



MSWord 2003 and 2007
Maximizing Use of
Custom Dictionaries
for
SFU Theses,
Projects, Essays, Papers

Goal: To reduce repetitious, time-consuming, labour intensive spellchecks

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## MSWord 2003 – Finding the custom dictionary tools

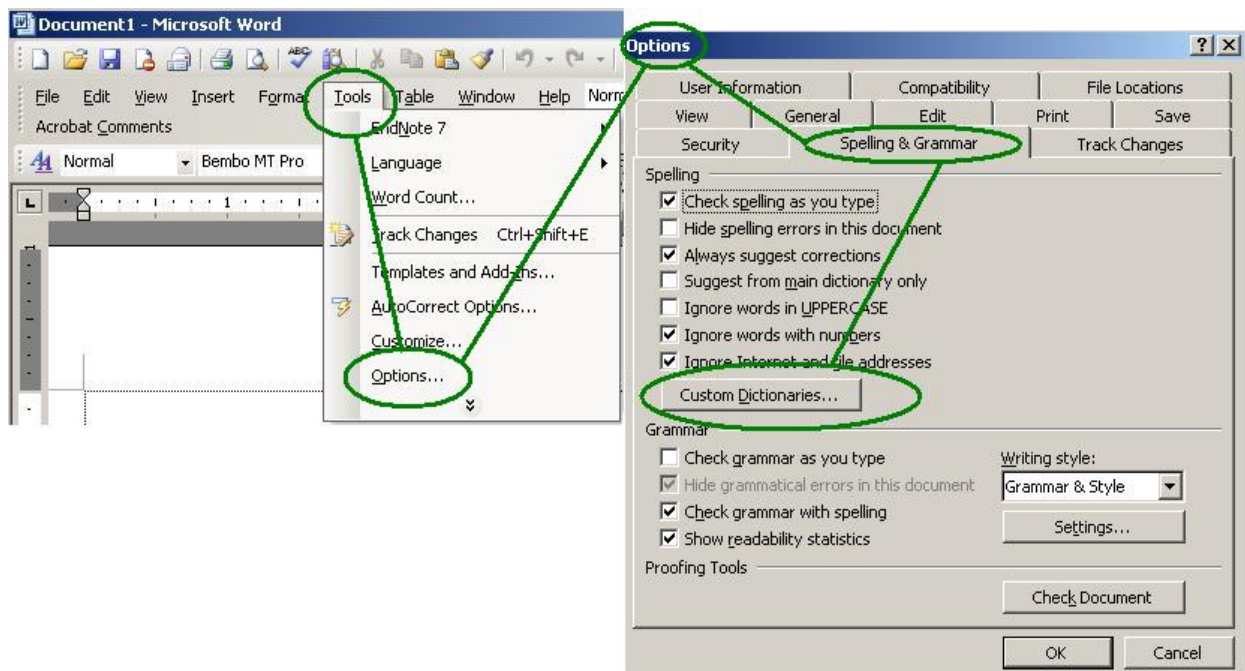
The instructions to follow are oriented to MSWord 2007.



The instructions refer to finding the Custom Dictionaries menu through a pathway of button choices beginning with the “Office” icon, which is featured on the extreme left of the upper menu bar.

**MSWord 2003 users can disregard the portion of the instructions referring to the pathway “Office icon/word preferences/Proofing”.**

- In MSWord 2003, the initial access to the custom dictionary is through the “Tools” menu.
- The pathway is Tools/Options/Spelling and Grammar/Custom Dictionaries...



- It is at that point, when you reach the “Custom Dictionaries” button, that the instructions become the same for both MSWord 2003 and MSWord 2007.

