FREE GUIDE

RUA TECHNOLOGIES

The Office 2021 End-of-Support Checklist

A practical, step-by-step checklist for finding every affected device, choosing between Microsoft 365 Apps and Office LTSC 2024, and moving before support ends on October 13, 2026.

7 sections + glossary	15 minutes	Print-ready checklist
WHAT'S INSIDE	TIME TO READ	FORMAT

Inventory · Choose a path · Licensing · Testing · Deploy & retire

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Office 2021 and Office LTSC 2021 reach end of support on **October 13, 2026**. The apps will not stop working that day. What stops is everything that keeps them safe: security updates, bug fixes and technical support from Microsoft. Unlike Windows 10, there is no paid Extended Security Updates program for Office 2021.

That makes this a planning exercise, not an emergency switch-off, but it is one with a hard date. Every vulnerability found in Office 2021 after October 13 stays unpatched permanently. This checklist walks through what to find, what to decide and what to do, in the order we run it on client environments.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Work through the sections in order and tick each box. If a box cannot be ticked yet, that is your to-do list. Share the completed checklist with whoever signs off IT spend.

CHECK DATES AND PRODUCT NAMES

Product lifecycle details can change. Confirm the current end-of-support dates for your exact products (including Visio and Project) on Microsoft's lifecycle pages before you finalize your plan.

SECTION 01

What actually changes on October 13, 2026

Understanding exactly what changes keeps the conversation with leadership factual and calm.

What keeps working

- Installed Office 2021 / LTSC 2021 apps continue to open and save files.
- Your existing perpetual license stays valid; nothing is revoked.

What stops

- Security updates, so newly discovered vulnerabilities remain open.
- Bug fixes and non-security improvements.
- Technical support from Microsoft for the affected products.

What is in scope

- Office 2021 and Office LTSC 2021 (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and the rest of the suite).
- Visio LTSC 2021 and Project LTSC 2021, if you run them. Confirm exact dates for each product.

> **WHY IT MATTERS FOR BUSINESS**
>
> Unpatched productivity software is a common entry point for phishing-delivered attacks, and auditors, customers and cyber-insurance questionnaires increasingly ask whether you run unsupported software. Running it is a business risk, not just a technical one.

SECTION 02

Step 1: Inventory what you have

You cannot plan a migration for devices you do not know about. Start with a complete picture.

- [ ] List every device running Office 2021, Office LTSC 2021, Visio LTSC 2021 or Project LTSC 2021
- [ ] Record the exact version and build on each device (File > Account in any Office app, or your endpoint management tool)
- [ ] Identify laptops used by remote staff, shared PCs, kiosks and lab machines, which are the ones most often missed
- [ ] Flag devices that are offline, air-gapped or cannot connect to the internet
- [ ] Note which users have which apps (Outlook, Excel, Visio, Project) so you license only what is needed
- [ ] List add-ins, macros, templates and line-of-business integrations that depend on Office
- [ ] Identify any other Office versions still in the environment (2016, 2019) that carry their own support dates
- [ ] Assign an owner for the inventory and agree a date to freeze it

> **TIP**
>
> If you manage devices with Intune or another endpoint tool, run an installed-software report first. It is faster and more accurate than asking users.

SECTION 03

Step 2: Choose your path

There are two realistic destinations. The right one depends on how your people work, not on which is cheaper per seat in isolation.

QUESTION	MICROSOFT 365 APPS	OFFICE LTSC 2024
Licensing model	Subscription, per user	Perpetual, one-time purchase per license
Updates	Continuous feature and security updates	Security updates; feature set is fixed at release
Connectivity	Needs periodic internet connection to stay licensed	Suited to offline or restricted environments
Cloud features	Full access to cloud-connected features	Limited; designed for stable, locked-down setups
Best for	Most knowledge-worker teams, remote and hybrid staff	Regulated, air-gapped or fixed-function devices
Long-term view	Stays current without another forced upgrade cycle	Will itself reach end of support on a future date

Questions to settle before you decide

- [ ] Do users need real-time co-authoring, Teams integration or cloud storage?
- [ ] Are there devices that can never be online?
- [ ] Do you already pay for Microsoft 365 plans that include the desktop apps?
- [ ] Is a single, simpler licensing model worth more than a lower first-year cost?
- [ ] Who will own ongoing updates after the move?

> **RUA VIEW**
>
> For most organizations with hybrid or remote teams, Microsoft 365 Apps is the lower-maintenance path. Office LTSC 2024 makes sense for specific locked-down machines, and many businesses end up with a mix.

