New in Microsoft Office 2007: The Ribbon-Based User Interface

THE NEW LOOK AND FEEL OF MICROSOFT OFFICE 2007

When you start using Office 2007, you will immediately notice changes to the look and feel of the applications. The organization of the menus and toolbars you’ve grown accustomed to has greatly changed. As you get used to the new layout, you may find that in this case, change is a good thing.

The most obvious change is the addition of what is referred to as “the Ribbon.” The Ribbon-based user interface replaced the traditional Office menus and toolbars. Built into the Ribbon are many new and exciting useful and user-friendly features.

Microsoft made the changes in Office 2007 for several reasons:
- To enable you to focus on what you want to do rather than how to do it.
- To help organize and improve access to the Office application tools and capabilities.
- To enable you to be able to find tools and features more easily and quickly, making the Office applications easier to use.

Although the new Ribbon-based user interface is a departure from the familiar in Office applications, the new functionality was designed to make your Office 2007 experience a richer and more productive one. The Ribbon and other changes may take some getting used to, but with time, the enhancements in Office 2007 should help make your work easier to accomplish.

THE RIBBON

The Ribbon consists of tabs displaying the commands that are most relevant for each of the main task areas in all of the applications. Additionally, many of the icons have been visually enhanced, making it easier to find what you are looking for.

For example, the tabs in Word 2007 group activities, such as: formatting and aligning text (Home Tab); inserting pictures and tables (Insert Tab); and working with margins and columns (Page Layout Tab).

In Excel 2007, tabs also group related commands together: inserting charts or PivotTables (Insert Tab); import or filter data (Data Tab); and inserting or building functions (Formulas Tab).

The new tab structure of the Ribbon makes it easier to find features because the commands are organized in a way that corresponds directly to the tasks you perform in these applications.
CONTEXTUAL TABS

The new tabs within the Ribbon also have a dynamic component to them, Contextual Tabs. Certain sets of commands are only visible when objects of a particular type have been selected. Contextual Tabs only appear when they are needed, making it easier to find and use the commands needed for the operation at hand.

For example, in Excel 2007, clicking on a chart displays a Contextual Tab with the commands necessary for chart editing. When you click off of the chart, the tab disappears. Contextual Tabs in Office 2007 help to hide commands that you aren’t using until you actually need them.

LIVE PREVIEW

Has this ever happened to you? You are working on a document or a spreadsheet and want to see what a different font size would look like. You try several different changes until finally finding the one that works best. Office 2007’s Live Preview allows you to preview most formatting changes in your document before having to apply them, saving you time and aggravation.

THE OFFICE BUTTON

The Office button, located at the very top left corner of the Office window, gives you quick access to many of Office’s most important tasks. These tasks include: opening a file, saving your work, and printing or sending a file. From this button, you can also access a list of the most recent files you’ve worked on. The Office Button is very similar to the old File menu.

THE QUICK ACCESS TOOLBAR

Located at the top of the screen to the right of the Office Button, the Quick Access Toolbar is a customizable toolbar which allows you to store and use the commands you implement most often. You can place your favorite functions on it, which can make how you complete your work on Office 2007 similar to your experience on Office 2003.

The default Quick Access Toolbar displays only Save, Undo, and Redo, but you can customize it to show the displays you need by clicking the down arrow to the right of the toolbar, which enables the customization feature.

The most commonly used commands display, but you can add whatever commands you need by clicking “More Commands.” You can also right-click any command within the ribbon and choose “Add to Quick Access Toolbar.”

The settings on the Quick Access Toolbar are not shared among the different Office 2007 applications (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.), enabling you to customize the way you use each application to best suit your needs.