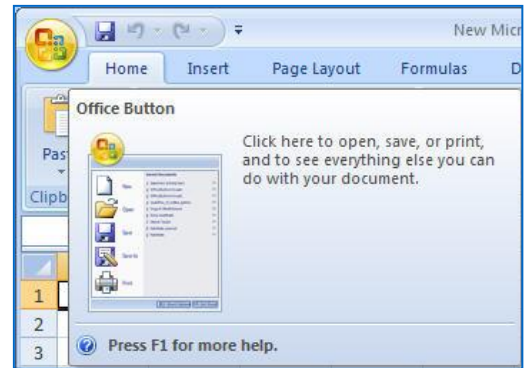


By Jody Gilbert

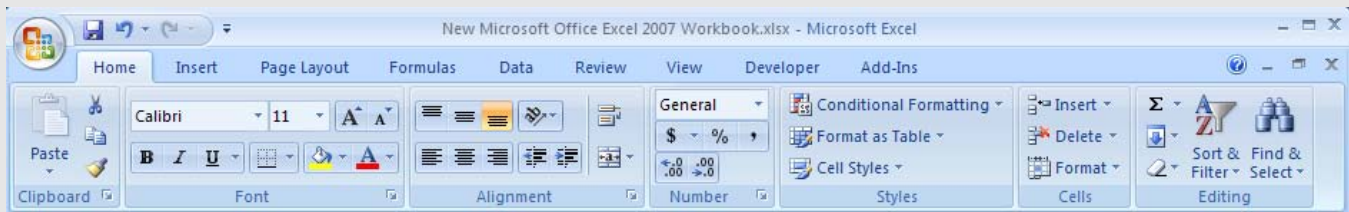
I've read a lot of early documents trying to sort out and describe the new Office 2007 interface. Not only has there been some confusion over where all the familiar stuff has gone and how to use the new stuff, but there have been rampant inconsistencies in terminology. So, for instance, the Office button has been variously called "the Logo button," "the Office icon," and "the big round control at the left end of the ribbon bar."

To help clarify things—and possibly to facilitate clearer conversations about all these features as you help users get up to speed—I've listed 10 major Office 2007 interface elements (using their Microsoft-given names).



## 1 The Ribbon

If you've seen Office 2007 (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, or Outlook items such as messages), you know about the Ribbon. It houses tabs with functional groupings of buttons and drop-down lists that are supposed to be relevant to particular tasks. Some icons are bigger than others, engineered that way to add prominence to the most commonly used items. Below is the Ribbon that appears when you're in an Excel worksheet cell.



If you find the Ribbon distracting or too space-consuming, toggle it out of sight using one of these methods:

- ◆ Press CTRL-F1.
- ◆ Double-click on any of the tab labels.
- ◆ Right-click on the row of tab labels or any item within a tab and choose Minimize The Ribbon from the shortcut menu.
- ◆ Click on the drop-down arrow at the end of the Quick Access toolbar and choose Minimize The Ribbon.

Clearly, Microsoft saw that one coming.

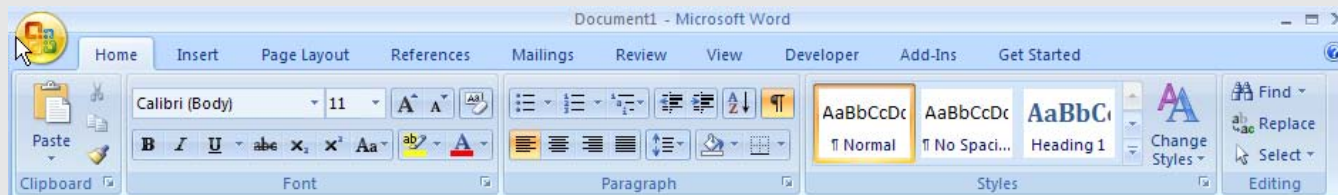
## 2 Tabs, contextual tabs, program tabs

Each of the beRibboned apps initially displays a standard set of tabs, which vary depending on the application. For example, Excel's standard set of tabs (which you can see above) includes Formulas and Data, whereas Word offers References and Mailings. In addition to the standard tabs, you'll see specialized *contextual tabs* that appear depending on what you're working on. For example, if you insert a chart in Excel, the Chart Tools tab will appear, with Design, Layout, and Format subtabs, as shown below.

