Gimme the lowdown on downloads: Defining the terms

Crabby Office Lady

Longing to know what all those terms are when it comes to downloads? Well, long no longer; I've uploaded them out for you here, ready for you to download to your brain's internal memory.

Once you've wrapped your brain around the terms below, read [Crabby's guide to Office downloads](#) to get the big picture of how a download can make you more efficient, better organized, and perhaps even a better human being (OK, I'm stretching a bit on that one).

Download

As a verb, it means to transfer a copy of a file from a remote computer (say, one at Microsoft that has a download you want) to another computer (yours). As a noun, it's the file itself.
Used in a sentence: "I need to download *<verb>* the most current security download *<noun>* so that I can remain a protected Web citizen."

Upload

To upload means to transfer a copy of a file from your computer to another computer.
Used in a sentence: "I uploaded all 2 gazillion photos of my family trip to Euro Disney to the company's server and promptly shut down the network."

Add-in

A type of download that adds functionality to an existing program.
Example of an add-in: [Excel 2003/2002 Add-in: MSN Money Stock Quotes](#) (Add this to your Web site and you'll get up-to-the-minute stock quotes directly from the MSN Money Web site.)

Viewer

A utility you can download that that lets you view or read files — such as Visio diagrams and PowerPoint presentations — even if you're too cheap to buy the actual programs themselves.
Example of a viewer: [Visio Viewer 2007](#) (This download lets anyone view full-featured presentations created in Visio 97 and later versions.)

Converter

A type of program that allows you to change from one format to another. Sometimes different versions of the same software won't play nice together, so you need a converter to mediate.
Example of a converter: [Access 2.0 Converter for Access 2003](#) (With this converter, you can convert files from the Access 2.0 format to Access 2003. And good for you! You took my advice and upgraded!)

Update

A type of download that increases performance or security for a program you already have. It's not normally optional, like an add-in; it's something you need if you want your program to work its best.
Example of an update: Office 2003 Tablet PC Update: Improved Ink Recognition (This update provides improved ink recognition when using Office 2003 on your Tablet PC.)

Security Update

This is a high-priority update, one that can potentially save you from being vulnerable to those sneaky, hostile hackers.
Example of a security update: Security Update KB947801 (This download resolves a vulnerability that could allow arbitrary code to run when you open a maliciously modified file. Yikes!)

Service Pack

A service pack is a single, big update that includes all the individual updates released since the last service pack was released. This can include full product updates as well as security updates.
Example of a service pack: OneNote 2003 Service Pack 1 (SP1) (This particular service pack loads you up with new features and significant security enhancements, in addition to stability and performance improvements. In other words, it's all good things rolled into a single serving — sort of like a vitamin.)

Smart tags

Smart tags provide a menu that presents commands that are specific to your current task.
Example of a Smart tag: Office 2003 Smart Tag: Date and Phone Number XML Smart Tags (The Date and Phone Number smart tags recognize most date and phone number formats in Word 2003, Excel 2003, and PowerPoint 2003.)

White paper (also known as a publication)

A white paper is a publication about anything having to do with a program that is most likely too long to be put on the site as an article. So, it needs to be compressed, scrunched, and packaged as a download.
Example of a white paper: Live Communications Server 2005 Document: Real-Time Collaboration White Paper (This white paper provides information about the business value of real-time collaboration. Now you know.)

There are also other types of downloads such as sample files, tutorials, and other publications.

So now you know what these terms mean. Be brave, go forth, and download.

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 **Was this information helpful?** tool below. And remember: If you don't vote, you can't complain.

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