

# Opening and Editing Word Online Documents using the Desktop Microsoft Office Program

Jim Cammack, update 4/6/25

## Introduction:

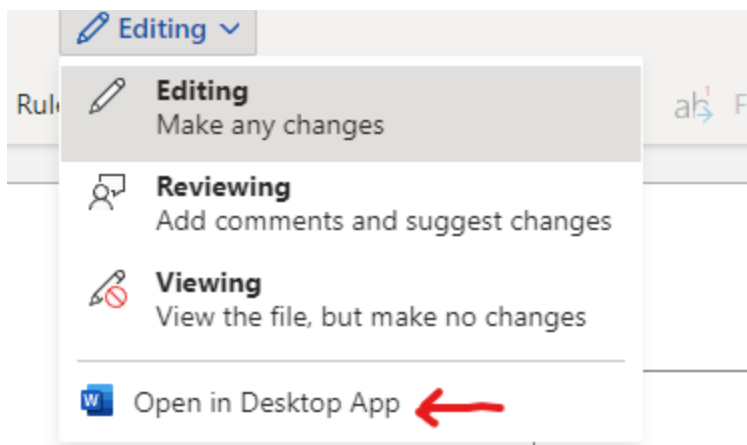
The Microsoft business model has always been mainly about selling software. In addition to the Windows operating system, Microsoft makes a ton of money selling Microsoft Office. To keep the money flowing, Microsoft needs businesses and individuals to buy Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.) and install it on their computers. But Microsoft is feeling the heat from competitors such as Google, which offer free software, such as Google Docs, available in the “cloud.”

Microsoft’s answer is to offer a free version of Office with Onedrive. These Office apps are available online with your microsoft account, and include **Word Online**, **Excel Online**, **PowerPoint Online**, and **OneNote Online**. These online versions are **limited** versions of the “full” Office desktop programs. For example, in Word Online, you can’t insert a textbox. So, if you are working in Word Online and you want to insert a text box, you need to open the desktop version of Word from your computer.

**\*Note:** To distinguish these full Office products from their online cousins, we will refer to these paid versions of Office programs as the “**desktop**” versions, i.e., the “desktop version of Word”.

