



# Office 2007

## *Best Features for Accountants*

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Released in January of 2007, Office 2007 can no longer be considered a “new” application; yet, many accountants are just now discovering some of the new features of Office 2007 that make it a productive and welcome upgrade. From a substantial overhaul to the user interface to enhanced capacities to tools designed to improve document formatting, the feature set in Office 2007 offers many opportunities for accountants to increase productivity with this stable and secure desktop suite. The following “best features for accountants” have been compiled from two years of experience using Office 2007, first as a beta-tester and then in “live” production.

### **Office-Wide Changes**

There are several changes in the Office 2007 suite that apply to most, if not all, of the core applications of **Excel**, **Word**, **Outlook**, **PowerPoint**, and **Access**. The most obvious is that of the new user interface. A new **Ribbon** along with **Tab** groupings has replaced the traditional drop-down menu structure previously found in Office applications. The **Ribbon** and related **Tabs** make it easier to find commands and functions in the various Office applications as these commands and functions are organized much more logically than in the previous menu structures. In addition, the **Quick Access Toolbar** is easily customized, allowing users one-click access to the commands and functions they use most often, along with those not found on the Ribbon. **Contextual Tabs** and the **Mini-Toolbar** are also new in Office 2007; these tools appear when needed to provide functionality that is related to the object(s) currently selected.

The **Office Button**, located in the upper, left-hand corner of the Office window provides access to many of the commands and functions that were located on the File menu in previous versions of Office such as print commands, save commands, and file creation and open commands. In addition, the Office Button contains a significant amount of new functionality, including the ability to inspect documents for hidden metadata, mark documents as final, and save documents as PDF or XPS files through a free download available from the Microsoft web site. With this add-in installed, users no longer need to own Adobe Acrobat or any other PDF engine to create PDF files; the add-in works with Office 2007 only and can be downloaded at [www.microsoft.com/downloads](http://www.microsoft.com/downloads). Also located under the Office Button are the options for each of the application, including access to the new **Trust Center** from which security settings for a given application can be managed.

Another new feature that applies across multiple Office 2007 applications is that of **Themes**. Found in Excel, Word, and PowerPoint, Themes provide for consistent formatting of documents across each of

these applications. For instance, if you chose to format an Excel workbook using one of the twenty pre-defined Themes and then also chose to format a related Word document and a PowerPoint presentation using that same Theme, then you could rest assured that fonts, colors, and other related formatting options would be consistent across all documents which had been formatted with that Theme, lending an overall air of professionalism to the documents.

Charting has also been improved throughout the Office 2007 suite. Now Excel, Word, and PowerPoint all use the same charting engine and this engine makes obsolete many of the challenges formerly associated with creating dynamic and compelling charts and graphs. For instance if you create a chart and later decide that you wish to swap the data associated with X and Y axis, the new charting engine supports that function with one simple click of the mouse.

## Accountant-Friendly Features in Excel 2007

Of course, the application that accountants want to know about the most is that of Excel 2007 and how the changes in Excel will affect the ubiquitous spreadsheet. In sum, Excel contains many new features that accountants will welcome as productivity-enhancing options. The most striking is that of the increased worksheet capacities in Excel 2007. Whereas previous versions of Excel limited users to 256 columns and 65,536 rows in a worksheet, Excel 2007 obliterates those limitations by extending the number of columns to 16,384 and the number of rows to 1,048,576 – *yes, that is over 17 billion cells in one worksheet!* Virtually all other capacity limitations in Excel have been extended similarly, to the point that for most users they are only theoretical limitations as opposed to practical ones.

**Tables** are one of the most important new features for accountants in Excel 2007. With Tables, you can quickly and easily apply formats to large ranges of data and calculate totals, averages, and other summarizations of columns of data with a single mouse click. Additionally, data contained in Tables can be used in formulas via a new feature known as **structured referencing** in which row and column headers replace traditional cell addresses in formulas. For instance, the formula **=SUM(Sales![April])** would create a total of all of the data in the *April* column of a Table named *Sales*. And because a Tables automatically expands and contracts as rows and columns are added and deleted to the Table, as additional rows are added to *Sales*, the values in *April* column of those rows are automatically included in the summation.

Other significant new features for accountants in Excel 2007 include greatly improved conditional formatting options; improved sorting and filtering tools, including the ability to sort and filter by colors; a redesigned and more powerful PivotTable function; and an easier to access set of Page Layout commands. In short, for accountants there is much to like in Excel 2007!

## New Features in Other Core Applications

The preceding discussion on Excel should not imply that Office 2007 has nothing to offer Word, Outlook, PowerPoint, and Access users. In fact, there are many significant new features in each of these applications that will make it easier for accounting and financial professionals to get quality results in less time. For instance, Word, Outlook, and PowerPoint contain **SmartArt**, a new feature which allows you to create presentation-quality graphics to more effectively communicate your message. Word also

introduces **Building Blocks**, pre-defined and pre-formatted text blocks that can be inserted into a document on demand. Outlook's new **Instant Search** feature allows users to find critical data in just slightly more than a blink of the eye, while new **Color Categories** make it easier to group together related data. Not to be outdone, PowerPoint's more powerful **Slide Masters** make it easier to globally change the look of a presentation and integration with SharePoint-based Slide Libraries allow for simple re-use of existing slides in other presentations. Finally, the improvements to Access may be the striking of all, simplifying how end users create and interact with databases.

## Next Steps

If you have already installed Office 2007, be sure to explore the new features described above – along with the many others that, due to space limitations, are not mentioned above – and how you may benefit by putting them to use. Remember that not all commands and functions are contained on the Ribbon; there are many commands and functions that are available only by first customizing the Quick Access Toolbar and adding the desired functions to it. Additionally, do not ignore the value of investing in training for you and your team. Office 2007 represents the most significant change to the Office suite perhaps since moving to Windows; given the magnitude of these changes, it would be unreasonable to assume that users will be as productive as they otherwise could be without first equipping them with necessary training.

If you have not yet had a chance to experience Office 2007 and how you may benefit from using it, you may want to consider downloading the free, 60-day trial available from Microsoft. With the exception of Outlook, this could be installed alongside your existing version of Office for trial and experimental use, it could be loaded onto a computer that does not currently have another version of Office installed, or it could be loaded into a virtual computer. In any case, putting the fully-functioning trial version through the paces would be a wise move to assist you in experiencing first-hand the best features that Office 2007 offers to accountants.

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