

New file format options in the new Office

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Editor's note: Jim Thatcher, Principal Program Manager Lead for Office Standards joins Office Next to discuss file format standards. Interoperability remains an important focus of the product teams, our documentation, interoperability events and our efforts in file format adoption are going strong. You can catch up on the latest Office interoperability news on the [Interop team blog](#).

In the next release of Office, we have added two additional formats for use: Strict Open XML and Open Document Format (ODF) 1.2. We have also added support for opening PDF documents so they can be edited within Word and saved to any supported format. By adding support for these standardized document formats, Microsoft Office 2013 provides users with more choice for office document interoperability. Regardless of your preferred document file format, the new Microsoft Office gives you more options for sharing, collaborating, and archiving office documents. This post explores the details of the support for these standards in the new Office.

For those of you who haven't been immersed in document formats, the participants in the ISO/IEC standardization process recognized two objectives with competing requirements. The first objective was for the Open XML standard to provide an XML-based file format that could fully support conversion of the billions of existing Office documents without any loss of features, content, text, layout, or other information, including embedded data. The second was to specify a file format that did not rely on Microsoft-specific data types. They created two variants of Open XML – Transitional, which supports previously-defined Microsoft-specific data types, and Strict, which does not rely on them. Prior versions of Office have supported reading and writing Transitional Open XML, and Office 2010 can read Strict Open XML documents. With the addition of write support for Strict Open XML, Office 2013 provides full support for both variants of Open XML.

The next release of Office also includes support for the next version of ODF, version 1.2. Microsoft added support for OASIS ODF 1.1 in Office 2007 SP2. The Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS) published version 1.2 of the ODF standard in January. As a member of the OASIS technical committee working on ODF, [Microsoft provided technical expertise in key areas of improvement in ODF 1.2](#). The most significant improvement in ODF 1.2 is the specification of Open Formula to standardize formulas for spreadsheets. Excel 2013 provides very complete support for Open Formula. The new Office also supports XAdES digital signatures, added in ODF 1.2. In April, Microsoft hosted the 8th ODF Plugfest in Brussels, Belgium, where representatives from most ODF implementers gathered to test interoperability of our implementations of ODF 1.2. Although we had not yet released the public preview of the new Office, we provided a web server for other Plugfest participants to submit ODF documents that were then loaded into the new Office, which saved the files as PDF, Open XML, and ODF

files and returned the results to the submitting participant. This allowed participants to see how the new unreleased version of Office would render ODF files from their applications.

The following table shows the evolution of file format support in the last few versions of Office:

	Office 2003	Office 2007	Office 2010	The New Office
Binary format (.doc, .xls, .ppt)	Open, Edit, Save	Open, Edit, Save	Open, Edit, Save	Open, Edit, Save
Transitional Open XML	Open, Edit, Save	Open, Edit, Save	Open, Edit, Save	Open, Edit, Save
Strict Open XML			Open, Edit	Open, Edit, Save
ODF 1.1		Open, Edit, Save	Open, Edit, Save	Open, Edit
ODF 1.2				Open, Edit, Save
PDF		Save	Save	Open, "Edit", Save

In addition to providing updated support for the Open XML and ODF standards, the new Office adds exciting new features around PDF files as well. With this release, Microsoft introduces the option, which we call PDF Reflow, to open PDF files as editable office documents. As Tristan Davis, Senior Lead Program Manager for Word, [explained](#): "With this functionality, you can transform your PDFs back into fully editable Word documents, rehydrating headings, bulleted/numbered lists, tables, footnotes, etc. by analyzing the contents of the PDF file." The goal is not to make Word into a PDF reader or PDF editor. The goal is to help you to bring the contents of PDF files back into an editable format using Word 2013.

Microsoft continues to lead in giving customers choice and flexibility in file format standards and interoperability. With these enhancements, Microsoft Office now provides full read and write support for the most commonly used document format standards, including ISO/IEC 29500 (Strict Open XML and Transitional Open XML), ISO 32000 (PDF), and OASIS ODF 1.2. So no matter which of these formats your documents are in today, you will be able to work with them in the next release of Office. And you will be able to save your Office documents in any of these formats, providing the broadest options for document format interoperability.