[Custom Dictionaries...](#)

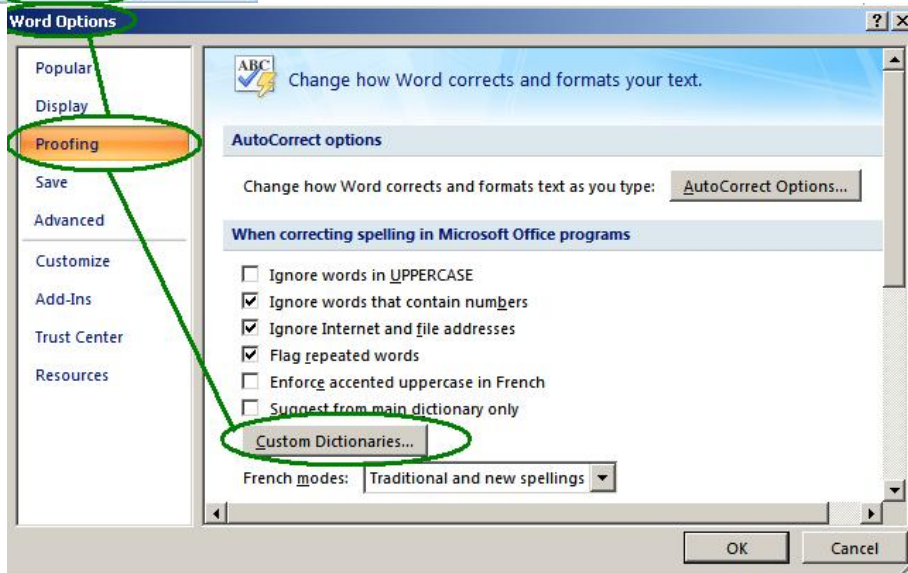
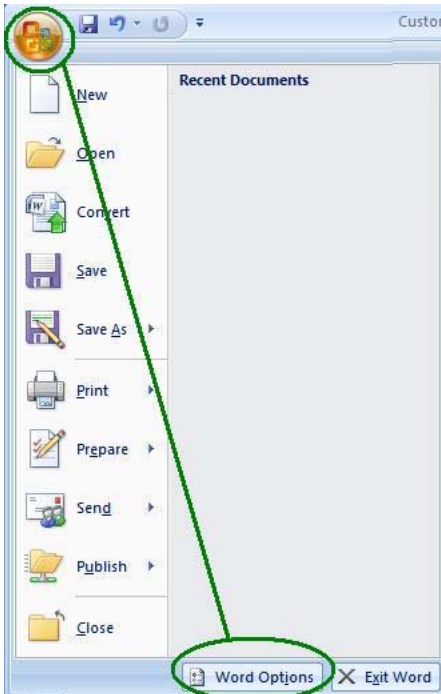
## MSWord 2007 – Finding the tools

The primary difference between Word 2003 and Word 2007 is the immediate “interface” of Word 2007.

- It demands an immediate understanding of many icons and more levels of clicking to gain access to the tools menus familiar from Word 2003. However, there are improvements also. Tools are in more logical groupings, such as “things that get inserted” are now all under the “Insert” menu, including tables.
- MSWord also buries many highly desirable features that would greatly assist new users in a way only accessible or noticeable to “advanced” [and very determined] users with time for exploration. This makes it very challenging to tame and control MSWord for your own purposes when under deadline pressure.

- This helpsheet offers a tested method by which the average user can take advantage of existing, but obscure, advanced MSWord capacity to create a custom dictionary efficiently and make it portable between computers.
- Access the “Custom Dictionaries” menu through the “Office icon” button at the upper left corner. This opens a menu. Find the “Word Options” button at the bottom of the menu, then select “Proofing” from the list on the next menu to find the “Custom Dictionaries” button .
- This gives access to the custom dictionaries tools menu.

[Custom Dictionaries...](#)



## Maximize your default custom dictionary

- MSWord has a default Custom dictionary set up for you. All words you add to the dictionary automatically go into this file.
  - You can add words to it during a spell check or directly by accessing this dictionary through the Word/Word Options menu path.
  - First ensure correctness, and then add any words, surnames, special terms to your custom dictionary.
- Regularly adding words, including names, unknown to the MSWord dictionary, reduces the amount of irritating underlining of words, and speeds the next spell check.
- You can also delete incorrect words as needed through the “Edit Word List” menu, where you can highlight any word and use the “Delete” button.
- If you never move your document from this computer, this may be sufficient.

