

Visual Studio Magazine

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Clearing Up Microsoft Office/Surface Rumors

Is it true you don't receive the full version of Office on your Surface tablet? Can you not upgrade to a different version? Brien Posey takes some time to clear the air on these and many other questions.

By Brien Posey (<http://redmondmag.com/forms/emailtoauthor.aspx?AuthorItem={DE697901-5700-4C3D-B394-99FCCD4E779E}&ArticleItem={F0BF2780-7B4E-45E3-B7D8-314342AE7B78}>)
03/11/2013

As you probably know, Microsoft has had a tremendous number of new products released over the last few months. We have recently seen the release of Windows 8, Microsoft Surface, Surface Pro, Office 2013 and a number of new server products to boot. With so many new products thrown into the mix, it seems only natural for there to be a bit of confusion.

Lately I have noticed a lot of confusion around the Microsoft Surface tablet's support for Microsoft Office. I have encountered a number of articles on the Web containing inaccurate information about running Microsoft Office on the Surface tablet. That being the case, I thought that I would try to clear up some of the confusion by addressing a few of these issues.

Does Surface Actually Include Microsoft Office?

Perhaps the biggest misconception that I have read regarding the Surface tablet is that it does not actually include Microsoft Office. Like most good rumors though, this one has a degree of truth. Whether or not Microsoft Office is included depends on which version of the Surface tablet you purchase.

The Windows RT-based Surface tablet includes Microsoft Office 2013. The Surface Pro however, does not. In some ways this is really counter intuitive since the Surface Pro is a higher-cost tablet, but for whatever reason, Microsoft chose not to include Office with the Surface Pro

Do You Get a Full Copy of Office, or Just a Trial Version?

Another misconception that I have heard several times is that Surface tablets don't actually include an Office 2013 license. Instead, the Surface tablet comes with a trial version of Office preloaded.

This rumor is completely false. When you purchase a Surface tablet running Windows RT, you get a fully licensed copy of Office 2013. I think that the reason why this rumor has been so rampant has to do with the way that Microsoft released Office 2013.

The Surface tablet was released before Office 2013 was released. Consequently, Surface tablets shipped with an Office 2013 preview release. I think that many people mistook the preview release for a trial version. After Office 2013 was officially released, Microsoft made the full-blown Office suite available for Surface tablets via an update.

What Office Products Do You Get?

Another somewhat common rumor about the Surface tablet is that it comes with a sub-par version of Microsoft Office and that a lot of major features are missing. This rumor is partially true, depending on how you look at things.

Surface tablets include a version of Microsoft Office called Microsoft Office Home and Student 2013 RT. Home and student versions of Microsoft Office have never been as full featured as professional editions, but they have historically covered the basics.

The Surface tablet includes 2013 versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote. While I admit that I spend a lot more time working with Office on my desktop than I do on my Surface tablet, I have not noticed any major features missing in Office RT. However, there are some Office products that are missing.

Because Surface tablets do not include the Professional edition of Office 2013, it lacks Office products such as Visio and Publisher. More alarmingly, Surface tablets do not include Microsoft Outlook.

While I will be the first to admit that I wish Surface included Outlook, Microsoft has included much of the Outlook functionality in Windows RT. The People Hub, Calendar, and Mail apps provide much of the basic Outlook functionality. Personally however, I find myself using Outlook Web App (which is included with Microsoft Exchange or with an Office 365 subscription) rather than using the built-in apps.

Is Office Upgradable?

One last rumor that I want to address is that of Office not being upgradable. The Surface Pro runs Windows 8. As such, you are free to purchase any edition of Office you want and can therefore upgrade at will.

Surface tablets running Windows RT are a little bit different. As previously mentioned, the tablets initially shipped with Microsoft Office Home and Student 2013 RT Preview. The Preview release is upgradable (for free) to the full release of Office 2013 Home and Student RT. Presumably, Microsoft will make other updates (such as service packs) available at a later time. For right now however, there is no option to upgrade to the professional edition of Office 2013 or to the next version of Office to be released, whatever that might be.

This isn't to say that there will never be an option to upgrade Office. Surface tablets include an online store. There isn't currently an option to purchase a "better" version of Office 2013 through the store, but Microsoft would be crazy not to eventually offer such an option.

Conclusion

So what's the verdict on the Surface tablet and Office 2013? To put it simply, Surface RT does come with a "real" version of Office 2013. While it is true that this edition might be inadequate for seriously hardcore Office users, it should meet most people's needs. The Surface Pro offers a lot more flexibility, but of course this flexibility comes at a price since an Office license is not included with the tablet.

About the Author

Brien Posey is a seven time Microsoft MVP with over two decades of IT experience. As a freelance writer, Posey has written many thousands of articles and written or contributed to several dozen books on a wide variety of IT topics. Prior to going freelance, Posey was a CIO for a national chain of hospitals and healthcare facilities. He has also served as a network administrator for some of the country's largest insurance companies and for the Department of Defense at Fort Knox. When He isn't busy writing, Brien Posey enjoys exotic travel, scuba diving, and racing his Cigarette boat. You can visit his personal Web site at: www.brienposey.com (<http://www.brienposey.com>).

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3 comments



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Alexander Beal • 10 days ago

I want to go to a tablet but until they quit being toys and can run the full suite of MS office I cannot support purchases of these playthings for our corporation. When will

Archived CommentsReader Comments:

Mon, Mar 18, 2013

My understanding is the licensing model of Office on RT indicates that it cannot be used for business/enterprise purposes unless it can be tied to another Office 2013 'commercial' license.

Thu, Mar 14, 2013

Aale

the sun burnt country down under

A bit of myth busting goes a long way... .. How about doing an article on office for the pro... .. versions.. costs... viability... etc... .. Yes there are articles popping up BUT...

Wed, Mar 13, 2013

Marc Wagner

Bloomington, IN

The Surface RT includes Office Home & Student 2013. It is a port of that edition of office to the Surface RT. This is necessary because the Surface RT is an ARM-based device intended for consumer use. The Surface Pro is an Intel-based tablet intended for professional use. It had a much broader choice of options for MS Office (and any other x86-based office suite). In short, the number of options for the Surface Pro is so vast that there was no good reason to provide any single option for owners of the Surface Pro.