About „Office 2007"

"My friend sometimes sends me emails with Microsoft Word attachments. I used to be able to open them but now I can't".

If this sounds familiar, it could be because the friend has installed Microsoft Office 2007.

Microsoft Office 2007 introduces a new file format that is based on XML. It's called "Open XML Formats" and applies to Microsoft Office Word 2007, Excel 2007, and PowerPoint 2007. XML provides a number of advantages such as automatic compaction of files (so they take up less space), improved damaged file recovery (helps if a file has become damaged or corrupted in some way), better privacy and control of user information (you should see the information that each Word document contains!!!!), and a few more that will probably make your eyes glaze over.

XML (Extensible Mark-up Language) is a mark-up language. Its primary purpose is to facilitate the sharing of structured data across different information systems, particularly via the Internet.

A mark-up language provides a way to combine text and extra information about it. The extra information, including structure, layout, or other information, is expressed using *mark-up*, which is typically intermingled with the primary text. The best-known mark-up language in modern use is HTML Hypertext Mark-up Language), one of the foundations of the Internet.

What all this technical stuff means is that files created by applications in Office 2007 will have a four character extension rather than the three characters created by Office 97-2003.

Word documents created by Office 97-2003 typically had an extension of "doc".

A **Word document created in Office 2007** will have an extension of "docx" (although you can choose to save the document as an Office 97-2003 file and it will have an extension of "doc". This means that users of Office 97-2003 can open the document).

Put simply, an extension like "doc", or "PDF" or "jpg" is used by the operating system to determine the program that will be used to open the file.

So, if you are using Office 2007, and you want to make sure other users can open your files, then choose "File/Save as/Word 97-2003 Document" to save your files.

If you are a user of Office 97-2003 and someone sends you a file in Office 2007 format, you can download and install the "Microsoft Office Compatibility Pack for Word, Excel, and PowerPoint 2007 file formats" (try saying that in one breath).

The download is available **free** from Microsoft and if you put something like "**office compatibility pack**" into your favourite search engine (like **Google**), you'll find it easily.

Thanks to Peter Whalan for this article.