

# Open Writer. OpenOffice.org word processor

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## Introduction

Open Writer is the OpenOffice.org text document creation application. As we shall see, the program can carry out the same functions as any other program of this nature on the market and offers filters for other types of document (Microsoft Word included), graphics support, the creation of books and tables, non-consecutive selections of blocks of text, version control and the automatic creation of tables of contents.

This unit will deal with general use of the program, but it will not cover the basics of document composition and editing because it is not the aim here. We will look at the features of OpenOffice.org for users who routinely use other text editors, such as Microsoft Word or WordPerfect, so that they can weigh up the possibility of using OpenOffice.org as an alternative. Nonetheless, we will cover key concepts when considered necessary.

The main aims of this unit are:

- 1) to describe the working environment of the Open Writer program in order to familiarise students with it,
- 2) to teach students how to use the basic tools for composing and formatting text documents, and
- 3) to explain how to set up the text composition help features in order to adapt them to our working needs.



## 1. The Writer working environment

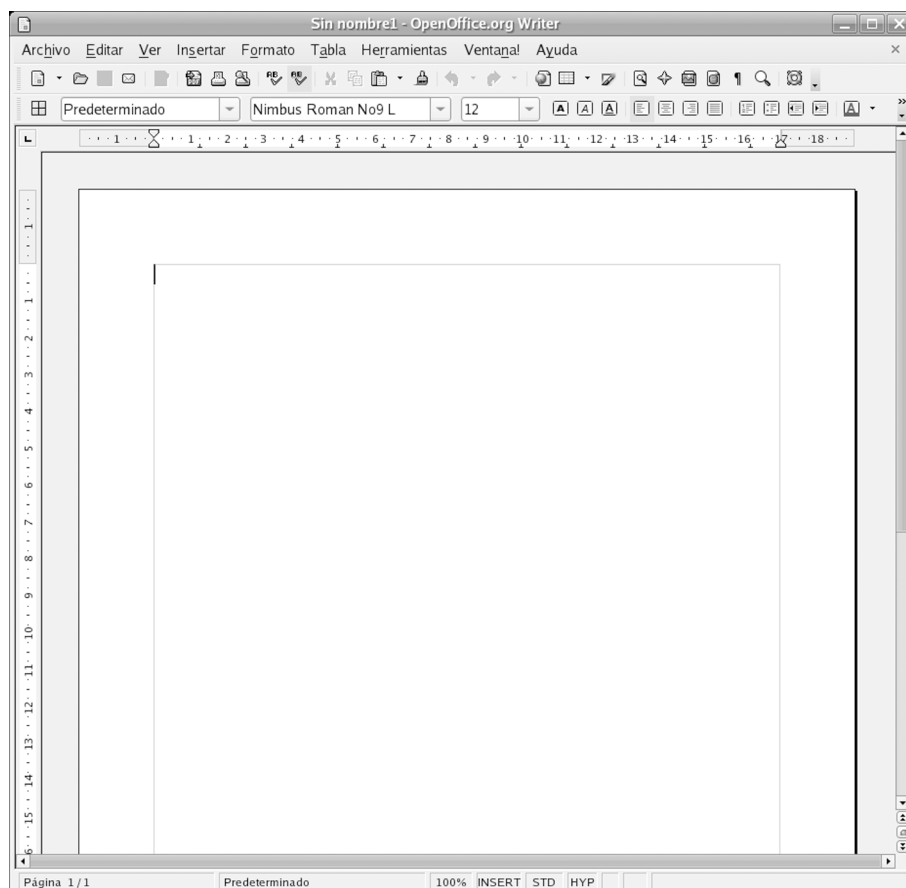
This section looks at the working environment of the Open Writer program, offering an introduction to familiarise readers with the environment and how it can be customised. Some of the concepts covered here will also prove useful for other components of OpenOffice.org.

Writer can be launched from any OpenOffice.org application by selecting the File -> New -> Text Document menu option.

Tips can be very useful for learning about the different features of the program. Tips are displayed for each of the labels and icons on the screen so we can find out what they do simply by pointing the mouse at them. You can enable or disable this option using the Help -> Tips menu option.

If you need help with a dialog box or window, you can always click on the Help button or press F1. OpenOffice.org is a very well documented program and its Help is very good. You should learn to use it whenever you have a query about something as this will enhance your experience as users.

Figure 1. The Writer working environment



We will now describe the diverse elements in the program's workspace:

- The **Menu bar** contains the various actions that can be carried out globally across the OpenOffice.org program and those that are specific to Writer. New entries can sometimes appear in this bar, such as when you are working with tables.
- The **Function bar** indicates the full path of the file being edited and provides a shortcut to the program's global features.
- The **Object bar** is used to apply formatting to the objects you are working with at a given time. It will most often display text formatting tools but it may also contain table and drawing tools if you are working with these elements.
- The **horizontal ruler** displays the page dimensions and can be used to insert tab stops. The measurement units of the ruler can be changed very quickly by right-clicking on it. Though not enabled by default, the program has a vertical ruler too, which is very useful for working with drawings and tables. We will see it shortly.
- The **Main toolbar**, positioned vertically down the left-hand side of the document, gives quick access to the most common word processing functions.
- The **Status bar** at the bottom of the screen has a number of functions, which include viewing page numbers, applying page styles (by right-clicking on Standard), changing zoom percentage and changing the default type of text selection.

### 1.1. Customising the toolbars

All OpenOffice.org components display lots of icons on screen simultaneously so that the user can access functions very quickly. To display all of the toolbars, select them in the drop-down list that appears after selecting the View -> Toolbars menu option. Here, you can select the toolbars that you want the program to display. We recommend that you always keep the Function, Object and Main toolbars checked as these give access to most of the actions that you will need.

Most toolbar buttons only carry out one action, which is the one indicated in the tip that appears when you hover over it with the mouse. However, some buttons have several functions, in which case you will see a green arrow next

to the button image. To see all of the button's options, click and hold down the left mouse button over the image. This can either produce a new toolbar or display a drop-down list of options.

For example, if you click on the Insert button, the first one on the Main toolbar, the Insert Table dialog box will appear. However, if you hold down the left mouse button as you click on it, a toolbar will appear containing more buttons with drop-down lists.

Figure 2. Element insertion toolbars



If you often use the various toolbar options, you can click on the blue space around its title to make it into a real toolbar that can be dragged to any point of the screen for direct access to its various functions.

The appearance of the Object bar changes according to the context in which you are working. For example, its buttons will vary if you are in the middle of a paragraph of text or a table.

Figure 3. Object bar in text context



For paragraphs, it displays basic text formatting elements, which you will be very familiar with at this stage.

Figure 4. Object bar in table context



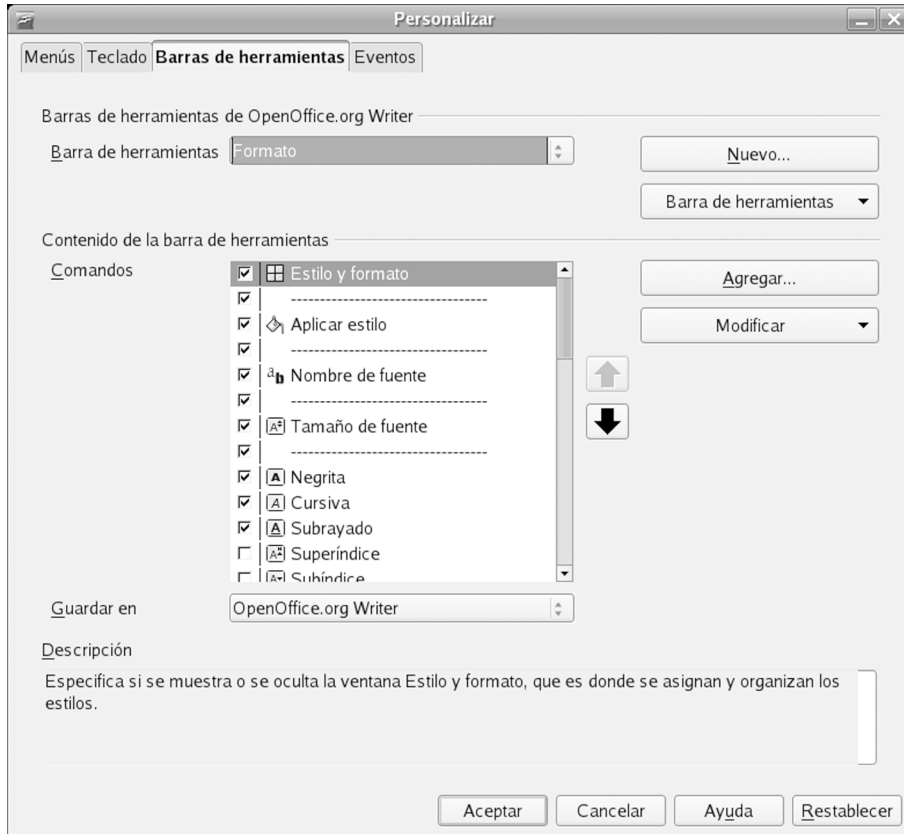
If you are inside a table, it will display the most common actions for working with tables. Very often in a table we need to use text formatting tools. To do this, simply click on the button with the blue arrow at the end of the Object bar. This button allows us to manually toggle between the two contexts.

If you find that the buttons on the Object bar are the fastest and most convenient way of formatting text, you may need to add new features to the bar's default ones. OpenOffice.org only includes the most common ones by default.

To view all of the available options, simply right-click the relevant toolbar and select the Visible Buttons option from the menu. This will open a drop-down list where you can select all of the available actions for the bar that you just clicked on.

If, besides modifying the available buttons, you wish to organise them using a different criteria to the program, you will need to use the customise toolbars tool. To call it up, right-click on the toolbar you wish to customise and select the Customise option.

Figure 5. Customise toolbars tool



The left-hand list contains all of the program's functions grouped into categories, which you can add to your toolbar by clicking on the Add button. The Move Up and Move Down buttons move the added actions along the bar while the Icons button is used to customise the button images. Note that some of the program features (the least common ones) do not have a predefined image. To restore the toolbar to the default program values, simply click on the Default button.

## 1.2. Customising menus

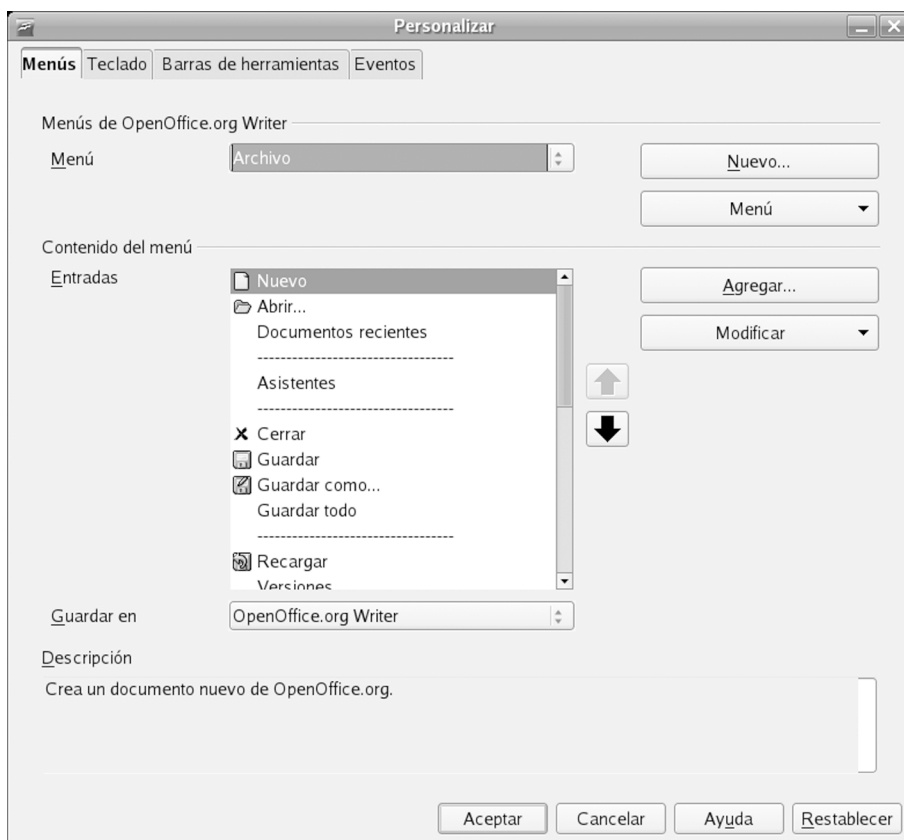
Finally, some computer programs have adopted a strategy of hiding menu options when they are unavailable. In this case, the menu options that cannot be accessed simply disappear instead of being greyed out. This can lead to confusion as users may think that the program feature does not exist or that there is a problem with the program. In contrast, if an option is greyed out and disabled, the user will realise that the option is not available in this context. The

OpenOffice.org program behaves differently here, depending on the version you use. To enable inactive menus, go to Tools -> Options -> OpenOffice-> View and mark the Inactive menu items option.

It is possible to customise application menus, just as we did with toolbars. Normally, however, it is much quicker to access functions through toolbars, so we would recommend using these for the more common activities. Besides, customising menus is for very advanced users. Your average user would not modify default program options.

To go to the menu configuration tool, go to Tools -> Configure and select the Menu tab.

Figure 6. Customise menus tool



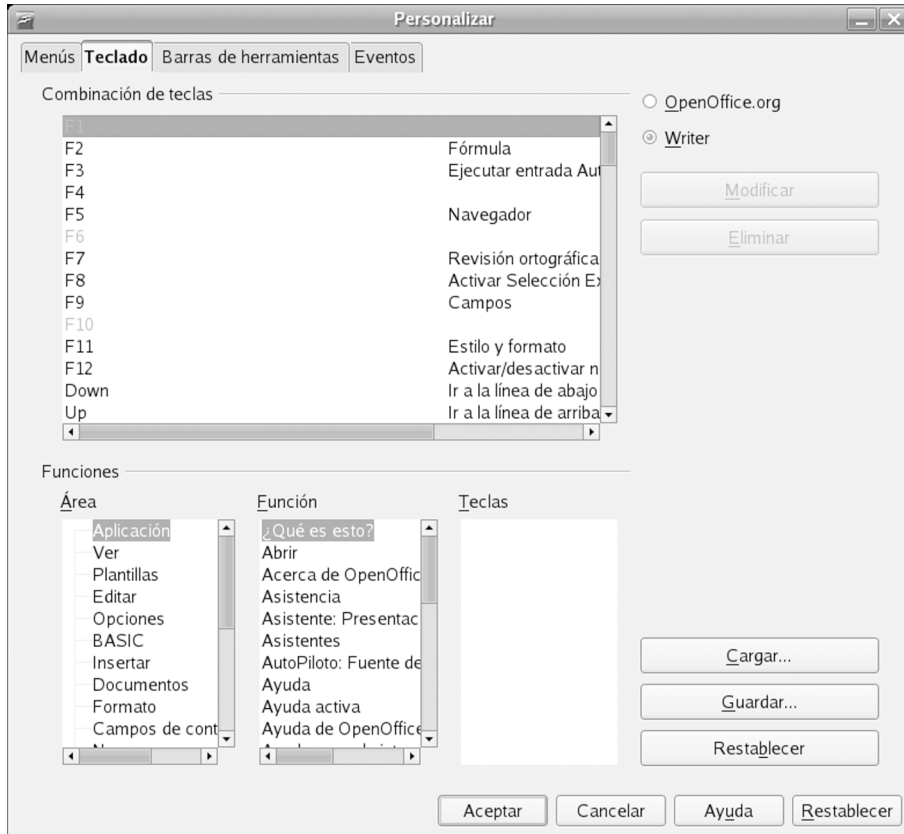
Each of the different OpenOffice.org applications (Writer, Calc, Impress etc.) has its own menus, so be sure to access this option from the application you wish to customise. Customised menus are saved in files with the .cfg extension in the /user/config folder of the personal profile of each user. When we create, modify or save menus, we make changes to these files.

