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# Understanding Office 2000 Document Formats

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*When you upgrade, or need to share files between two or more versions or products, you can face file incompatibility problems. Office 2000 deals with these in a number of different ways, and usually enables you to share or open the file.*

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If you were involved in upgrading users from Office 95 to Office 97 you might remember the difficulties caused by the change in document file formats. Moving from Office 97 to Office 2000 is usually a lot easier, as those two versions share a more-or-less common file format. Even so, the transition is not always as seamless as it should be, and you could still face problems resulting from the different Office document formats in common use. In this article, I will give you an overview of the document formats supported by Office 2000, concentrating on the three “document-centric” applications: Word, Excel and PowerPoint. I’ll also explain how to convert between these formats and how to import other vendors’ data into the Office suite.

In summary, there are three “generations” of file formats which Office 2000 users are likely to come across:

- The current version, native to Office 2000 and Office 97, and also Office 98 for the Mac.
- The previous version, used by Office 95 and the immediately previous release of each application (Word 6.0, Excel 5.0 and PowerPoint 4.0 respectively).
- Various earlier versions, such as Word 2.0.

Office 2000 lets users open and edit documents created in most earlier versions, although in some cases this can only be done if suitable converters have been installed. Users can also save documents in earlier formats, but this too might require a converter. Any features in the document which were not supported in the earlier release will be lost when documents are saved in this way.

Office 2000 also supports HTML as a document format. This permits information to be moved between Office applications, and it can help make Office documents accessible to people who don’t have Office installed. Up to a point, it can also be used for exporting files to previous versions of Office.

## **Converters**

You can’t go far in dealing with Office file formats without having to worry about converters. In Microsoft parlance, a converter is a piece of software which lets an application open and/or save a document in a format other than its native format. It is not the same as a filter, which is used to import images from external graphics files. Unlike Office 97, Office 2000 comes with relatively few converters. Also, the Office 97 Value Pack, which provided a range of additional conversion tools, is no longer supplied. Instead, we have something called the Microsoft Office Converter Pack (OCP). This consists of around two dozen converters and some 20 filters. It includes converters and filters for use with both Office 97/2000 and Office 95.

The OCP is supplied on CD-ROM with the Office 2000 Resource Kit, and can also be downloaded from the ORK Utilities Web page (see the Resources box for details). [It was also on the PCSA 141 CD - Ed.] It is not installed with the main Resource Kit utilities, but has its own setup program, which you will find in the \PFiles\ORKTools\ToolBox\Tools\OCP directory on the CD-ROM. If you wish, you can copy the OCP files to a central network installation point and let users run its setup program for themselves. But it is better to automate the process so that users only install the converters they are likely to need. This can be done by letting the users run the setup program in “quiet” mode, either on its own or as part of a custom install of Office 2000.

### ***Installing OCP***

Start by copying the OCP directory from the Resource Kit to a suitable directory on a network server. Then edit the CONVPACK.INI file in this directory. This file contains an entry for each converter for each version of each Office application (Figure 1). Each entry has an initial value of Yes. Change this to No to tell the setup program not to install the corresponding converter. You only need to do this for the applications and versions which are actually present on the users' systems, as the program will ignore any that aren't.

You might also wish to change the Quiet entry (near the top of the INI file) from No to Yes. This will prevent users from interacting with the setup program and thus overriding your choices. If you change the PreventUninstall entry to Yes, the setup program will refrain from putting a shortcut to uninstall the OCP in the user's Start/Programs menu (you can still uninstall the pack from the Add/Remove Programs window in Control Panel).

If you want to let users install the converters independently of Office 2000 - for example, if they have already installed the suite - you should tell them to run SETUP.EXE with -S in the command line. If you want them to install Office 2000 and the converters at the same time, you can arrange for Office Setup to chain to OCP Setup. You do this by adding a command to run the OCP setup program in step 13 of the Office 2000 Custom Installation Wizard (for more details, see *Deploying Office 2000*, PCSA 135, File E1146).

