

1 What is New in Excel 2007

In the last several versions the new features in Excel have mostly been cosmetic in nature, but in version 2007 there are many new things. There have been many improvements in appearance, but Microsoft has in this version also introduced many functional improvements.

1.1 Ribbons and Tabs

Like the other applications in the Office package, Excel has also gotten a new and smarter look. The first thing that catches the eye is that the traditional menu bars and toolbars have been replaced by the new “Ribbon”. The Ribbon contains Tabs, and each Tab contains buttons for various functions that were previously located in the menus and toolbars. The Ribbon is far more visual and task-oriented and adapts constantly to the activity you are engaged in.

If you have been accustomed to working with menus and toolbars for many years, it takes a while to get used to the Ribbon, but I must admit that after some time I have been really pleased with the new system. It appears more coherent, and it is not as messy as the toolbars sometimes tend to be.

1.2 Larger Workspace

It has always been possible to make large spreadsheets in Excel. In previous versions you could have 65,536 rows and 256 columns. This made for pretty large spreadsheets, but you had better sit down for this: In Excel 2007, you have up to 1,048,576 rows and 16,384 columns!

1.3 More Colours

In previous versions you had only a few colours to choose from when you had to put background colour in the cells. Now you can choose between 16 million different colours. You can also create colour transitions inside the cells. It gives you unprecedented opportunities to create worksheets that look nice and inviting.

1.4 Colour Themes and Styles

Now you can use predefined colour themes in Excel. This feature is known from Word and Power Point, where the programs help you format your entire document, so everything appears smooth and harmonious. This is also possible in Excel now.

If you make charts, they will automatically be consistent with the colour theme that is selected

1.5 Improved Pivot Tables

The “Pivot Table” function has been one of the features that have been least accessible. Microsoft has radically changed the way to set up a pivot table so it is easier and more intuitive to use.

1.6 Improved Conditional Formatting

The “Conditional Formatting” function has been significantly improved. There are more opportunities for highlighting of, for example, “Top 10”, and it is possible to colour the cells according to cell value

1.7 More and Better-Looking Charts

Excel 2007 has no new basic chart types, but there are now more variations of existing ones. Formatting has been improved, and you can, for example, add soft shadows behind your columns, which gives a nice effect. If you do not choose the colours in a chart yourself, the colours in the spreadsheet colour theme will be automatically applied, so everything appears harmoniously.

1.8 New File Format

Excel uses a new file format which is not compatible with earlier versions. If you have worked with the program before, you will know that the file name ends in “.Xls”. In Excel 2007 the file name ends with “.Xlsx”.

For the technically minded, I can reveal that it is an XML-based format, which gives smaller file sizes and better opportunities for integration with other programs.

You can still save your spreadsheets in the old format, but be aware that some functionality may be lost.

1.9 Where can I find the Old Buttons?

If you are familiar with older versions of Excel, you will probably have trouble finding some of the old features. This is obviously because the menu bar and toolbars have been replaced with the “Ribbon”. It might be a little confusing, but I’ll try to list the main functions, so you can find them quickly.

New, Open, Save, Save As and **Close** are located in the **Office Button** at the top left. The Save feature is also available as standard in the Quick Access Toolbar, located just to the right of the Office Button.

Preview is also available in the Office Button under menu item **Print**.

The **Drawing** toolbar no longer exists. It has been replaced by the Shapes and SmartArt buttons under the **Insert** tab in the Ribbon.

The **Insert** symbol is also located in the Ribbon under the **Insert** tab. This button is simply called **Symbol**.

Normal view and **Page Break preview** are there as small buttons at the bottom right corner of the screen.

The **Insert** function has been replaced by the **Formulas** Tab in the Ribbon. This is a clear improvement, but if you prefer the old dialog box, you can get it by clicking on **FX** on the formula bar.