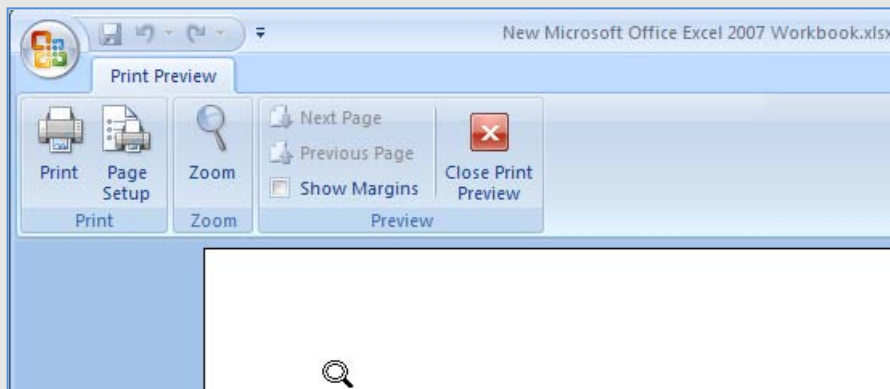


Incidentally, you may sometimes see more than one contextual tab. I was working with a picture in a table in a Word doc, and both the Table and Picture tabs appeared on my Ribbon.

Tabs come with their own terminology, too: Each tab is divided into *groups*. So, for example, the Word Home tab below has groups called Clipboard, Font, Paragraph, Styles, and Editing. And certain groups (all but the Editing group in the Ribbon shown here) have *dialog box launchers*, those tiny icons in the bottom-right corner of the group. Click that icon and you get a traditional dialog box or task pane associated with the group.



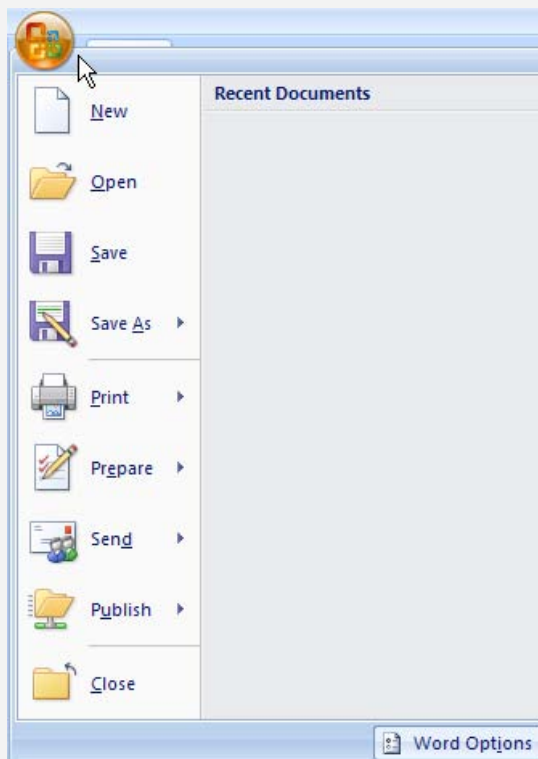
One more distinction to make regarding tabs: The Ribbon also sometimes displays *program tabs*. These are tabs that appear for certain views or authoring modes, such as Print Preview.