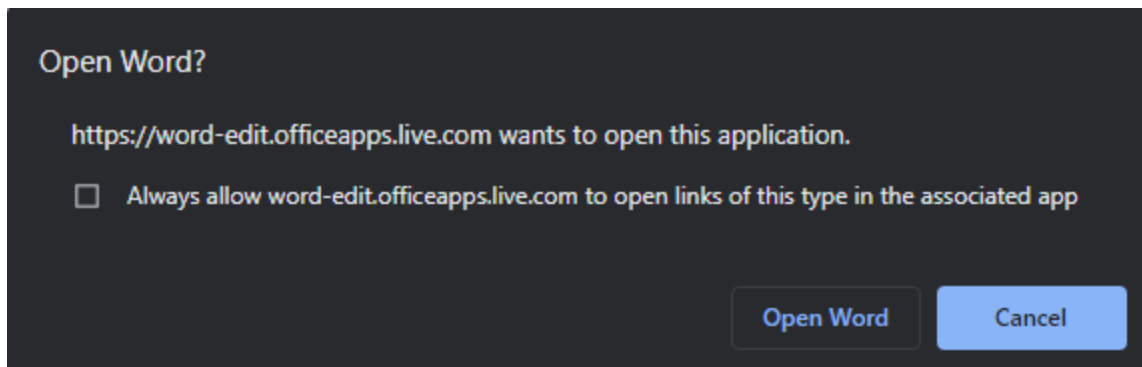
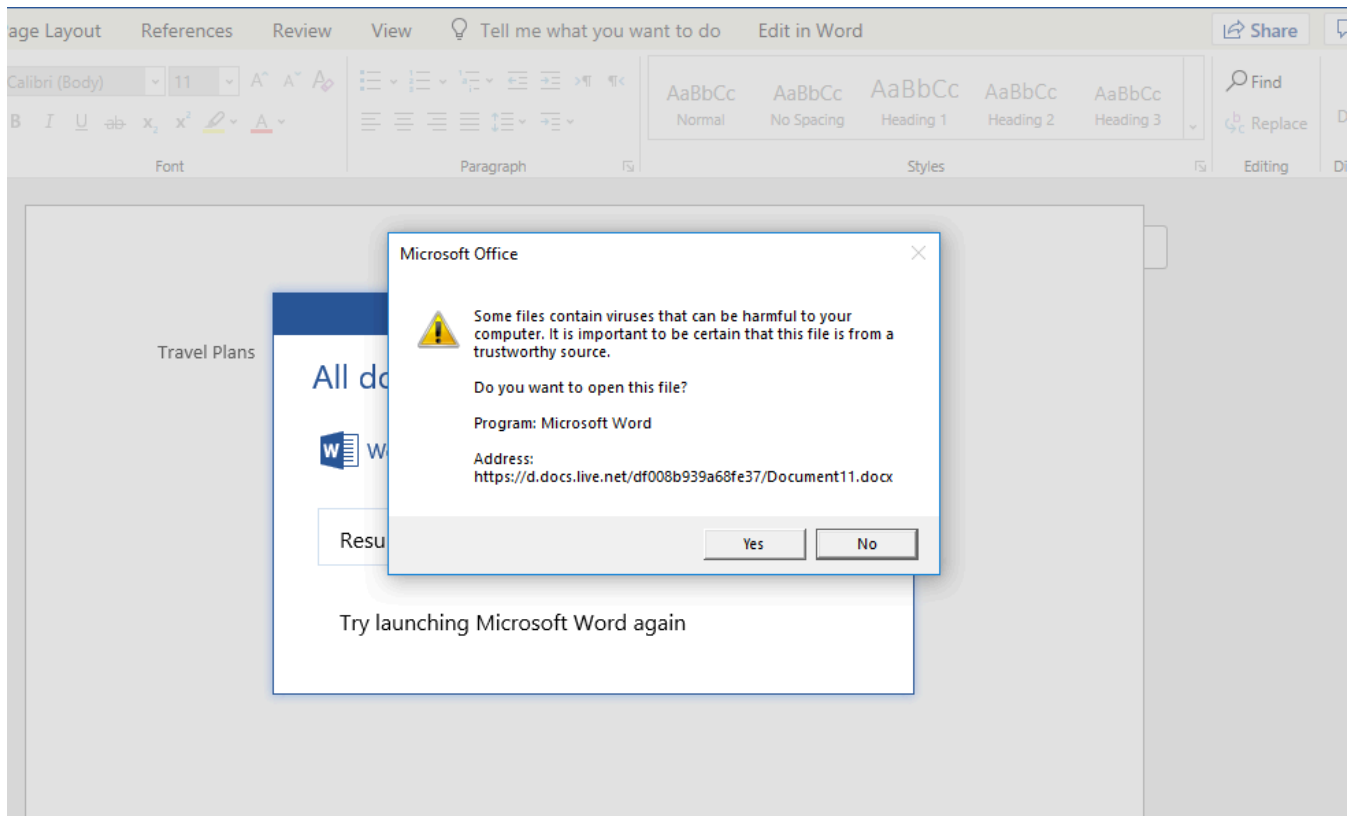
## To Edit a Word Online Document Using the Desktop Version of Word

1. Assume you are editing a Word document in Word Online and you want to edit the document with the desktop version of Word. You might want to do this, for example, if need to use a feature available only in the desktop version of Word. You can do this while in Word Online by clicking the **Editing button** and then **Open in Desktop** button, as shown below:

