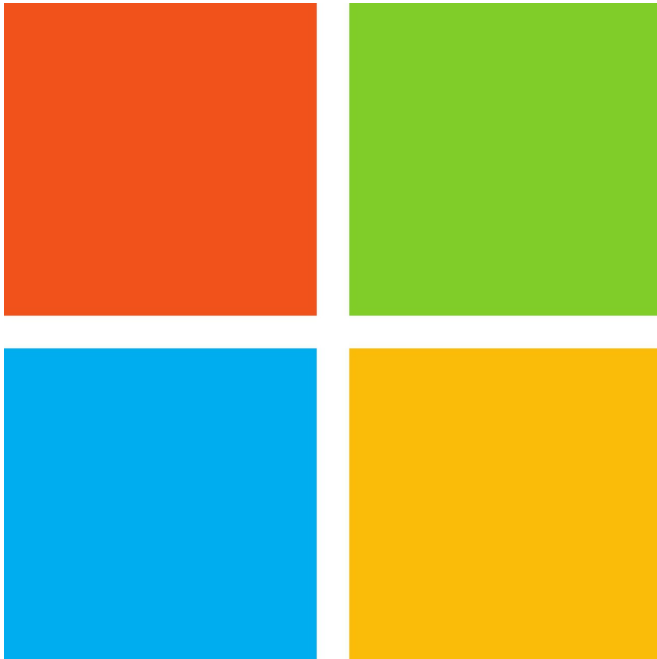


Microsoft renames 365, throws in new Word, Excel features and more

31 March 2020, by Jefferson Graham



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Microsoft is overhauling its Office 365 subscription with a new focus on consumers, changing the name to Microsoft 365 and throwing in tons of new features for Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and Skype.

The price remains at \$99 for a yearly subscription. Some 38 million people subscribe, says Microsoft.

Some of the new changes become effective today, while most kick in on April 21st, the day Office 365 officially becomes Microsoft 365. The company calls it "the subscription for your life to help you make the most of your time, connect and protect the ones you love, and to develop and grow."

Among the highlights:

Word and Outlook: Editor is described as an AI-

powered service for Word and Outlook that makes writing suggestions for grammar and sentence structure. Subscribers will now be able to "write with more clarity and conciseness," says Microsoft vice-president Yusef Mehdi.

PowerPoint Present Coach: The ability to put videos in the background and work on public speaking tips is added to the presentation software. The Coach will "listen to your tone of voice and give feedback in real-time to suggest adding some variation where needed," says Mehdi.

Coming later in the year, with no precise time date announced:

Excel: Microsoft is bringing in Quicken-like tools to monitor purchases, create graphs based on spending and offer food nutritional information in charts.

Microsoft Family Safety: Microsoft has tools to detect when your child is learning to drive, and to detect whether he or she, for instance, looked down at their phone while in the car. This [mobile app](#) for 365 subscribers also manages screen time across Windows PCs, Android, and Xbox devices.

Microsoft Edge: The browser, which is free, gets two new major tools. "Smart copy," is an update on the old copy-and-paste feature that gets updated for items that are hard to copy, like tables. "Vertical Tabs," is a solution to all those open tabs that appear on the top of the screen that get truncated and hard to read. Now, they can be displayed vertically, on the side of the window, and easier to read.

Microsoft Teams, which is a separate subscription for enterprise, gets a free consumer update. Users will now be able to toggle back and forth between their corporate Teams account and personal ones, which can be used for PTA meetings, soccer team members and the like.

Teams has a free version that doesn't offer phone calling to team members or much storage space, and the new consumer features will also be free. The popular software, which allows enterprise to cut down on email and talk to each other via direct message, video and audio meetings, is used by some 44 million people daily.

Microsoft suggests that with Teams, consumers can create groups to plan trips with friends, organize a neighborhood gathering or a book club meeting.

Beyond the access to the software and 1 terabyte of online backup storage, the \$99 subscription also gives 60 Skype minutes for calling mobile phones and landlines and access to tech support.

Microsoft says during the COVID-19 crisis, Skype has seen an increase in usage with 40 million people using it daily, which is up 70% month over month.

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