

Office 2007 File Formats: Compatibility & Conversion

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Working with older files in Office 2007

Opening older files in Office 2007

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Saving files in the old format

After working on an older file in the 2007 version, 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 features to a file, the Compatibility Checker will still appear when you save. This is because Office 2007 automatically upgrades certain types of elements when you open a file, e.g., if the older file contains WordArt, the WordArt is upgraded to use the latest 2007 effects.

Saving files in Office 2007 format

If you want to save old files in the new 2007 format, you must do so explicitly. To do so, go to the Office button and choose Save As – Word Document, PowerPoint Presentation, Excel Workbook, etc. You can also use the “Convert” command to replace the old file with the new one, so the file no longer exists in the old format. To use this command, open the old file, then go to the Office button and choose Convert. Click OK.

Working with Office 2007 files in earlier versions of Office

Opening files in earlier versions of Office

When a file in Office 2007 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 files may not open if you just double-click on them. If this happens, you’ll need to open the program – Word, Excel, or PowerPoint – first, and then go to File – Open and open the file. We have also seen some files that simply cannot 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 one of your Office 2007 files 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. 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. To do so, 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. Realize that doing this means you will probably have to deal with the Compatibility Checker (mentioned above) more frequently. 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. 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 installing Office 2007.

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To convert a database to the new format, just open it, then go to Office button and choose **Save As – Access 2007 Database**. 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. (While it is possible to save an Access 2007 database back into the older format, this only works if no Access 2007 features have been used, so it’s best to avoid this situation.)

If you open an Access 97 database in Access 2007, Access 2007 will 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.

Assistance and questions

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If you use Access, particularly if you share databases with others, plan carefully before upgrading to Office 2007. 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 installing Office 2007.

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The new file format in Access 2007 is .accdb. This new 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 a database to the new format, just open it, then go to Office button and choose **Save As – Access 2007 Database**. 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. (While it is possible to save an Access 2007 database back into the older format, this only works if no Access 2007 features have been used, so it’s best to avoid this situation.)

If you open an Access 97 database in Access 2007, Access 2007 will 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.

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.