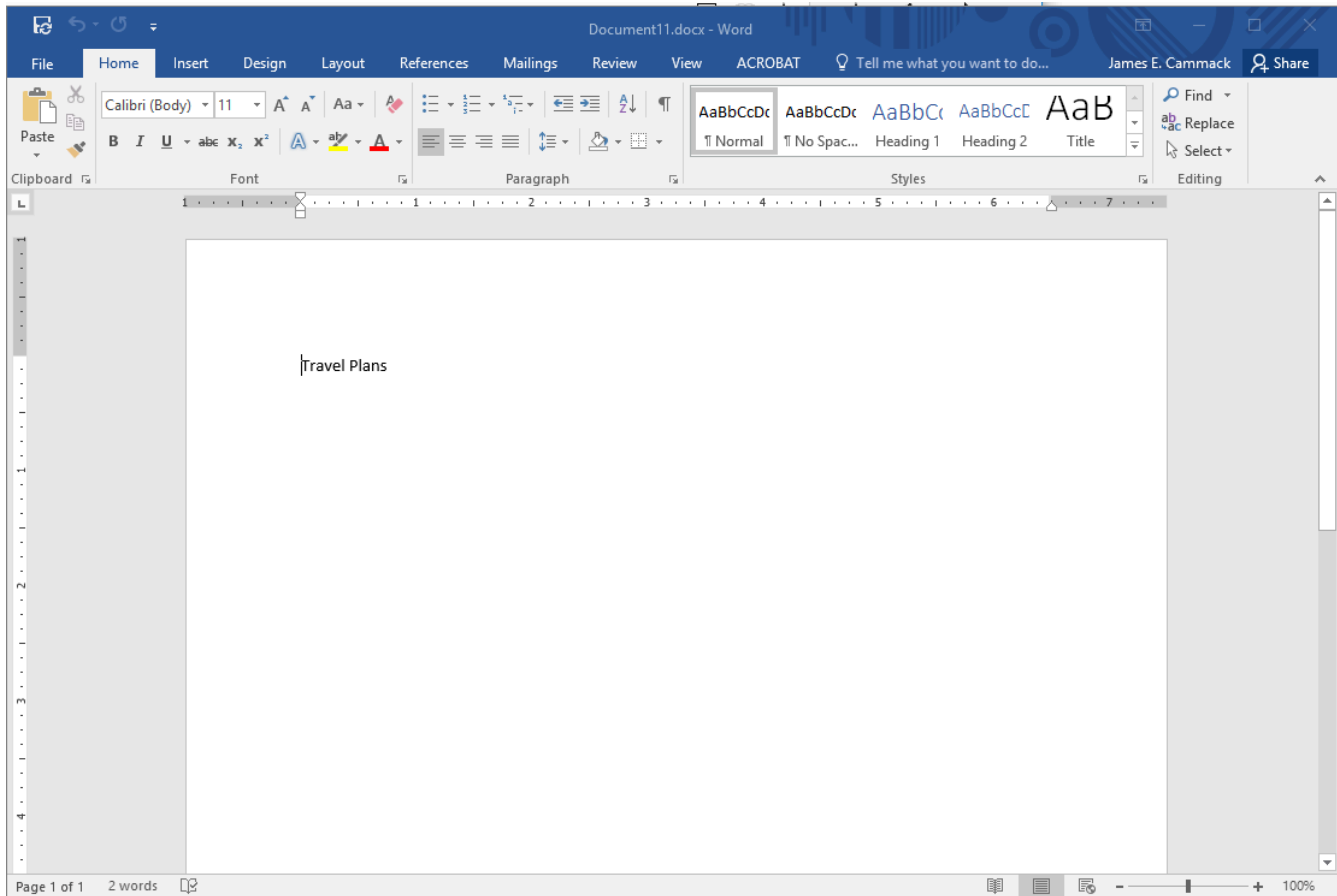


2. Clicking **Open in the Desktop** will do two things: 1) it will tell your computer to open the desktop Word program on your computer and 2) it will automatically download the document from Word Online and open it in the desktop Word. (Note, to do this, you must already have the desktop version of Word installed on your computer).
3. Before it opens in the desktop version of Word, you may first get messages similar to the following. This is because your computer (the Windows OS or Mac OS) sees that you are attempting to download a document from the web, and wants you to be sure this is safe to do. In fact, the website is not only asking to download the Word document to your computer, it is also requesting your computer run a program (in this case, the desktop version of Word) which is installed on your computer. In the following screenshot, the computer is asking you if you want to allow the file to be opened, and in the second screenshot below, it is asking you if it is safe to open a program (desktop Word) on your computer. **In addition, you may also be prompted for**

