

Chapter 6

Automatic spelling correction and abbreviation expansion

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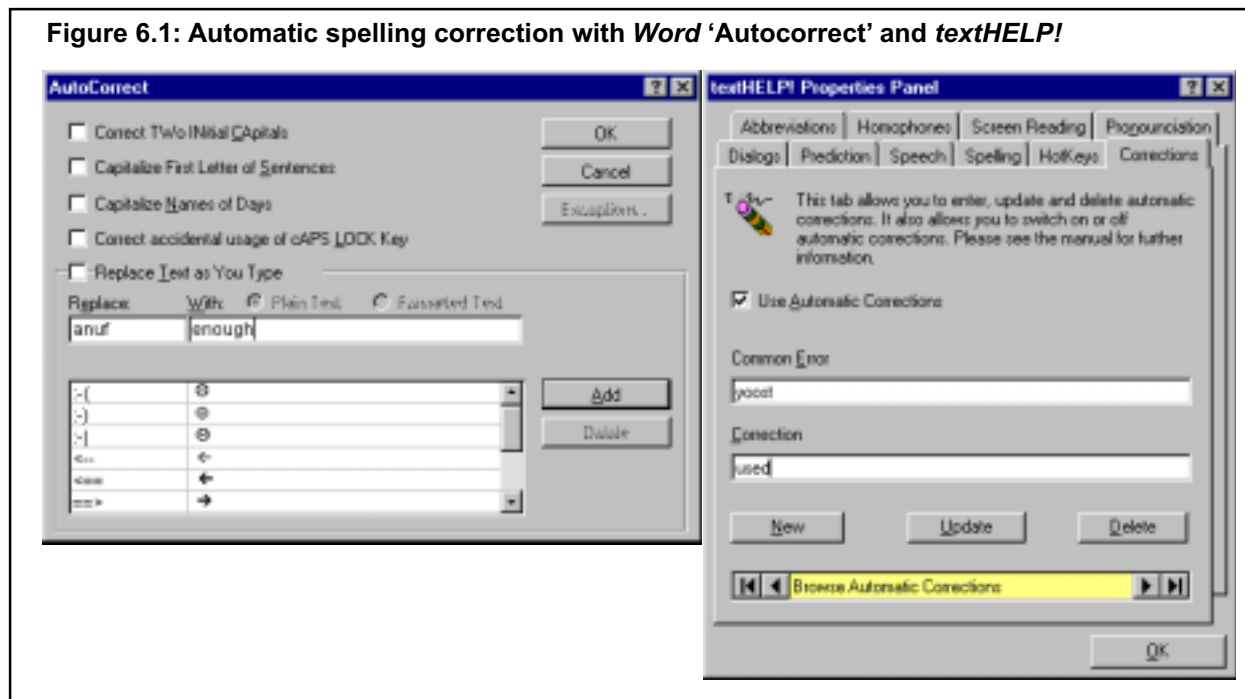
6.4 Automatic spelling correction / abbreviation expansion summary

6 AUTOMATIC SPELLING CORRECTION AND ABBREVIATION EXPANSION

6.1 Automatic spelling correction

Some programs have a facility to correct a spelling or typing mistake automatically. The mis- and correct spellings are added to a dictionary and the program replaces the error with the correct spelling automatically as it is typed. Automatic spelling correction suits writers who make consistent spelling mistakes – for example, spelling ‘enough’ as ‘enuf’ or ‘anuf’. It can also be used to correct particularly idiosyncratic errors such as ‘yooshaly’ (usually) which cause problems for standard spellcheckers.

Figure 6.1: Automatic spelling correction with Word ‘Autocorrect’ and textHELP!



Automatic spelling correction tools and dictionaries are provided in *Microsoft Word 6/97/98* and in *textHELP!*. The abbreviation expansion facility available in several word predictors (e.g. *Co:Writer*, *Penfriend*) can also be used for spelling correction. These

Figure 6.2: Correcting spelling and split words with *Co:Writer* and *Penfriend* ‘abbreviation expansion’