## Why create a specialized custom dictionary?

- One problem with these dictionaries is that they appear to have a maximum of about 250 words. They can become too full.
- It is therefore valuable to create additional dictionaries, particularly for different subjects, different languages, and specific projects, such as long-term research or a thesis, which need many surnames, specialized title words, and company names contained in bibliographies, added to the dictionary. It is not efficient to add these words and names one at a time.
- You can create a specialized dictionary at any time by going to the Custom Dictionary creating a new dictionary, give it a suitable name, activate it with a tick , and then add the desired words using this menu’s “Edit Word List” button, or during a spell check.
- However, if you already have a long list of words you wish to add, it can be a slow, irritating nuisance to add them one by one.

## Create a custom dictionary from a list

- The most common existing list containing words that are unknown to the MSWord dictionary, is a bibliography (reference list).
- The names and specialized words will be underlined in red because they are unknown to the MSWord dictionaries.
- If you do not add all the underlined words, (including surnames you know are correct) to your custom dictionary during a first spell check, the next spell checks will repeatedly stop at these words.
- You can create a dictionary of surnames, specialty words and abbreviations from any existing bibliography(ies). This allows you to bypass the bibliography in subsequent spell checks or requires adding only new words from later additions to the bibliography.

Continuum International publishing co.

Canadian population society, Toronto, Ontario, May 30, 2002.

Bulletin of Islamic Medicine, Vol. 3, KUWAIT.

The Modern Language Journal, 89, 206-220.

Journal of Research in Personality, 13, 363-385.

McGraw-Hill.

SAGE Publications


The Modern Language Journal, 80, 199-212.

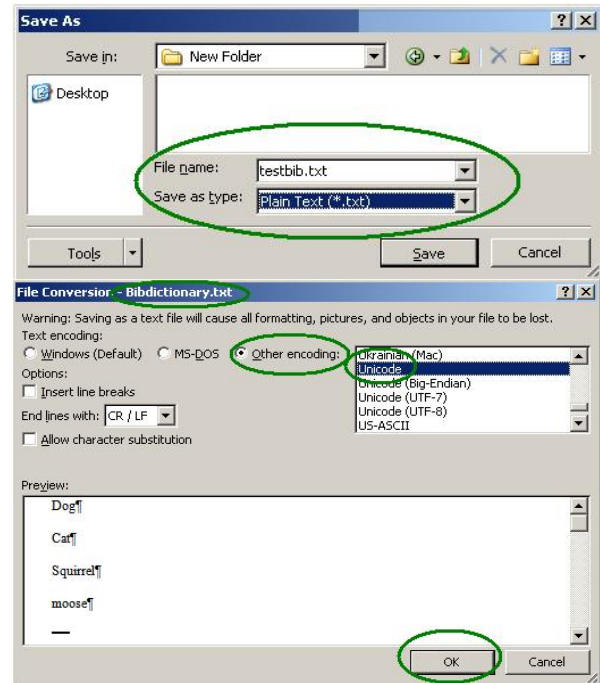
Routledge.

## Step-by-step instructions

- Please follow the steps carefully, as MSWord does not make this easy to do. The dictionaries are hidden from all but the most advanced users, yet it is less experienced users who need this feature the most. This is how to get around the gatekeeping.

