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Options galore for upgrading to Office 2007



Stephen Allen, Senior Technical Engineer at Data Systems Limited



Stephen Allen is Senior Technical Engineer at Data Systems Limited, a Microsoft Small Business Specialist and independent supplier of IT solutions. He advises companies on how to save money while using IT to make a difference. Nearing its 20th year, Data Systems prides itself on providing no-nonsense advice and competitive pricing.

Question: Our company is looking to upgrade from Microsoft Office 2000 to Microsoft Office 2007 and to get Microsoft Outlook installed on our 11 PCs. What package would be best for us to buy to upgrade everything? I've found Office 2007 Basic and Office 2007 Standard online and both seem to cover what we need. What's your advice in order to achieve the upgrade we need, and what are our options for acquiring it? - Sophie, Taunton

Answer: Hi Sophie- First off, you won't regret stepping up to Office 2007. It's not just an upgrade, it's a new version in its own right - yet one which lets you continue using features from previous versions while you get used to the new ones.

Here's my advice on which version will best suit you, what your purchase options are, and finally some of the benefits you and your colleagues can expect by upgrading.

Check your spec!

First things first - if you're upgrading from Office 2000, it's fair to say your PCs will be getting on a bit, so you'll need to make sure they're up to the job. As long as you're running at least Windows XP with Service Pack 2 and have a 500MHz CPU, 256Mb RAM and 1.5Gb of disk free, you'll be OK. You can find these details in your PC Control Panel.

The Basic Edition

As you've already discovered, there are various Office packages available. The cheapest is to buy [Office Basic 2007](#) from an OEM (a retailer like PC World, or a vendor like Dell) - but this has its drawbacks.

Firstly, Office Basic is only available with new PCs, so you'd need to buy new hardware, rather than upgrade what you've got, which doesn't sound like an option at this stage. Secondly, an OEM licence is tied to the specific machine on which it's first installed, so if you needed to upgrade your PCs to new ones in the future, you'd have to buy the software again.

What's more, OEM software doesn't come with any media discs because it has to be pre-installed by the manufacturer or systems builder. This means you have to order Office Basic when you buy the PCs, then create your own backup discs in case you ever need to re-install the software - say after a drive crash.

For each PC, you'll also need a different product key to unlock the software, and those keys need managing - painful if you're regularly adding new users and software (download a guide to [Product Licensing: Windows and Office](#)).

The Standard Edition

So if you plan to stick with your existing PCs, best go for [Office Standard 2007](#), which contains all the applications you're likely to need as a small business:

- Word 2007: all the writing tools you need for creating and sharing documents.
- PowerPoint 2007: a powerful tool for creating professional-looking presentations.
- Excel 2007: for creating spreadsheets, then analysing and sharing the information.
- Outlook 2007: for managing your time and information, and communicating across boundaries.

You can buy Office Standard 2007 as a retail product in both new-user and upgrade versions, so you have **two options**:

- **Either new** as a box you buy off-the-shelf at any major IT retailer, which comes with the CDs or DVDs needed to install the software. The advantage here is it's licensed to you rather than the PC or notebook. So, if you buy a replacement machine, you can uninstall Office from the old one and reinstall it on the new at no additional cost.
- **Or you can upgrade** to Office 2007 Standard using a retail box upgrade version, which is worth considering because you'll get a discount for your loyalty to the Microsoft Office suite. The downside is again you'll need to keep track of the product key for each copy and an audit trail of which Office 2000 key you used with which upgrade copy of Office 2007 Standard.

Licensing

If the idea of keeping track of product keys doesn't appeal to you, then another alternative is to license your software via the Microsoft Open Licence Programme (MOLP). This allows you to buy your licences from authorised resellers and to set up an agreement with Microsoft whereby the more products you purchase, the better the discount you can receive.

Under MOLP, you can also benefit from Microsoft Software Assurance, which protects your investment in new software for a small additional charge. It means whenever Microsoft releases a new version of Office within the agreement's life, you'll be entitled to upgrade to the new version free of charge.

To get a good price for your software based on 11 PCs, you might also consider taking out a Volume Licensing Agreement. As the name suggests, these are licensing programmes designed for purchasing multiple copies of Microsoft software. They can be tailored to suit your type and size of organisation and your buying preferences - whether you've five PCs or 5,000.

“It's not just an upgrade, it's a new version in its own right”

Another major advantage to this licensing programme is it gives you access to a central software management portal via the [eOpen](#) website. This allows you to login to a webpage to see all the software you're entitled to use and check you've sufficient licences.

Exciting new benefits

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- When it comes to the product itself, Office 2007 is jam-packed with exciting new goodies - like the ability to save straight into .PDF format, view previous versions, and undo that 'save' you really didn't want to make to your presentation.
- Or the new attachment preview in Outlook 2007, which lets you quickly view attachments without having to save or open them in another program - making it much easier to keep track of your documents.
- You can now publish blogs directly from Office Word 2007. You can configure Office Word 2007 to link directly to your blog site, and use the rich Word experience to create blogs with images, tables, and advanced text formatting features.
- Another nifty innovation is the 'Document Inspector', which can save embarrassment when sharing documents by clearing confidential information and comments with one click.

I hope that's whetted your appetite- you'll find many more new features for increasing your productivity and security at the links below.

Beware the Pirates

Finally, a word of caution if you're looking online for deals. You'll find some seemingly attractive ones from various 'independent' resellers, but be careful, many are not genuine. For peace of mind, I suggest you read the 'how to tell' section on the Microsoft [piracy](#) webpage. If a deal looks too good to be true, it probably isn't legal!

To avoid this, I'd recommend you contact a Microsoft Small Business Partner or reseller. You'll find one near you right [here](#).

I hope this helps and please get in touch again if you need further assistance.

Best of luck,

--Stephen

Related Links

-  [Guides to the 2007 Office system user interface](#)
-  [How to buy](#)
-  [Data Systems Limited](#)
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