The customising procedure is similar to the one seen above. New menus and items can be created and existing ones can be deleted. In this case, the functions are divided into categories and subfunctions in the two windows in the lower half of the dialog box.

### 1.3. Setting keyboard shortcuts

Another useful option of this configuration dialog box can be found in the Keyboard tab. We can also access it from Tools-> Configure...

Figure 7. Customise keyboard tool



In OpenOffice.org, actions can be assigned to keys or – as is more often the case – key combinations. Some keys already have default actions assigned to them by the program. These include F11, which launches the Stylist box, and F5, which launches the Navigator. Some actions depend on the application you are in at the time. In Writer, for example, F12 turns numbering on or off while in Calc it is used to define a group of cells.

In addition to the program's functions, keyboard shortcuts can also be assigned to the macros we create. This allows users to create key combinations that can be used, for instance, to insert a text for which we would otherwise need to press a number of keys and set a number of formatting options every time if we were to create it manually.

The required steps for creating a new keyboard shortcut are:

- 1) In the key combination list, select the key or combination of keys to which you would like to assign a function.



- 2) In the list of categories, specify the category of the function you wish to assign. To assign a macro, select the category where you created it. The actions available in this category will be shown automatically in the function window.
- 3) Select the command you wish to assign to the key in the function window.
- 4) Click on the Modify button. The name of the command will be inserted alongside the name of the key in the list of key combinations.

Even if you do not want to assign or modify a program key, this dialog box is the quickest reference for the program's shortcut keys and can be useful for finding out which key or key combination can be used to perform a given action.

### 1.4. Changing the size of program elements

For people with some form of visual impairment or those who simply wish to work more comfortably, it is important to be familiar with the accessibility options of OpenOffice.org.

Although it is not the aim of this unit to cover these topics in detail, we will look at how to change the size of program elements to make them bigger than normal. To do this, bring up the following dialog box by going to the menu option:

Tools -> Options... -> OpenOffice.org -> View.

Figure 8. Display options dialog box



Although this window contains various settings, such as the appearance of the program windows, the options of interest to us here are Scale and Icon size. For example, we can select a scale of 120% and a Large icon size and click on OK for the changes to take place immediately in the program interface.

Remember that any changes made to these options will only affect the program display. If you increase the scale, text fonts will appear bigger but their actual size (the size they will be if they are printed and the size at which other people will see them) will be determined by the size of the font.

## 2. Basic Open Writer functionality

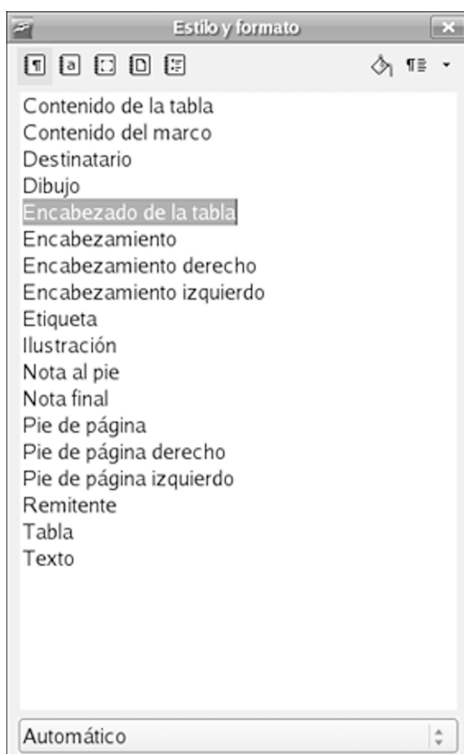
This section will look at how Writer can be used for everyday word processing. We will begin by creating a sample document that will serve to introduce us to the basic features of the program and we will then look at the various options for formatting our text.

### 2.1. Creating a sample document

We will create a text document to familiarise ourselves with the Writer environment. To do so, follow these instructions step by step.

- 1) Launch OpenOffice.org and create a new text document by selecting the File -> New -> Text Document option from the main menu. This will open a new window.
- 2) Type the following text in the blank document: "Planning for UOC work".
- 3) Press the F11 key to open the Stylist and check that the title of the dialog box reads "Paragraph Styles" by clicking on the first button on the toolbar inside the box. If you click on the other buttons, you can see the different styles available in the program.

Figure 9. Stylist displaying paragraph styles



4) If the size of the text on the screen is too big or too small to work with comfortably, you can change the scale of the **zoom** using the View -> Zoom menu option or by double-clicking on the percentage in the program's status bar.

5) We will now look at the Stylist. The first thing to do here is to click the mouse to position the cursor somewhere in the text you have entered, and then double-click on the Heading 1 style in the Stylist. The text will automatically change to adapt to the selection.

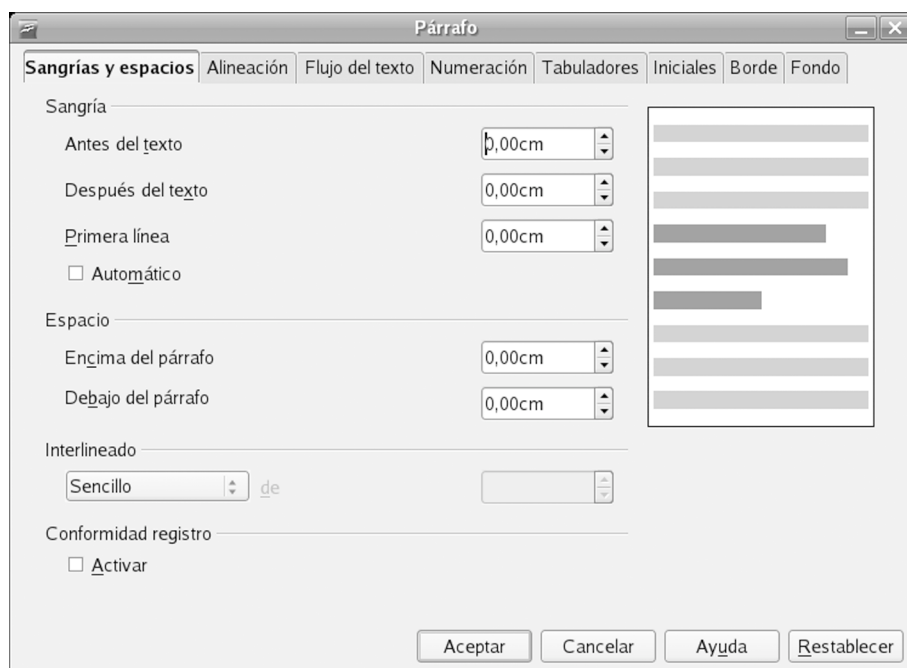
6) Press the **End** key to move to the end of the text and then press **Enter** to go to the next line.

7) Type the list of subjects you have this term, separating each one with a new line. Once you have completed the list, select them all with the mouse and click on the Bullets On/Off button in the Object bar.

8) With the text selected, click on the Increase Indent button. This will indent the text to the right.

9) We will now change the formatting of the first paragraph. To do so, go to the "Planning for UOC work" text, right-click on it and select Paragraph from the context menu.

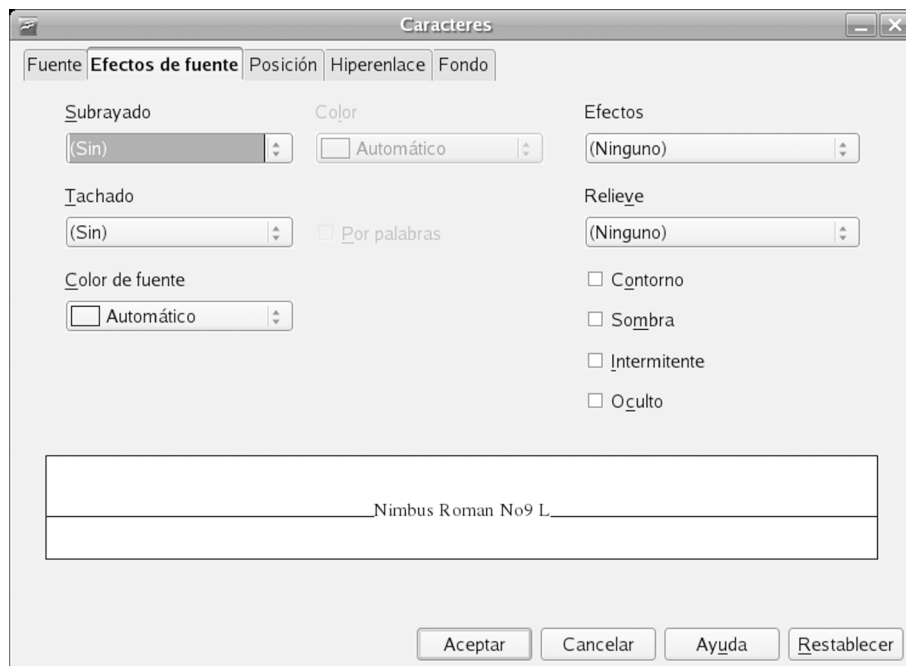
Figure 10. Paragraph formatting window



In the spacing below paragraph box, increase the value to 0.5 cm, for example. When you click on OK, you will see that the distance between the title and the text has increased substantially.

10) To make the title appear more attractive, we are going to change the colour. To do this, select it again and go to the Format -> Character main menu option and select the Font Effects tab in the dialog box.

Figure 11. Character formatting window



In the drop-down font Color list, select your favourite colour from those available. Click on OK to see the colour change.

11) Go to the end of the text you have written. If this is the text you have formatted as bullet points, you will need to press **Enter** twice: once to move on to the next line and one to automatically stop bullet formatting. We will now insert a table.

12) Go to the Main toolbar and press and hold the Insert button until the Insert toolbar appears. Go to the Insert table button and select the number of rows and columns you wish to insert. Use two columns and the number of subjects you typed in for the number of rows, plus one extra for the title. Therefore, if you entered three subjects, the table will be  $4 \times 2$ .

13) In the first row, write "Subject" in the first column and "Hours' study" in the second. In the rest of the rows, type in the name of the subjects and the hours you plan to spend studying for them. When you have completed the table, click outside it.

14) Finally, we are going to insert a header in the document. To do this, go to the Insert -> Header -> Default menu option to automatically insert a text field at the top of the page.

15) Position the cursor inside the header by clicking on it with the mouse and then select the fields you wish to insert. For this step, go to the Main toolbar and click on the Insert Fields button but do not release the left mouse button until the insertable text fields menu has appeared. Here, you can select the Date or Page Number options, for example. Inside the header, if you click once on the tab, you will be taken to the centre of the field and if you click twice, you will be taken to the far right.

If you have followed this example word for word, you will already be familiar with the basics of the program and can start working on your documents with total peace of mind if you are used to working with office suites.

## 2.2. AutoText

The AutoText feature is used to enter a text or a text combined with other elements very quickly. It is very useful if you often find yourself writing the same text over and over, such as an e-mail signature or a document header. We will now look in detail at how we can customise the program to insert these items.

1) In a Writer document, create the text you wish to convert into autotext. You can also add graphics.

2) Select the text you have typed with the mouse and click on the Edit AutoText button.

Figure 12. AutoText dialog box



3) Enter a name for the AutoText in the Name field and its shortcut in the same field. Choose this carefully because it is very important as we will see in a moment.

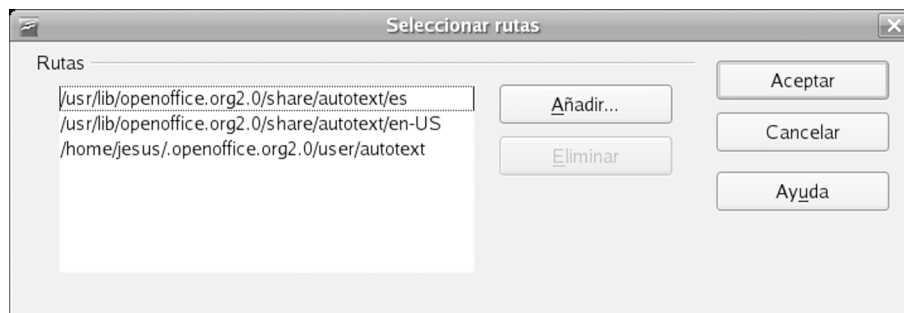
4) In the list underneath the name and shortcut fields, select the category it should belong to. Categories are simply folders in which to organise our texts.

5) Click and hold the left mouse button on the AutoText button and select the New option from the menu. The AutoText is now created. You will be able to see it in the category you selected and you can insert it if you click on Insert.

### 2.2.1. Specifying new paths

If you want to use other folders besides the default ones of the OpenOffice.org program to save AutoText items, you will need to indicate them by clicking on the Path button, which will bring up the dialog box below.

Figure 13. Select Paths dialog box



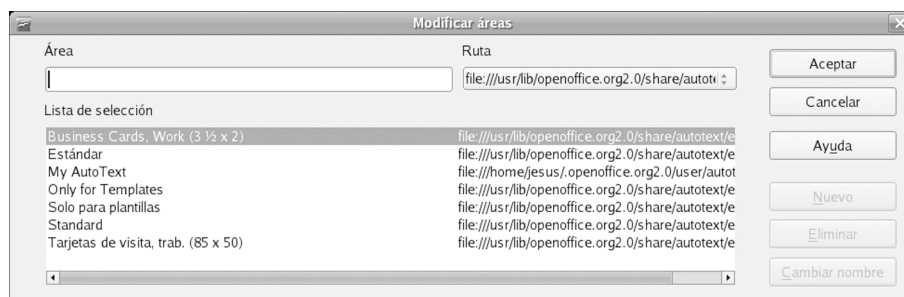
This dialog box displays the default paths but new ones can be added by clicking on Add and then selecting the folder. To change the program's default AutoText paths, go to Tools -> Options -> OpenOffice.org -> Paths.

### 2.2.2. Creating new categories

As we mentioned above, AutoText categories are simply recipients for organising AutoTexts. The program already comes with some categories but you will probably need to create new ones to organise these texts according to your needs.

To create a new AutoText category, call up the AutoText dialog box by clicking on the Edit AutoText button in the Main toolbar and clicking on the Categories button. This will bring up the following dialog box.

Figure 14. Edit Categories dialog box



In the Category text field, type in the new name for the category you wish to create and select the path to its location. If the desired path does not appear in the list of paths, you will need to create it in the way we saw in the previous

section. After selecting the name and path of the new category, click on New to add it. You can also delete categories you no longer need in this dialog box. Click on OK to save the changes made.

When you return to the AutoText dialog box, you will see the new category. At this point, you may wish to re-classify elements into the new category you have created. To move an AutoText from one category to another, simply select it, and without letting go of the mouse button, drag it to the new category. As you drag it, a bar will appear to indicate which category you are dragging the autotext to.

### **2.2.3. Inserting AutoText in documents**

Thus far we have seen how to create AutoTexts and how to organise them, but we have not seen how they can be used in our documents. The easiest option is to position the cursor where you want to insert the text and then click and hold down the Edit AutoText button on the Main toolbar. A list of available categories will appear. Simply select the AutoText you require to automatically insert it in the document.

