All versions of Office can play nice — Crabby shows you how

Applies to: Microsoft Office Excel 2007, PowerPoint 2007, Word 2007

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Crabby Office Lady

Who is your favorite muppet? Mine is Kermit. We all looked the same, liked the same things, and thought exactly alike. However, when it comes to software, it helps if everyone is on the same page, using the same version. When that isn't possible, it's up to you to ... adapt.

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Many of you have already hopped on board the 2007 Microsoft Office system. You're getting to know the Ribbon (which is part of the Microsoft Office Fluent user interface), you and that Office button have a little office romance going on, and you're creating skyscrapers with the building blocks in Microsoft Office Word 2007. In a phrase, you're captain of your computer and a pillar of productivity.

However (and there is always a "however" since everyone is a little bit different), not everyone you work or are friends with — be it inside or outside your organization — is using Office 2007 (could it be?). Some are sticking with Office 2003, others never got off the Office XP bus, while others are still partying like it's 1999 (when Office 2000 came out).

So even though being unique is a great thing (and "unique" rhymes with my real name ...), it doesn't always work well when it comes to sharing files among your peers and your customers. That's why we've made it simple for all of you, no matter what version of Excel, PowerPoint, or Word you're using, to create, open, and share your files.

Making sure Office 2007 files can be opened and viewed

Yes, you can do this because no, we are not trying to exclude anyone who hasn't had the sense to upgrade to Office 2007.

NOTE   It's okay folks — you can stop that frantic clickety-clack of your fingers as they send off an irritated e-mail to me about how not everyone can upgrade at will. Rest easy: I know that if you work for a company that is not upgrading, you are at the mercy of the decision makers. But if you CAN upgrade, I highly recommend that you do.

There are a couple of ways to make sure that everyone is able to read, view, and work with Office 2007 documents, presentations, and workbooks.

- If you are the one who created the Office 2007 file, you can save a copy of it that is compatible with Word 97-2003, PowerPoint 97-2003, or Excel 97-2003. Click one or more of the links in the **See also** section to learn how to do that for each program.
- If you are the one who is opening a Word 2007, PowerPoint 2007, or Excel 2007 file with an earlier version, you can download the Microsoft Office Compatibility Pack for Word, Excel, and PowerPoint 2007 File Formats, which will allow you to do just that.

Note that certain 2007 features are lost or changed when you open a document, presentation, or workbook with an earlier version of Office. You can read more about that, too, by clicking the links in the **See also** section at the top of this page.

Working in Word 2007 with previous versions

If you have Word 2007 but receive a document that was created in a previous version of Word, when you open it, Compatibility Mode is turned on automatically. This ensures that no new or enhanced features in Word 2007 are available while you're working with the document. Thus, people who are using previous versions of Word will have the full editing capabilities of those versions.

You can also convert this document to Word 2007 so that you can take full advantage of the new features in Word 2007 that aren't available in other versions.

Take a look at this demo that shows you what you need to know about working in Word 2007 with documents created in other versions.

Working in PowerPoint 2007 with previous versions

If someone sends you a presentation created in an earlier version of PowerPoint, you have two choices: Keep the presentation in its original format, thereby making sure that everyone has access to all its functionality and features, or convert it to the PowerPoint 2007 format (.pptx). Me, I'd do both: Keep the original one that was sent to you, and then save it with a different file name in the new format.

If you do decide to convert the presentation to the current file format (.pptx), you should check whether a PowerPoint 2007 presentation is compatible with earlier versions of PowerPoint. There are several new features in PowerPoint 2007 that aren't available in earlier versions, and you wouldn't want to send off a presentation that didn't look exactly like you expected, would you? Of course you wouldn't. So do yourself (and your audience) a favor: Run the checker.

Working in Excel 2007 with previous versions

If you have Excel 2007, you can open a workbook that was created in an earlier version of Excel and work in Compatibility Mode so that the workbook remains in a file format that can easily be opened again in the earlier version. An Excel 2007 workbook can also be opened in an earlier version of Excel by downloading the Compatibility Pack.

And if you convert the workbook to the current Excel 2007 file format (.xlsx), you can check your workbook for compatibility with earlier versions of Excel so that you can make the necessary changes to avoid the loss of data or fidelity that might occur when that workbook is opened in an earlier version of Excel.

As you see, we can all play together nicely; it's just a matter of those who have Office 2007 being sensitive to the fact that not everyone else does, and those not yet using Office 2007 being sensitive to the glory that some already are.

"Despair is perfectly compatible with a good dinner, I promise you." — William Makepeace Thackeray

About the author

Annik Stahl, the Crabby Office Lady columnist, takes all of your complaints, compliments, and knee-jerk reactions to heart. Therefore, she graciously asks that you let her know whether this column was useful to you — or not — by entering your feedback using the **Did this article help you?** feedback tool below. And remember: If you don't vote, you can't complain.

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