

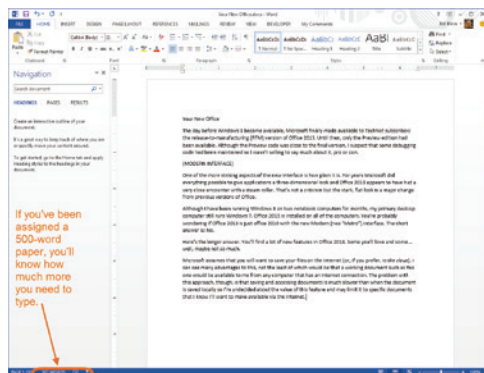


## Preparing for Your New Office

MICROSOFT OFFICE 2013 HAS BEEN RELEASED TO MANUFACTURING AND THE DAY BEFORE WINDOWS 8 BECAME AVAILABLE IN LATE OCTOBER, MICROSOFT MADE AVAILABLE TO TECHNET SUBSCRIBERS THE RELEASE-TO-MANUFACTURING (RTM) VERSION. THE NEW SUITE WILL BE IN STORES EARLY NEXT YEAR.

Maybe. Microsoft hasn't announced the release date but we do know that anyone who buys a copy of Office 2010 between October 19 and the end of April 2013 will qualify for a free upgrade to the new version. In the meantime, you can still download and try the Preview version of Office 2013. Having seen both the Preview and RTM versions, I can confirm that the final version works better than the preview but you'll see most of the new features in the preview version.

If you install Office 2013 Preview, you'll need to uninstall it before installing the final version. The preview will also offer to upgrade Office 2010 and both upgrading and not upgrading present problems. If you use the preview to upgrade and decide you don't like it, going back to the 2010 version will involve uninstalling the new version and then re-installing the old version. If you keep the old version, determining which application opens files could be a problem.

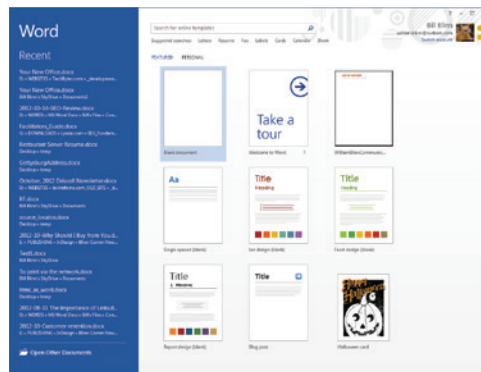


I like what I've seen so far. Excel in particular has some new WOW! Features but Word may

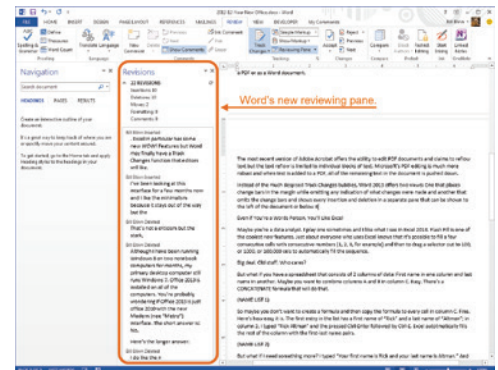
finally have a Track Changes function that editors will like.

One of the more striking aspects of the new interface is how plain it is. For years Microsoft did everything possible to give applications a three-dimensional look and Office 2013 appears to have had a very close encounter with a steam roller. I've been looking at this interface for a few months now and I like the minimalism because it stays out of the way but the flat look is a major change from previous versions of Office.

You'll find a lot of new features in Office 2013. Some you'll love and some ... well, maybe not so much.



New Start Screens show commonly used templates, a blank page, several formatting options, and maybe even a seasonal template. Microsoft decided to color code these pages: blue for Word, green for Excel, orange for PowerPoint, green for Publisher. It's easy to tell the difference between Word and Excel, though, even without the color coding.



Instead of the much despised Track Changes bubbles, Word 2013 offers two views: One that places change bars in the margin while omitting any indication of what changes were made and another that omits the change bars and shows every insertion and deletion in a separate pane that can be shown to the left of the document or below it.

Microsoft applications have been able to save documents in Adobe's portable document format (PDF) for several years but now Word can open and edit a PDF. After editing the document, you can save it as a PDF or as a Word document.

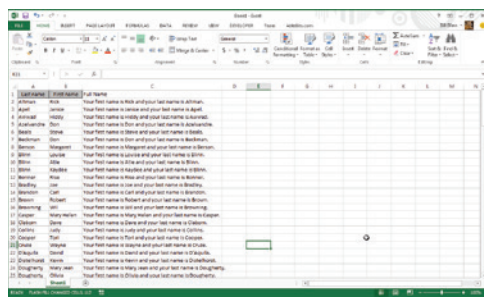
The most recent version of Adobe Acrobat offers the ability to edit PDF documents and claims to reflow text but the text reflow is limited to individual blocks of text. Microsoft's PDF editing is much more robust and when text is added to a PDF, all of the remaining text in the document is pushed down.

Even if you're a words person more than a numbers person, you'll like Excel.