A much quicker way of inserting an AutoText is to use its shortcut. Obviously, it can be very difficult to remember all of our shortcuts but it is not too hard to remember the ones we use most often. To insert an AutoText with a shortcut, type the latter in the document and press F3. For example, to insert an AutoText called My AutoText with the MAT shortcut, type these three letters in the document and then press F3. This will insert the contents of the AutoText you have created.



### 3. Document formatting

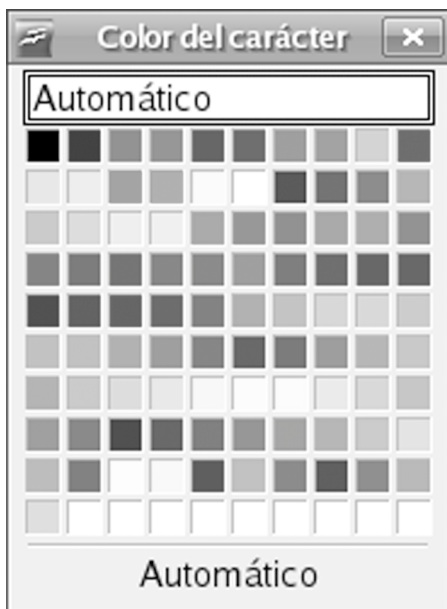
Formatting a text or section of text is one of the basic functions of any word processing program. In fact, it is essential considering that, when it comes to creating documents, we spend most of our time on formatting. As a result, we think that it is important to mention some of the formatting possibilities of OpenOffice.org.

#### 3.1. Character formatting

To format characters quickly using basic operations, such as changing font and size and applying styles such as bold type, italics and underlining, we can use the program's Object bar. This bar will be very familiar to users who have worked with word processing programs before, but there are two features worth mentioning here: Character color and Character background, located at the end of the Object bar.

If you click and hold on these buttons, you can select the font or highlighting colour.

Figure 15. Character color selection dialog box

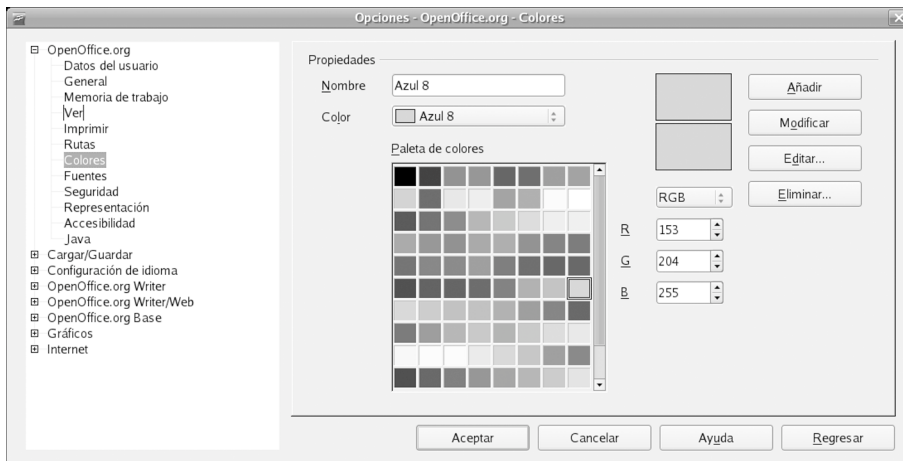


Simply clicking on the selected text will apply the last font or highlighting colour you chose. Any of the colours in the palette can be used or you can even create your own custom colours.

### 3.1.1. Creating custom colours

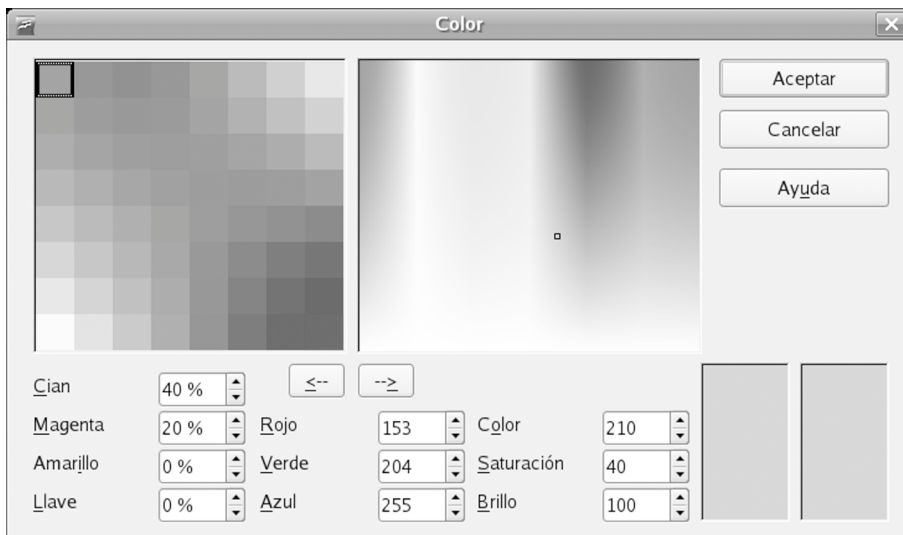
To define a new custom colour, go to the following menu option: Tools -> Options... -> OpenOffice.org -> Colors, where you will see the colours in the system palette.

Figure 16. Colour preferences dialog box



To add a specific colour, select **RGB** or **CMYK** and enter the combination of values. If you do not know the values or prefer to use your intuition, click on Edit...

Figure 17. Color selection dialog box



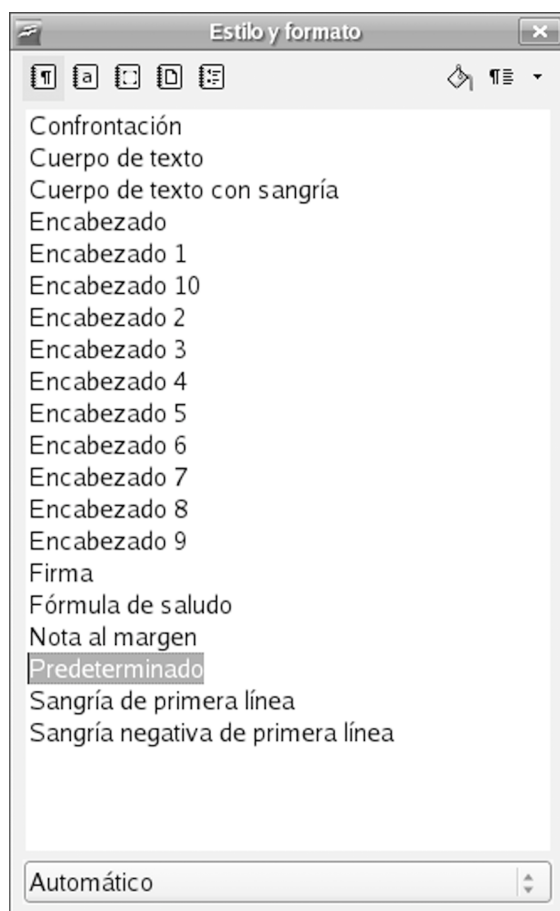
Once you have chosen the colour you require, click on OK to return to the previous window. In the Name field, delete the name of the current colour and type in the name you wish to give to your new colour (e.g. "Lettuce green"). Finally, click on Add to insert your new colour in the program palette.

### 3.1.2. Using the Stylist in Fill Format Mode

If you have ever used Microsoft Word, you will probably be familiar with the Format Painter tool, which copies the formatting features from one element to another. OpenOffice.org has a similar tool called Fill Format Mode. We will see step by step how this characteristic can help us with our work.

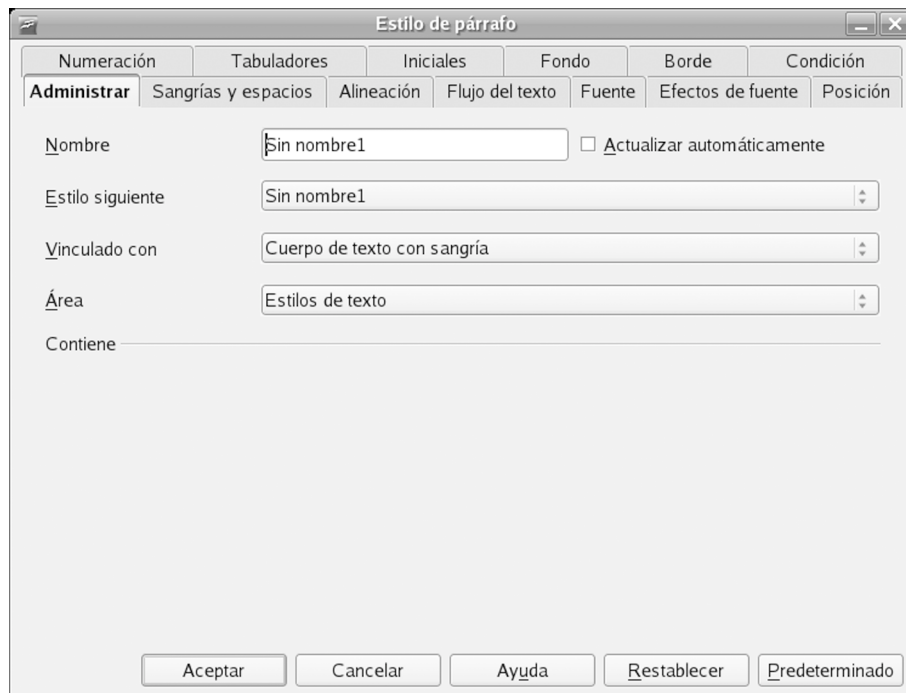
1) Open the Stylist using the Format -> Stylist menu option or by pressing **F11**. The Fill Format Mode button has a picture of a pouring can on it and is located in the upper section of the window. Click on it to enable it. The colour of the button background will change.

Figure 18. Stylist



2) Select the category you wish to apply to the text from the available styles list. You may wish to apply a style that has not yet been defined to the text, in which case right-click on the list of available styles and then select New to set the new style you want to use. If you do not want to enter all of the options and simply wish to copy the text style as quickly as possible, select the text with the original style in the document and click on the New Style From Selection button in the Styles and Formatting box.

Figure 19. Create Style dialog box



This will bring up the Create Style dialog box, where you will need to enter a name for the style you have created from the text format.

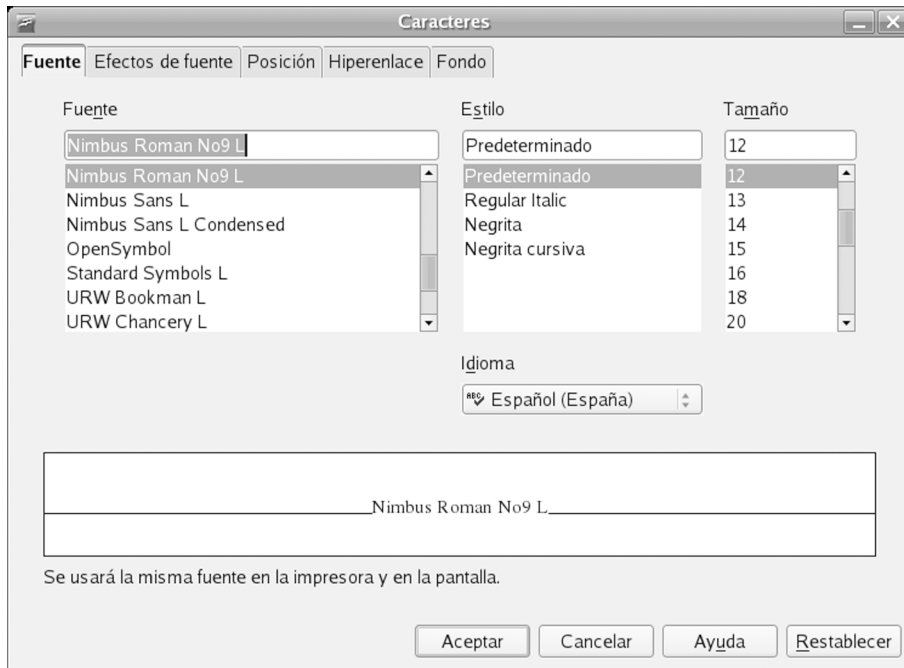
3) Once you have selected the style, position the cursor in the text or on the object you wish to format and click on it. The style will be applied to every element you click on. When you have finished formatting, close the Stylist or click on the Fill Format Mode button.

### 3.1.3. Character formatting dialog box

Thus far, we have looked at the more basic features of character formatting. The advanced options are located in the Character formatting dialog box. To access these, select the text you wish to format and then to go to the Format -> Character menu option, or right-click the text and select this option from the context menu. In this section, we will look at the options offered in this dialog box.

When you select the text to apply character formatting to, be careful not to select the spaces between the selection and the rest of the text because these will also be formatted and the result will probably not be as you had planned. To avoid this, select words by double-clicking on them. If you want to select more than one word, double-click on one and drag the cursor across the rest of the words. This will give you greater control over the elements selected.

Figure 20. Character formatting font tab

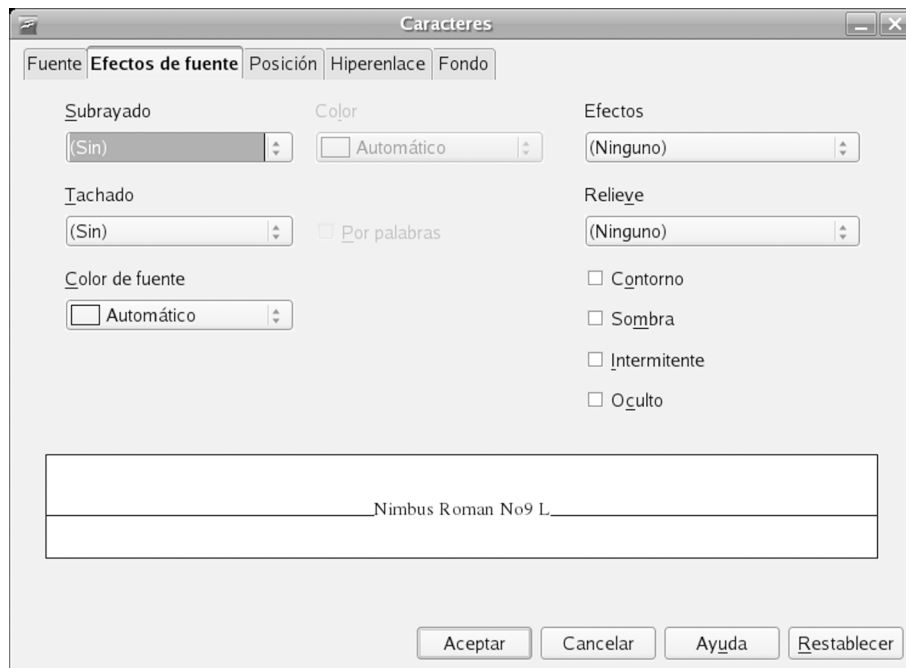


In the Font tab, we can configure the following character style settings:

- **Font** displays the current typeface and allows us to select any of the available fonts.
- **Style** allows us to choose a style to apply to the selected font. The list of styles will vary depending on the characteristics of the font.
- **Size** allows us to select the size of the font. We can choose one of the preset values or enter the font size we require, such as 13.5.
- **Language** mainly used to tell the program which spellchecker to use in the fragment of text. If you do not select the right language, the spellchecker will not work properly. Languages with a blue tick on their left have a dictionary installed in OpenOffice.org, so they can be used for correcting documents.

