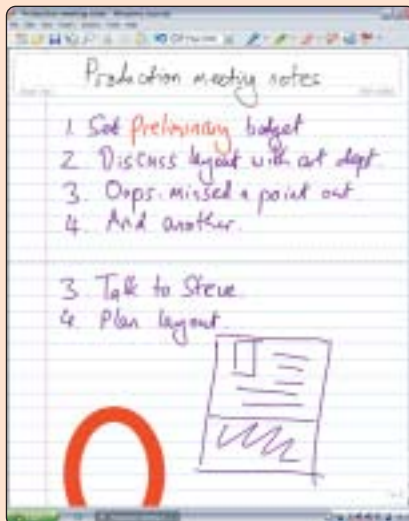
the screen, the thicker the ink stroke that appears. Some have an eraser on the end, so you just need to turn the pen round to correct mistakes, while with eraserless pens you are required to select the Eraser tool on screen if you want to delete something.

In addition, some pens have a button near the tip which, when held down, activates a right-click function, while other pens require you to press and hold the nib to the screen for a right-click.

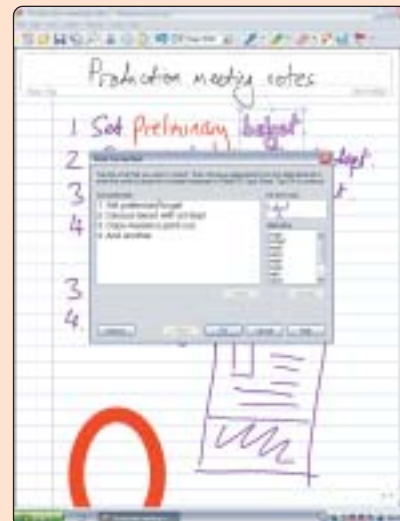
## Taking notes using Journal



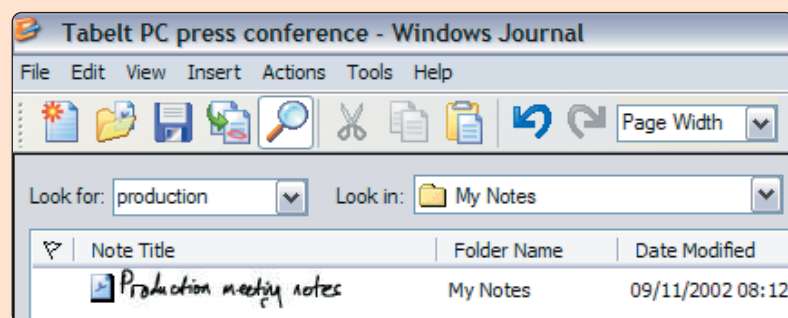
**1** Microsoft Journal can be used to take notes and write memos just as if you were using a pen and paper. The screen displays a blank sheet, which can be displayed in a number of formats, including lined or plain. The title you enter into the box at the top of the page will be used to name, store and retrieve the file. The rest of the page can be filled with whatever you like – writing, sketches, diagrams and so on. The pen tool lets you select different styles and colours of pens, and similar options are available for the highlighter tool



**2** To move items around the page, select them with the Select tool and then drag them to a new location. This feature is useful if you want to insert or delete words. You can also move entire sections of the page up or down using the Insert/Remove Space tool. Notes can be made more interesting using different pen styles, highlighting sections of text and adding pictures. And if your sketched ellipse or rectangle looks less than perfect, you can select it, then choose 'Convert shape to...' and Journal will redraw it as a neat geometrical shape



**3** Journal notes can be stored as they are, or converted to text using Tablet's handwriting-recognition engine. To convert Journal items to text, select the words using the selection tool then choose Actions, Convert Handwriting to Text. In the Text Correction box you can check that the words have been recognised correctly and make changes if necessary. The converted text can then be pasted straight back into the journal note to replace the original handwriting, or you can copy it to the Clipboard so you can export it into another application



**4** Journal includes a versatile search tool, enabling you to look through Journal notes just as you would a normal text document. Click the magnifying glass icon to bring up the search box. You can then enter the term you're looking for in the 'Look for' box either using the keyboard or by writing it in the TIP. When you click Find, Journal will search for the word in both the titles and contents of all your saved notes. Results are displayed in a list, and if you double-click an item in the list it will open in Journal

### Pen and ink

If you're an experienced PC user, accustomed to using a keyboard and mouse or trackpad, doing away with these devices is going to take some getting used to. Of course being able to do without them means you can use a tablet PC in ways you'd never have thought possible, but for a while at least you'll probably find yourself instinctively reaching for a

keyboard and mouse which are no longer there.

