

DO YOU NEED TO PAY?

Office software lets you write letters, keep spreadsheets and create presentations. Microsoft Office, with Word, Excel and PowerPoint, is the best known, but it isn't the only choice, and for many people a free alternative does everything they need.

FREE OPTIONS

W IN YOUR BROWSER

Microsoft's free web versions

Benefits: Word, Excel and PowerPoint, free in your web browser with a Microsoft account. They look and work much like the full versions, and open Word and Excel files perfectly.

Drawbacks: Some advanced features are missing, and you need to be online to use them.

G IN YOUR BROWSER

Google Docs and Sheets

Benefits: Free with a Google account, simple to use and ideal for sharing documents with family.

Drawbacks: They work differently from Word and Excel, and complex documents may not look quite the same.

A APPLE DEVICES

Pages, Numbers and Keynote

Benefits: Free on every iPhone, iPad and Mac, and simple to use.

Drawbacks: They're not available on Windows, and documents need saving in Word format to share with others.

L ON YOUR COMPUTER

LibreOffice

If you've heard of OpenOffice, LibreOffice is a more up-to-date alternative.

Benefits: A complete office suite that installs on your computer and works without the internet, entirely free and without adverts.

Drawbacks: It looks a little old-fashioned, and the layout of complex Word documents can occasionally shift.

PAYING FOR MICROSOFT OFFICE

If you need the full versions of Word, Excel and Outlook, you can either subscribe to Microsoft 365 or buy Office outright with a one-off payment.

	Price	Who and what it covers
Microsoft 365 Personal	£84.99 a year, or £8.49 a month	One person, on up to five devices, with 1TB of OneDrive storage.
Microsoft 365 Family	£104.99 a year, or £10.49 a month	Up to six people, each on up to five devices, sharing 2TB of OneDrive storage.
Office Home 2024	£119.99, paid once	One Windows computer or Mac. Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote, but not Outlook.
Office Home & Business 2024	£249.99, paid once	As Office Home 2024, with Outlook added.

Microsoft's prices, correct as of October 2026.

BEWARE OF CHEAP LICENCE KEYS

Websites and online marketplaces sell 'lifetime' Office licences for a few pounds. Many are not genuine, and can stop working without warning. Buy only from Microsoft or a well-known retailer.

WHAT’S INCLUDED

The subscription and the one-off versions aren’t quite the same, so it’s worth checking that the version you choose includes everything you use.

	Microsoft 365	Office Home 2024
Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote	Yes	Yes
Outlook	Yes	Free version with adverts only. The full version needs Office Home & Business.
Access (databases)	Yes, on Windows computers	No
Phones and tablets	Yes, on up to five devices in total	No, one computer only
Cloud storage	1TB, or 2TB shared on Family	5GB, as with any free Microsoft account
Updates	New features as they’re released	Security updates only, until October 2029

- Microsoft 365 now includes Copilot, Microsoft’s AI assistant, which is partly why its price rose in 2025. You don’t have to use it.
- The storage that comes with Microsoft 365 is a real benefit if you’d otherwise pay for cloud storage. Our [Guide to Cloud Storage](#) explains more.
- Support for Office Home 2024 ends in October 2029. We don’t expect it to stop working then, but it will no longer receive security updates, so it’s less good value than it first appears.

WHICH IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

If you write the odd letter or open attachments

Use a free option. Microsoft's free web versions are the most familiar if you've used Word before. On an Apple device, Pages and Numbers are already there.

If you use Word and Excel regularly

Microsoft 365 Personal. You'll have the full programs on your computer, phone and tablet, kept up to date, plus plenty of storage for your files and photos.

If several people in the household need it

Microsoft 365 Family. It costs only a little more than Personal and covers up to six people, making it the best value by far.

If you'd rather not pay a subscription

LibreOffice gives you a full office suite on your computer for free. Office Home 2024 is the paid alternative, or Office Home & Business 2024 if you need Outlook. It should keep working after its support ends in 2029, but without security updates.

WE CAN HELP

We can help you choose the right option, install it, move your documents across and make sure your files are saved somewhere safe.