

Lesson 1-7: Understand common file formats

1 Open a new blank workbook.

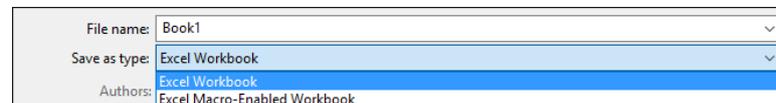
You learned how to do this in: *Lesson 1-1: Start Excel and open a new blank workbook.*

2 View the file formats supported by Excel.

1. Click the *File* button at the top-left of the screen.
2. Click: *Save As* in the left-hand list.
3. Click *Browse* in the *Save As* menu.

The *Save As* dialog appears.

4. Click the drop-down arrow to the right of the *Save as type* list.



A list appears showing all of the different file formats supported by Excel (see sidebar).

3 Understand the most important file formats.

The Wealth Of Nations
Excel Workbook
Excel Workbook
Excel Macro-Enabled Workbook
Excel Binary Workbook
Excel 97-2003 Workbook
CSV UTF-8 (Comma delimited)
XML Data
Single File Web Page
Web Page
Excel Template
Excel Macro-Enabled Template
Excel 97-2003 Template
Text (Tab delimited)
Unicode Text
XML Spreadsheet 2003
Microsoft Excel 5.0/95 Workbook
CSV (Comma delimited)
Formatted Text (Space delimited)
Text (Macintosh)
Text (MS-DOS)
CSV (Macintosh)
CSV (MS-DOS)
DIF (Data Interchange Format)
SYLK (Symbolic Link)
Excel Add-in
Excel 97-2003 Add-in
PDF
XPS Document
Strict Open XML Spreadsheet
OpenDocument Spreadsheet

Excel Workbook (the Open XML format)

Before Office 2007 was released, every program stored its information on the hard disk in a completely different way. These incompatible formats are called *binary formats*. This made it very difficult to write applications that could be used together.

All of this changed with a file format that was first introduced in Office 2007: *Office Open XML*

Microsoft have published exactly how this format works and given it away free to the world's developer community. This allows other programs to easily work with Excel workbook files. For example, Apple's iPhone supports Office Open XML Email attachments.

Excel Macro-Enabled Workbook

An Excel Macro Enabled Workbook is simply a workbook that has program code (called VBA code) embedded within it. Macros are beyond the scope of this book but are covered in the *Excel Expert Skills* book in this series.

While macro code is very powerful it can also be destructive as it is extremely simple to write damaging viruses within Excel macro code.

Macro programming (also called VBA programming) is a vast subject of its own and is not useful to the vast majority of Excel users. The Smart Method® run comprehensive classroom Excel VBA courses but they are usually only taken by scientists and engineers who need to add very advanced functionality to Excel.

Versions of Excel before Excel 2007 could potentially allow a workbook to infect your machine with a macro virus because all Excel files were capable of carrying macros. Because the formats are now separate, it is easier to avoid opening potentially infected files.

Excel 97-2003 Workbook

This is the old binary format that allows users with earlier versions of Excel to open your workbooks. Some features won't work in earlier versions and if you've used those in your workbook, Excel will display a warning when you save telling you which features will be lost.

Excel Binary Workbook

An oddity in Excel 2007/2010/2013/2016 is a binary format called: *Excel Binary Workbook*. This is a binary alternative to Open XML but it can't be read by earlier versions of Excel. The advantages of this format are that it generally results in smaller file sizes and loads and saves more quickly than Open XML. You will only notice a speed difference when working with very large worksheets.

The *Excel Binary Workbook* format may also present a security threat as (just like the *Excel Macro-Enabled Workbook* format) it can contain macros that could infect your machine with a macro virus.

PDF

If you need to send a worksheet to a user who does not own a copy of Excel, you can save it in PDF (Portable Document Format). This format was invented by Adobe and is also sometimes called *Adobe Acrobat* or simply *Acrobat*.

All major web browsers can open and display PDF files. In Windows 10 PDF files will, by default, open using the new Edge browser. If you send a user a PDF file you can be confident that they will be able to read and print (but not change) the worksheet.

If you are reading this book as an e-book you are using a PDF file right now as all Smart Method e-books are published using the PDF file format.

Other formats

As you can see, there are several other less commonly used formats supported by Excel 2016 but the above formats are the only ones you'll normally encounter. The most important thing to remember is that, unless there's a good reason to use a different format, you should always save documents in the default *Excel Workbook* format.

note

Sharing files using Cloud Computing features

You should be aware that Excel 2016 provides another way to share files with users that do not have Excel 2016 (or, indeed, any version of Excel) installed upon their computer. This is done using Excel 2016's built in *Cloud Computing* features.

Cloud Computing also allows users to open (and even edit) Excel workbooks using devices such as iPads, Android pads, Apple Macs and Smartphones.

Support for Cloud Computing was originally introduced in the Excel 2013 release.

Because Cloud Computing is such an involved (and complex) subject it is beyond the scope of this *Basic Skills* book.

The *Essential Skills* book in this series devotes an entire session to Cloud Computing (in *Session Eight: Cloud Computing*).