### 3 The Office button

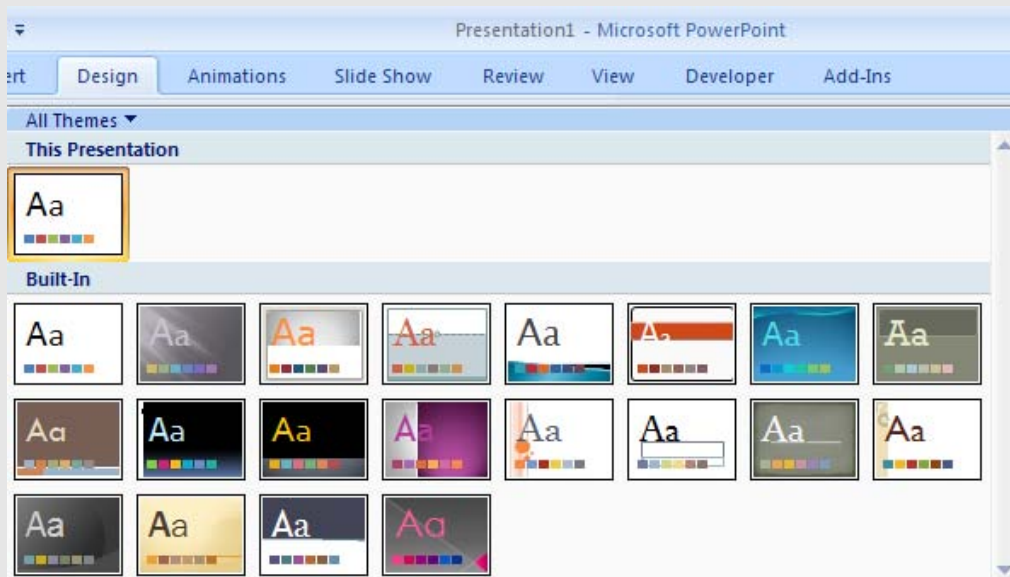
Clicking the Office button displays the Office menu, which is sort of like the traditional File menu. It offers basics such as New, Open, and Save commands, along with some newcomers, like Prepare and Publish. In the figure to the right, I've purged the Recent Documents list (not that I have anything to hide), but it took awhile to find the option that controls that display.

To save you some looking, here's the trick: Click Word Options (or Excel, PowerPoint, or Access Options) at the bottom of the menu and select Advanced. In the pane on the right, go to Display. You can enter the desired number in the Show This Number Of Recent Documents text box (0 to clear the list and keep it that way, and as many as 50 in Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Access limits you to a maximum of nine.) Just click OK when you're finished.



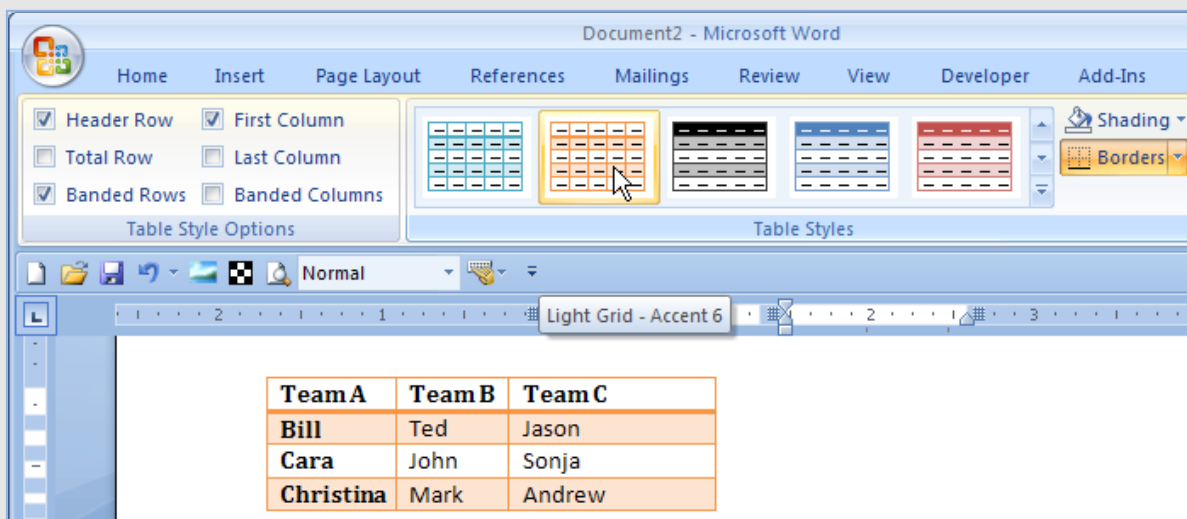
## 4 Galleries

A gallery is a palette of prefab formatting attributes you can apply to various elements in Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access. Examples include tables, styles, charts, and PowerPoint themes, shown here.



