



How to Take and Pass the MOUS Word Expert Exam

By Donna Payne, President of Payne Consulting Group

Target Audience:

Word Trainers, Support Staff, and Power Users

When you are the supposed “expert” at Microsoft Word and decide to publicly announce that you are taking an exam to prove or disprove that expertise, what do you have to gain? That’s what I faced when I decided to take the Microsoft Office User Specialist expert level exam for Word 2002.

Now I should explain something before we get into the article – I’m not a test taker. I’d probably panic at the thought of taking a Cosmopolitan magazine test if it were being scored and there was a possibility of failure. So, it took a big leap of faith to announce to others that I was voluntarily taking the test.

This article chronicles the three weeks leading up to the exam, as well “t (test) day”. While this article won’t tell you the exam’s questions and answers, you will learn some useful tips for taking and passing the exam, as well as how to avoid common pratfalls that have brought down even the most knowledgeable IT trainer. Make no mistake, the test is tricky and difficult to follow, but we’ll get to that shortly.

The Reason

I firmly believe that if you set requirements for others in your company, you should be held to the same standard. All Payne Consulting Group trainers are required to pass the MOUS expert exams, so it seemed only fair that I did so myself. We’ve had a long-standing agreement that anyone in our company that has contact with clients should be able to answer questions. The MOUS certification, if nothing else, would instill confidence.

Another reason for taking the exam was to help clients who might be preparing to take the test as a part of their migration readiness program. I cannot imagine trying to guide someone through a task that you haven’t completed yourself.

With the decision made, it was time to get started.

Getting Started

The first step for me was to tell everyone that would listen that I was going to take the test and when. That way, there would be no backing out. I figure it’s better to test and fail than to be a coward and back out.

Next, it was time to sign up for the test. The Web site:

<http://www.microsoft.com/traincert/mcp/officespecialist/default.asp> had information regarding what testing facility in my area administered the test.

The *Find a Testing Center* drop-down list showed options for testing in 161 countries – from Albania to Zimbabwe. I was taking the test in the United States, near Seattle, Washington, which produced 29 locations where the test was administered. I chose one near the Microsoft campus at a local community college (which shared a building with a Microsoft satellite office). Chances were good that I’d run into someone that I knew – pressure!

The cost of a test varies between testing centers, but the average is around \$70. There are two flavors of the test -- Word 2002 Core and Word 2002 Expert. My experience is with the expert level exam.

Studying for the Test

The Web site listed under Getting Started is the best place to find out what’s on the test. The direct link for this information is currently at: <http://www.microsoft.com/traincert/mcp/officespecialist/objectives/word2002expert.asp>.

There are books and electronic tests that can be purchased as well. Microsoft lists its recommendation as *Microsoft® Word Version 2002 Step by Step*. Amazon.com *MOUS: Office XP Study Guide* by Gini Courter, Annette Marquis. I found all of the answers in our book, *Word 2002 for Law Firms* and did not use the others listed. One of our clients had Payne Consulting Group create a class that helped them study for the MOUS test and that worked well for them. Practice tests can be purchased from Certiport <http://www.certiport.com/yourPersonalPath/practiceTests.asp>. While the tests are of good quality, if you take them more than once, you start to memorize the answers, which doesn’t really measure your knowledge but how well you memorize. Further, the practice tests allow you to go back and retake a



question. This is not allowed on the actual test. Lastly, the practice test tells you immediately if the answer is right or wrong – unlike the actual exam.

Here's What's on the Test...

Customizing Paragraphs

- Control pagination – Here you will want to pay particular attention to options in the Paragraph dialog box, line spacing, widow orphan control, keep lines together and keep with next.
- Sort paragraphs in lists and tables – Understand how to sort different types of information in a table and how sorting differs when there are heading and total rows.

