Overview

Etherpad is a real-time collaborative online editor. It allows single or multiple people to collaborate on content such as:

- Meeting agendas
- Taking minutes for online or offline meetings, workshops or any event
- Real time or asynchronous, text-based planning of projects - feature planning, release planning
- Brainstorming
- To-Do lists
- Gathering info for project-based docs
- Keeping notes and stack traces for bugs: https://pastebin.com/ is good for pasting the actual stack traces
- Collating resources, research and other forms of data

Etherpads are heavily used in open source communities such as OpenStack and OPNFV.

Common Features

Because Etherpad is software that can be installed on many different servers in many different places, there are different features which may be enabled. Here are some of the most common features.

Creating Pads: Normally, it is possible for anyone create a new collaborative document, known as a "pad". Each pad has its own web address (URL), if you are sent this URL then you will be able to edit the pad.

Clear Collaboration: It is possible to see changes being made by other people in real time. Each participant is identified by a color and a name.

Chat: By default there is the ability to 'chat' with other people who are using the pad.

Recording Revisions: The pad is saved at and participants can permanently save specific versions checkpoints at any time. A time slider allows anyone to explore the history of the pad in a very user-friendly way.
Exporting work: The text contained in the pad document can be downloaded in plain text, HTML, Open Document, Microsoft Word, or PDF format.

Creating a Pad

Go to https://etherpad.acumos.org/ and enter the name of your pad in the text box.

Best Practice

- for personal pads, start your pad name with your IRC name or LF ID
- for project pads, start your pad name with your project or component name

Single Author Writing in a Pad

To start writing you can use the pad in the same way that you would a normal word processor or the writing window of an email editor.

If you have just created the pad yourself you will see some existing text already there. You can select this and delete it.

You can now type text into the editor.
Minutes are a written account of the meeting, covering the main points of discussion, the decisions reached and actions to be taken. This guide explains how to take minutes, and why taking minutes can be a good idea.

As you type you may notice that there is a background color behind what you type. This color is called an Authorship Color. If other people start writing to the pad their text will show up as a different color. If you are only writing by yourself then this may be distracting. You can choose to remove these Authorship Colors by clicking on the eye-with-a-slash-through-it icon.

Sharing a Pad
To invite others to collaborate with you on this pad you can click on the icon to show options for sharing the pad.
Multiple Author Writing on a Pad

As other people join the pad and start to type their text will appear in other colors. This allows you to keep track of who has written what.

To make this easier, it is a good idea for you to link our name with your color. To do this click on the icon of the head and shoulders at the top right of the pad.

This will prompt you to enter your name.

Type in your real name, your IRC name - whatever identifies you to other authors of the etherpad. Then press enter.

Note: if you don't like the color associated with your name, you can select the color square to change your color.
Adding Text

Add your text, prefaced with your name, just in case somebody decides to clear the pad's Authorship colors.

Best Practices

1. link your color and your name
2. preface your text with your name, just in case somebody decides to clear the Authorship colors from the pad

Chatting with Other Authors

One of the core reasons for using Etherpad is to be able to collaborate in real time with other writers remotely. Etherpad provides a Chat window which allows you to talk in real time with other writers.

To activate the chat on a default installation, click on the chat icon.
If you type text in the small text field at the bottom this is now visible to the other people currently looking at the document.

The chat tools is a great way of exchanging information about what you are writing or simply to greet others and make them feel welcome in the collaborative writing process.

It is possible to display chat more permanently. You can do this by clicking on the left of the two icons above the chat window.

Recording changes and revisions

One of the key features of Etherpad is that it keeps a record of all the changes that are made to the document.

To view these changes click on the icon that looks like a clock to show the time slider of the project.

There is a playing head slider which you can drag to the left to move between versions. The playing head starts at the right with the latest version of the pad.

Dragging this playing head back to version 0 should show the default message and the time when the pad was created.

*When you drag the playing head you will see the text alter. This is a visual representation of the changes that have been made to the text.*
It is possible to click on the play button to the right of this timeline screen to replay these changes at a speed where you can generally keep a track of what happened.

Practically, this is useful because you or a collaborator may have deleted some text by mistake which you might want to restore. It is also very interesting to see how your collaboration progresses. This is a great visualisation of collaborative creativity in action.

When you are finished you can click on the Return to the pad link.

Intentional Saved Revisions

While Etherpad saves all work and changes in small increments by default, you may want to set intentional versions or revisions. This is done by clicking on the star icon.

If you go to the Timeline view of a pad where these saved revisions have been used you will see the intentionally saved revisions as stars marked along the timeline.

You can skip back to one of the 'starred', intentional versions by double clicking on it.

Importing and Exporting Documents

You may want to start a pad with a word processing document you have already created. When you have finished collaborating you may also want to export the document you have created.

It is possible to do this in many different formats. To start click on the Icon with two arrows facing opposite directions in the tool bar on the top right.

You can choose to export to a limited number of different file types.

Much of the information above was copied from http://write.flossmanuals.net/etherpad/getting-started-with-etherpad/