If you are upgrading from Office 97, you won't need to worry about installing any converters that are already present. The converters themselves are the same for both releases, and Office 2000 will correctly find and use any that had previously been installed.

### ***Word***

Let's now look at the specific issues affecting each Office application in turn, starting with the word processor. As well as having the same file format as Word 97 (for Windows) and Word 98 (for the Mac), Word 2000 can open and save plain text files, HTML documents and RTF files. It does this natively - that is, without

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Convpac.ini - Notepad
File Edit Search Help
; this file configures the Microsoft Office Converter Pack

[ConvPack]
Quiet=no
PreventUninstall=no

[Word6]
AmiPro2=yes
dBASE=yes
Lotus123=yes
Excel=yes
FoxPro=yes
Word97-2000=yes
DOSWord=yes
MacWord=yes
RTF-DCA=yes
Text=yes
Write=yes
WordPerfect4=yes
WordPerfect5=yes
WordStar=yes

[Word95]
AmiPro3=yes
dBASE=yes
HTML=yes
Lotus123=yes

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Figure 1 - CONVPACK.INI lets you customise OCP Setup.

the need for converters. Word 2000 can also open documents created by Word 6.0/95, Word for Windows 2.x and Word for the Mac 4.0 to 5.1, but it cannot save to these formats natively. In the unlikely event that you need to share documents with users of the ancient WinWord 2.x or MacWord 4.x/5.x, you can install converters (Winword232.cnv and Macword32.cnv respectively) to export these files from Word 2000. These are installed via the Office 2000 setup program, where they are listed under Converters and Filters/Text Converters in the Installation States screen.

If you are sharing documents with users of Word 6.0 or 95, you have several choices. The easiest option is to install the Word 6.0/95 converter (Wrd6ex32.cnv) in Office 2000, which you do from Office 2000 Setup. You then tell your Office 2000 users to select Word 6.0/95 in the "Save as type" control when saving documents. Or they can specify Word 6.0/95 as the default for saving documents. To do this, they set the "Save Word files as" control on the Save tab of the Options dialog. You don't need to do anything special when opening documents which have been saved with this converter. All versions of Word (from 6.0) will correctly detect the document's format, so if you standardise on the 6.0/95 format, all users should be able to open documents without worrying about the "Files of type" control. (The Resource Kit states that Word 2000 needs a converter to open 6.0/95 documents, but this is not so.)

Note that documents saved in this way are genuine Word files. Unlike in the original release of Word 97, this option really does save a Word document, not an RTF file with a DOC extension. So you should have no trouble using the documents in third-party applications which specifically require 6.0/95 files. An alternative option is for the Word 2000 users to continue to save documents in the default Word 97/2000 format, and for you to install a converter to enable the documents to be imported into Word 6.0/95. The converter in question is Mswrd832.cnv, and can be installed from the OCP.

There are three other formats which allow documents to be shared between Word 97/2000 and 6.0/95. They are RTF, HTML and a special dual-file format which stores two copies of the document in the same file. All versions of Word can read and write RTF natively, so this is a good choice if you have problems installing converters - if you have no control over some of the users' systems, for instance. Like the other Office 2000 applications, Word 2000 can save documents as "high fidelity" HTML files, which essentially means that all formatting and content is retained, even for features which are not specifically supported by HTML. To allow Word 95 users to open and save these HTML documents you must install the HTML converter (Html32.cnv) from the OCP. However, this is not available for Word 6.0.