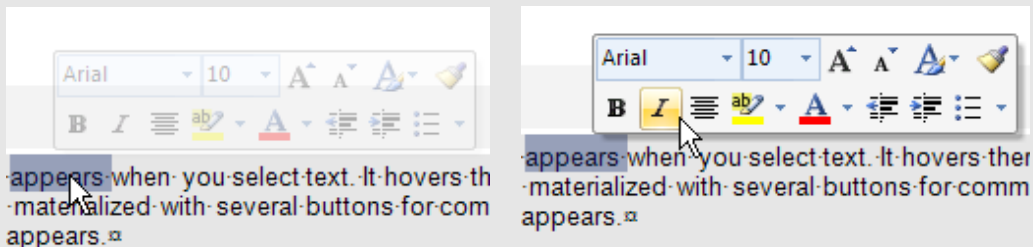
## 5 Live Preview

Along with the gallery feature comes Live Preview, which is aptly named. When you move the mouse over the various selections in a gallery, your document takes on the formatting attributes of the current selection—just as a preview. So you can flit from one choice to another and try on the various sets of formatting without committing to anything until you're ready. In the image below, I was spinning through the offerings in the gallery of table styles:



## 6 The Mini Toolbar

The Mini Toolbar is a ghost toolbar that appears when you select text. It hovers there in the ether unless you move the mouse pointer over it, when it materializes with several buttons for common text formatting tasks. Move off it or click somewhere else, and it disappears.

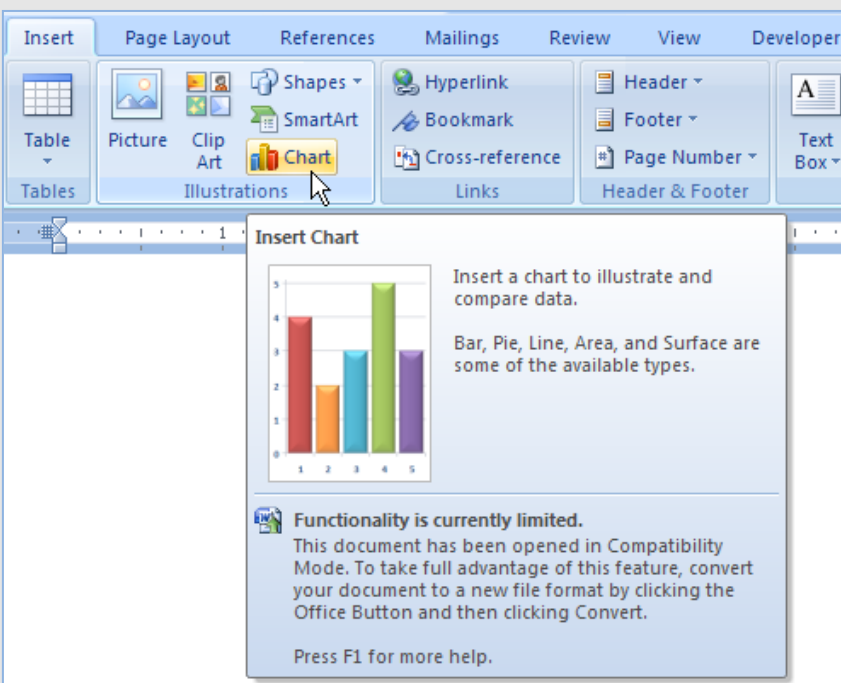


## 7 Enhanced ScreenTips

When you move the mouse pointer over items in the Ribbon, you'll see Enhanced ScreenTips. These ScreenTips will probably come in handy for novice users and those who are learning the Office 2007 ropes. More experienced users may not pay much attention to them, although in some cases, they should. For example, if you forget you're working on a document in Compatibility Mode (as I did), you might otherwise be confounded if you run into limited functionality. The ScreenTip shown here serves as a useful reminder.