The bottom part of the dialog box displays a preview of the selected text as it will look when the specified changes have been made. Below this box is a text informing the user of any conflicts with the selected typeface. If we see the text "The same font will be used on both your printer and your screen", this tells us that there are no conflicts.

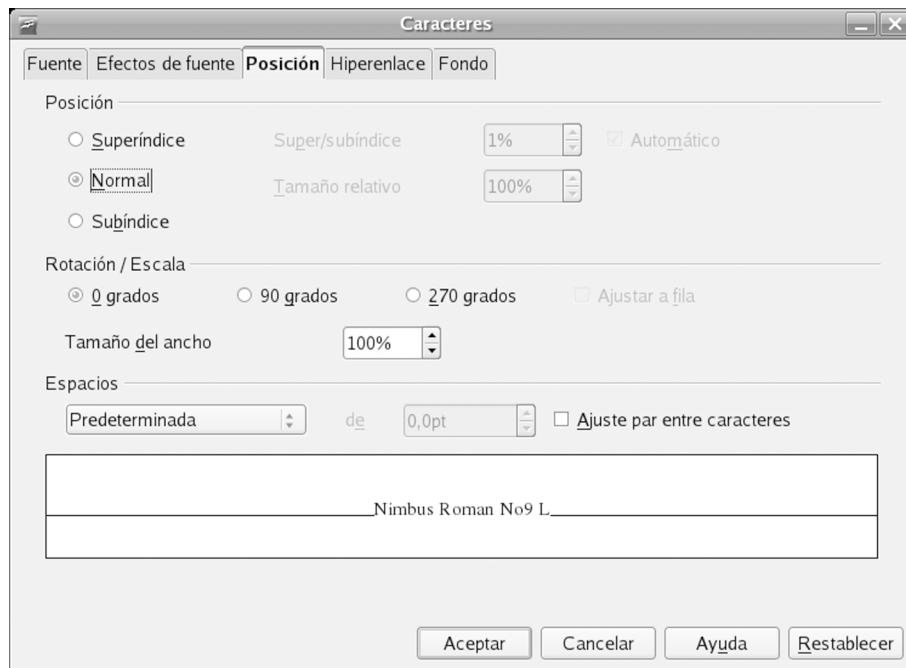
Figure 21. Character formatting Font Effects tab



This tab contains more advanced aspects of font formatting. These are:

- **Underlining** allows us to choose between different types of underlining for the selected font. The font is not underlined by default. The colour of the underlining may differ from the colour of the font, so we must also select a colour.
- **Effects** can be useful if you need to automatically control character capitalisation. For instance, this feature can be used to automatically change all of the letters in the selected text to capitals.
- **Strikethrough** is used to select different types of strikethrough effects for the selected font. Letters appear without strikethrough by default.
- **Relief** lets us specify whether to give the font a relief effect and what the characteristics of this will be.
- **Font Color** is used to change the colour of the characters based on the options available in the system palette. We have already seen how to create custom colours in this unit.
- **Individual words** is a very interesting feature that can be turned on if you enable font underlining or strikethrough. When this is checked, underlining and strikethrough are not applied to spaces in the document.
- **Outline, Shadow and Blinking** are some of the other effects that can be selected individually or in combination with others.

Figure 22. Character formatting Position tab



We have divided the options inside this window into their three broad sections:

- **Position** is useful for specifying the subscript and superscript options, as we can manually enter their height and relative size. Or we can mark the Automatic option to accept the program's default values.
- **Rotation / scaling** rotates the text on a vertical axis so it is read from bottom to top (90°) or from top to bottom (270°). If you want the text to take up all of the available space on the page, check the Fit to line option. You can also customise font width in this section using the Scale width option. Values above 100% will make the font wider while values below this figure will make it narrower.
- **Spacing** allows us to expand or condense the space between characters by the number of points entered in this field. If you check the Pair kerning option, letters will be placed closer together to enhance the appearance of the text.

Figure 23. Character formatting Hyperlink tab



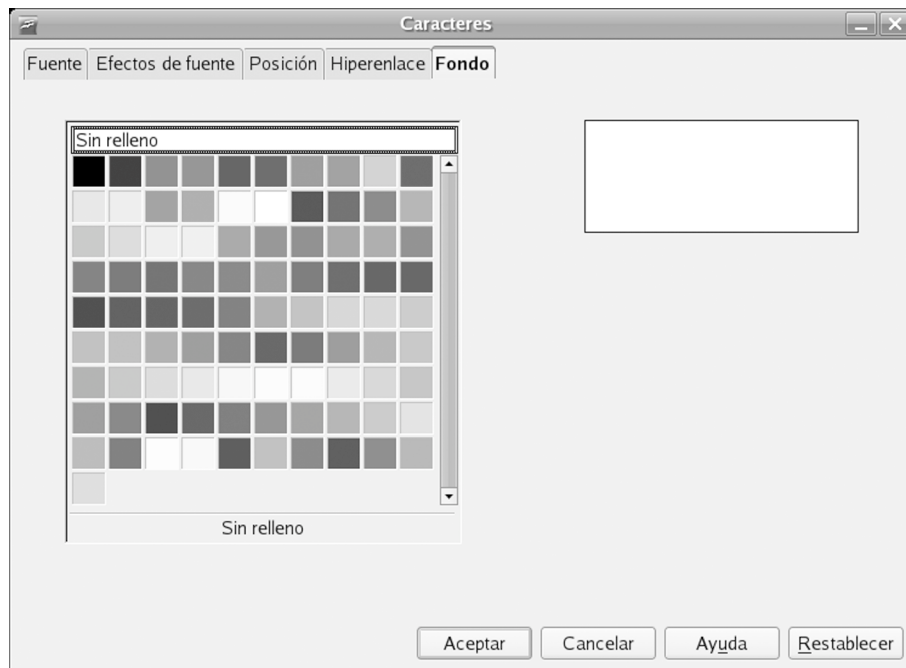
The image shows the 'Caracteres' (Characters) dialog box in OpenOffice.org, specifically the 'Hiperenlace' (Hyperlink) tab. The dialog has a title bar with standard window controls. Below the title bar are five tabs: 'Fuente' (Font), 'Efectos de fuente' (Font Effects), 'Posición' (Position), 'Hiperenlace' (Hyperlink), and 'Fondo' (Background). The 'Hiperenlace' tab is selected. Inside this tab, there are several sections. The first section is labeled 'Hiperenlace' and contains four rows of input fields: 'URL', 'Texto', 'Nombre', and 'Frame'. Each row has a text input field and a 'Seleccionar...' (Select...) button to its right. Below these fields is a button labeled 'Acontecimientos' (Events). The second section is labeled 'Estilos de caracteres' (Character Styles) and contains two rows of dropdown menus: 'Vínculos visitados' (Visited links) and 'Vínculos no visitados' (Unvisited links). At the bottom of the dialog are four buttons: 'Aceptar' (Accept), 'Cancelar' (Cancel), 'Ayuda' (Help), and 'Restablecer' (Reset).

If you want to make the selected text into a hyperlink, this tab has all the options you might need.

- **URL**, enter the name of the website or file you want to open when the hyperlink is clicked in this field. You can also select it by clicking on the Browse button.
- **Text** allows you to enter the hyperlink text that will be seen in the text document.
- **Name** allows you to enter a name for the hyperlink. OpenOffice.org uses the HTML NAME label for this.
- **Target frame** used to indicate the name of the frame in which the associated file or link should be opened. You can also select one of the standard default frames. If you leave this option blank, the link will open in the current location.
- **Events** this is very useful if you want a given event to take place when the hyperlink is clicked. For instance, if we want a program macro to run. You will need to specify the action in the dialog box that appears when you click on the button.
- **Visited links** allows us to specify the style of links with this status. For this, select an available style from the Stylist.
- **Unvisited links**, as above, it allows us to specify the style for this link status.



Figure 24. Character formatting Background tab



This tab is used to choose the background colour for the selected text. You can use a colour from the program's standard palette or one that you have created yourself. To clear the background colour, select the No Fill option.

### 3.2. Paragraph formatting

Character formatting requires the text for formatting to be selected. However, to use paragraph formatting, simply position the cursor inside the paragraph to which you want to apply the formatting changes.

As with characters, it is best to use the Object bar for basic formatting features. This can be used to justify or indent the paragraph, or to change the background colour. We will also see how to use the ruler to define basic paragraph formatting settings.

To change a paragraph indent quickly without going through the paragraph formatting dialog box, you can use the program's horizontal ruler. To do so, select the paragraph you want to indent by positioning the cursor in it and then move the triangle on the lower part of the ruler to specify the left indent (the top triangle will move with it).

#### 3.2.1. Tabs

The horizontal ruler can also be used to insert and move tabs for one or more paragraphs in the document. To configure tabs, first select the paragraph you want to indent by positioning the cursor in it. In the small box on the left edge of the horizontal ruler, you can select the type of tab you wish to insert by clicking on it repeatedly. The available options are:

- a) Left tab
- b) Right tab
- c) Decimal tab (which allows us to align texts such as amounts by their decimal point when clicked).
- d) Centered tab

To add a tab to a point on the ruler, simply drag it to the desired position. To delete a tab, drag it outside the edges of the horizontal ruler. If you are working on a document that has no specified tabs, OpenOffice.org's default tabs will be used.

### 3.2.2. Paragraph formatting dialog box

This section will look at the dialog box containing the paragraph formatting options. This and the character formatting dialog box complement each other. For instance, to select the paragraph font, mark it and go to the character formatting dialog box as we have already seen.

To bring up the Paragraph formatting dialog box, position the cursor or mouse pointer in the paragraph you wish to format and right-click the mouse to select Paragraph in the context menu. A dialog box with different tabs will appear.

Figure 25. Paragraph formatting Indents & Spacing tab



The Indents & Spacing tab contains the following options:

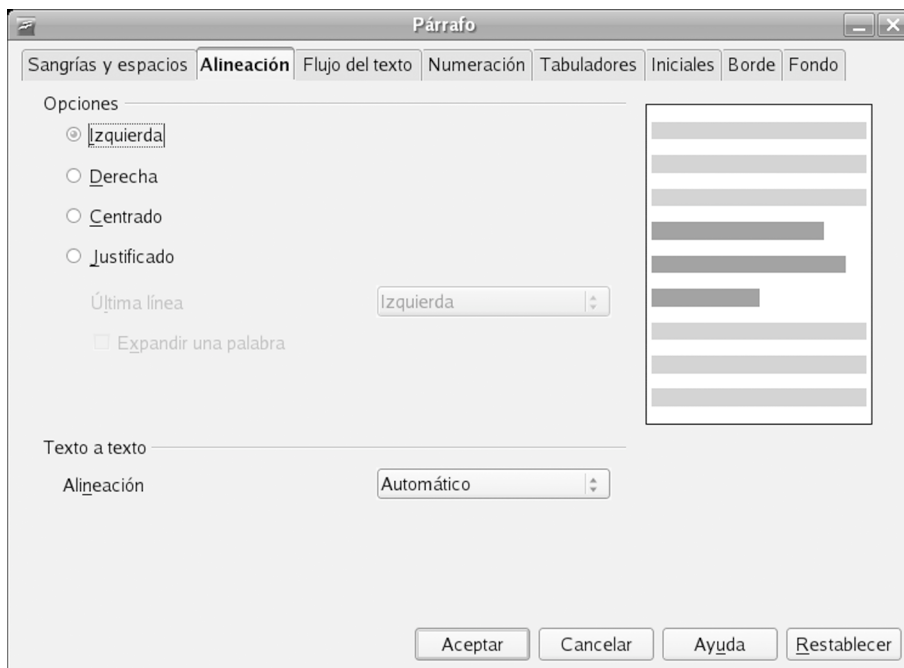
- **Indent** lets us specify the distance between the text and the page margins. The First line option is used to indicate the distance of the paragraph's

first line in Before text. If you mark the Automatic checkbox, the default indent will automatically be applied.

- **Spacing** used to configure the space above and below the paragraph. This space will not be applied if the paragraph is at the top or bottom of the page. Adjacent paragraphs will use the largest separation value.
- **Line spacing** allows us to choose from the different line spacing options, which can be customised in some cases.
- **Register-true** gives us the option of aligning ends of paragraph with the lines of adjacent columns.

On the right of the window, the program offers a preview of the values being modified so that we can see exactly what we are doing.

Figure 26. Paragraph formatting Alignment tab

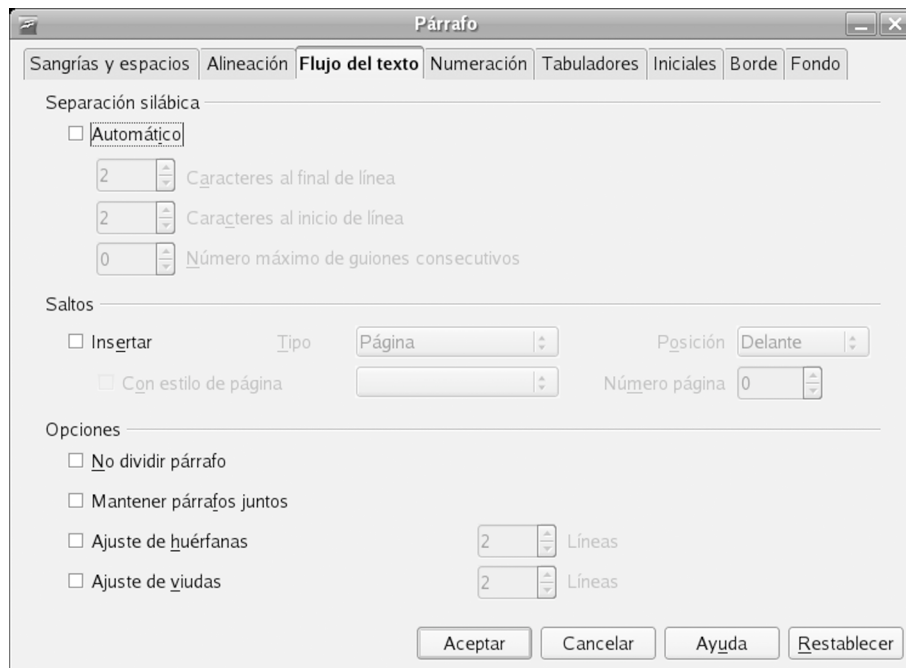


The Alignment tab is used to configure the following:

- **Options** used to select the Left, Right, Center or Justified options. If you select the latter, you can align the last line of the text separately. For instance, if the last line is very short, you can align it to the left to avoid large spaces between words.
- **Text-to-text** lets us specify the vertical location of the text if line spacing is greater than the text.

