

Chapter 1

Getting Started in Scrivener

In This Chapter

- ▶ Figuring out what you can do with Scrivener
 - ▶ Clarifying the differences between Mac and Windows
 - ▶ Working with keyboard shortcuts
 - ▶ Starting a project
 - ▶ Getting familiar with Scrivener
 - ▶ Thinking about how you write
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Parts of Scrivener probably look very familiar to you. The Editor pane, for example, is essentially the built-in word processor. If you've been using a computer to write — and not, say, carving stone tablets or working in crayon — then the act of putting down words will be a piece of cake in Scrivener, too. At least, Scrivener makes writing easy from a technical standpoint. It can't do anything about your muse.

Outside the Editor, however, things look a little different, maybe even a bit confusing. If you're not already familiar with the Scrivener interface — and maybe even if you think you are — you can use this chapter to make sure you understand the basic terminology fundamental to using Scrivener and get to know Scrivener's many wonderful parts.

Understanding What Scrivener Is (and Isn't)

Scrivener's core purpose is to help you write. It's not intended to tell you *how* to write or force you to get the work done. Instead, Scrivener provides an environment in which you can keep your writing, research, character sketches, synopses, outlines, and images in one project file.

You can export your work into many formats and document combinations without affecting the original manuscript. So you can export three chapters to a word processor one minute, and then create an e-book file the next, all without modifying the format in Scrivener. You can write in green, Comic Sans text but export in black, Times New Roman text.

Writing software is all about the experience of writing, not the format of the final text. You can write without distraction in Composition (Full Screen) mode, view multiple scenes at the same time, storyboard by using electronic index cards, or view your work as an outline.

Scrivener was created to support all aspects of the creative process of writing, from inception to final revision, not just the period when you actually lay down the words.

Understanding the Differences between Mac and Windows Versions

Scrivener was originally created for the Mac, but in November 2011, Literature & Latte — the company behind the software — released a much-anticipated version for Windows. At some point, the Windows version is expected to match the capabilities of the Mac version, but at the time of this book's publication, some features still aren't available to Windows users.

Take heart, Windows users, because those features will come in time, and the Windows programmers have done a fabulous job of incorporating the most beloved functions of Scrivener. I make note of differences between the two versions whenever I can.

I'm not going to talk about all the functional differences because program updates are frequent and the list would quickly be out of date. The best resource is provided by the Literature & Latte folks at <http://literatureandlatte.com/forum>. From this page, click Scrivener for Windows; click Technical Support (Windows) on the Scrivener for Windows page that appears; and on the Technical Support (Windows) page that appears, click Differences between the Mac and Windows Versions.

Although the programmers strive to put menu commands in the same location on both versions, there will always be some disparity because Windows and Mac each have their own rules and standards. For example, Mac software always has a program menu — in this case, the Scrivener menu — whereas Windows doesn't.

Mac also has a standard menu called Window. Its commands can often be found in the Tools menu on the Windows version. Table 1-1 provides a list of commands that have different locations in the Mac and Windows versions and where to find those commands.

| <i>Command</i> | <i>Mac Menu</i> | <i>Windows Menu</i> |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Preferences | Scrivener⇨Preferences | Tools⇨Options |
| Customize Toolbar | Edit | Tools |
| Layouts | Window | View |
| Scratch Pad | Window | Tools |

Looking at Scrivener Keyboard Conventions

Scrivener has a lot of keyboard *shortcuts*, combinations of keys that activate a menu command when pressed simultaneously. If you're a mouse hater (but they're so cute!) or just dread taking your fingers off the keyboard, you'll love keyboard shortcuts.

Any command that has a keyboard shortcut lists the shortcut next to the item on the menu, as shown in Figure 1-1.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| New Text | ⌘N |
| New Folder | ⇧⌘N |
| New From Template | ▶ |
| New Media File | ▶ |
| Show Project Targets | ⇧⌘T |
| Project Statistics... | ⇧⌘S |
| Text Statistics... | ⇧⇧⌘S |
| Project Notes... | ⇧⌘P |
| Show Project Keywords | ⇧⇧⌘H |
| Meta-Data Settings... | ⇧⌘, |
| Auto-Complete List... | |
| Text Preferences... | |
| Set Selection As Templates Folder | |
| Empty Trash... | |

Figure 1-1: Keyboard shortcuts are listed next to their menu items.