Not all ScreenTips are this colorful or verbose. Some offer the feature name and a terse description and possibly a keyboard shortcut.

If you don't like the ScreenTips, you can suppress them or eliminate the "Enhanced" characteristics. Choose Options from the Office menu and under the Popular settings, choose either Don't Show Feature Descriptions In ScreenTips or Don't Show ScreenTips.



## 8 The Quick Access Toolbar

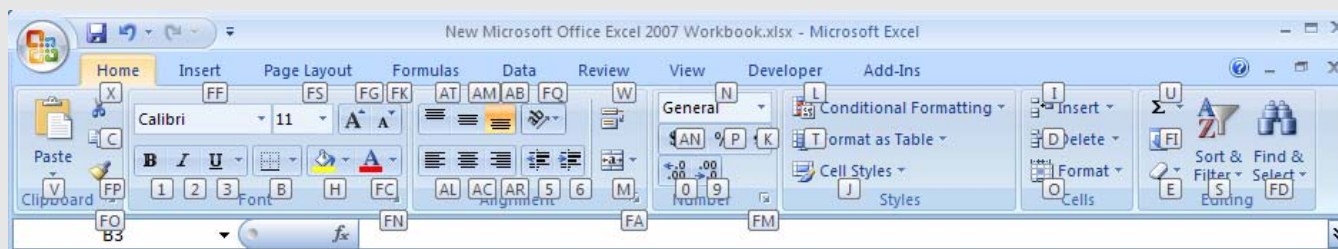
The Quick Access Toolbar is by no means an innovation. Still, I'm relieved to have it in the Office 2007 interface because it can serve as a customized toolbar that's similar to ones I've always used in earlier versions. The Quick Access Toolbar, shown here, displays only above or below the Ribbon (no undocking or minimizing).



The Quick Access Toolbar comes with a set of basic, frequently needed buttons to get you started. At the right end, you'll find the Customize Quick Access Toolbar drop-down arrow, which gives you a list of other frequently needed buttons, such as Undo, Print Preview, and Spelling & Grammar. Just select what you want from the list and they'll appear on the Toolbar. The better news is that you can also choose the More Commands option from the list to access all commands, including those not found anywhere on the Ribbon, as well as any macros you might want to have handy.

## 9 KeyTips

I don't want to editorialize excessively here, and I should point out that the traditional Office keyboard shortcuts (CTRL-C, SHIFT-F3, etc.) work as they've always worked. And KeyTips—designed to serve as keyboard accelerators to access various items on the Ribbon—are sound in principle. You press ALT and then you press the appropriate additional keys as indicated by the KeyTips labels. But I'm not entirely convinced that this implementation is going to be all that well received. Here's an example:



## 10 The status bar

Okay, you already know the name of this one--and miracle of miracles, it's still in the same old spot. But it's a status bar on steroids, so you should be aware of its new trappings. By default, the Office 2007 status bar offers options such as a Zoom slider for magnification and view options (Draft, Print Layout, etc.). The options vary by application.

But here's the best part: You can customize what appears on each application's status bar. Just right-click on it and you'll see the Customize Status Bar menu, shown here. It lists everything you can place on the status bar, along with its current state.

Customize Status Bar	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Formatted Page Number 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Section 1
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Page Number 4 of 5
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vertical Page Position 4.2"
<input type="checkbox"/>	Line Number 12
<input type="checkbox"/>	Column 70
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Word Count 923
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Spelling and Grammar Check Errors
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Language
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Signatures Off
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Information Management Policy Off
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Permissions Off
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Track Changes Off
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Caps Lock Off
<input type="checkbox"/>	Overtype Insert
<input type="checkbox"/>	Selection Mode
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Macro Recording Not Recording
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	View Shortcuts
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Zoom 100%
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Zoom Slider

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## Version history

**Version:** 1.0

**Published:** June 7, 2007

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