**Word processing** software

The last step in **word processing** came with the advent of the personal computer in the late 1970s and 1980s and with the subsequent creation of **word processing** software. **Word processing** systems that would create much more complex and capable text were developed and prices began to fall, making them more accessible to the public.

The first **word processing** program for personal computers (microcomputers) was Electric Pencil, from Michael Bell Software, which went on sale in December of 1976. In 1978 WordStar appeared and because of its many new features soon dominated the market. However, WordStar was written for the early CP/M (Control Program–Micro) operating system, and by the time it was rewritten for the newer MS-DOS (Microsoft Disk Operating System), it was obsolete. WordPerfect and its competitor Microsoft Word replaced it as the main **word processing** programs during the MS-DOS era, although there were less successful programs such as XyWrite.

Most early **word processing** software required users to memorize semi-mnemonic key combinations rather than pressing keys such as "copy" or "bold". Moreover, CP/M lacked cursor keys; for example WordStar used the E-S-D-X-centered "diamond" for cursor navigation. However, the price differences between dedicated word processors and general-purpose PCs, and the value added to the latter by software such as “killer app” spreadsheet applications, e.g. VisiCalc and Lotus 1-2-3, were so compelling that personal computers and **word processing** software became serious competition for the dedicated machines and soon dominated the market.

Then in the late 1980s innovations such as the advent of laser printers, a "typographic" approach to **word processing** (WYSIWYG - What You See Is What You Get), using bitmap displays with multiple fonts (pioneered by the Xerox Alto computer and Bravo **word processing** program), and graphical user interfaces such as “copy and paste” (another Xerox PARC innovation, with the Gypsy word processor). These were popularized by MacWrite on the Apple Macintosh in 1983, and Microsoft Word on the IBM PC in 1984. These were probably the first true WYSIWYG word processors to become known to many people. Of particular interest also is the standardization of TrueType fonts used in both Macintosh and Windows PCs. While the publishers of the operating systems provide TrueType typefaces, they are largely gathered from traditional typefaces converted by smaller font publishing houses to replicate standard fonts. A demand for new and interesting fonts, which can be found free of copyright restrictions, or commissioned from font designers, occurred.

The growing popularity of the Windows operating system in the 1990s later took Microsoft Word along with it. Originally called "Microsoft Multi-Tool Word", this program quickly became a synonym for “word processor”.