

# Office 2007/2010 File Formats: Compatibility & Conversion

---

While most files from the 97, 2000, and 2003 versions of Word, Excel, and PowerPoint were interchangeable between those versions, Office 2007 and 2010 programs save files in formats that are not compatible with older versions without a converter. The Office 2007/2010 formats are .docx (Word), .xlsx (Excel), and .pptx (PowerPoint). There are also new macro-enabled formats with “m” at the end, e.g., .docm, .xlsm, template formats with “tx” at the end, e.g., .dotx, .xltx, and macro-enabled template formats with “tm” at the end, e.g., .dotm, .xltm. These new formats are supposed to be more secure and compact than the old ones and less vulnerable to corruption, but older versions of Office can’t open them without a converter. If necessary, it is possible to have Office 2007 & 2010 save files in the old formats (details below). Most of the information here applies to Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Access databases are addressed separately in the last section.

## Working with older files in Office 2007/2010

### Opening older files in Office 2007

To open files created in the 95 through 2003 versions of Word\*, Excel, and PowerPoint in Office 2007 or 2010, just open them as usual. They should open with no problems. Office 2007 and 2010 programs opens older documents in “compatibility mode.” You’ll see the words “(Compatibility Mode)” at the top of the program window next to the file name. Because the old format doesn’t include all of the new 2007/2010 features, those features may be turned off or modified when in compatibility mode.

**\*Word:** Word 2007 can open files created in *all* previous versions of Word, 1.0 through 2003.

### Saving files in the old format

After working on an older file in a 2007 or 2010 program, if you just click Save, it will be saved in its original format. When saving files in the older formats, the “Compatibility Checker” may appear to warn you about incompatible features and explain what will happen to those things if you save the file in the older format. For example, the new “SmartArt” graphics may become uneditable, or special effects may be removed.

Note that sometimes, even if you don’t add any 2007/2010 features to a file, the Compatibility Checker will still appear when you save. This is because Office 2007 and 2010 automatically upgrade certain things when you open a file, e.g., if the older file contains WordArt, the WordArt is upgraded to use the latest effects.

### Saving files in Office 2007/2010 formats

If you want to save an old file in the new format, you must do so explicitly. To do so, go to the Office button (2007) or File tab (2010) and choose Save As – Word Document, PowerPoint Presentation, Excel Workbook, etc. This will result in two copies of the file, one in the old format and one in the new format. Alternately, to replace the old file with the new one, open the file and use the Convert command (under the Office button or on the File tab).

## Working with Office 2007/2010 files in earlier versions of Office

### Opening files in earlier versions of Office

When a file in Office 2007 or 2010 format is opened in an earlier version of Office, if the necessary converter is not already installed, the user will be asked if they want to download it. If the converter is already installed, the file should just open. Files may not look exactly the same in different versions of Office, but with the converter, they can still be opened, edited, and saved.

Even with the converter, Office 2007/2010 files may sometimes not open if you just double-click on them. If this happens, try opening the program (Word, Excel, or PowerPoint) first, and then go to File – Open and open the file. In rare cases, some files may simply not be able to be opened, even using this method with the converter.

### Format converter/compatibility pack

The official name of the converter is the “Microsoft Office Compatibility Pack for 2007 Office Word, Excel, and PowerPoint File Formats.” It works only with Microsoft Office 2003 SP1, Office XP SP3, and Office 2000 SP3, and only on the Windows XP SP1, Windows 2000 SP4, and Windows Server 2003 operating systems. For computers on the campus network, it can be installed from Start – Network Software – MS Office – Install Office 2003-2007 File Format Converters. On other computers, it can be downloaded free from Microsoft’s web site.

## Saving files in the old format

To save an Office 2007 file in the old format, go to the Office button and choose Save As – Word 97-2003 Document, PowerPoint 97-2003 Presentation, Excel 97-2003 Workbook, etc. To save an Office 2010 file in the old format, go to the File tab and choose Save As. From the “Save as type” drop-down menu, choose Word 97-2003 Document, PowerPoint 97-2003 Presentation, Excel 97-2003 Workbook, etc. If the file contains anything that may not work the same in the old format, the program will display the “Compatibility Checker,” which details what will happen to those things if you save the file in the older format. For example, the new “SmartArt” graphics may become uneditable, or certain special effects may be removed.

It is possible to set Office 2007 programs to always save files in the old Office 97-2003 formats, but doing this means you will probably have to deal with the Compatibility Checker (mentioned above) more frequently. To do so in Office 2007, click on the Office button and choose Word Options, Excel Options, PowerPoint Options, etc. On the left side, click on Save. Under “Save files in this format,” choose Word 97-2003 Document (\*.doc), Excel 97-2003 Workbook (\*.xls), PowerPoint Presentation 97-2003, etc. To do so in Office 2010, click on the File tab and choose Options. On the left side, click on Save. Under “Save files in this format,” choose Word 97-2003 Document (\*.doc), Excel 97-2003 Workbook (\*.xls), PowerPoint Presentation 97-2003, etc. and click OK. You can always change the options again if you change your mind.

## Access databases

If you use Access, particularly if you share databases with others, plan carefully before upgrading to Office 2007 or 2010. We recommend that everyone in a department (or everyone who shares a database) upgrade at the same time to avoid problems. Feel free to consult the Help Desk for advice before upgrading.

Earlier versions of Access use the .mdb file format. In Access 2007 and 2010, you can open and work with .mdb database files from Access 2003, 2002, or 2000. However, no new Access features will work with .mdb files.

The file format for Access 2007 and 2010 is .accdb. This format supposedly makes databases more secure and more compact than the old .mdb format, and makes recovery of data more reliable if a file becomes corrupted. Databases in .accdb format **cannot** be opened in any older version of Access.

To convert an older .mdb database to the new .accdb format in Access 2007, open it, then go to Office button and choose Save As – Access 2007 Database. To convert an older .mdb database to the new .accdb format in Access 2010, open it, then go to the File tab and choose Save Database As. From the “Save as type” drop-down menu, choose Microsoft Access Database (\*.accdb). Note: Do **not** do this unless you are absolutely sure that no one will ever need to open the database again in any older version of Access.

If you open an Access 97 database in Access 2007 or 2010, Access should offer to upgrade it to .accdb format. If you don't plan to use the database with any earlier versions of Access, don't share it with anyone else who does, and don't use replication or user level security, you can upgrade the database. Note that once a database is converted to .accdb format it **cannot** be opened in any older version of Access.

## Assistance and questions

If you have any questions or need more information, contact the Help Desk at 920-403-HELP (4357) or helpdesk@snc.edu. The Help Desk is for St. Norbert College students and employees only.