The dual-file format might be useful where Word 6.0/95 users simply want to read Word 2000 documents without saving them. Users will be prompted to open

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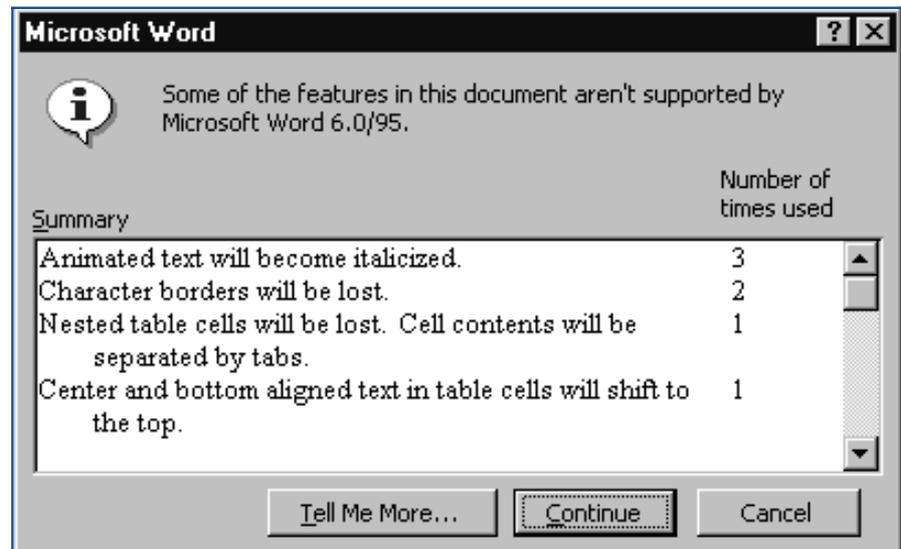


Figure 2 - Word warns you about using unsupported features.

these documents as read-only, although they can ignore this advice if they wish. For Word 2000 users to save to this format, they will need to install the Wrd6er32.cnv converter via Office 2000 Setup, and select "Word 97/2000 - 6.0/95 RTF" as the file type. Note that these files are much bigger than normal Word documents, so don't adopt this option if you are concerned about disk space.

### **Loss Of Content**

The biggest problem with sharing documents across versions is that some of the content will be lost when users apply a feature which is not available in the earlier release. When saving to RTF or the dual-file format, and also when importing Word 2000 documents into Word 6.0/95 via the Mswrd832.cnv converter, this loss of content will happen without warning. However, when you save a Word 2000 document to Word 6.0/95 format (using the Wrd6ex32.cnv converter) Word will give you a detailed warning about the loss of content. You will see a list of the features which you have used in the document but which are unsupported by the earlier version, along with an indication of what will happen if you choose to go ahead and save the document anyway (Figure 2). For example, if the document contains nested tables, Word will warn you that the inner table will be converted to tab-delimited text.

If a document created with this converter is subsequently re-opened in Word 2000, any features not supported by 6.0/95 will be unavailable within the Word 2000 user interface. So, if the insertion point is inside a table cell, the Insert Table command will be greyed out, as nested tables are not supported in Word 6.0/95. The same thing will happen if you are sharing between Word 97 and Word 2000. In this case, the warnings are not issued by default, as Word 2000 cannot know that you plan to open the document in Word 97. However, by selecting "Disable features not supported by Word 97" in the Save tab in the Options dialog, you can force Word 2000 to issue the warnings. Word will then take the same action as it would if you had saved to 6.0/95 format using the Wrd6ex32.cnv converter. Of course, the list of unsupported features will be different in the two cases.

### **Other Applications**

The OCP includes a further nine converters which let you import documents into Word 2000 from other applications (Figure 3). Most of these can also be used to export Word documents back to the original application. These are in addition to converters for WordPerfect (4.x and 5.x for DOS and Windows), Works (4.0 for Windows) and Lotus 1-2-3 (2.x, 3.x and 4.0) which are installed by Office Setup.

If you need to share a file with an application for which no converter is available, you can use either plain text or RTF as an intermediary. RTF supports most text formatting and graphics, although non-Microsoft applications vary in the degree to which such support is implemented. Plain text would be a good choice if you don't need to preserve formatting or graphics. Word distinguishes three flavours of plain text: text only (with carriage returns at the ends of paragraphs), text only with line breaks (with carriage returns at the ends of lines), and text with layout (which uses spaces to maintain the appearance of indented, centred and right-justified text). If you are moving a text file to or from a DOS application, be sure to select the MS-DOS version of the relevant text format, otherwise characters above ASCII 128 will not be translated properly.