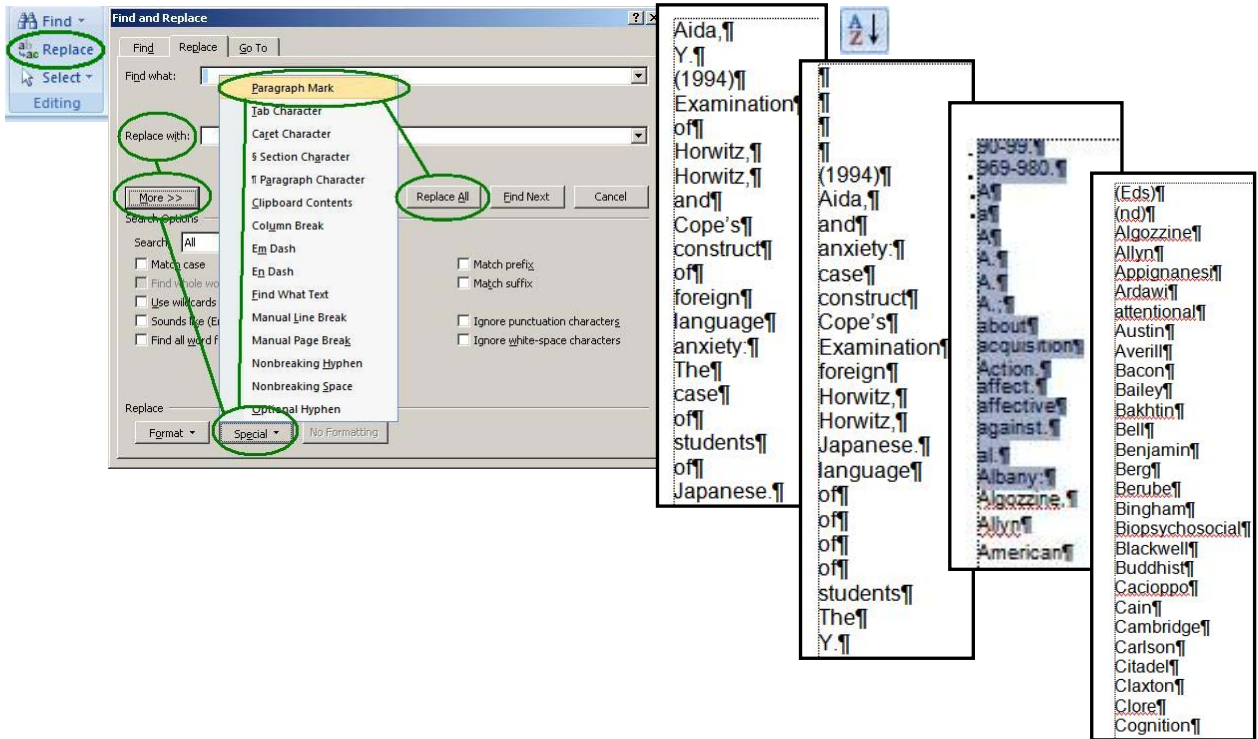
### Create a plain text document from your bibliography

- First turn an existing bibliography into a plain text list of words in a “txt” document. Copy/paste the bibliography into a new document and save to your desktop.
- On the Home menu, find “Select” and then “Select all” to highlight the entire text. Then, strip all styling from fonts, words and paragraphs. How? Find the tiny Styles “down arrow”  button, open the styles menu, then find and click the “Clear All” feature.
- Save this as a plain text document on your desktop with the name of your choice (\*.txt). A new “File conversion” menu will appear. Select “Other encoding” and then “Unicode” on the list to the right. Okay. Save. Close.
- When you re-open this document, you will see that hyperlinks have also been stripped out by this “Save”.



### Turn the bibliography into a clean list

- The next steps are illustrated below.
- First, reduce the entire list to single word paragraphs. How? On the “Home” menu, Use the “Replace” features (far right of Home menu).
  - In the “Find what” slot, hit the space bar once to insert a space. “Replace with”:  
Use the “more” button to find the “special” button. Select “paragraph mark”. Hit “replace all.” Exit the menu.
  - You will now be able to see the text as one-word paragraphs.
- On the Home menu, find the Sort button. sort alphabetically by paragraph
  - Clean out all “junk”, paragraph marks, duplicates and any other words you don’t want. Also clean out all punctuation. You can use the Replace function to find each item, such as a comma, and replace with nothing (clear all content from the replace slot to ensure there is nothing), then hit “Replace all”. Finally, check the very end of the document, after the last “Z” word, for remaining junk. Delete.
  - See illustration on next page
- Then cut out all words (highlight and delete) that are not underlined by the spell check. You may wish to keep some surnames and specialty words that are not underlined, as a precaution.
- Save this clean list. Ensure it remains a “txt” document. Keep it open.