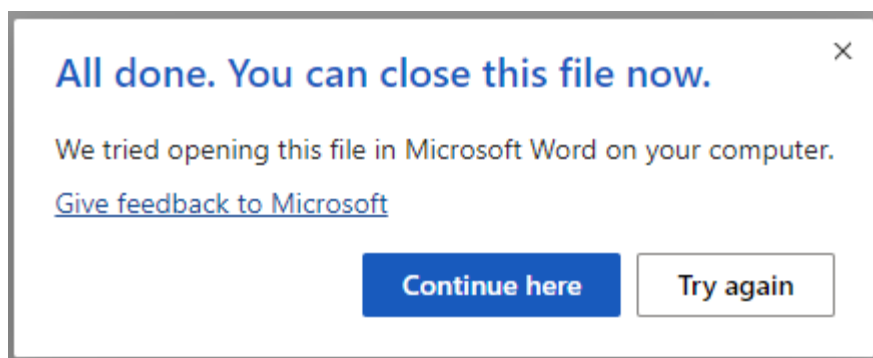
**your username and/or password. This is the username and password of your personal Microsoft account. This is to make sure you are authorized to download the document from OneDrive**



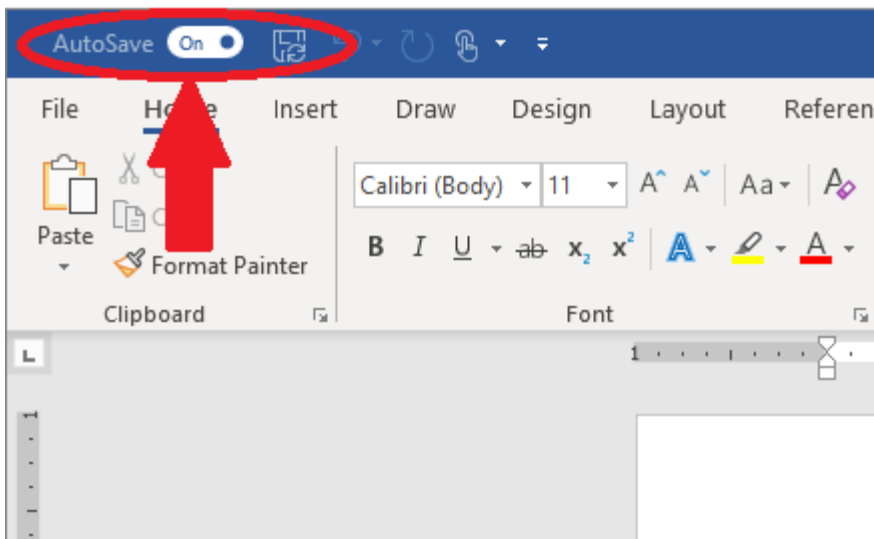
4. If all goes well, you will see your document in the desktop Word as shown here:



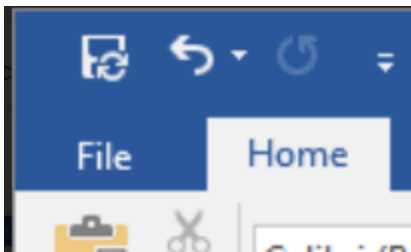
5. **NOTE: Two windows will be open.** At this point your document will be open on your computer in desktop Word. However, you will also have Word Online still open in the web browser window (it may be hidden behind other windows). Look at the following screenshot. This is what you will see in the web browser window. The message in the browser window is telling you that the Word Online document is now open in desktop Word on your computer. You can leave the browser window open for now. After editing the document in desktop Word, you can save it back to Onedrive and click “Resume editing here” to continue editing the document in Word Online.