While the handwriting-recognition technology built into Tablet PC is surprisingly accurate, there will inevitably be recognition mistakes which can get pretty frustrating. The perfect system wouldn't require you to alter your handwriting at all, but with time you will learn Tablet PC's foibles and find the best

way to write problem characters to ensure a higher recognition rate.

### Becoming a journalist

It's important to note that a tablet PC isn't just a PC with handwriting recognition built in. This is still a new technology so it's impossible to be certain at this point how customers will respond to it, but it's likely that the most frequently used feature of

## Marking up documents



**1** Journal has another very useful function – the ability to mark up existing documents such as Word files. To do this, select Import from the File menu and navigate to the document you want to mark up. Journal will create an image of the file you're working on. Note that you will no longer be able to edit the marked up document itself. Then annotate the document as necessary, using the pen and highlighter tools



**2** To share the marked-up document with other people, select Send to Mail Recipient in the File menu. A dialog box will appear with a number of options. The first allows you to send the file as a Journal document. This can only be opened by users who also have a copy of Journal, but the advantage is that the markups can then be edited. Alternatively, you can save the document as a web page, viewable in Internet Explorer 5.0 and later, or as a black and white Tiff image

Windows XP Tablet PC edition will be the Journal application. This takes you as close to using a pen and paper as you can get with a computer.

The screen displays a blank sheet of paper (you can choose plain, lined, or a number of other formats) and you write on the screen as if it were a pad. You can take notes unobtrusively in situations where typing on a notebook wouldn't really work – in business meetings or in lessons at school – you can create sketches, draw diagrams and basically do whatever you can do with a regular notepad.

But Journal has some significant advantages. Firstly, everything you write or draw is editable: if you make a mistake, you can erase it; if you need to insert some words, grab what you've already written, move it down the page and start writing in the space. If you want to highlight something, you can mark it with a digital highlighter, or better still choose different pen styles for thicker or thinner strokes and different colours.

Secondly, everything you write is searchable. It isn't mandatory to convert Journal notes to text as Tablet PC still indexes everything it recognises, so you can search among handwritten documents for items you've previously written.

## Apply yourself

In addition to the Tablet PC Input Panel and Journal, Tablet PC comes with a range of additional applications. Sticky Notes lets you write memos directly on the screen, as you would with Post-it Notes. Ink Ball is a game designed to improve your pen skills.

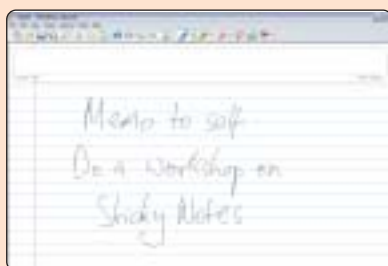
There are also magazine readers, allowing you to download books, newspapers and magazines and read them on screen, and gesture packages which let you use simple onscreen pen gestures to control functions such as web browsing and opening popular applications.

But these features are just the beginning. Third-party software is already available for using a tablet PC as a drawing tool, a doctor's chart, a retail planner's workshop and more. To get the most out of a tablet PC, you have to use it in ways that will help you be more productive. At the end of the day, as with all technology, a tablet PC is what you make it. ■

## Memos with Sticky Notes



**1** You can use the Sticky Notes application just like you use Post-it Notes in real life. Jot down a memo or a phone number and 'stick' it to your screen. Notes can also contain voice annotations, and you can create multiple notes which are stored in a single stack to avoid cluttering up your desktop. When you want to view the other notes in your stack, you just click the back and forward buttons at the top right of the note window



**2** If you find you need to move the information stored in a Sticky Note somewhere else, you don't have to write it out again. Using the drag and drop tool in Sticky Notes, you can move an exact copy of your note into other programs. If the application supports inline graphics, it will display the item exactly as it was in the original. If not, it will show up as an icon which you can then double-click to open. If you drag a note into Journal, you can then convert it to text