

HOW TO WORK WITH OLDER VERSIONS OF FILES

When working with Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint documents that were created in older versions of Microsoft Office, Microsoft Office uses **Compatibility Mode** and **Compatibility Checker** to help maintain compatibility between different versions of Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.

What is Compatibility Mode?

Compatibility Mode allows users to open and edit files created in older versions of Microsoft Office while preserving their original formatting and functionality. When a file is opened in Compatibility Mode, some newer Office features may be disabled to prevent issues for users working with older versions.

Typical Older File Formats

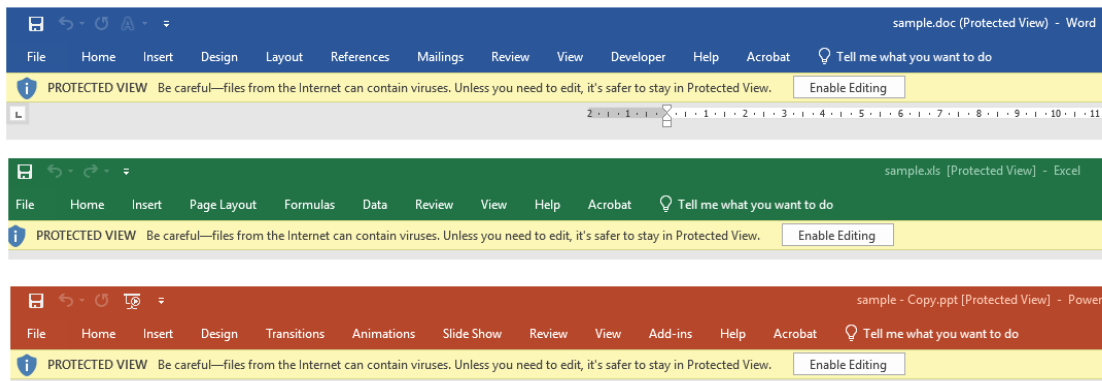
Application	Older Format	Current Format
Word	.doc	.docx
Excel	.xls	.xlsx
PowerPoint	.ppt	.pptx

How to Identify Compatibility Mode

You may be working in Compatibility Mode if:

- The file title displays ***[Compatibility Mode]***
- The document uses an older file format (.doc, .xls, or .ppt)
- Certain modern Office features are unavailable.

sample.xls [Compatibility Mode] - Excel



Compatibility Mode in

- a) Word
- b) Excel
- c) PowerPoint

when opening a file created with an older version of Microsoft Office

If you wish to Edit this file, you will first need to:

- d) click on "Enable Editing" button

Best Practices When Working with Older Documents

Before Editing - you should always create a backup copy before making significant changes.

After Editing - you should always save the file as a new latest available format (see Current formats above).

Benefits of Running Compatibility Checker

- Identifies unsupported features
- Highlights potential formatting issues
- Helps ensure a consistent experience across Office versions
- Reduces support issues and rework

2 Once the file is open, go to File > Info, here you have 2 options (1-Convert, 2-Check issues):

1a) if you select Convert, you will see a

1b) confirmation message, click OK

1c) you should immediately close the file and choose "Save"

1a) Compatibility Mode

Some new features are disabled to prevent problems when working with previous versions of Office. Converting this file will enable these features, but may result in layout changes.

Protect Document

Control what types of changes people can make to this document.

Inspect Document

Before publishing this file, be aware that it contains:

- Document properties, author's name and related dates
- Content that cannot be checked for accessibility issues because of the current file type

2a) Check for Issues

Inspect Document

Check the document for hidden properties or personal information.

Check Accessibility

Check the document for content that people with disabilities might find difficult to read.

Check Compatibility

Check for features not supported by earlier versions of Word.

Microsoft Word

Your document will be upgraded to the newest file format.

While you'll gain all the new features of Word, this may cause minor layout changes. If you prefer not to upgrade, press cancel. Converting allows you to use all the new features of Word and reduces the size of your file. This document will be replaced by the converted version.

☐ Do not ask me again about converting documents.

Tell Me More... OK Cancel

Microsoft Word

Want to save your changes to "sample - Copy.docx"?

If you click "Don't Save", a recent copy of this file will be temporarily available.