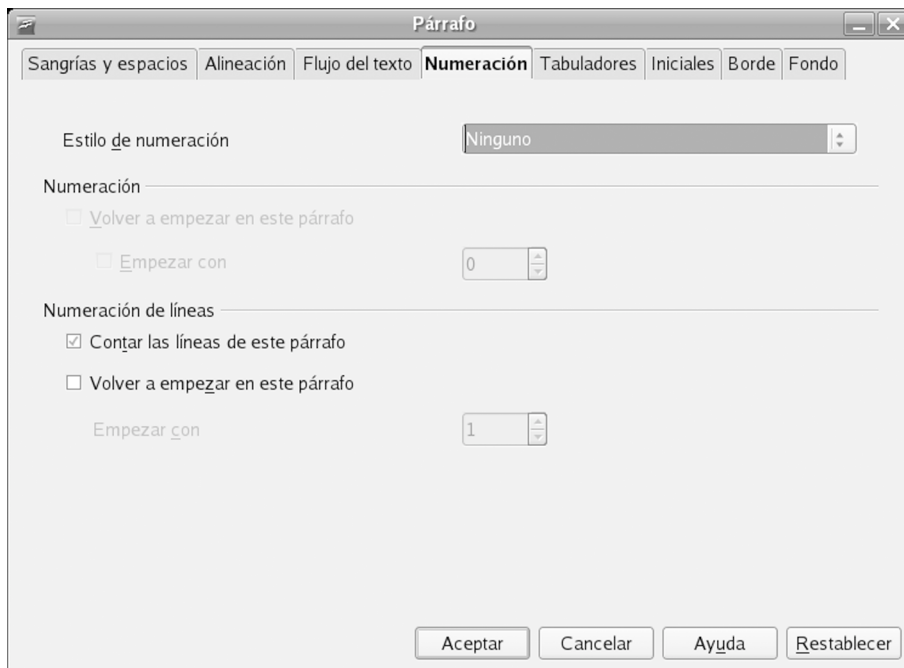
On the right of the window, the program also offers a preview of the values being modified so that we can see exactly what we are doing.

Figure 27. Paragraph formatting Text Flow tab



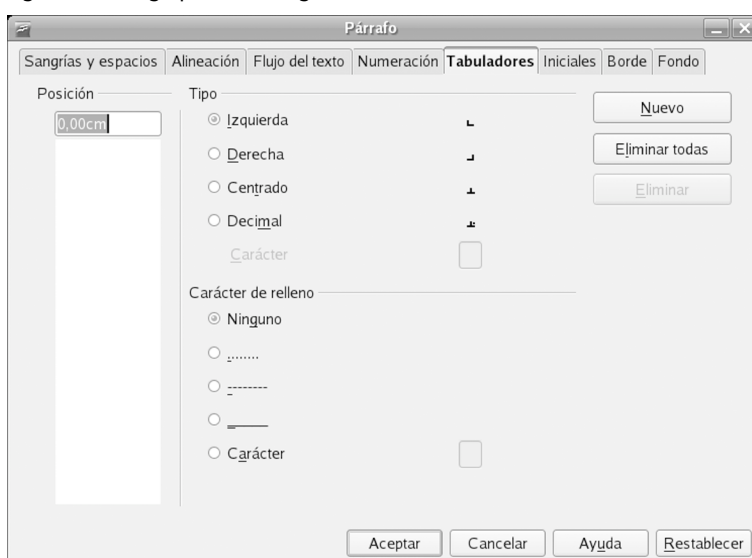
- **Hyphenation** if we select the Automatically option, the program will separate the last word of the line into syllables. We can control OpenOffice.org's hyphenation system by specifying the number of characters that need to be present at the end and start of the next line and the maximum number of consecutive lines that can be hyphenated.
- **Breaks** used to select the page or column break option for the selected paragraph. If you choose the Before option, the current paragraph will be moved to the next page or column; if you select After, the next paragraph is moved. When you move on to the next page, you can choose the style for the new page from those available.
- **Options** useful for setting the minimum number of lines to appear on the previous page (orphans) or the next one (widows) when a paragraph continues on to the next page.

Figure 28. Paragraph formatting Numbering tab



- **Numbering Style** allows us to apply predefined numbering styles to the selected paragraph.
- **Numbering** used for lists of numbered paragraphs when we wish to restart numbering. In Start with, you can specify the first number of the series.
- **Line numbering** if you use line numbers in the document margins, you can use the line numbering options to control whether the paragraph has to be numbered and how this should be done.

Figure 29. Paragraph formatting Tabs tab

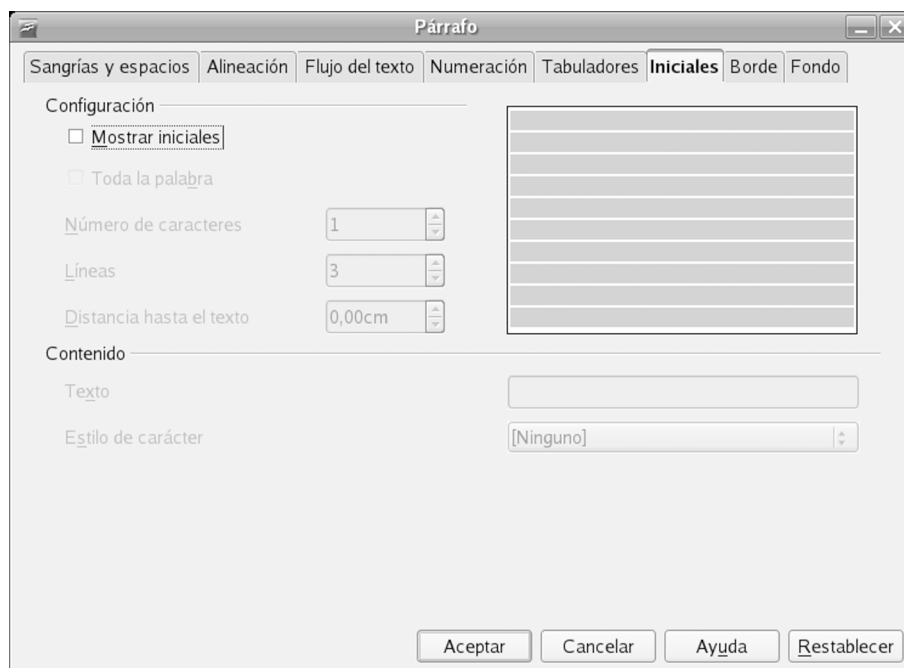


- **Position** inserts a new tab position, measured from the page margins.

- **Type** lets us select the type of tab. Earlier, we looked at the tabs available on the vertical ruler.
- **Fill character** very useful if we want the specified characters to appear between the position at which the tab key was pressed and the tab position.

To add a tab that you have created, click on the New button. You can also delete one or all tabs from the paragraph by clicking on the corresponding button. If you are working on a paragraph with no specified tabs, the default OpenOffice.org tabs will be used.

Figure 30. Paragraph formatting Drop Caps tab

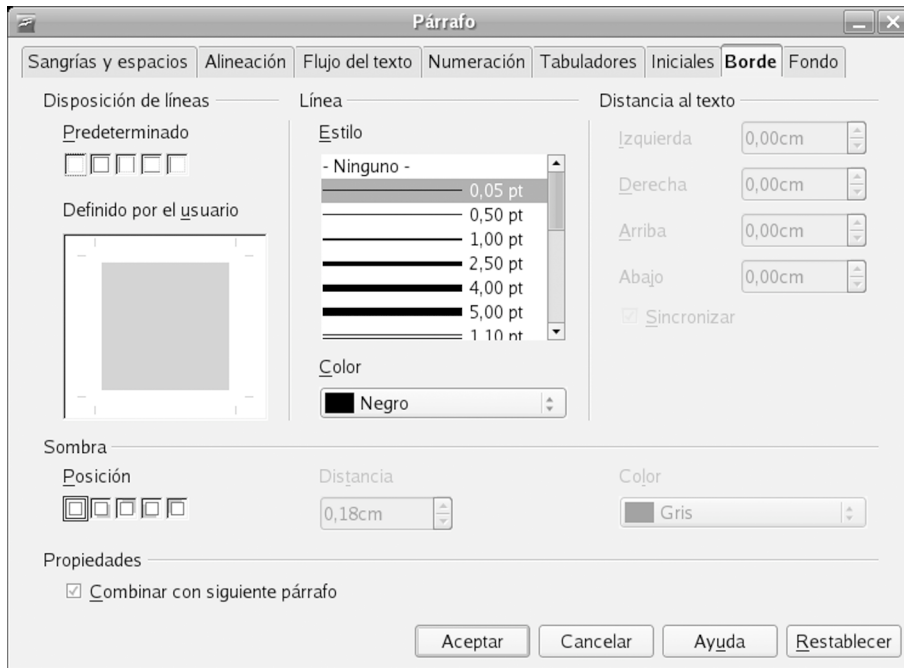


This tab is used to format the initial letters of a paragraph. The available options are:

- **Settings** lets us activate this feature when we mark Display drop caps. You can specify Whole Word to use the first word as text. If you do not select this option, you can specify the number of characters to use. You can also indicate the number of lines to use and distance to text.
- **Contents** used to specify a different text to the one at the start of the current paragraph. A character style can also be applied to the specified text.

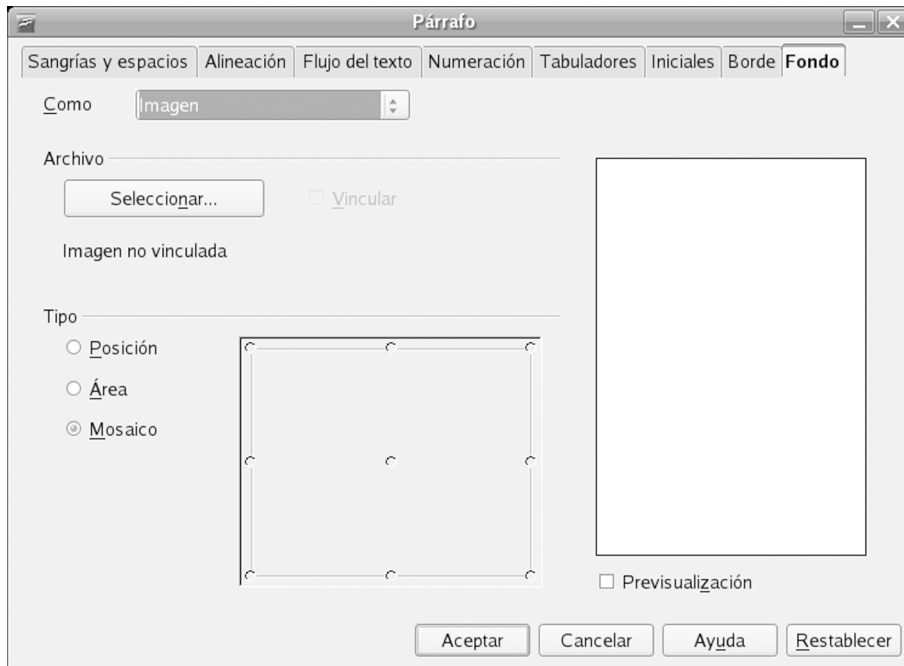
On the right of the window, the program offers a preview of the text we are modifying so that we can see exactly what we are doing.

Figure 31. Paragraph formatting Borders tab



- **Line arrangement**, we can click on the different types of line to apply the type of border they represent. We can also click on the blank box to delete all line settings. The grey box in the User-defined box represents the paragraph. We can add or delete lines around the paragraph by clicking on them.
- **Line**, in this section we can choose the type and colour of line to use.
- **Spacing to contents** allows us to specify the distance between the paragraph and the outermost shadow line. If we modify a value and wish to apply this change to all of the other values, mark the Synchronize option.
- **Shadow style** allows us to select the position at which to apply the angle of shade to the line. The first of these boxes disables shadow configuration. The drop-down Color list is used to change the shadow colour, which is grey by default.

Figure 32. Paragraph formatting Background tab



The Background tab can be used in two ways: it can colour in the background and it can make the background into an image:

- **Color** this is used to change the background colour using the options in the system palette. We have already seen how to create custom colours in this unit. Select the No Fill option to turn off background colour.
- **Graphic** this offers a number of options for using graphics as paragraph backgrounds. When you click on the Browse button, a selection window will appear in which you need to select the graphic to use. The Link option creates a symbolic link to the graphic. This will reduce the size of your document but the graphic will need to be available in order to see it. If the graphic is smaller than the paragraph, use the Type options to position it in relation to the paragraph.

### 3.3. Bullets and numbering

As we saw in the last two cases, for quick formatting with bullets and numbering, it is best to use the options available in the program's Object bar. To do so, simply select the text to number or convert to bullets and click on the relevant button in the Object bar.

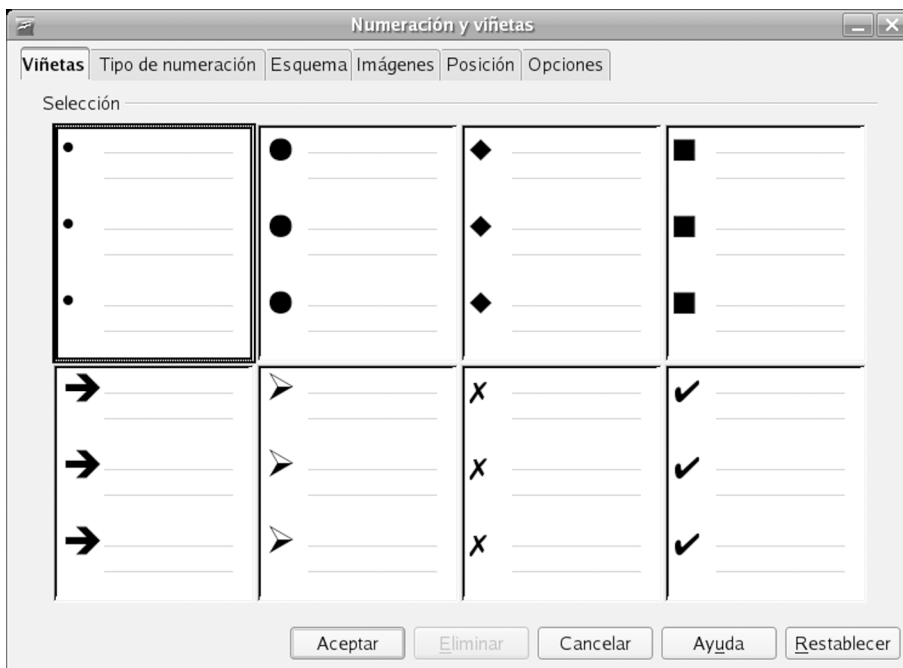
The bullets or numbers appear in grey boxes to help locate them better in the document. These grey boxes will not be printed with the document. If you find them distracting though, you can turn them off with the View -> Field Shadings menu option.



The program's default bullet and numbering options are basic but they can be customised to adapt them to our needs. The procedure for this is as follows:

- 1) Select the paragraphs you wish to number or change to bullet points or position the cursor on the blank line where you wish to begin numbering.
- 2) Go to the Format -> Numbering/Bullets menu option and select the tab you require from Bullets, Numbering type and Graphics; if you select this last option, the following dialog box will appear:

Figure 33. Numbering/Bullets Graphics tab



This dialog box allows us to use much more attractive tabs than the program's default ones. If you choose a graphic, it is very important to check the Link graphics option in the bottom part of the window because if you need to send the document to others, they will be unable to see the bullets if the graphics are not installed on their computer or if the path to the graphics is not the same as on yours. As these graphics take up a minimum of space, it is not necessary to link them to the document instead of inserting them.

- 3) After selecting the style you wish to use, click on the OK button.

