



Oct 2025

Guidelines for Real-Time Co-authoring in SharePoint Online

This document outlines the best practices and technical requirements for effective real-time co-authoring using Microsoft 365 and SharePoint Online or OneDrive.

Microsoft Office Compatibility Notice

Office 2016 and Office 2013 are no longer supported.

For full compatibility and support, it is strongly **recommended to upgrade to Microsoft 365**.

 Unsupported	 Recommended
Office 2016 / 2013	Microsoft 365
Desktop apps from old versions	Browser-based Word, Excel, PowerPoint

Reference: [Collaborate on Word documents with real-time co-authoring - Microsoft Support](#)

Opening and Editing Shared Word Documents

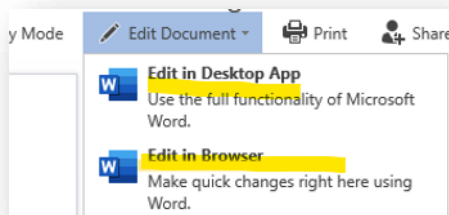
When someone shares a Word document with you via email, you will receive a link that opens the document directly in your **web browser** using **Word for the web**.

Prefer to use the Desktop App?

If you have a **supported version of Microsoft Office** (see compatibility table above), we recommend opening and editing the document in the **Word desktop app** for the best experience.

If your version of Office isn't supported, you can continue editing the document in your browser using **Word for the web**.

Select **Edit Document** > **Edit in Desktop App**



1. Co-authoring Requirements

Co-authoring Requirement	Details		
Platform	Real-time co-authoring is supported only with office version Microsoft 365 and SharePoint Online/OneDrive .		
File Format	Use .DOCX format exclusively. Older formats such as .DOC or .DOCM are not supported and may cause compatibility issues.		
Cloud Storage	Documents must be stored in SharePoint Online or OneDrive to enable real-time collaboration.		
Hardware requirements	Component	Minimum Requirement	Recommended
	Processor	1.6 GHz, 2-core	2.0 GHz or faster
	Memory (RAM)	4 GB	8–16 GB
	Disk Space	4 GB available	10 GB or more
	Display Resolution	1280 × 768	1920 × 1080 or higher
	Graphics	DirectX 9 or later, WDDM 2.0+	Dedicated GPU
	Operating System	Windows 10/11, macOS (latest 3 versions)	Latest OS version with updates
	Browser	Latest Edge, Chrome, Firefox, Safari	-
	.NET Framework	4.6 or higher	-
	Internet	Stable broadband	10 Mbps or higher

2. Document & Table Management

2.1. Tables

Best Practice	Why It Matters
Avoid complex tables	Merged cells, nested tables, or inconsistent layouts can cause formatting issues and slow down co-authoring.
Split large tables into smaller ones	Smaller tables (ideally one per page) are easier to edit and reduce the chance of errors.
Delay complex table creation	Save time and avoid confusion by adding complex tables during the final editing phase.

 **Tip:** Use simple rows and columns during collaboration. Add advanced formatting later.

2.2. Large Documents

Best Practice	Why It Matters
Break long documents into sections	Splitting into chapters (e.g., Chapter 1.docx, Chapter 2.docx) makes editing faster and easier.
Merge after co-authoring is complete	Combining sections at the end ensures smoother collaboration and avoids performance issues.

 **Tip:** Use **SharePoint** folders or naming conventions to keep sections organised.

3. Performance & User Limitations

- **Max Users:** Up to 200 users; Optimal performance with fewer than 20 users, particularly for complex documents.
- **Network Stability:** A stable and fast internet connection is essential for all participants to ensure smooth real-time collaboration.
- **Document Complexity:** Avoid embedded objects and excessive tracked changes.

4. Real-Time Editing & Conflict Resolution

- **Live Updates:** Changes are visible to all users in real time. This allows for seamless collaboration and immediate feedback.
- **Conflict Handling:** If multiple users edit the same content simultaneously, SharePoint will either merge changes automatically or prompt users to resolve conflicts.
- **Revision Management:** Regularly accept or reject tracked changes to maintain document performance and clarity.

5. External User Access

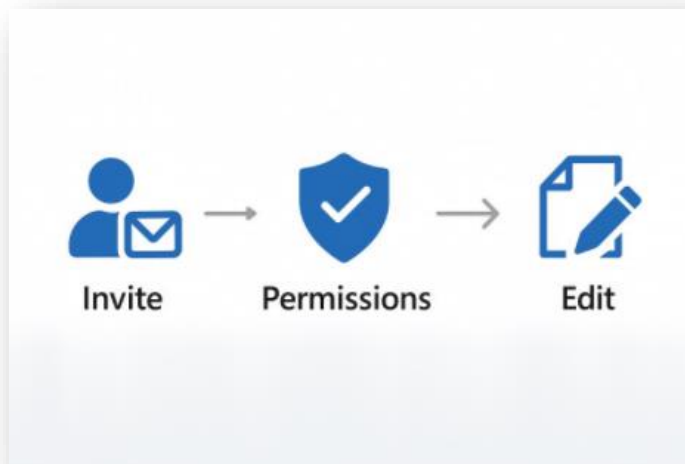
- **Permissions:** External users with their respective EMA accounts can participate in real-time co-authoring if granted appropriate edit permissions.
- **Limitations:** Some features may be restricted for external users. Ensure they are familiar with the document structure and any relevant security protocols.
- **Embedded Objects:** Embedded Objects: External users should avoid editing embedded objects (e.g., Excel charts) simultaneously, as the last saved version will overwrite previous changes.

6. Performance Optimisation

- **Track Changes:** Use **only when needed** and tidy up often. Approve or reject changes regularly to avoid performance issues.
- **View Settings:** Use **Web Layout** or **Draft View** for better performance in complex documents.

7. Productivity Features for Co-authoring

Feature	Description
Real-Time Presence	You can see where other people are working in the document. This helps avoid editing the same part at the same time.
Instant Updates	Co-authoring sends small changes through the cloud immediately, so everyone sees updates almost instantly.
Version History	SharePoint keeps a record of all changes made to the document. This is useful for tracking edits, especially when working with external collaborators.



8. Error Handling & Notifications

Feature	Description
Automatic Merging	Most changes are combined automatically. If two people edit the same part, Word will ask you to fix the conflict.
Notifications	Turn on notifications to get alerts when someone else makes changes to the document.
File Locks	If someone else is editing the file, you may see a lock. Wait until it's available. Frequent locking may indicate a need to review access policies.