

# Microsoft Office Professional Edition 2003

By Larry Drake

## Product Information:

Microsoft Office Professional Edition 2003 (incorporates Standard edition, Student and Teacher edition and Small Business edition).

This product is the natural outgrowth of the older versions of Office from Office 97 to the present versions. These older Office products are excellent, bulletproof and a great value for the money. For example you can now purchase Office Professional 2002 on the Internet for \$40-60. Office Professional Edition 2003 (hereinafter "Office Pro") represents a quantum leap in concept and complexity. It is keyed to the Internet and broadband usage on the Internet. Where under old systems you could pick from a handful of clip art choices, you can now have the whole universe of clip art at your fingertips on this totally interactive system. Office Pro is a marketing based system and much of its value derives from marketing related activities in concert with others.

Office Pro is expensive. The cheapest I found on line was \$355 and the highest almost \$500. You can purchase the Standard or Student/Teacher editions for \$125-150. These are stripped down versions of Office Pro, but probably a good value if you only need their contents ("Word," "Excel," "Power Point" and "Outlook (Not to be confused with "Outlook Express.")). For an additional \$100 plus you can move up to Small Business edition that adds on "Publisher and "Business contact Manager." For 98% of us, I suspect the standard edition is more than we will ever need. I would think an older version (2000 or 2002) of Office would be our best buy. The rest of this review is limited to a discussion of Office Pro 2003.

Introductory Summary: Office Pro offers a new way to collaborate more effectively with the latest versions of Word, Excel, Power Point, Publisher, Access and Outlook (with Business Contact Manager for Outlook 2003). With your broadband connection you can get assistance in a variety of formats and in greater detail than ever before. You can reach out to the business world that is similarly outfitted. Not all businesses are so inclined. My son-in-law works for P&G and they have decided to pass on Office Pro 2003, considering it too expensive for the increased value.

System Requirements (In addition to what Microsoft states below you definitely need a Broadband connection to achieve the desired results.)

PC with a Pentium 233 MHz or higher. Preferably a Pentium III. (My Athlon works great.)

Microsoft Windows 2000 with service pack 3 or later, or Windows XP. (My XP professional works great and loaded with ease on a wireless G hookup).

128 MB of RAM. (I have 512).

400 MB of available disc space. (It will use all of this.)

Note: There is an optional install on Business Contact Manager that I did not get into that requires 450 MHz, 256 MB RAM and additional software. This was beyond my limited knowledge.

Installation: Was easy and the resulting software does not appear to clog or interfere in any way with my machine.

Features: It would take two Gazettes to list all of the features available with this system. Each of the modules (Word, Excel etc.) is dramatically enhanced. For example in Word new features include: a new look designed for XP adding color and depth to toolbars, menus and task panes. Better on line Help features that utilize the Internet. A new View allows you to display multiple pages and most importantly the ability to share documents and set up various levels of access with security protocols.

Documentation: No manuals come with the software. You can purchase a manual that Microsoft has published by Katherine Murray that discusses the various features and benefits in detail (cost \$10-20), but all of the documentation and training is available to the user by the click of the Mouse once you have loaded the new software. I found the Manual and the Internet information complete, but not as user friendly as I would like. I tend to struggle with computerize so the fault is probably in me and not in the stars.

Product Support: Realizing that I jumped from Office 97 to 2003 in one leap, I can testify that product support is definitely needed for me. It appears that Office Pro 2003 takes product support to a new level and has set the bar very high for all of its competitors. If you use this system every day, the need for product support will probably diminish over time. For those of us that use the system periodically, the on-line product support will be invaluable, and of course, it is constantly updating itself. Changes are routinely being made to the system and updates are facile to do.

Summary: The future is now in Office Pro 2003. Still it is not for everyone and probably never will be. I think this is the kind of evolutionary product that can greatly enrich our computer skills and thus our productivity and output. It is software of great power with the promise of better things to come. The beauty of the system to me is the way it evolves over time, ever changing, every advancing the envelope to take advantage of the world as it is. Everyone will have to jump in some time. Once in you can progress with the technology, but you will have to do your part to make it work.