

# iWork vs. Microsoft Office vs. Google Docs

## Which iPad and iPhone Office Suite is Best?

By Allyson Kazmucha

iPhone and iPad owners have an amazing problem: iOS is the only platform with *all* major office suites. The good news is we get to choose between Apple iWork (Pages, Numbers, and Keynote), Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint), and Google Docs (Docs, Sheets, and Slides). The bad news is we have to choose between Apple iWork, Microsoft Office, and Google Docs. And it can be a tough choice! iWork is great for consumers. Microsoft Office is the enterprise standard. Google Docs is increasingly popular. Which one is best? I put them to the test to find out.

### Word processing: Pages vs. Word vs. Docs

One of the most common things we do with an office suite is create documents or PDFs. Whether you need to update your résumé, complete an assignment for school, create a flyer for an event, or something else, you need the ability to enter text efficiently and format it effectively.

In terms of templates, both Pages and Word offer a decent selection from which to choose—everything from reports to résumés to outlines and more. Google Docs doesn't offer templates, and simply launches

you into a blank text document. If you're looking for templates, you'll want to use either Pages or Word.

When it comes to features and editing tools, Pages uses interactive formatting that lets you select different elements. Editing tools and the format menu change depending on what you've selected. As you type, a formatting bar appears over the keyboard so you can easily adjust fonts, alignment, breaks, and more. You can also add tables, charts, graphs, shapes, and photos in just a few taps. Overall, Pages offers robust features that are easy to use and work great with a touchscreen interface. When it's time to export your documents, Pages supports both .doc and .docx formats. Pair Pages with a Bluetooth keyboard, and it's almost comparable to the desktop version of the program.

Microsoft Word has been completely designed around a touchscreen interface, but will be familiar to desktop Office users as well. (This is true across all Microsoft apps.) There are tabs for creating, formatting, and editing your documents. In just two taps, you can insert or format pretty much any object. Features such as tracking and reviewing changes, section breaks, and a few others require an Office 365 Premium subscription. Either way, the free version of Word offers enough features for most folks to accomplish what they need without any issues. One caveat: I wish Word had the formatting toolbar similar to Pages.

Google Docs is simpler than either Pages or Word, and the editing tools are more basic. As with Word, I wish Google had placed a formatting bar directly over the keyboard instead of at the top of the screen. Image insertion is also missing, which will be a deal breaker for many (you can go back to the web version to insert images, but that's extremely inconvenient).

When it comes to word processing, Pages and Word are equal in terms of features. However, certain features such as review tracking, section breaks, and more are free with Pages; they require a premium subscription with Microsoft Word. Unless you need Word or simply prefer the layout, Pages currently offers the best value for most people.

### Spreadsheets: Numbers vs. Excel vs. Sheets

Numbers proves that doing calculations on an iPad or iPhone doesn't have to be painful—just plot your data and choose which kind of table, graph, or chart you'd like to use to represent it. The keyboard also changes dynamically to suit what you're doing. So if you type an “=” sign to start a formula, Numbers gives you a full number pad and relevant buttons you may want to use. There are also many templates to choose from, including ones for creating budgets, calculating net worth, tracking grades (great for teachers), planning travel, and more.

There's no disputing that Microsoft Excel has been the king of spreadsheets, the main reason being its robust set of features. In networked office environments, Excel can't be beat. And Microsoft did a good job of bringing the experience to the iPhone and iPad. When using formulas in Excel, the formatting bar automatically makes suggestions so handling complex formulas is easy. The keyboard also is suited for entering numbers and editing formulas, a feature I wish the Word application had. Again, some features require a premium subscription.

Google Sheets is a bare-bones application that allows you to create spreadsheets, but it lacks many of the formatting tools and templates offered in competitor apps such

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as Excel and Numbers. However, if your main purpose is to track data and share it with large groups of people, Google's collaboration tools are some of the best around. You can share sheets via e-mail, and once the recipients accept, you can view changes, make comments to one another, and even see who's changing what in real time.

If features and advanced tools are your main concern, there's none better than Excel. If you're new to spreadsheets and appreciate a balance between ease of use and features, Numbers is for you. If collaboration tools are what you're after and your feature requirements are minimal, Google Sheets will suit you fine.