The shortcut might look like a lot of gobbledygook, but it's just a series of keys that can get the job done. Table 1-2 shows the common shortcut characters and their equivalent key.

| <i>Character</i> | <i>Key</i> | <i>Operating System</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
|  | Command | Mac |
|  | Shift | Mac/Windows |
|  | Control/Ctrl | Mac/Windows |
|  | Option | Mac |
|  | Alt | Windows |
|  | Esc | Mac/Windows |



In Windows, the Return key is called Enter.

Creating a Project

Scrivener files are called *projects*. A Scrivener project is a collection of documents, some of which contain the text of your manuscript; others hold reference materials, photos, notes, and so on. Think of a project like a virtual three-ring binder: You can break up your writing into multiple documents, as well as include supporting notes, documentation, images, and website content, all under the umbrella of a single project file.

In order to get started in Scrivener, you must first create a project, in part because the program saves while you write (two seconds after every pause, by default!). To save your work automatically, it must already know the name of the file and where the file is stored on your computer.

If you've never used Scrivener before, or you closed all open projects last time you used it, Scrivener brings up the Project Templates window when you open it. You can also open the Project Templates window by choosing File⇨New Project.

Choosing the right template

A template is kind of like a new house purchased from a builder. You and your neighbor might buy the same model, but then you add your own paint colors, window dressing, flooring, fixtures, and landscaping. The neighbors might prefer antique furnishings, but your house is full of glass and steel. They might choose white siding, where you choose brick. They have garden gnomes, and you have a gazing ball. They . . . well, you get the idea.

Same template, different results.

The same is true in Scrivener. Each project template gives you a starting point from which to customize the project for your needs so that you don't have to start from scratch. In fact, in Part V of this book, you can find out how to create and save your own templates for use with future projects.

The Project Templates window is organized into tabs for each template type, as shown in Figure 1-2.

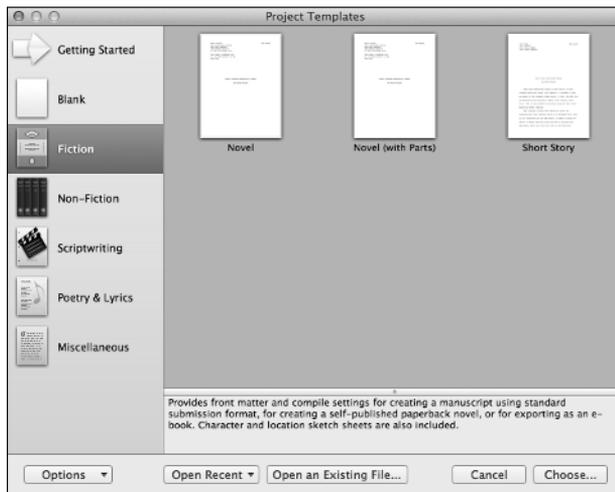


Figure 1-2:
The Project
Templates
window.

Click a tab to see the templates associated with that type. A pane at the bottom of the Project Templates window displays a short description of any template when you select it. Choose the template that most closely matches

the type of project you're working on. Then, you can mold that template to meet your needs, with the help of this book.

For the examples in this book, I use a project based on the Novel template. For those working in non-fiction, the General Non-Fiction template provides a close match to the figures in this book.

Naming your project

After you select a template, click the Choose button. Scrivener opens the Save As window and prompts you to enter a filename. (Windows users: The Save As section is in the New Project window. Select a filename, click Browse to choose a location, and then click Create.)

Consider these facts when naming your file:

