# Microsoft Word Programs

**Charles Kenyon** (wordfaq@addbalance.com)
**(personal observations)**

## Different Word programs on different platforms

Microsoft publishes a number of programs, all called "Word" and all able to edit and create Word files to a different extent.

See Compare Word features on different platforms. *This is an archival copy; the current page is Word Features Comparison: Web vs Desktop but that page does not cover many of the programs that are addressed in the archival copy.*

- There are ***multiple programs***, all named Word, and all created and published by Microsoft. This can be confusing when trying to get help.
- In addition, many of these are being used in different versions or updates.
- They all edit the same document files that have the same file structure. Some of the programs have no control over some of the document structures.
- They may all be called Microsoft 365 or Word 365 if using the subscription plan. If it is called Office 2024 (2019, 2019, 2016, etc.) it is the perpetual license version which is only the desktop programs. The perpetual license versions with a year number only work in a Windows or Mac OS environment.
- But, they are ***different programs*** with different features and controls. *Note that most users never come close to using all the features offered in the desktop versions of Word.*

### Windows Desktop Program

As of May 2025, the most powerful Word program, with the most features, remains the **Windows desktop** application from Microsoft 365. I do not expect that to change. The perpetual license version Word 2024 is very close as far as features but does not receive new features as added. It is only for use on a single device. *The perpetual license versions of Office/Word is only the desktop applications and does not include the online or mobile versions.*

### Macintosh Desktop Program

The **Macintosh** desktop application is a close second in the number of features. The things available in the Windows version not yet on the Mac version include Content Controls, Building Blocks, and ActiveX. It can use, but cannot create, or modify most Content Controls. AutoText is a Building Block that the Mac can and does use. The Mac version lacks the more powerful tools to manage styles available in the Windows version through the Manage Styles Dialog. See How do I manage styles? Mac User. *(Look at all of the responses, not just the one marked as an answer.)* Here is feedback requesting more parity between the Windows and Mac versions. Feel free to comment and vote!


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## Browser / online program

The **browser** version of Word – Word Online version does not print directly, only by first saving as pdf. This browser version has far fewer features and editing in it has been reported to mess up automatic numbering/bullets.

## Chromebooks

**Chromebooks** use a version of this or of the Android mobile app. See How to access Microsoft Office on a Chromebook. This can only be used with documents stored on OneDrive or SharePoint. See: Differences between using a document in the browser and in the Word desktop application. I would use this for note taking and for quick viewing/printing, but not for editing. Especially not for editing long or complex documents. The ability to mess these up is too high.

## Mobile Apps – Android/IOS

The **mobile** apps (Android/IOS, etc.) vary somewhat but have far fewer features. I would use them for note taking and for quick viewing/printing, but not for editing. Especially not for editing long or complex documents. The subscription versions are more powerful than the free ones but not, IMO, significantly. Primarily these can only be used with documents on OneDrive or SharePoint. *(Usually, you can get at documents on your local device, but it is tricky.)* What you can do in the Microsoft 365 apps on mobile devices with a Microsoft 365 subscription See also Word for Android Phones Help, Word for Android Tablets Help, Word for iPhone Help, Word for iPad Help.

When seeking help, it is important to give the program that you are having problems with as a part of your question.

*I see using Word on anything other than the desktop applications as supplemental to the desktop applications, not a replacement. Note that the statements about capabilities and usefulness are my opinions, not anything from Microsoft. They are based on my use and on my observations over the years here and in other Word forums. In my opinion, none of the versions is perfect. They can all be useful, recognizing their limitations.*


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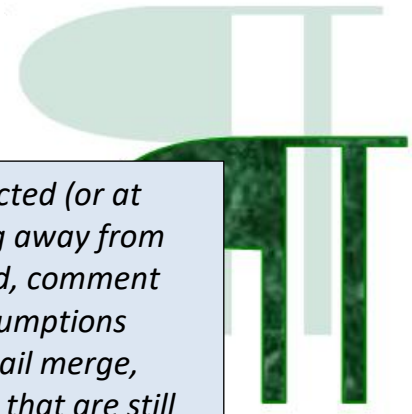
### Word MVP Jay Freedman recently reported:



> *As I recall, when Word for the Web was introduced, the expected (or at least advertised) use case was for a business person traveling away from home, who could use the Internet on a laptop to receive, read, comment on, and lightly edit documents from the home office. The assumptions included no need for templates (as used in desktop Word), mail merge, heavy-duty composition or editing features, and other things that are still missing.*
>
> *Word for the Web is still acceptable for the initial use case, but not for much more. It's the only version of Microsoft Word that can be used on a Chromebook.*

I think these observations are true of all of the mobile versions as well.

## Microsoft Word Free – Free Word – Free Office

Microsoft has never offered a free version of Word on new computers. Some manufacturers have included it in their purchase price, though.

- Every Windows computer comes with **WordPad**, which is a functional word processor, included at no extra charge. It has nothing near the features of Word but is more than a basic text editor. This is being removed in Windows 11, though.
    - Save your WordPad before its too late! – Woody's Watch
    - Software Alternatives to WordPad – Woody's Watch
- Word represents a lot of work by a lot of people. They were paid by Microsoft for their work.
- Some *manufacturers* purchase Office (at a discount) and include it in their price. Most *manufacturers* include a free trial version of Microsoft 365 that expires after 30 days. **This can conflict** with purchased perpetual license versions of Word.
- Microsoft offered Office 2010 Starter to *manufacturers* at a very cheap price. It was a *reduced-feature* version that included ads. Many manufacturers paid for that and included it on their computers at no extra charge *(that was revealed to the consumer)*.
- Microsoft Office Online free, but… This is a set of online programs with the same names as the desktop applications but with reduced functionality.
- You can subscribe to the reduced Microsoft 365 Basic which includes only the Online versions of the Office Suite along with expanded space on OneDrive. This does not include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te desktop applications but does allow for use on some mobile devices that require a subscription (i.e. larger tablets).