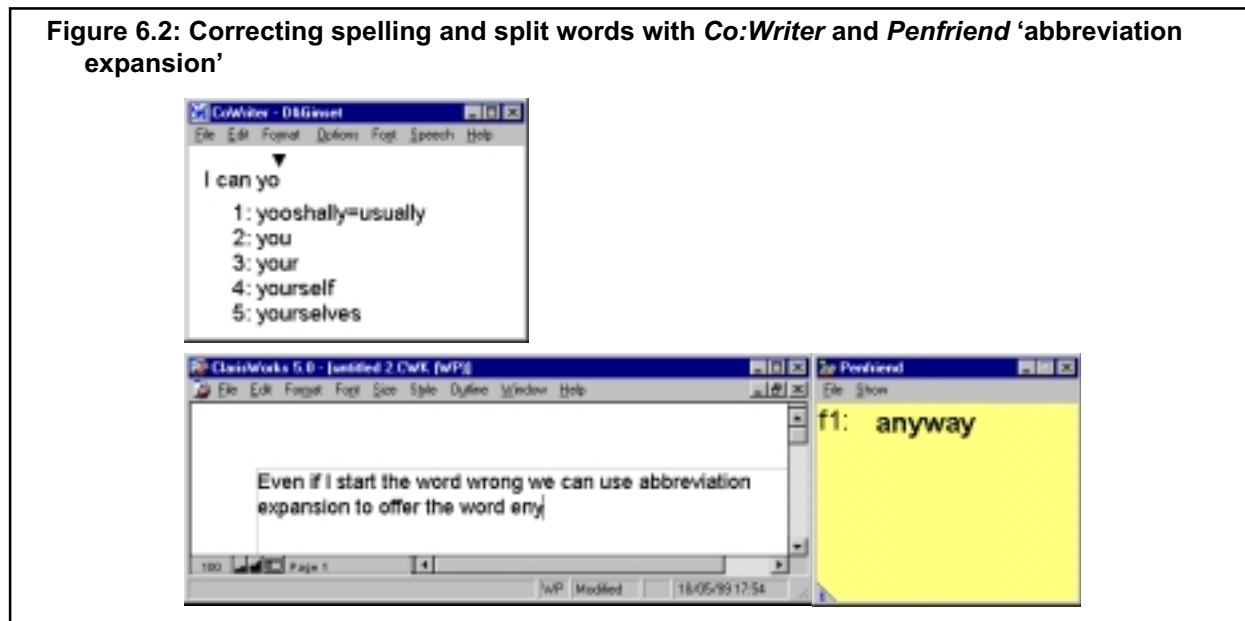


Figure 6.3: Case Study – AutoCorrect

Craig, a second year University student, has dyslexia and difficulty spelling longer words. He started using *Microsoft Word* while still at school and since then has built up an *AutoCorrect* dictionary with over 10,000 entries to automatically correct his spelling mistakes. For many words, he has three or four different 'wrong' spellings so can be fairly confident that the program will replace the word with the correct spelling.

tools are useful for setting up the predictor to handle words which do not start with the correct letter (e.g. 'yooshaly'), and can also be used to correct 'split word errors' ('eny way' for 'anyway'). (*Word's* AutoCorrect facility does not handle split word errors.)