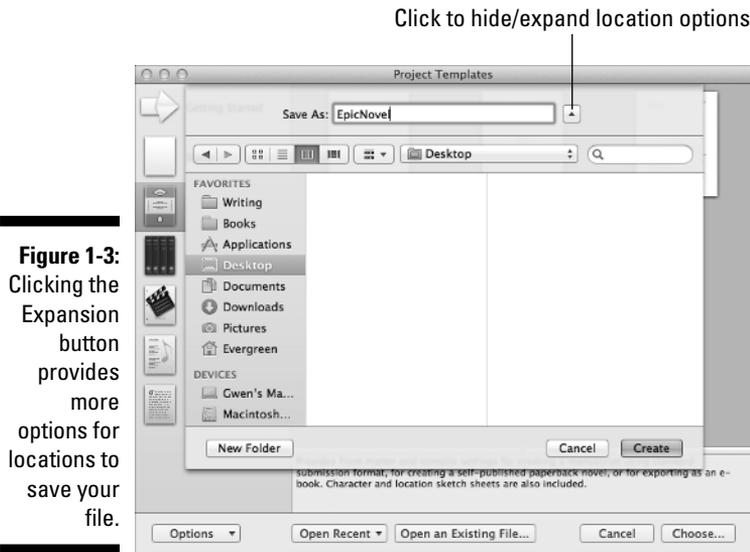
- ✓ **Scrivener uses the filename as the project name.** If you select certain templates, the project name is automatically inserted into the title page and into the header when you export the project (to print the manuscript, convert it to an e-book, and so on). However, you can change the project name manually or rename the project file at a later time.
- ✓ **Be sure to give the project a name that you can easily find again later.** If your manuscript is a novel about a man who shape-shifts into a rabbit when he visits the planet Lotharia, you might not want to call it Project 1. The working title doesn't need to be perfect, just something that makes the file easy to locate after you let it sit for a year to work on that zombie private-investigator mash-up that was nagging at you.

Determining where to save your project

After you figure out the project's name — at least, for now — you need to determine where to save your project. Because I'm excruciatingly organized — well, on my computer, anyway — I have a writing folder that contains subfolders for each major project.

Of course, the Documents folder may serve your needs just as well.

If your Save As window shows only the Save As text box and the Where drop-down list, don't fret. You can access more locations simply by clicking the Expansion button (which displays an arrow pointing down if the window isn't expanded) to the right of the Save As text box. Figure 1-3 shows the Expansion button after the window expands (with the arrow now pointing up). Windows users, click the Browse button in the New Project window to choose a location.



Now, simply select a location by clicking the desired folder in the list on the left. If needed, choose subsequent subfolders until you reach your destination folder. Then click Create.

Understanding the Scrivener Interface

When Scrivener first opens your new project, you can immediately see that this program is more than a word processor. Don't be alarmed by all the stuff that appears. Hopefully, after you understand what all these pieces and parts can do for you, you think of them merely as more to love.

The following sections provide an overview of the major elements of the Scrivener workspace, and the remaining chapters in this part and all the chapters in Part II are devoted to explaining each element in more detail.

Figure 1-4 names the major components for you. Don't worry about what they all mean. Unless you have a photographic memory, just keep a thumb, or maybe a sticky note, tucked into this page so that you can refer to it, as needed.