Learn more

Save Don't Save Cancel

Microsoft Word Compatibility Checker

No compatibility issues were found

Select versions to show

- ☒ Word 97-2003
- ☐ Word 2007
- ☐ Word 2010

Occurrences

☒ Check compatibility when saving documents

OK

2b

If you select "Check issues", choose

2a) "Check compatibility" from the drop-down

2b) you will see a confirmation message "Microsoft Word Compatibility Checker", any issues will be listed here, click OK

2c) you should immediately close the file and choose "Save" or "Save as" to convert to the latest format (.docx)

Once the file is open, go to File > Info, here you have 2 options (1-Convert, 2-Check issues):

1a) if you select Convert, you will see a

1b) confirmation message, click OK

1c) you will see a confirmation message, and should click on "Yes"

1a) Compatibility Mode

Some new features are disabled to prevent problems when working with previous versions of Office. Converting this file will enable these features, but may result in layout changes.

Protect Workbook

Control what types of changes people can make to this workbook.

Inspect Workbook

Before publishing this file, be aware that it contains:

- Document properties, author's name and absolute
- Content that cannot be checked for accessibility

2a) Check for Issues

Inspect Document

Check the workbook for hidden properties or personal information.

Check Accessibility

Check the workbook for content that people with disabilities might find difficult to read.

Check Compatibility

Check for features not supported by earlier versions of Excel.

Microsoft Excel

This action converts the workbook to the current file format, which allows you to use all of the new features of Excel, and it reduces the file size. The original workbook will be deleted and cannot be restored after this conversion.

☐ Do not ask me again about converting workbooks.

Tell Me More... OK Cancel

1b

Microsoft Excel - Compatibility Checker

The following features in this workbook are not supported by earlier versions of Excel. These features may be lost or degraded when you save this workbook in the currently selected file format. Click Continue to save the workbook anyway. To keep all of your features, click Cancel and then save the file in one of the new file formats.

Summary Occurrences

Minor loss of fidelity

Some cells or styles in this workbook contain formatting that is not supported by the selected file format. These formats will be converted to the closest format available.

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Excel 97-2003

☒ Check compatibility when saving this workbook.

Copy to New Sheet Continue Cancel

2b

2c

2d

2e

If you select "Check issues", choose

2a) "Check compatibility" from the drop-down

2b) you will see a confirmation message "Microsoft Excel Compatibility Checker", any issues will be listed here, the choices here are:

2c) click on "Help" to see more information

2d) click on "Continue"/"OK", after which you should immediately close the file and choose "Save" or "Save as" to convert to the latest format (.xlsx)

2e) "Copy to New Sheet" which creates a new sheet in the file with this report

The screenshot shows the 'Info' pane on the left with three main sections: 'Convert' (labeled 1a), 'Protect Presentation', and 'Inspect Presentation'. Under 'Inspect Presentation', there are three sub-sections: 'Inspect Document', 'Check Accessibility' (labeled 2a), and 'Check Compatibility' (labeled 2b). A dialog box titled 'Microsoft PowerPoint Compatibility Checker' (labeled 2c) is open, showing a message about unsupported features and a summary of compatibility issues.

Once the file is open, go to File > Info, here you have 2 options (1-Convert, 2-Check issues):

1a) if you select Convert, you will see a

1b) dialog showing you the option to save in latest format, click Save

If you select "Check issues", choose

2a) "Check compatibility" from the drop-down

2b) you will see a confirmation message "Microsoft PowerPoint Compatibility Checker", any issues will be listed here

2c) click on "OK", after which you should immediately close the file and choose "Save" or "Save as" to convert to the latest format (.pptx)

💡 Tip / Best Practice: Please do not save any files in older formats of Office, as some advanced features may be removed, simplified, or converted when files are saved in older formats.

Common Compatibility Issues

Word	Excel	PowerPoint
- SmartArt may convert to static images - Advanced formatting may not be available - Certain content controls may not function correctly	- Newer formulas may not be supported - Advanced charts may be downgraded - Data models and some modern analytics features may not function correctly	- New transitions / animations may be lost - Multimedia content may behave differently - Modern design features may not appear as intended

Microsoft References

1. Microsoft Support – Use Compatibility Mode to Work with Different Versions of PowerPoint
<https://support.microsoft.com/powerpoint/use-compatibility-mode-to-work-with-different-versions-of-powerpoint>
2. Microsoft Support – Save, back up, and recover a file in Microsoft Office
<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/collab-files/save-back-up-and-recover-a-file-in-microsoft-office>