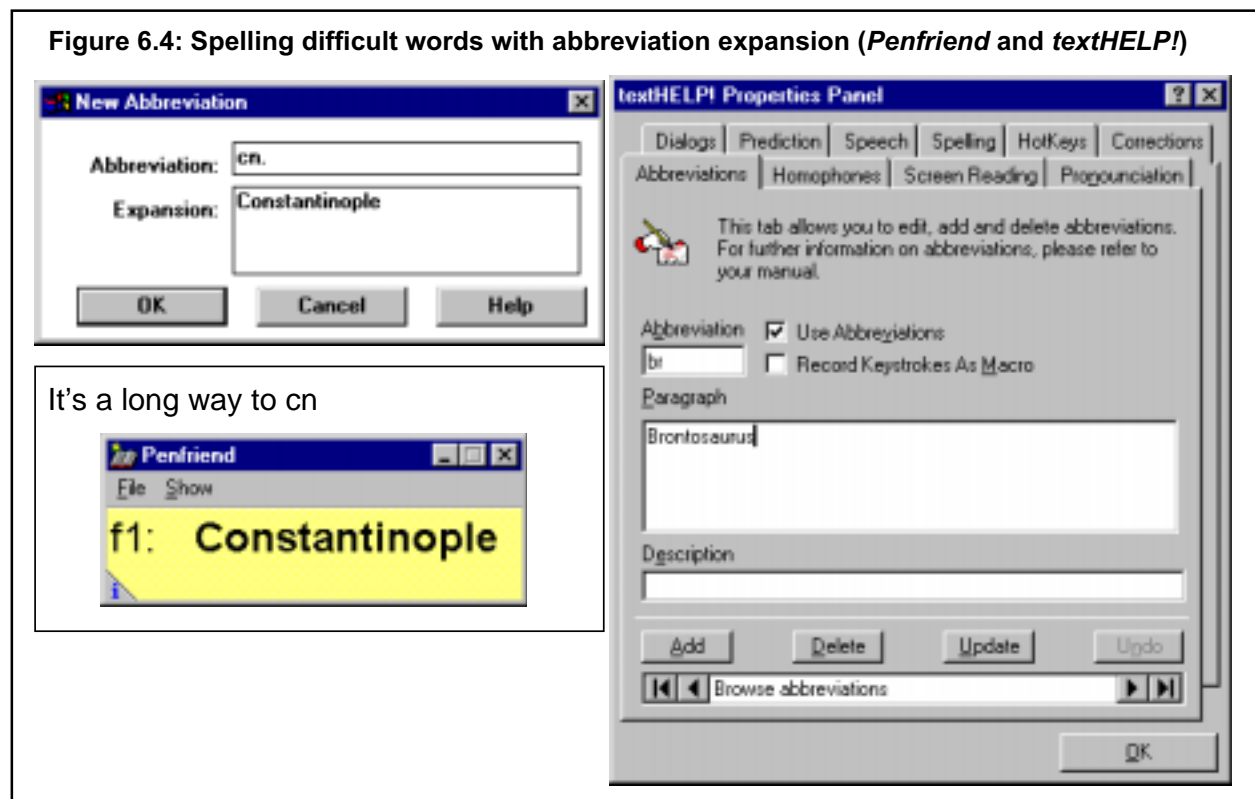
6.2 Abbreviation expansion

Abbreviation expansion is a technique whereby long words or phrases (expansions) are stored in the computer and given a short abbreviation. When the abbreviation is typed, the program 'expands' it and types in the full word or phrase. The expansions can either occur *automatically* as soon as the abbreviation is typed (like AutoCorrect); or *manually*, by typing the abbreviation followed by a special key or key combination.

Abbreviation expansion was originally developed for writers with physical impairments; since a whole phrase can be written by typing only a few keystrokes, typing speed is increased and fatigue is reduced.

Writers with spelling difficulties can use abbreviation expansion to help with long or difficult-to-spell words. The words are added to the dictionary under a short abbreviation (for example, 'cn.' for '*Constantinople*', 'br.' for '*Brontosaurus*') and when the writer types the abbreviation the word is inserted, correctly spelled, into the text.

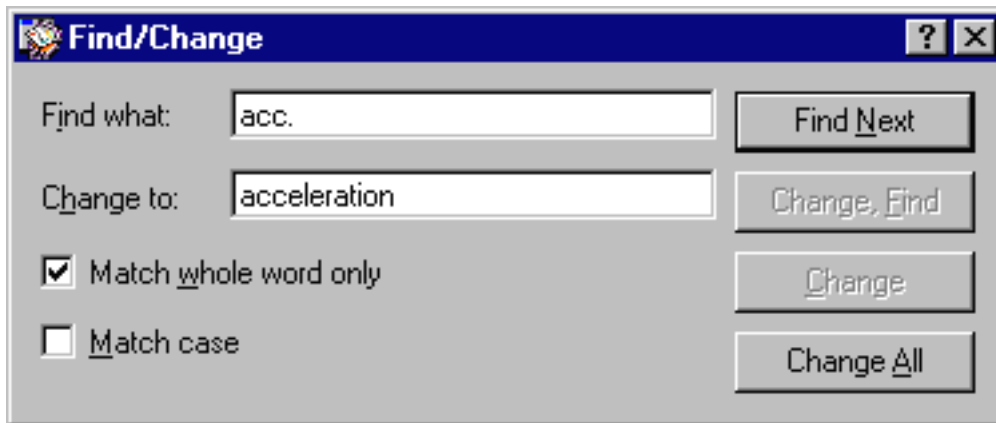
The *MS Word* AutoCorrect facility, and the tools in some word prediction tools can be used for abbreviation expansion in this way.

Figure 6.4: Spelling difficult words with abbreviation expansion (*Penfriend* and *textHELP!*)

6.3 'Find and replace'

The *'Find and Replace'* facility that is provided in almost all word processors can be used as a 'manual' form of abbreviation expansion. The writer types a short abbreviation for longer words which he or she has difficulty spelling and then uses *Find and Replace* to replace the abbreviation with the correct word. (Of course, the writer may need some help or strategy to spell the word correctly when typing it into the 'Replace' window. One technique is to create a word list or database of hard-to-spell words, and copy and paste from the list.)

Figure 6.5: *ClarisWorks* Find/Change window – use 'acc.' for 'acceleration'



6.4 Automatic spelling correction/abbreviation expansion summary

These correction methods are usually more appropriate for older writers who have already struggled and failed to learn to spell specific words correctly. The tools also require strategic thinking and an understanding of the nature of the writer's own difficulties.

Automatic spelling correction / abbreviation expansion are useful for pupils with writing difficulties because they:

- ✓ enable writers to automatically replace mis-spellings with the correct word, without interrupting the flow of writing;
- ✓ let writers type a short abbreviation or keystroke combination which is then replaced with a longer correctly spelled word or phrases.

Automatic spelling correction / abbreviation expansion is worth investigating if:

- ✓ the user writes slowly, or gets tired quickly;
- ✓ the writer makes fairly consistent mis-spellings;

Things to look for in a program for automatic spelling correction and abbreviation expansion:

- ✓ ease of use;
- ✓ automatic and manual abbreviation expansion methods
- ✓ facility to cope with split words (e.g. 'eney way' for 'anyway')