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### **Excel**

The issues affecting Excel workbooks are broadly similar to those which apply to Word documents. Excel 2000 can open files from all earlier Windows and Mac versions without the need for converters. Users just select the default "All Microsoft Excel files" in the "Files of type" control and let the program detect the version automatically. Excel 2000 can also save back to all earlier versions natively. Versions 2.1 and 3.0 only support single-sheet files, so to save a workbook containing multiple worksheets to those versions you would have to save each sheet in a separate file. For version 4.0, you can choose between single-sheet (XLS) and multiple-sheet (XLW) formats.

If your users are sharing workbooks with users of Excel 5.0/95, they can choose either to save the files to this format within Excel 2000 or use a dual-file format, which works in the same way as the one in Word. For this latter option, they

should select "Microsoft Excel 97/2000 & 5.0/95 Workbook" in the Save dialog. No converters are needed for this.

Unlike in Word, there is no converter available to let Excel 5.0/95 users import workbooks which were saved in Excel 97/2000's native format. Nor is it possible to use RTF with workbook data. Users can, however, use HTML to transfer workbooks between versions. For this to work, the 5.0/95 user must install the HTML add-in, which is done via the OCP. When saving to earlier formats, any features not supported by the earlier versions will be lost. But, unlike Word, Excel does not tell you which specific items will be affected; it merely gives a general warning that the workbook "may contain features that are not compatible with" the earlier version. Also, when re-opening the file in Excel 2000, features unsupported by the earlier version are not disabled in the user interface as they are in Word.

**Other Applications**

Excel has always offered particularly good support for users of Lotus 1-2-3. If your Excel 2000 users need to share data with users of this venerable spreadsheet they will have no difficulty opening and saving files. Excel supports 1-2-3 versions 1.0 and 1.0a (WKS), 2.x (WK1), 3.x and 1-2-3/W (WK3), and 4.0 (WK4), all without the need for converters. When opening these files, users need only select "Lotus 1-2-3 files (\*.WK?)" in the Open dialog. Excel will correctly determine the version and format. That said, Lotus 1-2-3 versions 2.x and below do not support multi-sheet workbooks, so you would have to save each sheet to a separate file in these cases. Nor can you save Excel chart sheets to these versions.

Given the sophistication of applications like Excel, it's easy to forget how primitive early spreadsheet programs were (although they might not have seemed so at the time). In many versions of Lotus 1-2-3, the only way to apply fonts was to install an add-in. Two such add-ins were available - Allways and Impress - and they each had their own file formats (ALL and FMT/FM3 respectively). Fortunately, Excel 2000 knows about these files. It will open any that are present and correctly apply the formatting to the appropriate sheets. In order to preserve the formatting when saving to WK1 and WK3 files from within Excel, users should choose WK1 ALL, WK1 FMT or WK3 FM3, as appropriate.

Excel 2000 can also natively open and save WQ1 files from the original Quattro Pro for DOS. But to open WB1, WB2 and WB3 files from the Windows versions of Quattro Pro (that is, version 5.0 and above), you need to install a converter. This is done during Office 2000 Setup, the item in question being listed in the Excel branch of the Installation States tree. But, even with the converter installed, you cannot save Quattro Pro for Windows files. If you need to export data to that application, you will have to either save to an earlier Excel format, or use the Lotus 1-2-3 WK1 format as an intermediary.

One other useful format which Excel 2000 natively supports is DBF. This is used by many database programs, notably dBASE and Foxpro. Excel recognises three flavours of DBF: dBASE II, III and IV respectively. In general, users should pick dBASE III when saving files, unless they know for sure that the target application requires a different choice.