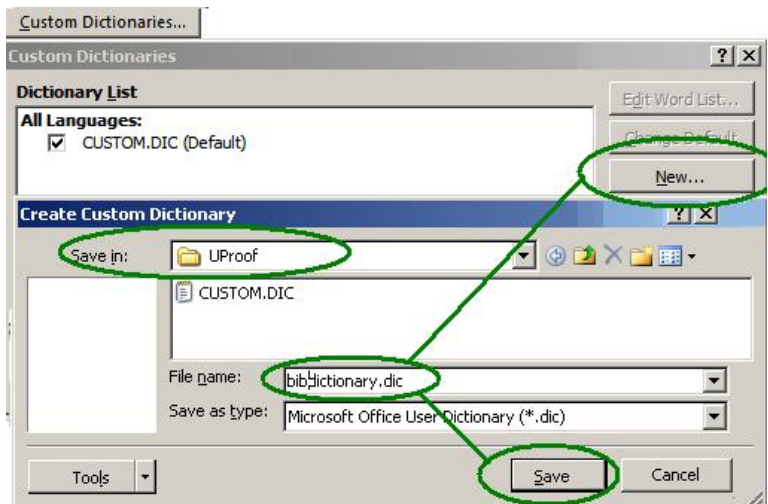
**Add the list to a custom dictionary**

□ Follow the following steps carefully in order.

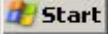
**Create a new custom dictionary**

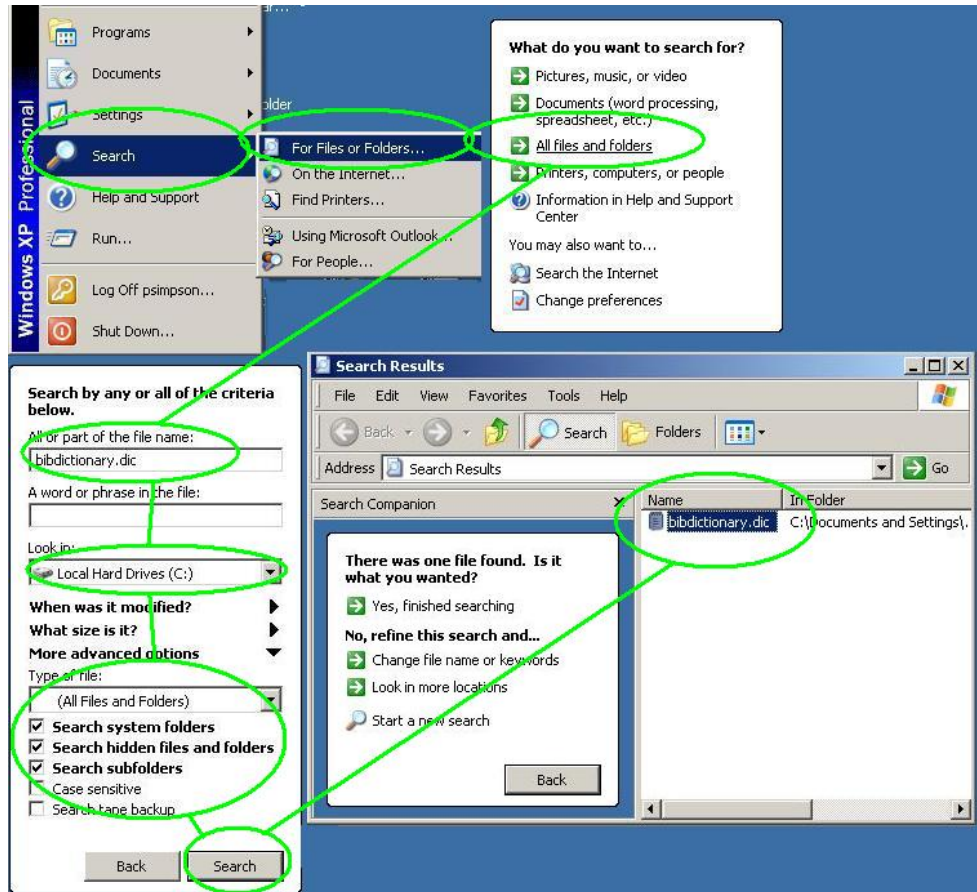
□ First, go to the custom dictionaries menu (as shown in the “Default custom dictionary” section: Create a new custom dictionary, giving it a clear name (i.e. ““thesis”; “Physics”; “Geography”; or “bibdictionary”). Ensure it is activated with a tick . Okay.

