

COMPUTER GURU

by Don Benjamin

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Why You Need a Microsoft Account

This is the first of a two-part article on Microsoft and Apple accounts, the free services they provide, and how they synchronize and back up all your devices.

Whether you use Microsoft's Windows 10 or Apple's MacOS, you should sign up for a Microsoft account. If you use Windows, then you probably created a Microsoft account when you set up your computer or upgraded from Windows 7 to 10. But even if you use an Apple computer, you should consider signing up for a Microsoft account and take advantage of their free services. (Many folks tell us they never created a Microsoft account, but when we look for it, it's often there.)



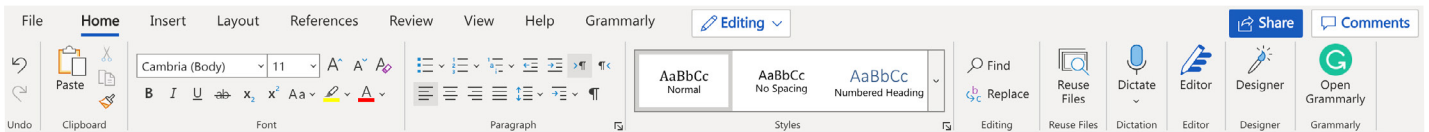
Randy just created his first spreadsheet using Excel Online!

So, what do you get with a free Microsoft account you ask?¹ You get a lot!

Office Online

Office Online includes web versions of Word, PowerPoint, Excel, OneNote, Outlook email, calendar, and address book. These are not the full versions of Microsoft Office or Microsoft 365 that you pay for, but they will be adequate for most users. (I'm writing this month's article on the web version of Word.) Because these applications run on your browser (Edge, Safari, Chrome, etc.), they will work on any computer — Windows or Mac. Built-in spelling and grammar suggestions are quick and mostly accurate. (I still split my infinitives, but I like the way it catches passive voice.)

Here's a screen shot of the menu and formatting ribbon for Word Online (below) — it's quite comprehensive. Only one caveat: Office Online only works when you're connected to the internet.



The menu and ribbon for Word Online look a lot like the paid version.

Email, Calendar, and Address Book

Outlook Online is a slick web-based email application that works with most mail providers, such as Gmail, AOL, Hotmail, Outlook.com, and iCloud. It's especially handy if you have more than one account because it gathers all your email into one place. Outlook provides a clean, ad-free interface for your mail, contact list, and calendar. (You will probably need to manually upload your contacts from your email providers.) You can also set up a free Outlook.com address (mailbox) if you'd like.

Computer Password Recovery

If you forget your computer password, you can reset it by logging in to your Microsoft account and answering your security questions (e.g., Where did you meet your dog? What's your great aunt's first cousin's step-father's name? How many fingers are you holding up?)

OneDrive

Office Online stores your documents on Microsoft's OneDrive servers that synchronize with the files on your computer, so you'll always have backups. In fact, OneDrive will let you work on your documents anywhere in the world that has an Internet connection! Five GB of storage is free.

If you need help setting up a Microsoft account, just mosey (or amble) on over to our tech support at princetonior.org/psrc-tech-resources/.

¹ I'm pretending that you asked. If I didn't then I'd have nothing to explain, so just humor me.