You can use GoogleDocs or OfficeLibre, both are free and read and write Word-compatible files. (The files are *not* identical to Word files but can be read and edited in Word.) Word online files are identical in structure to those created in the desktop versions.

*This document was originally prepared for a talk about Word in January 2025 and expands a bit on what I usually write in forums. Again, it states my personal opinions.*

**I do not work for Microsoft.**

Charles Kenyon

Volunteer Moderator – Microsoft Answers
Volunteer Moderator – Microsoft Forums
Contributor – Stack Overflow

## Background

I have been using Word since Word 95 on Windows 3, but really started with Word 97. I started programming after reading *Word 97 Annoyances* by Woody Leonhard.

**Some of my web pages:**

- Intermediate Users Guide to Microsoft Word – Templates Chapter
- Automated Boilerplate Using Microsoft Word – chapter in Usersguide
- Understanding Styles in Microsoft Word – chapter in Usersguide
- Use Body Text Style Instead of Normal Style – addendum to one of Shawna Kelly's tutorials
- Using Date Fields in Microsoft Word
- Moving (Sharing) Customizations in Microsoft Word
- Master Documents "Feature" in Microsoft Word
- Downloads - Microsoft Word - Add-Ins - Tutorials - Letterhead - Templates
- Startup Folder in Word – auto-load global templates
- Opening or Finding the Normal template in Word
- Modifying the Quick Access Toolbar (QAT) in Microsoft Word
- How can I get a different header/footer on the second page?
- Repeating Data Using Document Property Content Controls and Other Mapped Content Controls
- Frames and Textboxes in Microsoft Word
- The Ribbons of Microsoft Word 2007-2024(365) –different versions
- Function Keys in Word 97-2024 (365)
- Moving/Reorganizing Pages in Microsoft Word
- No Copies - No Editing
- Single-Click Checkboxes in Microsoft Word (Word 2003 and earlier primarily)
- Naming Files - A System is the Key


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- Backup Normal Template Using a Simple Macro – creates date-stamped backup copies of Normal in a separate folder

**Some of my articles on the Microsoft Answers site:**

- Minimizing Ribbon / AutoHiding Ribbon / Toggling Toolbars
- Getting the Ribbon to Show Up in Word
- Classic Spell Check Dialog - Macro to useclassic dialog rather than Editor
- Proofing Language Keeps Changing - Solutions - How can I keep my proofing language from changing?
- AutoComplete - for AutoText and Other Building Blocks
- Create a List of Keyboard Shortcuts in Microsoft Word
- Assigning Keyboard Shortcuts in Microsoft Word 2007-2024 (365)
- Creating "No proofing" styles in Microsoft Word - No Spell Check character style and Code paragraph style - keep text from being checked for spelling or grammar – Article
- Dealing with Fields in Microsoft Word
- [Quick] Style Sets and Word Themes in Microsoft Word
- Opening Word in Safe Mode compared to Opening Word with No Add-Ins
- Automatically Adding Date to the FileName for New Documents - vba to go into templates
- Setting Body Text Style to show and be useful - a simple macro
- Navigation Pane simulation in pdf or printed document
- Alternative Ways to Access Custom Templates - Alternatives for File New in Word
- Forensic value of the document "statistics" kept and reported by Word
- Managing Large Word Files and Combining Documents Into One File In Microsoft Word

**Some of my downloads:**

- **Add-Ins (free/shareware)**
  - DateStamp with dialog Add-In
  - Date - Append to FileName for New Documents Add-In
  - Recent File QAT Add-In for Word 2013-2024 (365)
  - FileNew Classic Dialog Add-In (give easy access to legacy FileNew dialog)
  - Chris Woodman's Keyboard Shortcut Organizer
  - Turn Off Field Code Display Add-In (switches to display of field results automatically)
  - Gender Toolbar Add-In
  - Heading Style Keyboard Shortcuts Add-In for Headings 4-9
  - MacroButton Prompt Add-In (lets you easily add placeholder text prompts to your document)
- **Tutorials**
  - Letterhead Textboxes and Styles Tutorial
  - Portrait Headers and Footers in Landscape Section Demonstration
  - Space Before Formatting at Top of New Page


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- Envelope Tutorial - graphics in return address and more using EnvelopeExtra AutoText
- Document Property Content Control Repurposed

- **Documents and Templates**
  - Fractions AutoCorrect Document - add more fractions to AutoCorrect
  - Basic Letterhead Template
  - [Quick] Style Sets Sampler
  - Themes Sampler
  - Building Blocks Gallery Content Control and AutoTextList Field Comparison and Demonstration
  - Document Formatted Using Styles Compared to Direct Formatting
  - Quick Reference Guide for Headers, Footers and Page Numbers
  - Question and Answer Styles (multiple-guess question/answer)
  - Password Protected Header and Footer Sample Using Restrict Editing
  - Business Card Template
  - Mac Content Controls Template - Contains Content Controls and Document Property Content Controls that can be used in Mac documents and templates
  - Ruled Paper Templates


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