To Create Feature matrix brackets in OpenOffice.org Writer

You're using Openoffice.org! We're so impressed! Your coolness rating just went up a massive amount.

The following instructions were produced in OpenOffice.org 3.0[1] using the Junicode font. You don't have to use Junicode to create feature matrix brackets, but we recommend it for linguistics work because it has a thoroughly complete set of IPA characters, more than Times. And besides it's, well, not Times. You can get it here:

http://junicode.sourceforge.net/

For instructions on how to install it and use it on Windows, Mac and Linux computers with OpenOffice.org or Microsoft Office, go here:

http://ipa4linguists.pbwiki.com/

OK, now we're ready to create feature matrix brackets in OpenOffice.org Writer. First, here's the quick and dirty easy way: Just select the feature matrix bracket below and paste it into your document. Wasn't that easy? And you thought you were actually going to have to learn something! We wouldn't do that to you. We know you need to save your faltering synapses for Phonology, 'cause, like, Phonology is a [bɪtʃ].

$$\begin{bmatrix} -\text{voice} \\ +\text{syllabic} \\ -\text{coronal} \end{bmatrix}$$

OK, maybe we stretched the truth a bit. If you have already copied and pasted it into a blank document you may have discovered that it didn't come out quite right. For example, the feature matrix bracket may be squashed like a fat dude sat on it. Not good! But easy to fix – just go into Format > Paragraph and change the line spacing to Single. Or if you prefer (as we do) to use real settings for line spacing, set the line spacing to Fixed and then enter a big enough point size in the box to give the feature matrix bracket room.

Or maybe the font came out as italic when you wanted regular, or it may have switched to <puke> Times. This is because the default setting in OpenOffice.org Writer is to use Times Italic for formulas. But you can change that, and once you do it will always use the font you specify. To change the fonts double click on the feature matrix bracket. This will open a separate window on the bottom of your Writer document showing the formula – more about that in a bit, be patient grasshopper! It will also pop up a toolbar thingy, but you can ignore that for now. As long as the separate window is open on the bottom of the document window you can apply editing changes, including fonts. So now you can just go to Format and you will find two options: Fonts..., and Font Size. But there is something tricky here – when you click on Format > Fonts... it will pop up a dialog box showing seven different font types:

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1   These instructions will probably also work in previous versions, but we didn't test it on anything but 3.0. OK, we're lazy. And besides, you ought to be using the latest version anyway.

Variables, Functions, Numbers, Text, and below are Serif, Sans, and Fixed. On our computer they were all set to Times by default except the last two, which were set to Arial and DejaVu Sans Mono. We changed them all to Junicode except the last two. And we unchecked the Italic box whenever it was checked. Important: After you set the fonts the way you want them, click on the Default button so all future formulas will be created with the same font settings. And then we went back to Format > Fonts and changed the point size for the Base to 12 points, because that's what we use when writing a paper with Junicode. And again, click on the Default button so your future formulas will use the same font sizes.

OK, now it's time to learn how to change the feature matrix bracket to something besides -voice, +syllabic, -coronal, 'cause why would anyone ever have those features anyway? Remember how you double clicked on the feature matrix bracket and it opened the little window on the bottom of the document window? Well, there is your formula. It should be pretty obvious. Like, you're big college boys and girls now, right? Just change the feature matrix bracket that we put into this document to suit yourself. Note that a # adds another feature on a new line. You can reorder them and add or delete to suit yourself. Just don't change any of the rest of the syntax lest you get a mess.

There's just one small problem that we noticed when editing the features. If you put a minus in front of a feature it will appear narrower in the feature matrix bracket than a plus sign, so the words won't be lined up nicely. We discovered a trick to get around that – use what typographers call an en-dash. The en-dash looks like a minus sign or a hyphen, but is the width of the letter n. To insert it on Linux just type Ctrl-Shift-u, then the Unicode number for it, which is 2013, and then a space. If you're using OpenOffice.org on Windows you can insert it with Character Map, or you can go to the IPA4Linguists web site above for more ways to insert Unicode characters into your documents. Or, since we know you're as lazy as we are, just copy the en-dash from the code window for our sample feature matrix bracket above and paste it where you want it. Cool, eh?

And finally, just in case you want to create your own feature matrix brackets instead of pasting in ours and then modifying it, here's how we did it:

1) Put your cursor in the document where you want the feature matrix bracket to appear. Go to Insert > Object > Formula. That will open a little window on the bottom of the document window and will pop up a little toolbar thingy.

2) In the toolbar thingy let your mouse hover over the icons until you see the one that is for Brackets. Click on it and it will change the icons in the bottom pane. Then in the bottom pane click on the one with a and b enclosed by brackets. Pretty obvious, eh?

3) Now in the top pane click on the Formats icon (next to the Brackets icon). And then in the lower pane click on the lower left icon, which will left align the bracket.

That's about all there is to it. Add the features you want separated by a # and then just click anywhere in your document. Your new feature matrix bracket will appear right where the cursor was when you started creating it.