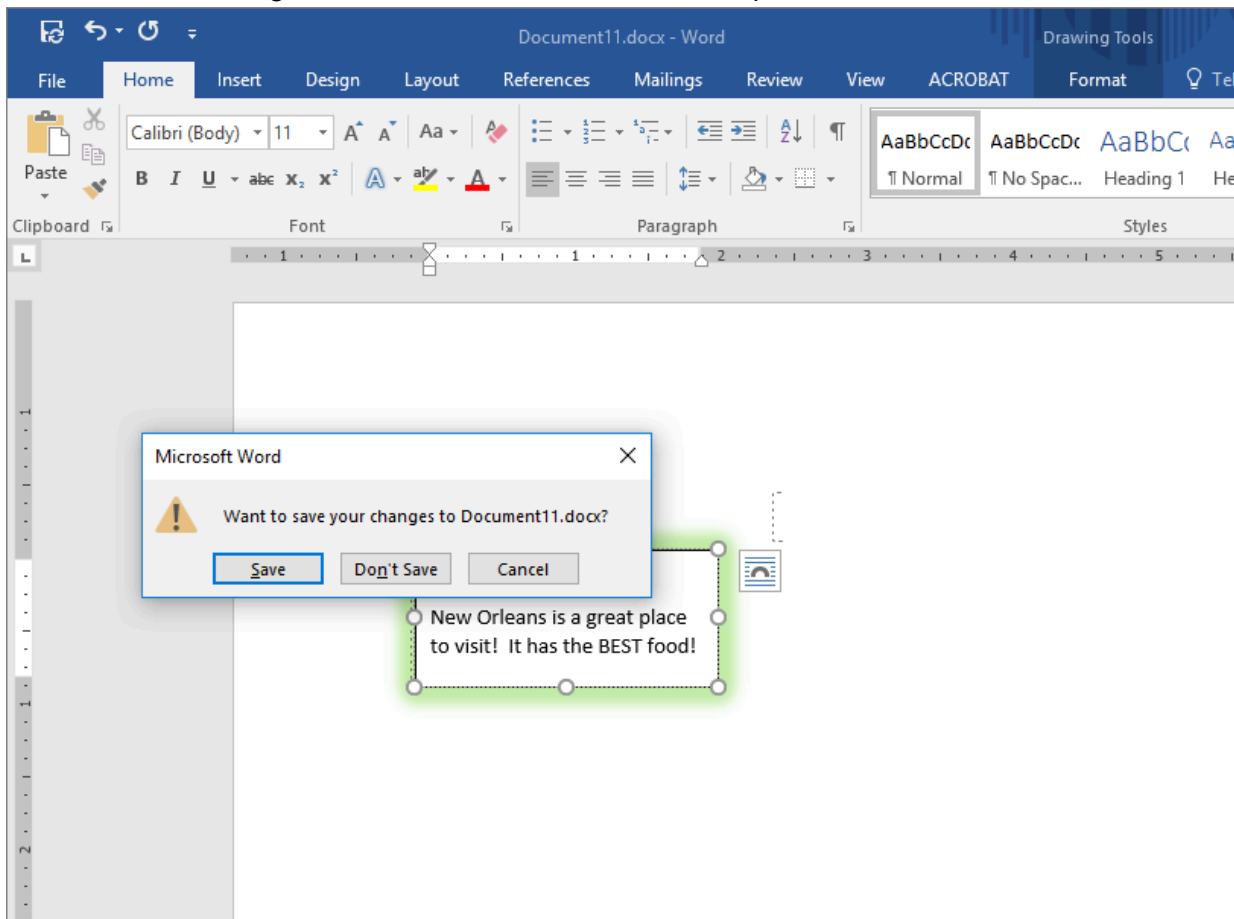
6. **A Note about Saving.** Unlike Word Online, in the desktop version of Word, documents are not normally automatically saved. So, when you edit your document with desktop Word, you will need to save it manually. In some cases, the computer may display the Autosave feature, which allows the computer to automatically save changes back to Onedrive.