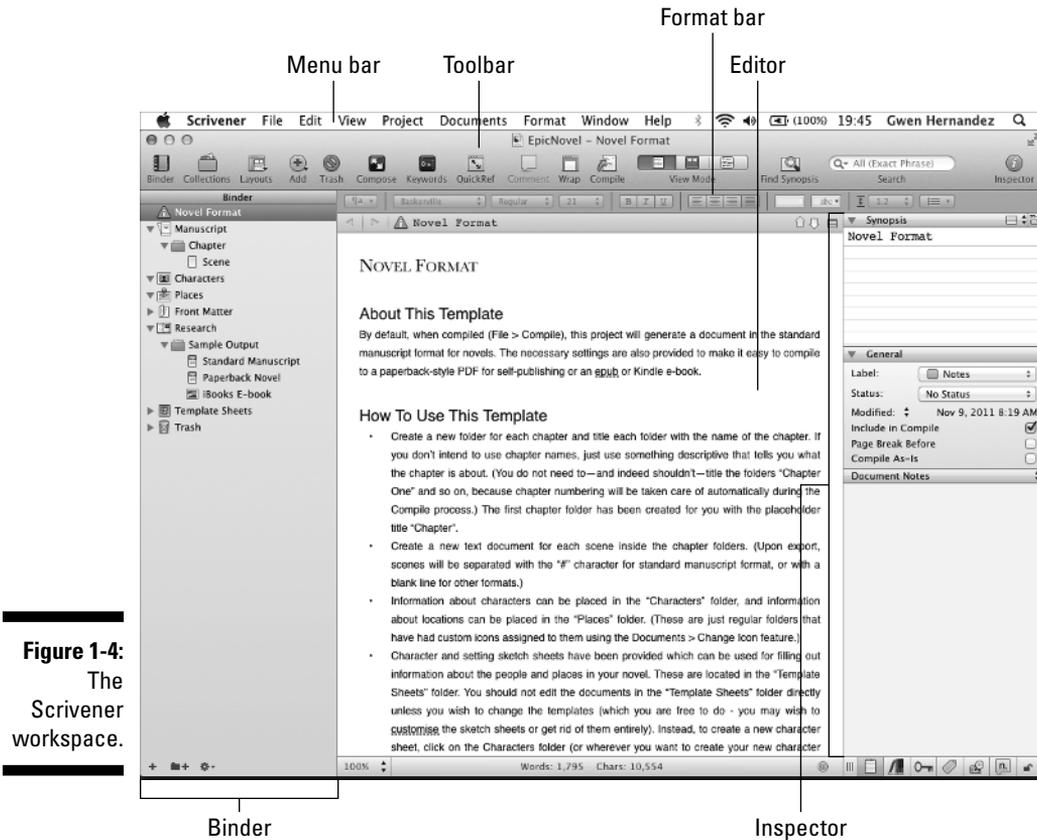


Figure 1-4:
The
Scrivener
workspace.

Menu bar

Across the top of your window is the menu bar. The menu bar, aptly named as it is, provides an organized menu of the program's commands. Although many of the menu commands have shortcuts, via keyboard or button, almost anything you need to do is available in one of the menus.



If you're using the Windows version, the menu bar looks a bit different, but most commands are still there somewhere. And if they're not now, they will be.

Each menu is organized into groups of menus and submenus that, mostly, make sense. So, commands that relate to working with a project file in a generic sense — such as opening a new project or saving the current one — are listed in the File menu.

Toolbar

The toolbar lives below the menu bar. At the top-center of the toolbar, Scrivener displays the project title followed by the active document name. (The Windows version doesn't display the project name in the toolbar, only the project title in the title bar, which appears above the menu bar.) Beneath the title, you find a row of colorful buttons for some of the most commonly used menu commands. To see the name of each button, hover your pointer over it for a second. A small tooltip pops up with the button name.

If you find hovering tiresome, Mac users can turn on text for the button icons by going to View⇨Customize Toolbar. At the bottom-left of the Customize Toolbar window that appears, select Icons and Text from the Show drop-down list, as shown in Figure 1-5. In this window, you can also decide which buttons to display in the toolbar by dragging them from the field of buttons into the toolbar.

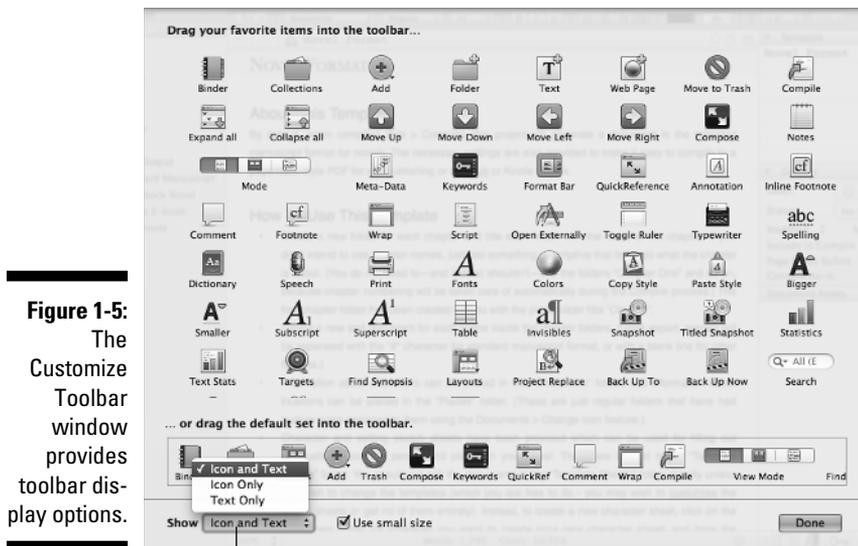


Figure 1-5:
The
Customize
Toolbar
window
provides
toolbar dis-
play options.

Change toolbar display options

Binder

The purpose of the Binder is to help you navigate and organize your documents. If it's not visible, go to View⇨Layout⇨Show Binder or click the Binder button in the toolbar.

Much like Finder (or Windows Explorer) does for your computer, the Binder provides access to all the files located within your project and keeps those files organized in an easy-to-see, hierarchical fashion. But even more, the Binder gives you an outline view of your manuscript.