□ Don't forget the name. The next task is to search for it.



## Search for it in MSOffice

- Using the Microsoft search available from the “Start” button  on the lower left of your screen, use the search with advanced options.



- Enter the name of your new dictionary file in the “All or part of the file name” box.

- (C) drive is correct to search in the MS Office folders.

- You need to search in system folders, hidden files and folders and subfolders. Tick these boxes

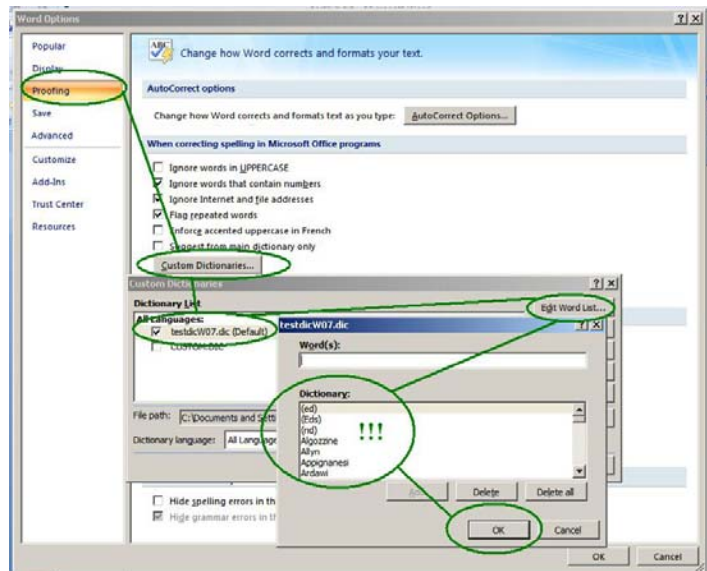
- Then search. When your dictionary appears, click on the file name to open it. It will open in “Notepad”.

## Move the list into the dictionary

- Go to the list document you previously created. Select all to highlight the entire list. Copy.
- Go back to the dictionary file you just opened. Paste in the list. Save.

## Check that the steps all worked

- Now check the dictionary from within MSWord. Open a new blank document. Go to the Custom dictionary menu, where this dictionary should be ticked. Click the “Edit word list” button to check that the word list is in it.
- You now have a custom dictionary that will work on this computer.



## Problem: Moving your document to a different computer leaves the dictionary behind

- The main problem arising for students is that the custom dictionary is stored deep in hidden folders inside MSOffice, and remains on one computer.
  - If you use only one laptop, and never change computers, then you will not have any problems.
- However, if you use a USB key, and change computers, you can lose contact with your custom dictionary, and all the work you did to add words.
  - Many words you previously checked and entered into the custom dictionary will re-appear with red underlining as though they have never been spell-checked. It is both irritating and time consuming to do the check again.
- It is therefore valuable to create a portable custom dictionary which you can keep with your document and template in a portable folder kept on a USB key for transfer between computers. When your document is attached to this dictionary within that portable folder, the words previously checked remain checked, and you can continue to add new words no matter where you are working.
- You first need to create a specialized custom dictionary, then move it to your portable folder.