### Presentations: Keynote vs. PowerPoint vs. Slides

Keynote has always been Apple's best office app, and the same holds true on iOS. Aside from offering gorgeous templates, Keynote's interface feels as if it were made for the touchscreen. Adding slides couldn't be easier, and neither could tweaking them to your liking. Just like the other iWork apps, formatting and editing are interactive, so the menus change depending on the content with which you're working. The Keynote Remote feature also lets you use an iOS device as a remote control for a presentation on another iOS device or a Mac.

PowerPoint is no slouch when it comes to creating presentations. You can create animations, transitions, and more in just a few taps. If you've used PowerPoint on a desktop computer, the experience is very much the same on the iPad and iPhone. Inserting objects is also easy and includes support for not only tables and pictures, but videos as well.

Google Slides doesn't provide as good an experience as either Keynote or PowerPoint. Slides are technically editable, but in reality, they're not. You can add text into existing text boxes, but there isn't a way to move or edit the text boxes. You are limited to choosing from Google's pre-made, text-only slides with no image support unless you opt to finish building your presentation from a web browser. You can choose themes on the web which will sync with the mobile version, but it's not very convenient.

When it comes to creating presentations, Keynote and PowerPoint are virtually identical. Both support inserting images, videos, and other objects and allow users to choose from several great-looking templates. Google Slides doesn't support these capabilities.

### Syncing, sharing, and collaborating

All of Apple's iWork apps tie in with iCloud. That means no matter the device on which you create something, you'll be able to access it on any other iOS device or Mac that's linked to your account. You can also use Continuity and its Handoff feature to share documents between devices as you go. All Apple iWork apps also support the most popular file formats and let you easily share what you create through e-mail or an iCloud link.

Microsoft Office syncs with Office 365, so you can access all your work from anywhere via the web. You can also link to Dropbox and pull files into any Office app. Google and Apple don't offer Dropbox integration, though that may change in the future thanks to iOS 8's third-party storage provider support.

Google uses Google Drive as a hub. There, you can view *all* your Docs, Sheets, and Slides files in one place, and they'll sync anywhere you can access Google Drive, including any desktop browser. You can easily share documents or export them from apps and online, and when it comes to collaboration, Google can't be beat. Not only can you share Google Docs files with others for viewing and editing, but you can see changes being made in real time. This makes Google Docs a great option for workgroups and teams needing live collaboration options.

### Who should use iWork?

If you're tied into an Apple ecosystem consisting of Macs and multiple iOS devices and iCloud is your main syncing service of choice, Pages, Keynote, and Numbers will serve you well. The iWork apps manage to strike a great balance between features and ease of use. If you don't need the most advanced tools and you're new to working with office documents, iWork apps are a great place to start.

- Pages: \$9.99; free for newer iPhones, iPads, and Macs; **Download Now**
- Numbers: \$9.99; free for newer iPhones, iPads, and Macs; **Download Now**
- Keynote: \$9.99; free for newer iPhones, iPads, and Macs; **Download Now**

### Who should use Microsoft Office?

Microsoft Office has always been the most advanced productivity suite on the market. Anyone familiar with Office 365 on the PC will feel right at home with Office for iPad or iPhone. Office is also the only offering that includes Dropbox integration—something you'll want to consider if you store most of your documents in Dropbox. The more advanced features of Office require a 365 subscription. If you already have a subscription, Microsoft Office is hands down the best option considering all the premium features at your fingertips.

- Word: Free; **Download Now**
- Excel: Free; **Download Now**
- PowerPoint: Free; **Download Now**

### Who should use Google Docs?

Although a bare-bones productivity suite, Google Docs is free and offers some of the best collaboration tools you can find. If you don't need fancy formatting and media capabilities, want to work with multiple people, and like having everything stored in the cloud, Google Docs is your best option. If you work with presentations, however, you'd benefit from picking up either Keynote or PowerPoint.

- Docs: Free; **Download Now**
- Sheets: Free; **Download Now**
- Slides: Free; **Download Now** ■

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*Allyson Kazmucha, from Michigan City, Indiana, is a senior editor at iMore. She manages help, how-to, and do-it-yourself content for iMore, as well as much of its app content. iMore is a valuable source for everything iPhone, iPad, Mac, and Apple, featuring in-depth news and analysis, daily tips and how-tos, the latest app and accessory reviews, and podcasts.*