Documents can be organized into folders (which may have a folder icon or some other icon) and multiple levels of subfolders, if desired.

For example, in the Manuscript folder (which is called Draft in the Scrivener User Manual and goes by other names, depending on which template you choose), you store all the documents you want to include in your final manuscript. If you want, you can break up your project into four parts in the Manuscript folder, with chapter folders within each part that contain the scene documents for each chapter. Try finding an easy way to do that in a word processor!

Or, within the Research folder, you might add subfolders to help further classify your research by type (for example, firearms, weather, period costumes, police procedure, plants). You can store photos, PDFs, and website archives in the Research (or another) folder, but not in the Manuscript folder, which is for text only.

The beauty is that *you* choose how to set up your project. You can rearrange items in the Binder at any time to change their levels, or assign them to different folders. You can collapse and expand files for an outline-like view of your project, easily move items around, rename them, group them into folders and subfolders, and even color-code them. The Binder can also be hidden if you find it distracting.

Chapter 2 provides a full explanation of the Binder.

Editor

The Editor sits at center stage in Scrivener, and it's the part that probably seems the most familiar to you. It's the text-editing part of Scrivener — the part where you do the actual writing. Just like a word processor, it contains a formatting bar at the top, a ruler (which may or may not be visible initially), and a blank space for adding your words.

If you chose a template other than Blank, your new project displays a description of the template and how it's set up. This is a handy reference that sits at the top of the Binder unless you delete it, so you may want to keep it until you get the hang of things.



If the Editor looks like a corkboard or a series of horizontal lines, choose View⇨Document (called Scrivenings when multiple files — or a container — are selected).

Within the Editor pane, you have access to several views: Document/Scrivenings (which displays the text editor), Corkboard (index cards), and Outliner.

The Editor has plenty of tricks up its virtual sleeve, which are covered in Part III of this book.

Inspector

The Inspector isn't a police detective — but for many new users, it's a bit of a mystery. Located at the far-right of the Scrivener window, the Inspector is a common feature in Mac-based programs, but exists in the Windows version, as well. If it's not visible, choose View⇨Layout⇨Show Inspector or click the Inspector button in the toolbar.

The Inspector displays all sorts of extra information — known as metadata — about the items in your Binder and allows you to modify a lot of that information. If each scene, chapter, or section within your project were a cereal box, your written text would be the chocolaty rice puffs inside, and the Inspector would be all the information on the outside of the box. (Anyone else hungry?)

When you first start Scrivener, the Inspector displays the Synopsis, general metadata, and notes for whichever document is selected in the Binder:

- ✓ **Synopsis:** The top portion of the pane. You can type a brief summary or outline of that scene, chapter, part, image, or whatever can help remind you what it's about. When you work with the Corkboard (which I describe in Chapter 8), you can see that the index card contents are pulled from the Synopsis section.
- ✓ **General:** Located in the middle of the Inspector pane, you store other information about the file here.
- ✓ **Document/Project Notes:** This bottom section of the Inspector pane lets you record notes or reminders about the document.

If you want more room to write, or just less clutter in general, you can hide the Inspector by clicking the Inspector button in the toolbar or choosing View⇨Layout⇨Hide Inspector.

Want to investigate the Inspector's many secrets? Part II of this book is devoted entirely to solving the puzzle of the Inspector.

Determining Your Writing Style

Whether you sit down in front of a blank piece of paper with only the spark of an idea or you create an 80-page outline complete with a storyboard and photos of all your characters before you write, Scrivener accommodates you.

The aforementioned people who write by the seat of their pants — so-called pantsers — might start writing, get to the logical end of the scene, and then start a new document for another scene, whether next in order or not.

Plotters, on the other hand — those who live and die by the outline — might start their process in the Corkboard (Chapter 8) or Outliner (Chapter 9), creating a title and brief synopsis for each scene, moving the scenes around until the order is just right, and then, after setting the storyline, begin filling in the actual text of the story.

Perhaps, like me, you're somewhere in between. It might even change from one manuscript or type of project to the next. The real beauty here is that you don't have to stick with one style. Pantsing your way through and got stuck? Try playing with your scenes in the Corkboard. Had a perfect outline, but your characters protested your "all is lost" moment in the plot? Try opening a blank document and free-writing your way through it.

There's no right or wrong style, only your style. And no matter what style works for you, Scrivener has your back.