Formatting Documents

- Create and format document sections – Make sure you know how to insert and apply formatting to sections in a document.
- Create and apply character and paragraph styles – Styles have changed in this version so make sure you are comfortable applying and creating styles in Word 2002. Also, read the question carefully because this one is tricky. You'll also want to know how to remove formatting quickly.
- Create and update document indices and tables of contents, figures, and authorities
- Create cross-references
- Add and revise endnotes and footnotes
- Create and manage master documents and subdocuments - This is on the test and it's something that law firms do not typically use because it does not work with a document management system. Make sure to read up on the topic in Word 2002 for Law Firms before taking the test.
- Move within documents – Basic navigation skills
- Create and modify forms using various form controls – You will need to use the Forms toolbar to add and manipulate controls and you must understand protection.
- Create forms and prepare forms for distribution

Customizing Tables

- Use Excel data in tables – You should study the interoperability between Word and Excel and be very comfortable inserting and working with Excel worksheets and charts.
- Perform calculations in Word tables

Creating and Modifying Graphics

- Create, modify, and position graphics – Pay particular attention to this when prepping for the exam.
- Create and modify charts using data from other applications
- Align text and graphics

Customizing Word

- Create, edit, and run macros – At minimum, know how to record a macro, run it, add it as a menu command, and edit basic macros.
- Customize menus and toolbars

Workgroup Collaboration

- Track, accept, and reject changes to documents
- Merge input from several reviewers
- Insert and modify hyperlinks to other documents and Web pages
- Create and edit Web documents in Word
- Create document versions – While this isn't typically something that law firms use (File, Versions), you may find it on your test and you should be comfortable working with this feature.
- Help protect documents
- Define and modify default file locations for workgroup templates – Read the question carefully if you get one on this topic.
- Attach digital signatures to documents



Using Mail Merge

- Merge letters with a Word, Excel, or Access data source – In a nutshell, know Mail Merge and the new Mail Merge Task Pane very well. Follow directions completely and it doesn't hurt to read the question several times if time permits.
- Merge labels with a Word, Excel, or Access data source
- Use Outlook data as mail merge data source

Examination Day

Plan to arrive at the testing center a few minutes early, if possible. Rushing tends to stress me out and it's better to go into the test calm. Bring a photo ID and be prepared for the test administrator to ask for identification. It seems there was a semi-scandal where people had hired others to take the test for them.

Upon arrival, I was told to leave all belongings at the administrator desk in another room. No cell phones, two way watches, or recording devices are permitted. Some testing centers ask you to sign a form saying that you will not disclose what's on the test. I wasn't asked to do this, but others that I talked to after the fact in preparing this article indicated that they were asked to do so.

The test administrator ushers you into a room where you will take the test. In my case, there were at least six other people at computer terminals also taking tests – not necessarily the MOUS exam since the testing center also administered other types of computer-based tests. In fact, as I took the test, I could hear the frustration of others in the room by loud sighs and other noises. Don't let that distract you.

One shocker for me that made me a little uncomfortable was a camera mounted on the ceiling to watch the room. Cameras, not unlike tests, make me nervous.

Once you are at the computer, the administrator of the exam enters a password and should give you instructions on how to begin. Enter information as requested into the initial startup, such as a unique username and password, and an address where the certificate should be sent.

The Actual Test

You have 45 minutes to take the test but before you start, an introduction provides hints and help on what is and is not acceptable on the test. It also lists some useful advice so I recommend reading it carefully before proceeding. It doesn't count against your time and it helped me to calm down before the clock started ticking.

You cannot use online Help during the test and each question has several parts. Each part must be completed correctly to score 100% and it must be performed in the order requested (so don't rush ahead).

You can use any method you feel most comfortable with to accomplish the task – keyboard shortcuts, toolbar buttons, menu commands, alternate-click.

Skill sets are judged not only on whether the question is answered correctly, but on your efficiency in the approach. My philosophy is that if the feature is new in Word 2002 – in example, the Clear Formatting option in the Task Pane, then that's how you should access it. Also, there is a timer on screen that shows remaining time. If you are taking an unusually long time to answer a particular question, and then figure it out, you can reset the timer for that question but not for test itself. One person that I interviewed who took the test had difficulty with the first question and it took him more than seven minutes to answer, by resetting the question, no time penalty was deducted because he reset the question and started over. The downside is that any steps leading up to this point are discarded.