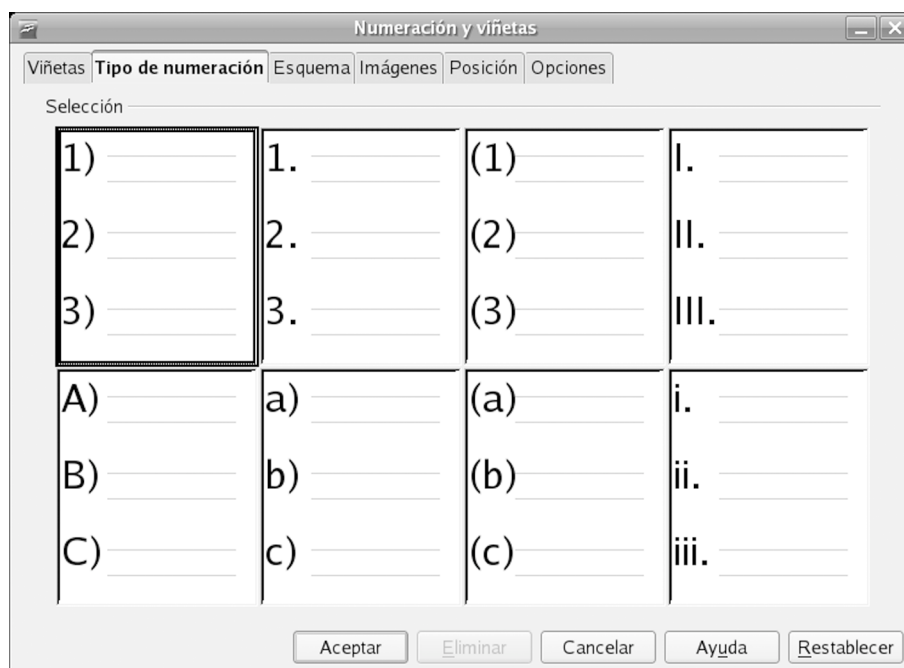
If you are starting a new list, enter your first text and press **Enter**. The new paragraph will also be a list item. To exit list mode, press **Enter** twice on a blank line or turn off the list from the Object bar.

### 3.3.1. Creating an outline

We can use the system we saw in the above section on bullets and numbering to create an outline, as the procedure is very similar. There is no quick way to create an outline in OpenOffice.org like there is for bullets and numbering. The steps to the process are as follows:

- 1) Position the cursor in the document where you wish to start the outline.
- 2) Go the Format -> Numbering/Bullets menu option and select the Outline tab.

Figure 34. Numbering/Bullets Outline tab



- 3) In the Outline tab, select the style of outline you wish to use and click on the OK button. The first level of the outline will appear in your text.

When you press **Enter** at the end of a line of text, you will remain at the same numbering level but the numbers will increase. If you want to move within a level, press the **Tab** key on the keyboard. To return to the previous level, use the **Shift+Tab** key combination.

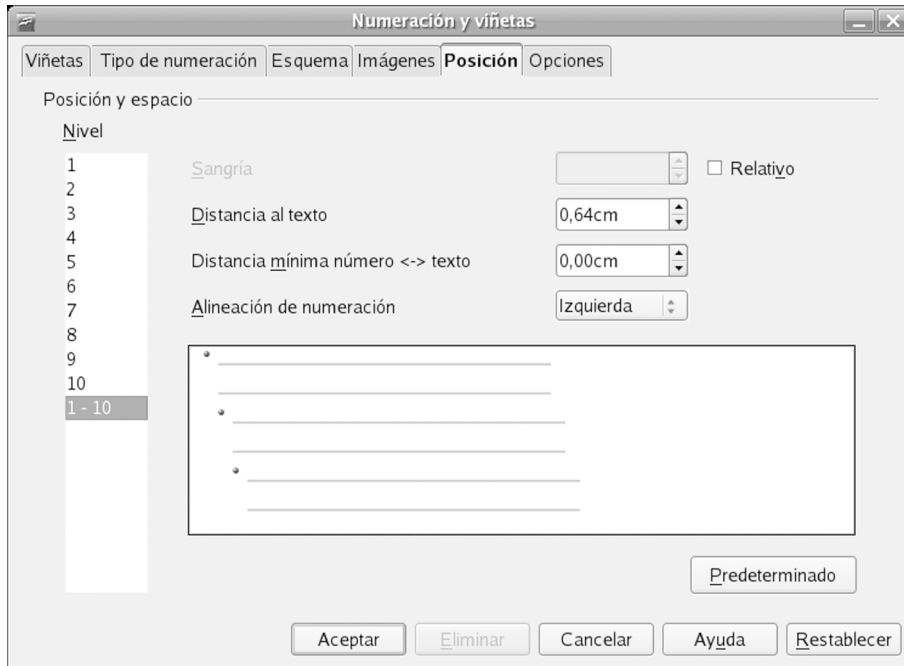
### 3.3.2. Configuring numbering, bullets and outlines

There are several settings options for numbering, bullets and outlines. The main reasons for configuring these would be to change symbols and indents, as well as numbers and typefaces. The process for configuring these is as follows:

1) Select the paragraphs you wish to number or change to bullet points or position the cursor on the blank line where you wish to begin the list of items.

2) Go to the Format -> Numbering/Bullets menu option and select the Options tab.

Figure 35. Numbering/Bullets Options tab



3) Select the level number from the Level field. The level numbers correspond to the text indent level. The higher the level, the greater the indent.

4) In the Numbering field, select the type of numbering or bullets you wish to use for this level. The formatting options differ according to the type of numbering selected.

- If you select a **numerical format** in the Before and After text fields, you can enter the text that will appear before and after the number. You can also choose the character style you wish to use for the numbering. This option allows different styles to be used in the paragraph numbering and text. The Show sublevels and Start at fields are used to specify the number of sublevels to include in the numbering and their initial level, respectively.
- If using **graphics**, click on the Select button to determine which graphic to use. You can enter the width and height of the selected graphic but it is always preferable to leave the Proportional option marked to avoid distorting the image. Finally, in Alignment, you can enter the alignment position in relation to the baseline of the text.

- If you select the **Bullet option**, you can choose the character style and select a special character for the bullets. To do this, click on the ellipsis (...) button to the right of the Character option.

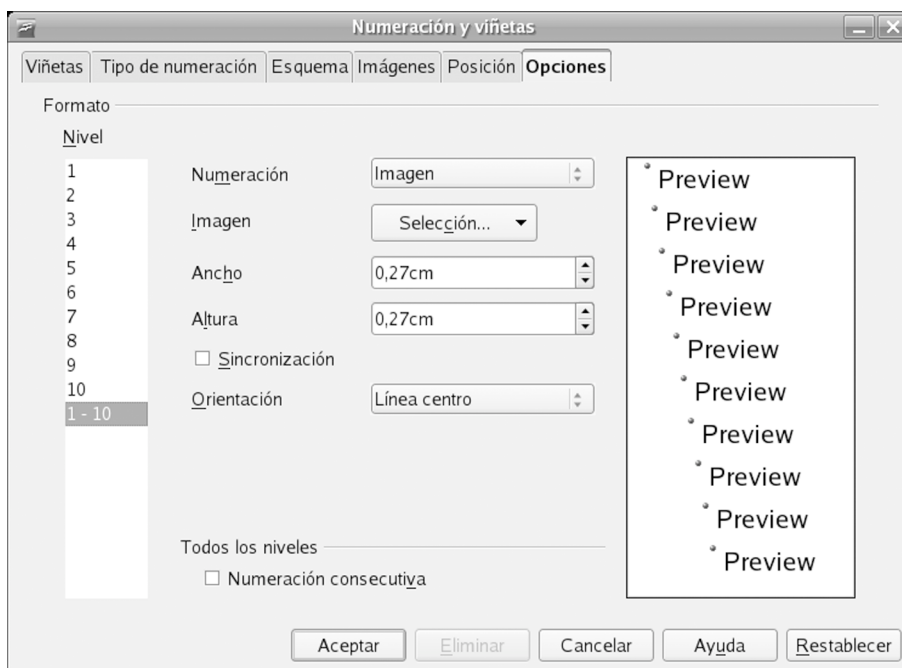
5) Select the appropriate options for the level you have chosen. To configure another level, mark it, define its settings and then click on the OK button.

### 3.3.3. Position and spacing between levels

Another settings option is to change OpenOffice.org's default position and spacing for bullets and numbering. The process for changing these settings is very similar to the one we have just seen. The steps are as follows:

- 1) Select the paragraphs you wish to change or position the cursor on a blank line where you wish to begin the list of items.
- 2) Go to the Format -> Numbering/Bullets menu option and select the Position tab.

Figure 36. Numbering/Bullets Position tab



3) Select the level number from the Level field. The level numbers correspond to the indent. The 1-10 field applies the changes to all levels.

4) Change the level settings. The changes that can be made here are to modify the distance between the number or bullet and the page margin, the minimum and maximum distances between the text and the number or bullet, and lastly, the alignment of the bullet or number with the space created. Click on the OK button to exit the dialog box and accept changes.

The lower part of the window has a preview area where you can see the visual effects of the changes as you make them.

## 4. Word Completion and AutoFormat

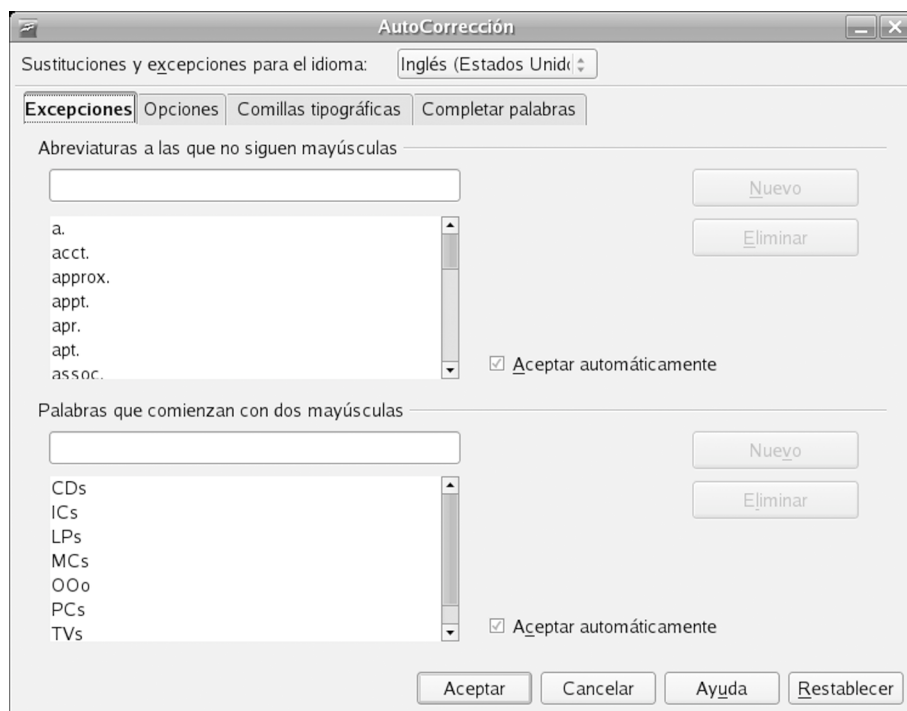
One of the most useful features of OpenOffice.org is its ability to complete words and format text automatically and to correct common typographical errors. However, one thing is clear, these options can either be very useful or very bothersome. It all depends on the person using the program. What can sometimes be a great feature for some, may put others off using the program precisely for that reason. This section will describe how to adapt these features and functionalities to our needs and how to turn them off.

### 4.1. Configuring AutoReplace

This can be a very useful feature if you tend to make the same spelling mistakes or grammatical errors all the time or if you regularly type the letters of a word the wrong way round. It can also be used to automatically change letters for their corresponding symbol. For example, "(c)" can be used for the copyright sign or "(r)" for the registered sign. If you have used any other word processor, they will probably have had this feature too. We will now look at how to configure the feature in OpenOffice.org.

To access Replace, go to the Tools -> AutoCorrect/AutoFormat menu option and select the Replace tab in the AutoCorrect dialog box.

Figure 37. AutoCorrect Replacement tab

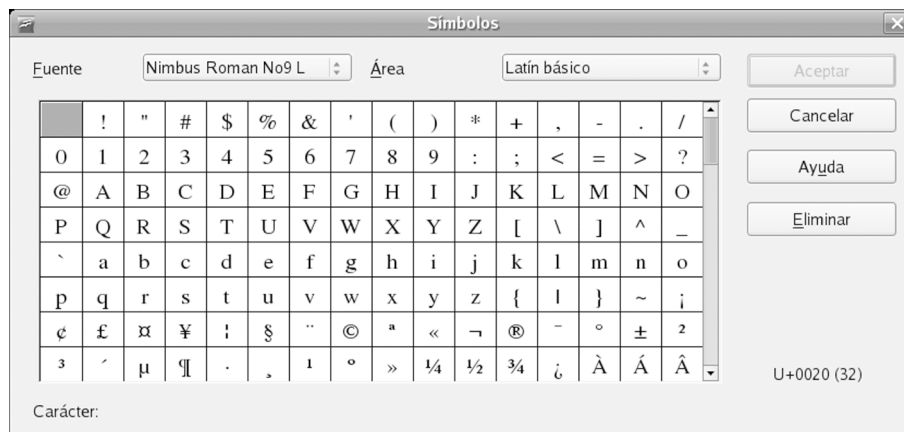


The first thing to do is to select the language of the document or the language in which you usually work, as the replacement table is different for each. To do this, select the required language from the list in Replacements and exceptions for language. Most languages already have their own replacement table that you can modify if you need to.

In the Replace text field, type the word or character that you would like to automatically replace with another and write the substitution in the With text field. Once you have completed this step, click on the New button to add it to the replacement table.

To type a symbol or special character in the substitutions text fields, right-click the text field and select the Insert Symbol option from the context menu, which will bring up all of the symbols for the fonts installed on the system for you to choose from.

Figure 38. Symbols selection dialog box



To delete a default replacement or one that you created yourself, first mark it in the replacement table and then click on the Delete button. Use this method to delete all substitutions affecting your work instead of disabling the function altogether.

## 4.2. Configuring automatic uppercase

By default, the OpenOffice.org program automatically changes the letter following a full stop and blank space into uppercase. This can be very useful but it can also be irritating if you often type abbreviations.

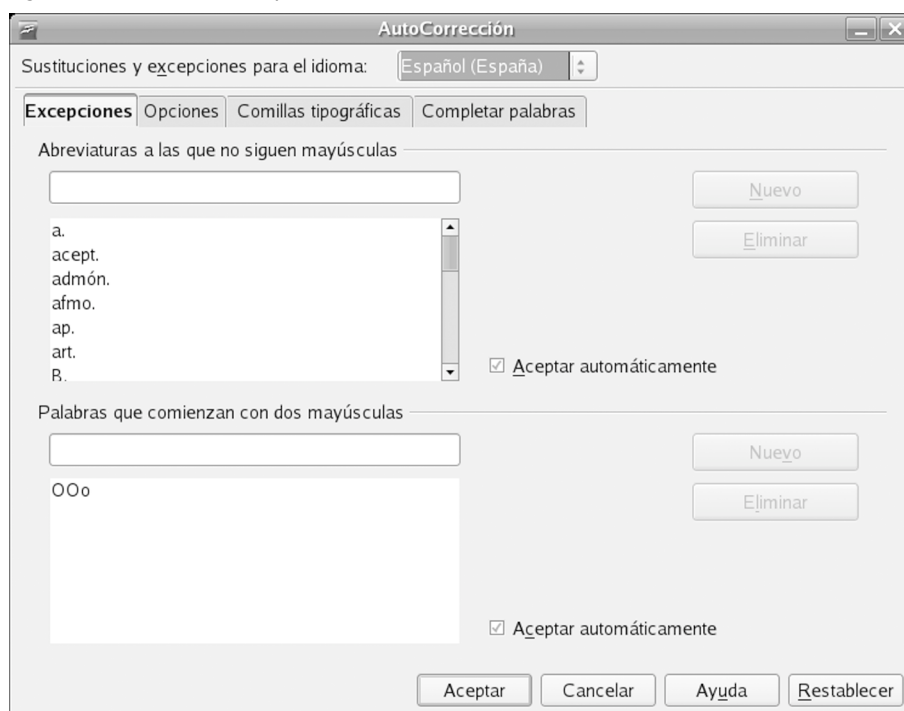
The program automatically changes words that start with two consecutive uppercase letters, converting the second uppercase letter into lowercase. The feature was designed for people who type very quickly, as the program thinks that the user has not had time to release the shift key before typing the second

letter. Nonetheless, at some point during use of this program we will no doubt need to type a word with two consecutive uppercase letters, such as the name of a company or product.