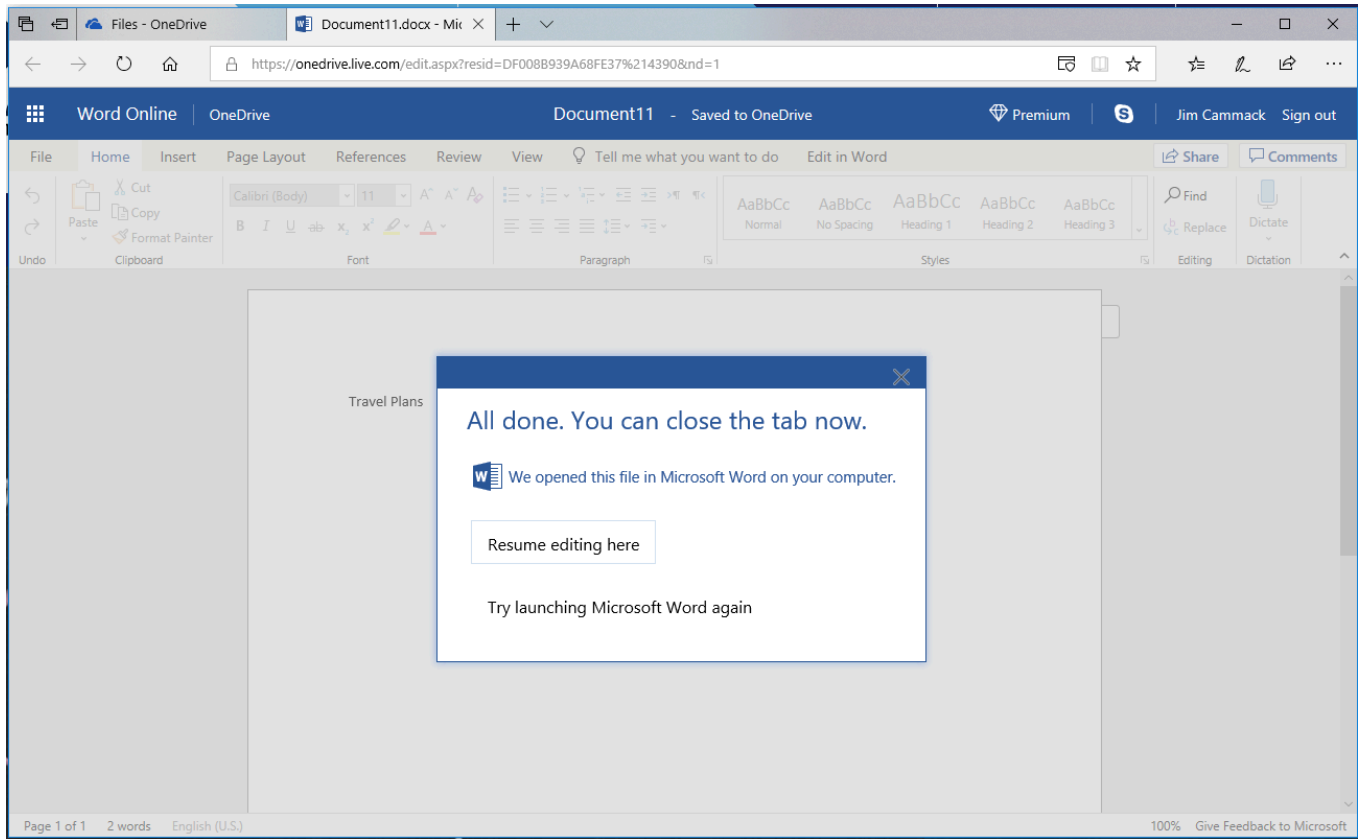
However, you may see only this icon. This is the Save button. Notice that it has the little arrows on it. That indicates that, if you click that button, it will be saved back to Onedrive (not to your computer)



7. After editing your document in desktop Word, you can save and exit desktop Word. If you forget to save, you will be prompted to save, as shown in the following screenshot. Also notice in this screenshot, a textbox has been inserted and a glow effect added. This would not be possible in Word Online.



8. After closing the desktop Word window, your web browser window may now be visible (it may be hidden behind other windows). You may close this window, or continue editing your document in Word Online. To continue editing in Word Online, click **Resume editing here**.



9. **A Note about Viewing Your Document in Word Online.** Word Online does not have the advanced set of features which desktop Word has. So, when you edit a Word document in desktop Word and then view your Word document in Word Online, Word Online might not display it correctly. However, if you download and open in desktop Word it should look fine. Also, if you open and edit your document in Word Online, features you added in desktop Word may not work properly and/or may not be editable in Word Online. For example, in the first screenshot below, a document with a textbox is shown displayed in Word Online. It looks great, but, if you click on the textbox, as shown in the second screen shot, you will see it is not editable. So you may not be able to edit items in Word Online which were added with desktop Word.

