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Add-ins are special COM files that extend the functionality of a program. In other words, they make your work simpler. Office's popularity—and occasionally, its limitations—makes it a perfect candidate for add-ins. Microsoft provides a number of them, but most add-ins are third-party products, and many are free. Here's a list of some of the most popular add-ins for Microsoft Office.

1 Save as or print to PDF or XPS

Without a doubt, one of the questions I receive most often is how to save an Access report as a PDF file. Adobe Systems created the PDF format more than a decade ago. Because of its flexibility and universal appeal, it's now an [open standard](#).

XML Paper Specification (XPS) is an XML-based specification that supports device and resolution independence, developed by Microsoft. In other words, content isn't at the mercy of the client's browser and local settings.

Microsoft offers a free add-in for Office 2007, [Microsoft 2007 Save as PDF or XPS](#). You might also try, [PDF995](#), [CutePDFWriter](#), and [PrimoPDF](#).

2 MathType with Word

[MathType](#) is an interactive equation editor that creates mathematical notations in Word. It's flexible enough to handle Web pages, desktop publishing tools, PowerPoint presentations, and more. It's a must for anyone writing scientific, engineering, and mathematical papers.

Microsoft also offers [Microsoft Math](#), an add-in that eases the task of creating graphs, performs calculations, and solves for variables in Word 2007.

3 Lookeen for Outlook 2003 and 2007

This [search tool](#) integrates into your local system to search all Outlook folders, including archived folders, and it's quick! You can search mail, attachments, appointments, tasks, notes, and contacts, all at the same time.

4 Search Command

Do you support frustrated users who can't find commands and features in Office 2007? Install [Search Command](#) on their local systems. This innovative add-in drops in a new tab that allows users to enter their own words to find commands. It's easy to implement and it works great.

5 MZ-Tools

If you write your own VBA solutions, you need [MZ-Tools](#). This customizable add-in has a number of features that will make the time you spend coding more productive and efficient:

- Write better code and find existing code faster.
- Apply default properties with a single click.
- Quickly document code by inserting custom headers into modules.
- Automatically add line numbers and error handlers to procedures.

6 Total Access Analyzer

[Total Access Analyzer](#) analyzes your Access database objects to expose hidden problems, forgotten objects, and more. It cross-references objects and creates data flow diagrams. Use this add-in to document your code, find missing objects and variables, and uncover scoping issues. Total Access Analyzer finds errors, suggests changes, and offers tips for improving performance. It's a bit pricey, but developers who use it say it's worth it.

7 SimplyVBA Global Error Handler

[SimplyVBA Global Error Handler](#) displays effective information about each error:

- The procedure and module where the error occurred
- A traceable iteration through the call stack to the error

VBA developers will appreciate this add-in's robust error handling.

8 Office Live

[Office Live](#) lets you open (and save) documents in Office Live Workspace directly from Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Mozilla Firefox users will need an additional plug-in. Be careful, though, as this is more than a simple add-in. It requires specific updates and will download and install them, if you haven't already.

9 Personal Folders Backup

Outlook stores all your mail, calendar items, contacts, and so on in a PST file. If something happens to it, you could lose all of your correspondence, tasks, appointments, and contact information. Backing up this file is a vital part of any maintenance routine. [Personal Folders Backup](#) is an add-in that backs up PST files at regular intervals. (If you're on Microsoft Exchange Server, this add-in probably isn't necessary, as your administrator is backing up PST files.)

10 Mail Merge Toolkit

Merging documents is a huge feature with a few limitations. [Mail Merge Toolkit](#) extends the existing merge capabilities in Outlook, Word, and Publisher so you can:

- Personalize the subject.
- Attach files to messages.
- Send HTML or RTF messages, regardless of security settings.
- Send messages from Publisher in GIF format.

11 Mail Merge for PowerPoint

It's hard to think of merging a PowerPoint presentation, but if you need that capability, you'll appreciate [PPTools Merge](#). This add-in merges data from Excel tab- or comma-delimited files into PowerPoint text boxes, pictures, notes, and hyperlinks. You can merge data, pictures, movies, sounds, and external text files. For instance, you could use this add-in to print award certificates for members of your audience at the end of your program instead of printing them later and mailing them.

12 Narration Timing Tweaker

PowerPoint lets you record an audio narration to enhance (or guide) a slide show. However, it's a winner-take-all type of feature. If an event needs tweaking, you have to start from scratch and it's difficult to get it right the first or even the second time. [Narration Timing Tweaker](#) allows you to fine-tune the narration portion of a slide show.

13 OLAP PivotTable Extensions for Excel 2007

There's more to Excel 2007's PivotTables feature than Excel lets on. This [add-in](#) extends the OLAP PivotTable Extensions to include Analysis Services cubes. It doesn't actually offer more functionality, it just provides an interface to use what's already there.

14 Access 2007 Developer Extensions and Runtime

The [Access 2007 Developer Extensions and Runtime](#) add-in helps developers get a solution to market. This add-in supplies tools for packaging, deployment, licensing, and distribution agreements.

15 Blueprint for Outlook

Printing is a bit limited in Outlook, even Outlook 2007. [Blueprint for Outlook](#) adds a few printing features that Outlook ought to offer but doesn't. You can print a single page or selected text, quickly automate a custom print task, or print an attachment.

16 CrossEyes for Word

If you work with long documents, you know that formatting can take on a life of its own. [CrossEyes](#) demystifies Word's formatting codes so you can identify problems and resolve them.

17 Microsoft Outlook SMS

With the help of [Microsoft Outlook SMS](#), you can send SMS text messages through most Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) mobile phones, connected to a PC using Outlook 2003 or Outlook 2007. You enter the message in an Outlook-type message form and then send that message to a mobile phone without third-party software or a subscription to a mobile network service *if* you connect the phone to a PC.

18 AddInSpy

Use [AddInSpy](#) to develop new add-ins for Office and to troubleshoot existing Office add-ins. Although Microsoft offers this free download through Microsoft Developers Network (MSDN), it doesn't support it. Despite that, it's one of my favorites.

Additional resources

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- Sign up for our [IT Leadership Newsletter](#)
- Check out all of TechRepublic's [free newsletters](#)
- [Use Excel's built-in features to simplify data entry](#)
- [The top 10 Microsoft Office tips of 2008](#)
- [Add a looping introduction to a PowerPoint presentation](#)

Version history

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