Note that this rule only applies to words that begin with two uppercase letters. When the program detects three or more consecutive uppercase letters, it assumes that this is not a mistake and that the user has intentionally typed the word like this. As we shall see, this feature can be turned off completely or we can create exceptions to the general rule.

To do so, go to the Tools -> AutoCorrect/AutoFormat menu option and select the Exceptions tab from the AutoCorrect window.

Figure 39. AutoCorrect Exceptions tab



After confirming that the language is correct, enter the exceptions for AutoCorrect to Uppercase in this dialog box. The top section includes a list of abbreviations not followed by uppercase letters, while the bottom section contains words beginning with two consecutive capitals. You can enter exceptions in the appropriate text boxes and then click on the New button to add the exception. To delete an exception, select it and click on the Delete button.

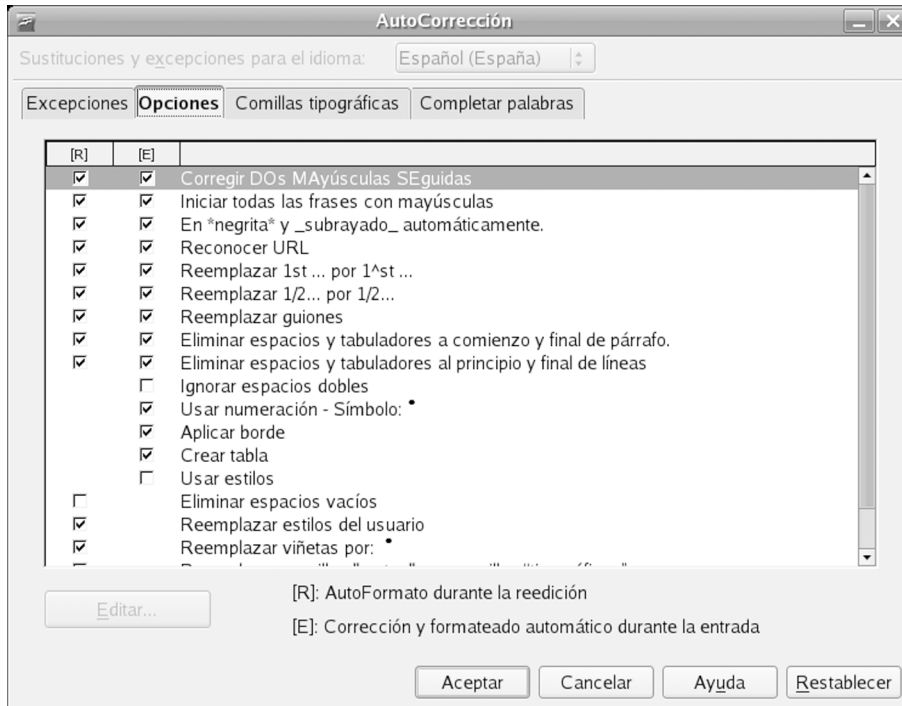
Each of the items in the two groups of exceptions include options marked by default with the word "AutoInclude". These are applied as you edit your document. If you correct an AutoCorrect to Uppercase that the program automatically entered and then carry on typing, the correction will be automatically added to the list of exceptions. For this to happen, the AutoInclude option must be checked.



### 4.3. Turning off AutoCorrect

OpenOffice.org comes with a wide range of AutoCorrect options, which we will introduce here. To locate them, go to the Tools -> AutoCorrect/AutoFormat menu option and select the Options tab from the AutoCorrect window. A dialog box like the one below will appear:

Figure 40. AutoCorrect Options tab



We will deal with these one by one. Some have a very obvious function but others do not. Moreover, the original meaning of some of the options may have been lost in translation.

- **Use replacement table** allows the program to use the replacement table from the Replace tab we saw earlier.
- **Correct TWo INitial CApitals** automatically converts the second consecutive capital into a lowercase letter. You can add exceptions to this rule in the Exceptions tab of the AutoCorrect dialog box.
- **Capitalize first letter of every sentence** changes any letter after a full stop and a space into a capital. You can enter exceptions to this rule in the tab we saw above.
- **Automatic \*bold\* and \_underline\_** automatically converts a word to bold if you enter an asterisk before or after it. This functionality also applies to words with an underscore before and after them, though this time the words are underlined.

- **URL Recognition** converts a group of characters that the program thinks is a web link into a URL. For example, if you enter "http://www.uoc.edu", the program will effectively convert it into a link to this web page when you click on it. If this autoformatting is useful most times but not so useful at others, you can restore the original text by selecting the full link and right-clicking it before clicking on the Default option. You can also undo autoformatting with the key combination **Ctrl+Z** after it has been converted.
- **Replace 1st... with 1<sup>st</sup>...** this option is useful if you write documents in English. It automatically superscripts ordinals in English.
- **Replace 1/2... with ½ ...** converts the three characters of a fraction into a single character with the corresponding symbol. This change only applies to character sets with the corresponding fraction symbols. Character sets normally only have three or four fraction symbols.
- **Replace dashes** converts minus signs into true dashes as long as they at least have a space on either side.
- **Delete spaces and tabs at beginning and end of paragraph** deletes the spaces and tabs at the start of a paragraph if the Apply Styles option is checked.
- **Delete spaces and tabs at end and start of line** deletes the spaces and tabs at the start of each line if the Apply Styles option is checked.
- **Ignore double spaces** makes sure that there is only one space between two characters.
- **Apply numbering - symbol X** converts a number followed by a full stop plus space and any text into a numbered list when you press **Enter**. This is a quick way to access the same feature in the Object bar. Instead of typing in a number, you can use a dash or an asterisk for numbering with dashes or bullets, respectively. You can change the character for turning on bullet numbering by clicking on the Edit button.
- **Apply border** allows you to create a line below the paragraph when you enter three consecutive characters and press **Enter**. To restore the original text, select and right-click on it and select the Default option. The following table illustrates the types of border that can be created:

---	0.5pt single underline
—	1.0pt single underline
===	1.1pt double underline

***	4.5pt double underline
~~~	6.0pt double underline
###	9.0pt double underline

- **Create table** if this option is turned on, you can automatically create a table in your document simply by using the keyboard. The + key represents a column border and the - character represents the width of the column. After combining the two characters to suit your needs, press **Enter**. Valid columns must begin and end with the + character. For example: "+-----+  
-----+-----+".
- **Apply Styles** allows OpenOffice.org to automatically apply paragraph formatting when using the Default style. When you begin a paragraph with a capital letter and do not end it with a full stop, press the **Enter** key twice at the end of the line and the paragraph style will automatically change to Heading 1. If you press the **Tab** key twice before typing in text, Heading 2 will be applied. If you press tab three times, the Heading 3 style will be applied, and so on.
- **Remove blank paragraphs** if this feature is turned on, when you choose Format -> AutoFormat -> Apply, all blank paragraphs in the document will be removed.
- **Replace Custom Styles** when use the Format -> AutoFormat -> Apply facility, this converts the custom styles of the document into the equivalent standard styles of the program.
- **Replace bullets with: X** when using the Default style, this option allows you to change all paragraphs starting with a number, asterisk or dash followed by a space (or tab) and text into a list when you choose Format -> AutoFormat -> Apply. You can change the character for turning on bullet numbering by clicking on the Edit button.
- **Replace standard quotes with custom quotes** when this option is turned on and you choose Format -> AutoFormat -> Apply, all single and double quotes in the document are changed to the characters indicated in the Custom Quotes tab of the AutoCorrect window that appears when you select the Tools -> AutoCorrect/AutoFormat menu option.
- **Combine single line paragraphs if length greater than ...** when using the Default style, you can choose Format -> AutoFormat -> Apply to combine consecutive paragraphs that only have one line. Single-line paragraphs must be at least the specified percentage of the width of the page. You can change this percentage by clicking on the Edit button.

## 4.4. Word Completion

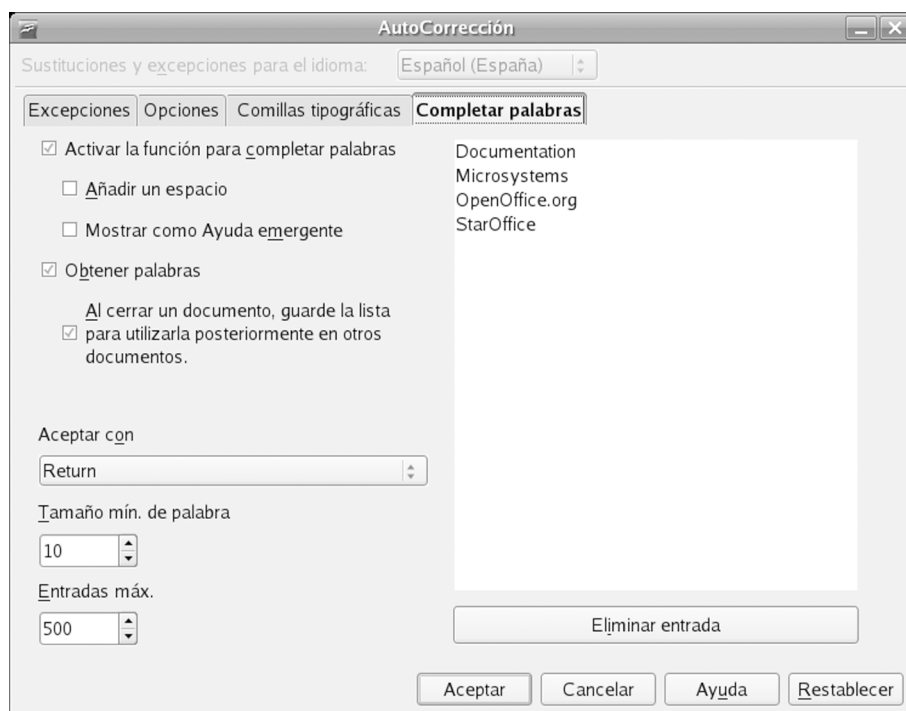
We will now look at what is probably the most visible automatic feature of the entire program. When writing a document in text or HTML format, OpenOffice.org will try to predict the word you are typing and automatically supply the rest of the letters in the word, which can either be extremely helpful or very irritating if not configured correctly. In this section, we will try to explain how it works and look at some of its limitations.

The best way of using this feature to our advantage is to limit the number of words for which the program offers suggestions. For example, if you are working on a scientific document with very long or complicated words that come up again and again, you can add them to the program so that it provides automatic suggestions and ignores others. This would make your task less tedious and considerably increase your productivity.

Remember that the Word Completion feature can only be used with single words. If you want to enter longer texts with more than one word, you will need to use OpenOffice.org's AutoReplace feature.

To set up this function, go to the Tools -> AutoCorrect/AutoFormat menu option. Once inside the AutoCorrect dialog box, select the Word Completion tab, which will look like this:

Figure 41. AutoCorrect Word Completion tab



The options in this window are:

- **Enable word completion** enables OpenOffice.org's Word Completion function. If you do not want to use this feature, unmark the box.
- **Append space** adds a space after completing the word.
- **Show as tip** displays suggestions from the program's list of words like a help tip much like the one we see when we hover the mouse pointer over a button, rather than like the rest of the word highlighted in blue. This makes word completion much less intrusive for users.
- **Collect words** tells OpenOffice.org whether or not to collect words for the list of suggestions. You can collect words regardless of whether or not the Word Completion feature is turned on. It is generally a good idea to collect words once you have the most common ones in the list. This will prevent the program from suggesting words that you never use instead of the ones you often do.
- **When closing a document, save the list for later use in other documents** allows us to reuse words in other texts. Words are generally only collected for the current document.
- **Accept with** allows us to select the key to use to complete words. The default key is **Enter**.
- **Min. word length** controls the words added to the list by specifying a minimum number of characters for words to be added. The default value of 5 is ideal so it is best not to change it unless there is an important reason for doing so.
- **Max. entries** allows us to specify the maximum number of entries for the word list.

The field on the right of the window lists the words that OpenOffice.org will attempt to complete as they are typed in a document. The program will automatically add the words you type to the list if the Collect words option is enabled, provided that the words meet the specified requirements.

If you have mistyped a word or added one by mistake and the program is always suggesting it, you can delete it in this window. Simply select the mistyped word and click on the Delete Entry button.

If you have two or more words formed from the same root, such as "process" and "procedure" and OpenOffice.org suggests the word you do not want, you can scroll up or down the list to select the right one. To go to the next word,

press **Ctrl+Tab**. To go to the previous one, press **Ctrl + Shift + Tab**. This feature allows us to scroll through the full list of words, but we can also use it to scroll back and forth in groups of words with the same root.

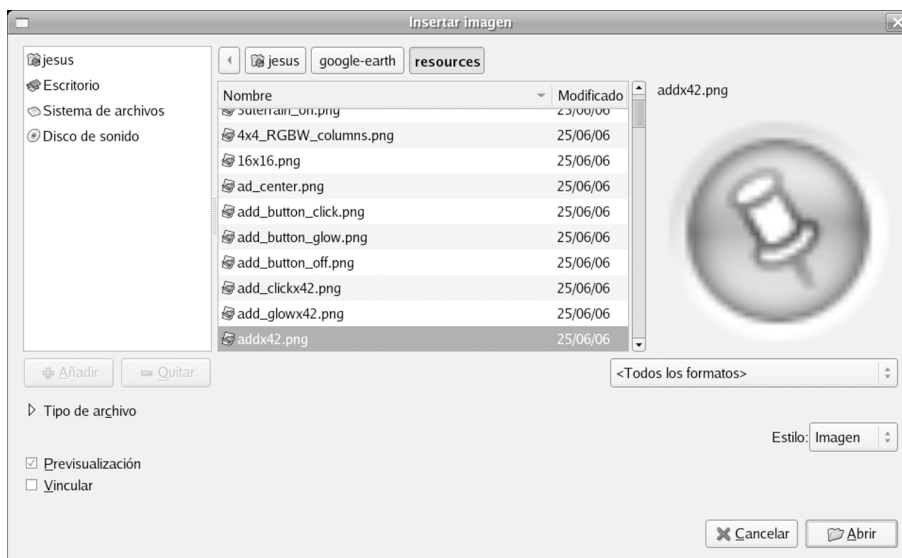
## 5. Using graphics and sounds

Almost any type of graphics file can be inserted into a document, including GIFs and JPEGs. We can also work with less common graphics formats, since OpenOffice.org has filters for most of these. However, remember that only the most usual ones are installed by default. To work with a rare graphics format, you will need to modify your installation to install filters.

To insert graphics in a document, follow these simple steps:

- 1) Position the cursor where you want to insert the graphic and click.
- 2) Click and hold the left mouse button on the Insert button and select Insert Graphics. The default Insert button will then change to adapt to the last selected action. This means that you now need only click on Insert to insert a picture in the document. You can also use the program's main menu by going to Insert -> Graphics -> From File... The result is the same in both cases.

Figure 42. Insert Graphics dialog box



Besides the typical actions of any file selection dialog box, this window has a graphics preview feature, which is very useful if you do not use meaningful names for your graphics files. To enable this feature, check the Preview option.

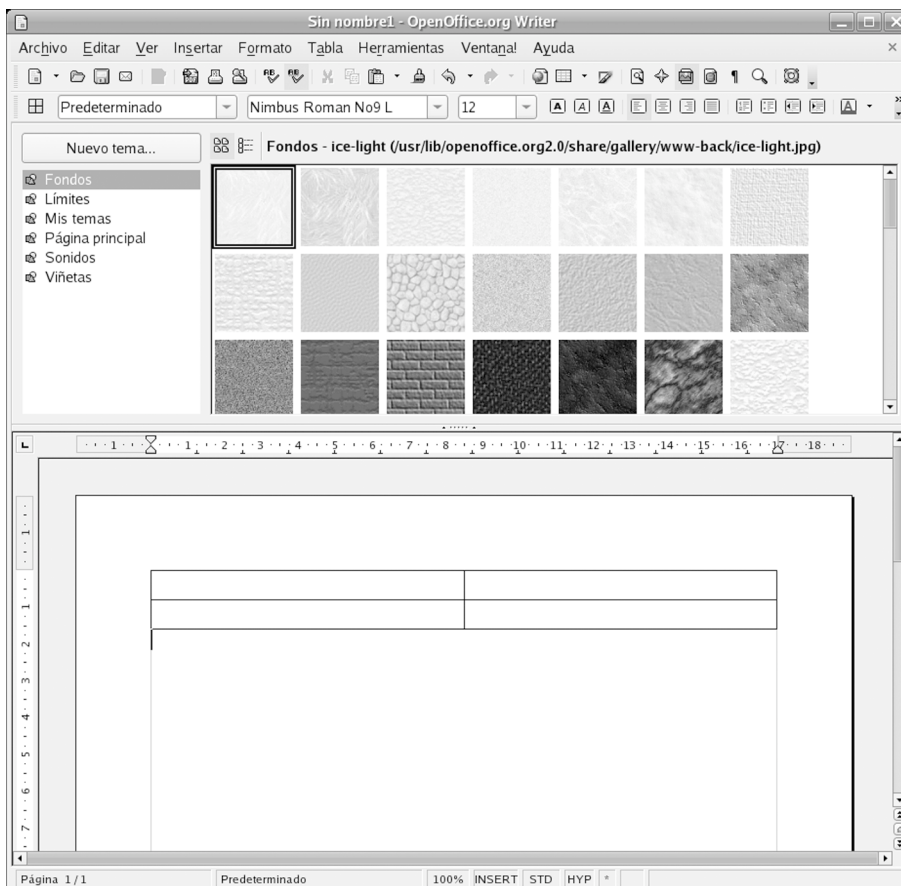
Another option that can be very useful, but also quite risky, is Link. When you check this option, the graphics are not physically inserted in the document; instead, the program inserts a symbolic link to their location. On a practical level, this means that if you want to send this document to others, you will also need to send the pictures with it, as you would for a web page.

So, if you link a graphic from a given folder (for instance, img) to the document, you will need to send it to the recipient in a folder of the same name.

### 5.1. Using the OpenOffice.org picture and sound gallery

We have seen the basic method for adding graphics to documents but OpenOffice.org also has a very powerful tool for classifying and working with graphics and sounds called the Gallery. To enable it, select the Tools -> Gallery menu option or click on this button in the Function bar.

Figure 43. OpenOffice.org displaying the gallery



The gallery is displayed as a series of images and/or sounds that can be classified into different categories although, in fact, they are a group of links. So, for example, each of the graphics that we see in a single category may be in different locations on our hard drive.

To insert an image into your current document, simply select the theme on the left of the screen and then drag the image on the right to the desired position in the document.

The program comes with a number of default gallery images and sounds. These will depend on the installation you used as some are not installed with standard installations.



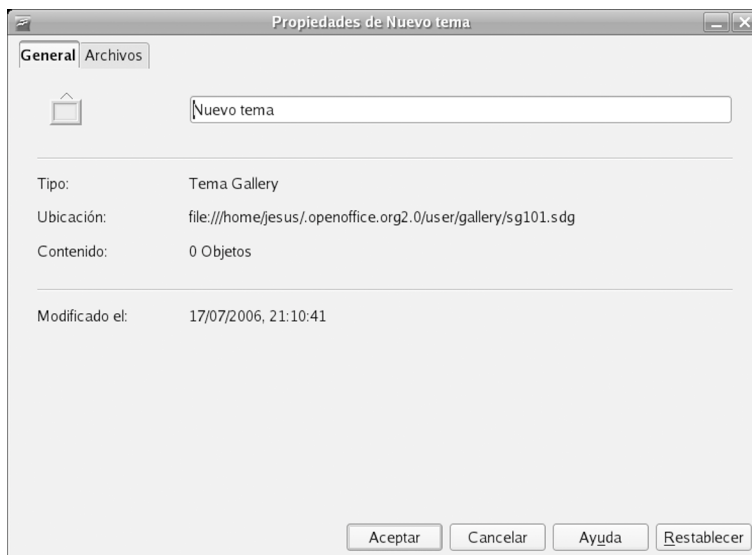
### 5.1.1. Creating gallery themes

You can add your own graphics, sounds and animations to an existing theme or you can create new themes to suit your needs. This section will look at how to create a gallery theme and add graphics to it. The method is very similar to adding elements to an existing gallery. The steps of the process are as follows:

1) The first thing to do is to open the gallery by selecting the application's Tools -> Gallery main menu option or by clicking on the Function bar button. If the gallery is selected but you cannot see it, it is probably hidden. To display it, click on the small arrow at the edge of the workspace of the current document. Clicking on this arrow will show the gallery.

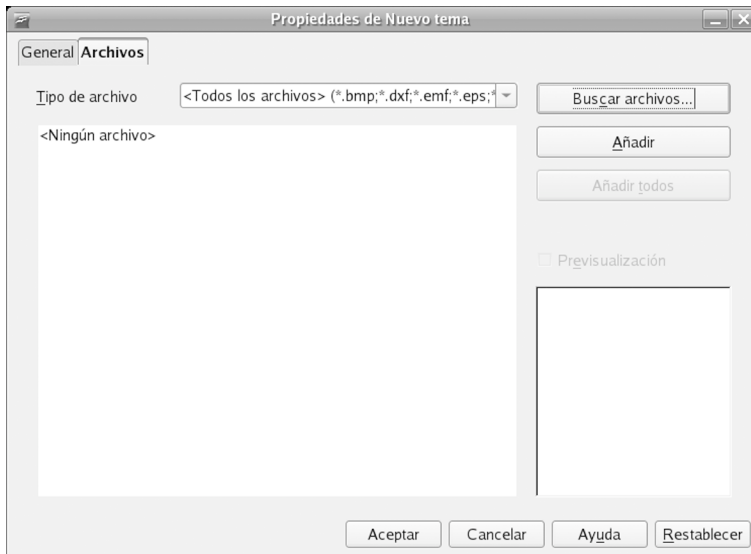
2) To create a new theme, click on the New Theme button in the top left of the gallery.

Figure 44. Properties of New Theme dialog box



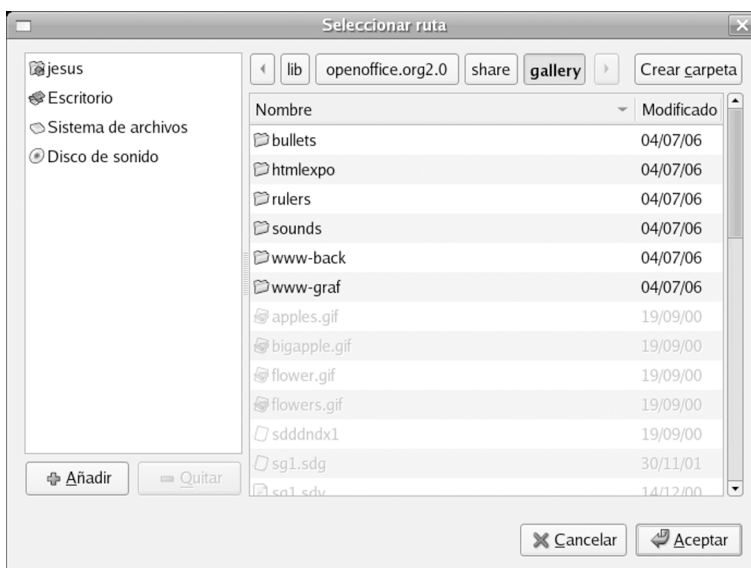
3) This will bring up the Properties of New Theme dialog box, which has two tabs called General and Files. In this first screen, type in the name of the theme you wish to create and click on the Files tab to add the contents.

Figure 45. Properties of New Theme Files tab



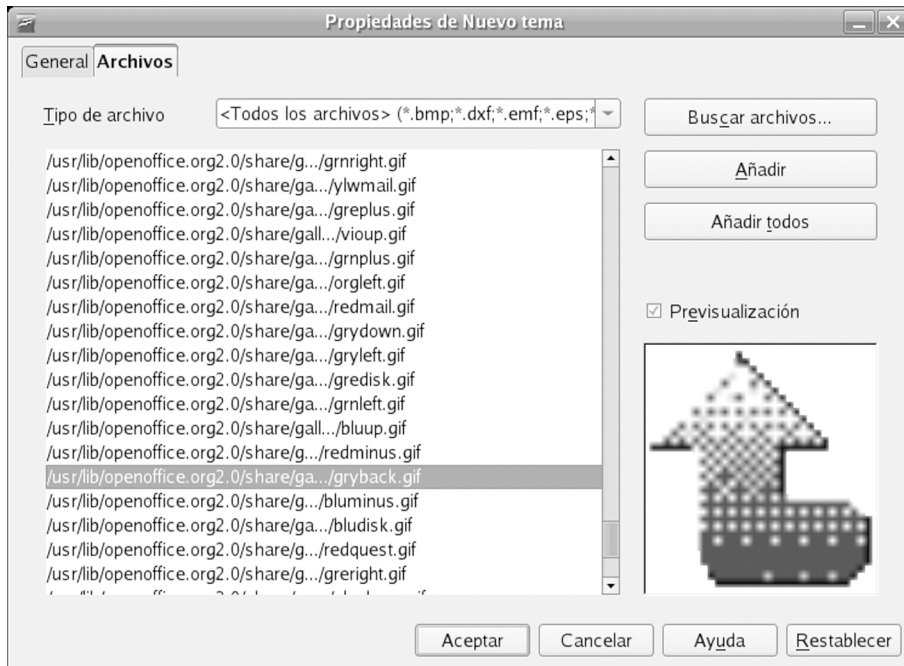
4) In the Files tab, first select the type of file you wish to add to the theme. If you mark the All Files option, you will be able to select all OpenOffice.org-compatible files in the folder. Click on the Find Files button.

Figure 46. Folder selection dialog box



5) In this window, simply select the folder of the files you wish to add and click on the OK button to continue the process. The program will search for all elements compatible with the gallery in the specified folder and its subfolders.

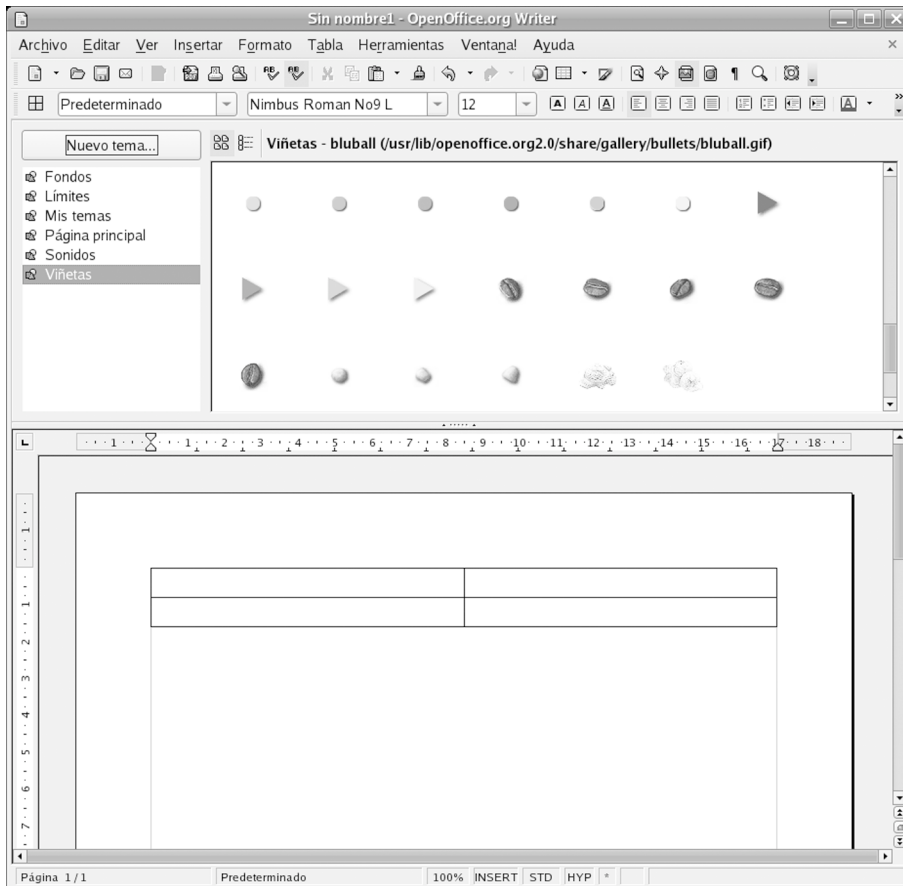
Figure 47. Files tab with found elements



6) This will take us back to the Files tab but you will now see that the left-hand side of the dialog box is displaying the elements found in the specified folder that matched your file type selection. If you check the Preview option, you can view the pictures or listen to the sounds in the files. However, note that if these images are very big or very small, they will be considerably distorted.

7) To add a file to the gallery you are creating, select it and click on the Add button. If you want to add all of the files from the folder and subfolders, click on the Add All button. As explained above, the added files are not copied; the gallery simply adds a reference to them in order to access them. If you delete a file added to the gallery from its original location, you will no longer be able to use it. After selecting all of the files, click on OK to create the new gallery.

Figure 48. Gallery with new theme



To add new sounds or images to an existing theme, right-click the name of the theme and select the Properties option. This will bring up the Properties dialog box we saw earlier where we can add new file references.

It is much easier to delete a file reference in a gallery theme. Right-click on the icon and select Delete from the context menu that appears. A dialog box will appear asking if you really want to delete the object. Note that you are only deleting the gallery reference here, not the original file.

## Summary

In this unit, we looked at the OpenWriter working environment and learnt how to use and configure it for routine word processing operations. We focused particularly on the formatting possibilities of OpenOffice.org as these are the most commonly used features for writing documents.

We also dealt with the configuration of the program's text composition help tools so that we can customise them to suit our needs. These features can often be very irritating to users if they have not been sufficiently adapted to their expectations.

Lastly, we saw OpenOffice.org's organised system for saving images and sounds, although we will probably only need to work with pictures.

From what we have learned in this unit, we should be able to discover for ourselves the other OpenOffice.org tools for creating text documents.