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*"If all else fails, Excel 2000 can import and export data via delimited text files. However, you will probably use these only as a last resort, as only raw values can be saved."*

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Format	Details
AmiPro	3.x for Windows
dBASE	Most versions (but not dBASE II as stated in the ORK)
FoxPro	All versions, including free tables in Visual Foxpro
RFT-DCA	All versions
Word for DOS	3.x to 6.0
WordPerfect	4.x for DOS
WordStar	3.3 to 7.0 for DOS, 1.0 - 2.0 for Windows, but can only save to 4.0 or higher for DOS
Works	3.0 for Windows
Write	For Windows 3.0 and 3.1

Figure 3 - OCP converters for Word 2000.

### **Text And Interchange Files**

If all else fails, Excel 2000 can import and export data via delimited text files. However, you will probably use these only as a last resort, as only raw values can be saved. By default, Excel will save the results of formulae and discard the formulae themselves. If you choose the option to display formulae rather than values within worksheet cells (you make this choice from the View tab of the Options dialog), Excel will save the formulae as plain text and discard the results.

In addition, Excel supports two special types of text file which are intended specifically for data transfer, though neither is widely used these days. They are symbolic link format (SYLK) and data interchange format (DIF). Of the two, SYLK is slightly more useful. It is supported by Microsoft Works, RBase and Microsoft's original Multiplan spreadsheet, among others. DIF and SYLK both save cell values and simple formulae; SYLK can also save a limited amount of formatting.

### **PowerPoint**

As with Word and Excel, PowerPoint 2000 will happily open files from earlier versions with no special action on the user's part. You just select "All PowerPoint presentations" in the Open dialog. It can natively save to earlier versions, too, except to PowerPoint 4.0, for which a converter is needed.

When sharing presentations with users of PowerPoint 4.0/95 you have broadly the same choices as with Word. Thus, you can save to native PowerPoint 95 format, to the dual-file format, or to HTML. Or you can arrange for the 4.0/95 users to import from PowerPoint 2000. Unlike with Word, you don't need to install a converter for saving to the native 95 format (that is, there is no equivalent of Wrd6ex32.cnv). But you do need a converter to permit 4.0/95 users to import from PowerPoint 2000, or to allow PowerPoint 95 users to open HTML documents (PowerPoint 4.0 users cannot do this). Both these converters are installed via the OCP.

PowerPoint 2000 also supports RTF files, although these are not particularly useful as far as presentations are concerned. PowerPoint RTF files store the text and the structure of the slides, but no graphics. They are mainly intended for transferring outlines to and from Word.

As far as external applications are concerned, PowerPoint is somewhat limited. It can import from Harvard Graphics 3.0 and below and from Lotus Freelance 1.0 - 2.1, but it cannot export to those or any other presentation programs. For importing from Freelance and Harvard Graphics you'll need to install converters during Office Setup - look for them under PowerPoint/Presentation Translators in the Installation States screen.

If you do need to transfer a PowerPoint file to another presentation program, just about your only option will be to save it in a graphics format. Unfortunately, this means you'll end up with each slide being saved in a separate graphics file. After importing the graphics into the target application, you won't be able to edit the text or alter the structure of the slide in any way, but at least the overall appearance of the slide will be preserved. PowerPoint 2000 can natively save presentations in this way to GIF, JPEG, PNG, DIB, WMF and TIFF formats. It can also save to any format for which a graphics filter has been installed. Some 15 such filters are available via Office Setup, with a few more being provided by the OCP. These are the same filters which are used for importing graphics into other Office applications, so you won't need to worry about installing them if they are already present.

### **Conclusions**

Although Office 2000 does a good job of supporting the many document formats in common use, the process is not always trouble-free. But, by understanding the issues described in this article and by familiarising yourself with the Office Converter Pack, you should be able to provide whatever help your users need.

**PCSA**

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#### **Resources**

A good source of information about Office document formats is the Office 2000 Resource Kit: Microsoft Press, ISBN 0-7356-0555-6, or online at [www.microsoft.com/office/ork/2000](http://www.microsoft.com/office/ork/2000).

The Office Converter Pack is available on the CD-ROM which comes with the Kit. It can also be downloaded from [www.microsoft.com/office/ork/2000/appndx/toolbox.htm](http://www.microsoft.com/office/ork/2000/appndx/toolbox.htm).

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