Each of the questions is divided into parts (a, b, c, and d). You will not have the same test as others who took the exam because the questions are selected at random. However, there are similarities between those interviewed for this article.

Questions may be poorly worded, ambiguous and tricky. Determine the "best way" although there may be a legitimate alternative to perform the action. Memorization won't help you on this test since it asks you to perform an action, not describe what action to take to resolve the question.

Been There Done That – Tips from Other Testers

- Read every question carefully – Twice, if time allows, making sure you decipher what they really want you to do.



- What they are asking may go against conventional wisdom. For example, most people know that File, Versions can bloat the file size and compromise information – leaving metadata in the document, but it has appeared on some of the tests given.
- They may ask you to do something like apply two types of paragraph formatting to a single paragraph. This is not something a real Word expert would do very often, but again, it could be on the test. If you read the question thoroughly, it will be clear.
- Yo Moreno from Jenkins & Gilchrist in Dallas, TX recommends understanding how information is imported from Word into Excel properly. This is something that slips under the radar because it's supposed to be a Word test – not Excel.
- Marilyn Bradford, also with Jenkins & Gilchrist, has the following recommendations: Study Macros and Graphics in preparation for the MOUS expert exam. A good, thorough study plan is your best weapon. Payne Consulting Group's Word 2002 Master Series training course was a great and successful study plan for me. Not only did it prepare me with the skills needed, but more importantly, it empowered me with confidence. When taking the exam, read the instructions carefully before you begin, and read each question with close care throughout the exam. Remember that this is a timed exam -- Don't hurry through, but without too much clock-watching, do not linger. Remember the three "Cs" --
 - Stay *Cool*, do not panic.
 - Be *Calm*, as you read carefully and move steadily forward to completion, and
 - *Collected*. Knowledge will empower you with the skills and confidence you'll need to succeed.

Develop a thorough study plan, using Word Expert study tools by Payne Consulting Group.

- Sandy Hagman, a senior trainer at Payne Consulting Group, had the following recommendations:
 - Most Important Tip - READ ALL DIRECTIONS CAREFULLY.
 - Understand the collaboration between Office applications, such as how to insert Excel files in Word, sending Word documents to PowerPoint, etc.
 - Reviewing and routing.
 - Understand how to format as well as edit shapes and pictures.

All's Well that Ends Well...

Just before clicking Finish, I wondered how well I did on the test. You cannot go back and make changes or review your answers, so with a click of the mouse, I sent the results to the proctor – forever sealing my fate with this exam. The resulting score – 980 out of 1000. Not bad, but I'm still begrudging that 20 points that they took off – I demand a recount.

About Payne Consulting Group, Inc.

Payne Consulting Group is a software training and development company headquartered in Seattle, WA. Payne has authored ten books on Microsoft products including: *Word 2002*, *Word 2000*, and *Word 97 for Law Firms*, *Essential Excel 97* and *Essential Excel 2000*, *Excel Expert Solutions*, *Office Expert Solutions*, and more. The company also specializes in developing software and includes the Metadata Assistant featured on the front page of the Wall Street Journal (Oct. 20, 2000) which removes embedded and often confidential information buried in documents, the Forms Assistant that automates the creation of letter, memo, fax, agreement and pleading documents, and the Numbering Assistant which simplifies the process of numbering. Payne offers high end Master Series and Visual Basic for Applications classes, end-user training, courseware, essential project management as defined by the Project Management Institute, and custom development.



Payne is a member of the Microsoft Legal Advisory Council, the American Bar Association, and the American Society of Journalists and Authors. Payne is a frequent speaker at Microsoft conferences and events.

Payne Consulting Group offers a preparatory class for taking the MOUS exam. For information on this class or other training, products or services from the company contact us at www.payneconsulting.com , info@payneconsulting.com or by calling 206-344-8966.