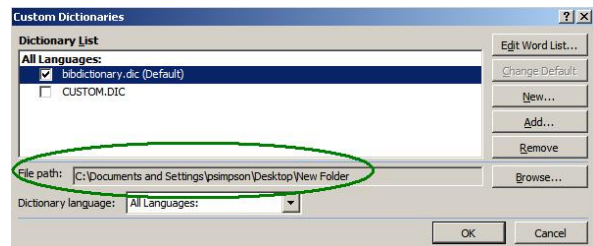
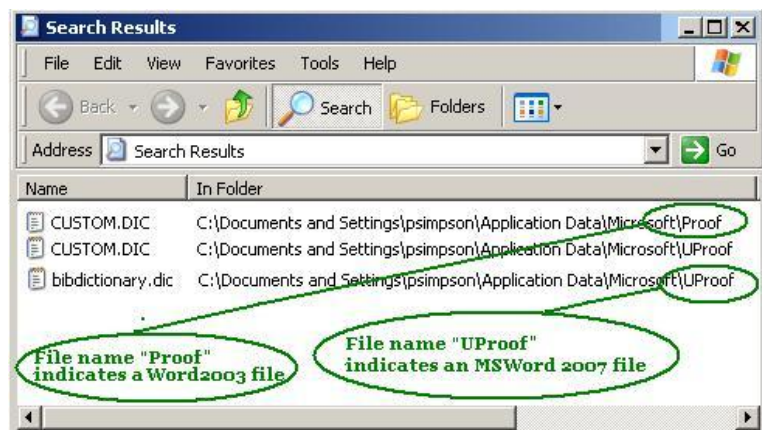
### Moving a dictionary to a portable folder

You can copy any custom dictionary to your portable folder.

- As before, search for the dictionary. If you wish to copy more than one to your portable folder, search for "\*.dic"
- Click on the dictionary name. Copy it, open your portable folder and paste it there.

### Attaching the dictionary to a document in the portable folder

- In the portable folder, open the document you wish to use.
- Then go to the Custom dictionaries menu (as shown in the "Default custom dictionary" section: Pathway: Office/Word Preferences/Proofing/ or Tools/Options/Spelling & Grammar/ to find the button and menu for Custom dictionaries).
- Click the "Add" button. Browse to find and open your Portable Folder. You should be able to see the ".dic" file you just pasted into the folder.
- Open this file and save it under a new, unique name. Delete the old version.
- Click on this newly named dictionary to highlight the file. Then click the "Open" button. The name should appear in the dictionary list with the tickbox  already ticked. This means the dictionary is activated. You can verify this by checking the filepath.



- Finally, untick the dictionary named "CUSTOM.DIC". Hit Okay. This ensures that the document is attached ONLY to dictionaries in the portable folder.
- You can attach more than one dictionary in the portable folder to this document. Just be sure that each has a unique name, so it cannot be confused with those in the MSWord UProof (or Proof) folder on this computer.

## **Using the dictionary**

- As long as you move the portable folder, keeping the dictionary and document hyperlinked together within it, your spellcheck will utilize this dictionary.
- Now that you have this dictionary attached (hyperlinked) to your document, you can use the spell check's "add to dictionary" button, or the Custom Dictionary menu's "Edit Word List" button, to add individual, new words to the dictionary.
  - You can verify this by adding a new word to your document. Highlight it, spellcheck it, add it to the dictionary, then go to the Custom Dictionary menu's "Edit Word List" button to open the dictionary, scroll down and find the word.
- You can add lists of words to the dictionary at any time.
  - Create a new word list ".txt" document, open this dictionary file, and copy/paste the list in.
  - Also consider searching for and opening the old CUSTOM.DIC, copying those previously entered words, and pasting them into your portable dictionary.
  - It does not seem to matter that you do not alphabetize the words when you paste them into the open text document. Viewed from within the custom dictionary "Edit word list" feature, they appear in alphabetical order.