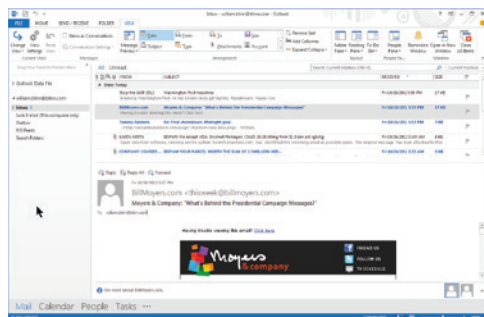
Flash Fill is one of the coolest new features. Just about everyone who uses Excel knows that it's possible to fill a few consecutive cells with consecutive numbers (1, 2, 3, for example) and then to drag a selector out to 100, or 1000, or 100,000 cells to automatically fill the sequence.

But what if you have a spreadsheet that consists of 2 columns of data: First name in one column and last name in another. Maybe you want to combine columns A and B in column C. Easy. There's a CONCATENATE formula that will do that.

But maybe you'd prefer not to create a formula and then copy the formula to every cell in column C. Flash Fill! Here's how easy it is. The first entry in the list has a first name of "Rick" and a last name of "Altman"; in column C, I typed "Rick Altman" and the pressed Ctrl-Enter followed by Ctrl-E. Excel automatically fills the rest of the column (10 names, 100 names, or 10,000 names) with the first-last name pairs.

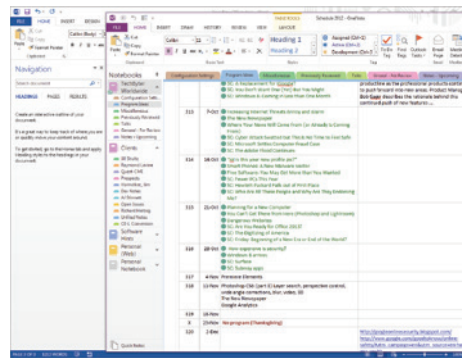


The real magic occurs when you need something more complicated. You could use a formula in each cell of column C to format each name this way: "Your first name is Rick and your last name is Altman.": =CONCATENATE("Your first name is ",B2," and your last name is ",A2,") Or, instead of typing that formula and copying it to every cell in the column, just type *Your first name is Rick and your last name is Altman.* Then press Ctrl-Enter and Ctrl-E. Flash Fill will do the rest.



Although I'm no fan of Outlook for e-mail, I do like the calendar, contacts, and task list func-

tions. Even the e-mail component continues to improve—not so much that I have plans to abandon The Bat as my primary e-mail program, but it's better than it was.



One Note has been one of my favorite Office applications for years but it's one that few people are aware of. If you need to keep track of information about procedures and processes but you don't need a full project management application, One Note is for you.

I've been using One Note to organize the TechByter podcast for years and the 2013 version improves the ability to share lists across various computers.

New features include the ability to embed other Office documents inside One Note. You can create or import Excel spreadsheets and Visio diagrams into One Note and edit these files in your notes.

## But Does it Work on a Tablet?

THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION IS ANOTHER QUESTION: SHOULD IT?

Yes, the Office applications (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher, Access, Outlook) do work on tablets. They aren't particularly easy to use on a tablet, though, and anyone who thinks that they should be is more than a few kittens short of a litter.

Tablets are not intended for use in situations where people spend all day editing Word documents, creating PowerPoint presentations, running what-if scenarios in Excel, or building large relational database applications in Access. Tablets will be used to review Word or Excel documents and possibly to make minor changes. They might be used to run an SQL query on a remote Access database. Tablets don't have keyboards and these applications need keyboards.

Office 2013 applications are designed to work optimally on desktop computers. The fact that they work at all on a 2-pound tablet with no keyboard

or mouse should be considered an astounding feat of programming.

Microsoft assumes that you will want to save your files on the Internet (or, if you prefer, *in the cloud*). I can see many advantages to using Microsoft's Sky Drive, not the least of which would be that a working document such as this one would be available to me from any computer that has an Internet connection. The problem with this approach, though, is that saving and accessing documents is much slower than when the document is saved locally so I'm undecided about the value of this feature and may limit it to specific documents that I know I'll want to make available via the Internet.

## Is the Ribbon a Problem?

MANY PEOPLE SEEM NOT TO COMPREHEND THE CHALLENGES FACED BY PEOPLE WHO WRITE THE PROGRAMS THAT WE USE ON OUR COMPUTERS.

There are still regular uses of the Office suite who describe the Ribbon interface that Microsoft introduced in the 2007 version of Office as *useless* or *difficult to understand*. I can understand how someone might have been confused by the Ribbon for a few minutes in 2007. But five years later?

The Ribbon isn't perfect by any means but it attempts to display the functions that the user might be expected to need at any given time. When you're typing text, the table functions and the image functions aren't displayed. But click inside a table and the Ribbon displays *Table Tools – Design* and *Table Tools – Layout*. Select a picture and you'll see *Picture Tools – Format*. How this is illogical, stupid, or bad design?

I am not a Microsoft apologist but I do wish that people who don't comprehend improved design would just continue to load DOS 6 on their computers, run their 1987 copies of WordStar, print files to their dot-matrix printers, and leave the rest of us alone. I apologize for that rant but as a former Microsoft Word hater, I feel that I've earned my stripes. Ω



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