SECTION 04

Step 3: License and provision

Licensing mistakes are the most common reason a migration stalls midway. Settle this before anyone touches a device.

- [ ] Confirm which Microsoft 365 plans (if any) you already own that include the desktop apps
- [ ] Count licenses per user, not per device, for subscription plans
- [ ] Order LTSC licenses only for the devices that genuinely need them
- [ ] Confirm your Microsoft 365 tenant, domains and identity (Entra ID) are ready for the users being moved
- [ ] Assign licenses to users and verify they appear in the admin center
- [ ] Document who holds the licensing records for audit purposes
- [ ] Plan renewal dates so subscriptions and perpetual licenses do not drift out of sync

> **COST NOTE**
>
> We have deliberately not quoted prices here, because they change by plan, volume and agreement. Ask for a current quote that compares both paths for your actual user and device counts.

SECTION 05

Step 4: Test before you deploy

A short, structured pilot prevents most post-migration surprises.

- [ ] Pick a pilot group of 10 to 20 users across different roles and devices
- [ ] Test the files that matter most: large Excel models, macro-enabled workbooks, linked documents
- [ ] Check every add-in and integration your finance, sales and operations teams rely on
- [ ] Confirm Outlook profiles, shared mailboxes and calendars behave as before
- [ ] Check printing, PDF export and file-format compatibility
- [ ] Confirm security tooling (endpoint protection, DLP) works with the new version
- [ ] Collect feedback for one to two weeks and log every issue
- [ ] Get a written go / no-go from the pilot group's manager

> **WATCH FOR**
>
> Older Excel macros and COM add-ins are the most frequent compatibility problems. Find them in the pilot, not on deployment day.

SECTION 06

Step 5: Deploy and retire the old version

Roll out in waves and remove Office 2021 once the new version is confirmed working. Leaving old copies behind defeats the purpose.

- [ ] Deploy in waves (for example by department) rather than all at once
- [ ] Use a managed deployment method (Intune, Configuration Manager or similar) instead of manual installs
- [ ] Communicate dates, expected downtime and where to get help to every affected user
- [ ] Uninstall Office 2021 after the new version is verified on each device
- [ ] Re-run your inventory to confirm no Office 2021 installs remain
- [ ] Update your asset register and license records
- [ ] Keep a rollback plan for each wave in case of a critical issue
- [ ] Schedule a short post-migration check-in with users

Suggested 30-day timeline

WEEK	FOCUS
Week 1	Inventory complete; path chosen; licensing confirmed
Week 2	Pilot group deployed and tested
Week 3	Wave 1 and Wave 2 deployments
Week 4	Remaining devices, old version removed, inventory re-checked

SECTION 07

If you cannot move everything in time

Some businesses will not finish before October 13. That is common, and it is manageable if you treat the remaining machines as a known risk rather than ignoring them.

- [ ] Prioritize the devices that handle email, external files and the internet; leave isolated machines for last
- [ ] Restrict risky behavior on remaining Office 2021 devices: block macros from the internet, tighten attachment handling
- [ ] Keep endpoint protection and email filtering fully up to date on those devices
- [ ] Remove admin rights from users on remaining machines

- [ ] Record the exceptions, the reason and a firm date to close each one
- [ ] Brief your management and, where relevant, your insurer on the interim risk

> **BE HONEST IN THE PLAN**
> A documented exception list with owners and end dates is far easier to defend to auditors than silence.

Common pitfalls

- Assuming everything is fine because the apps still open after the date.
- Forgetting Visio and Project, which have their own installs.
- Buying perpetual licenses for users who would be better served by a subscription, or the reverse.
- Leaving the old version installed next to the new one.
- Not testing macros and add-ins before the rollout.

REFERENCE

Glossary of terms

Office LTSC
Long-Term Servicing Channel: a perpetual-license edition of Office with a fixed feature set, intended for stable or restricted environments.

Microsoft 365 Apps
The subscription-based desktop Office apps (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and others) that receive continuous updates.

End of support
The date after which a product no longer receives security updates, bug fixes or technical support from the vendor.

ESU
Extended Security Updates: a paid program that provides security patches for some products after end of support. Not offered for Office 2021.

Entra ID
Microsoft's cloud identity service (formerly Azure Active Directory), used to sign users in and assign licenses.

Intune
Microsoft's cloud-based device and app management service, commonly used to deploy Office.

NEXT STEP

Want us to run this checklist for you?

We inventory your devices, recommend the right path for each team, license it correctly and manage the rollout, with a clear plan and a firm finish date. Most businesses get a straightforward answer in one conversation.

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