

Welcome to "ITS Technology Tips," where we bring you some useful information about the technology here at Loyola and effective ways to use the technology. Remember to visit the weekly [Tech Tips Blog](#) for the latest tips and the [Technology Tips Archive](#), to find all Tech Tips in PDF format, categorized for easy access.

RTF: Why You Need to Know!

Has this scenario happened to you? You've downloaded a file from Blackboard or from an e-mail message sent to you from a friend or a colleague. You double-click on it. Instead of a viewable document, you get a scientific message like "gobbledygook." Maybe you get a more specific error like "Windows cannot open this file." Windows might then ask you to select from a list of programs on your computer or claim it will go online for you and do it, but oftentimes, this yields nothing but frustration for you. And yes, though there are troubleshooting steps you can go through to open documents in times like this – it depends on the version of your program and their program, and your platform and their platform.

But, lucky for you, there's a very easy solution to all of this! Simply e-mail your friend and tell him or her to send the document to you again as an RTF file. You should also get into the habit of saving your documents as .rtf files before sending them off to other people or uploading them to Blackboard. You shouldn't make the assumption that everyone uses the same word processor. Though Microsoft Word has a dominant market share, don't assume that everyone has it just because you might use it.

What is an RTF?

RTF stands for Rich Text Format and is a method of encoding text so any word processing program or computer can read it. If you've ever opened a document and got a bunch of garbled text, it is most likely because the program you used to open the document can't translate the data into readable text. When saving your documents in common word processing programs such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft Works, and WordPerfect, documents are saved in a format specific to the program. Documents created in Microsoft Word use the extension ".doc," Microsoft Works use ".wks" and WordPerfect use ".wpd." If you create a document in Microsoft Word and name it "birds" the file is automatically assigned the file extension (.doc); therefore your file will be named "birds.doc." If someone using WordPerfect tries to open your file "birds.doc" he or she may experience difficulty because the (.doc) extension is specific to Microsoft Word. Problems especially emerge with earlier versions of software programs. If Aunt Erma sends you a document she made in Word 6, you might have some problems reading it in Word 2003. But RTF makes life easy for everyone because almost every word processor allows you to save as an RTF file. And because RTF files are platform-independent, no matter if you have Appleworks, Clarisworks, WordPerfect, AbiWord, Microsoft Works, OpenOffice, etc; you'll be able to open it.

Saving as RTF may strip some of the formatting out of your documents. So if you want your document to appear EXACTLY as you created it, you really should save it as a .pdf. However, .pdfs may not be the ideal solution for you. You may need the flexibility of sending people documents that can be edited. You also may not have the tools to actually make the .pdfs, particularly if you didn't read our very helpful tech tip on where to get the free tools to make .pdfs. Anyway, we digress. Even if you love .pdfs, it is very useful to know what an RTF is and how to save your documents in this format.

How to Save as an RTF

By following these instructions, you can save a file as an RTF. Note: the process of saving is the same for Microsoft Word, Microsoft Works, and WordPerfect. The view might vary a little, but the process is the same.

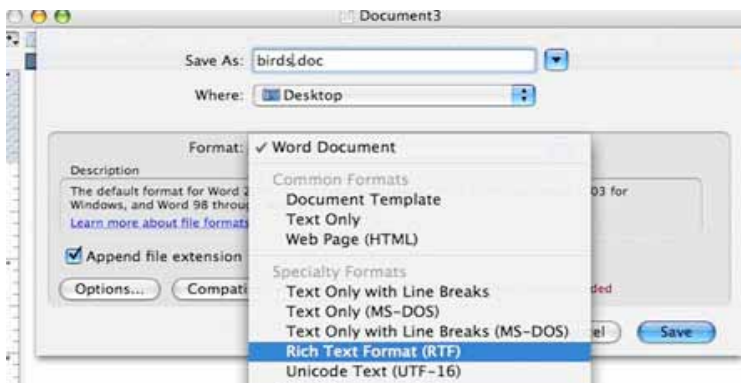
In your word processor, go to the drop-down **File** menu and select **Save As**. In the Save As window you will have the option to first name your file, then select the file type. If you are using Windows, in the 'Save as type' drop down menu, select "Rich Text Format (*.rtf)." If you are using a Mac, in the 'Format' drop down menu select "Rich Text Format (RTF)." Then click the Save button.

Here are examples using Microsoft Word:

Windows:



Mac:



*Tip for Mac users: Make sure that the 'Append file extension' box is checked in the **Save As** window. This is very important! Mac does not automatically add the extension, which causes pain and suffering for Windows users. Checking this box will enable Windows computers to more easily read the file type.

Get into the Habit!

If we all used the same operating system and word processor, then sharing documents would be a seamless process. If you send attachments often or post documents to Blackboard, then you've probably encountered the problem of someone not being able to open your file. Saving your documents as RTFs makes them easier to share. If you use a Mac and send an attachment to a Windows user or vice-versa, saving as an RTF will help you avoid the issue of someone not being able to open your document.

If you are a Mac user, opening WordPerfect and Microsoft Works files can be done but it is not always a straightforward process. Purchasing MacLink Plus is a good solution to convert newer versions of WordPerfect and Microsoft Works, but may not work for the older versions. A simple solution is to get access to a PC and convert the files to RTF then transfer the files to your Mac. If this is not possible, the following links will provide some insight.

WordPerfect files and Mac users:

http://www.dataviz.com/products/maclinkplus/mlp_evol.html
<http://mcohit.business.nd.edu/kb/kb.cfm?Action=questiononly&qid=552>
<http://kb.iu.edu/data/afal.html>

Microsoft Works files and Mac Users:

http://www.dataviz.com/products/maclinkplus/mlp_evol.html
<http://forums.appleinsider.com/showthread.php?t=22335>

Resources on RTF's

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rich_Text_Format
<http://www.washburn.edu/its/webct/rtf.html>

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