*A friend who works at a business consulting firm wanted my help in understanding blockchain. She already knew some basics, but had questions.*

Blockchain FAQ

After you know [the basics of how blockchain works](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r43LhSUUGTQ), you’ll probably have questions about the benefits and limits of the technology.

* [Why is blockchain un-hackable?](#_Why_is_blockchain)
* [Do I have to share my blockchain? Can I have my own?](#_Do_I_have)
* [Why is blockchain associated with financial transactions?](#_Why_is_blockchain_1)
* [Are there ways to use blockchain beyond finance?](#_Are_there_ways)
* [Why isn’t blockchain used everywhere?](#_Why_isn’t_blockchain)

# Why is blockchain “un-hackable”?

Blockchain uses a bunch of complicated math that is also used in cryptography (called a [hash function](https://decentralize.today/if-you-understand-hash-functions-youll-understand-blockchains-9088307b745d)). That’s what is going on behind the scenes when you use a password to protect something. Basically, the more complicated the math is, the longer it would take to break the code. Blockchain requires math that takes more computing to break than any computer could handle. And the blockchain users work together to verify transactions, so they keep each other honest.

That said, all codes are broken eventually; new technology and new methods are discovered all the time. Right now, there are hackers trying to break blockchain encryption, and people who are working to keep blockchain secure (just like for all kinds of encryption).

# Do I have to share my blockchain? Can I have my own?

You don’t have to share. A company could have their own. Or a consortium of companies (like a group of banks in Europe) could share one blockchain with companies they trust, speeding up transactions between those companies.

You can also have a blockchain that keeps the content of each block secret. Bitcoin has opted [to make all transactions public](https://bitcoin.org/en/you-need-to-know), and you can [watch real transactions in real time](http://bitcointicker.co/transactions/), but there is no requirement that you do this on your blockchain.

# Why is blockchain associated with financial transactions?

Bitcoin was the first successful application to use blockchain, and it focuses on [transferring money from account to account](https://bitcoin.org/en/how-it-works). At a high level, Bitcoin uses blockchain to **verify identity**, run computer code to **update records**, do **oversight** to make sure there aren’t any errors, and **keep records safe**. Banks have been doing these kinds of tasks to protect money for hundreds of years, originally by hand and more recently by computers. Bitcoin uses blockchain to do these tasks faster and more securely. The Bitcoin community is also working on new finance features like [micro-lending and fraud protection](https://bitcoin.org/en/innovation).

# Are there ways to use blockchain beyond finance?

Yes, and more [applications are being created all the time](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8o9QxMxhTp8). Some of the current ideas include: smart contracts, fraud detection, voting, and healthcare records.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Scenario | Verifies identity | Does oversight | Completes actions |
| Smart contract to make certain things happen only when conditions are true. Ex: Handle escrow on a house purchase | * Are the seller and buyer who they say they are? | * Checks that there are no liens on the property * Files paperwork with the local government, sends a copy to buyer and seller | * Check that buyer has the money * Move the money from buyer’s account to seller’s account * Changes title to reflect the new owner |
| Prevent auto insurance claim fraud.  Ex: You say your car was in an accident and needs a repair. | * Is it your car? * Does the person who hit your car have insurance? With which company? | * Does your policy cover this kind of accident? * Is your car actually damaged? * Have you already submitted a claim on this car for this accident? | * Pay the mechanic * Pay for rental car * Adjust insurance policy rates to reflect the accident |
| Voting machines. Ex: you are voting in a local election. | * Are you who you say you are? * Do you live in this district? | * Is voter registered? * Is voter alive? * Is only one vote counted per voter per race? | * Total up votes instantly |
| Health care records. Ex: you break your leg and go to the emergency room | * Are you who you say you are? * Where are your most recent medical records? | * Do you have allergies to medication? * Which insurance company will be billed? * Is the procedure covered? | * Make sure your electronic record is updated. * Notify your PCP that you were in the ER * Give you instructions to take home about how to use medications and when to see your doctor next |

# Why isn’t blockchain used everywhere?

All technology has pros and cons. We don’t get the benefits unless we figure out how to solve the challenges.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Benefits | Challenges |
| * Makes inefficient procedures faster by automating them. Ex: transferring money internationally. * Secure. A blockchain is tamperproof and permanent. * No middle man taking a cut for helping with your transaction * Any kind of digital information can be stored inside a block * Contents of a block can be private | * Bitcoin is associated with illicit activities, and some companies don’t want that to influence their reputations * Most computer systems use the old methods, and not many people have been trained to use blockchain yet * Regulations reflect the old way of doing things; new laws will need to be made * Scalability. Really big companies do so many transactions that the blockchain would be slow to verify them all. * Fear of change. |

*A blog article using a chattier, less formal tone, comparing Excel and Tableau for a reader with some experience with Excel and no experience with Tableau. This is written as someone who does not work for Microsoft or Tableau, with the premise of a product comparison.*

Before you compare Excel and Tableau

You are merrily going about your job, making a spreadsheet in Excel, when your boss walks over to your desk, all excited.

Boss: “I’ve just seen a presentation done with Tableau. We need to do that!”

You: “But…”

Boss: “Data-driven decisions! Comprehension over calculations!”

You: “Okay, but…”

Boss: “Make it happen! That’s why we pay you the big money!”

After putting aside your reaction to being told that you are paid “the big money”, your next step will be to find a way to evaluate Tableau and present your findings to your boss. The good news is that there are a lot of resources available:

* Sign up for a [two-week free trial](https://www.tableau.com/trial/tableau-software) of Tableau
* Tableau makes lots of [videos and articles](https://www.tableau.com/support/desktop) so you can learn how to use it
* You can post questions and read answers in the [Tableau community](https://community.tableau.com/welcome) even without buying Tableau
* The [Gartner Report](https://www.tableau.com/asset/2017-gartner-magic-quadrant?utm_campaign=Prospecting-GART-ALL-ALL&utm_medium=Paid+Search&utm_source=Google+Search&utm_language=EN&utm_country=USCA&kw=%2Bgartner%20%2Bbi%20%2Breport&adgroup=CTX-Magic+Quadrant-BI-B&adused=182326605352&matchtype=b&placement=&gclid=CjwKEAjw387JBRDPtJePvOej8kASJADkV9TLMmKrqq5IJtjZ_jhH494Zy1GR65zG5ukZPepnSJaRYxoC9Bvw_wcB) on Business Intelligence and Analytics Platforms is very useful. Notice that they are comparing Tableau to more than just Excel.
* Searching for things like “[I hate Tableau](https://www.google.com/search?q=i+hate+tableau&rlz=1C1CHBF_enUS741US741&oq=i+hate+tableau&aqs=chrome..69i57j69i64.2039j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)” and “[I hate Excel](https://www.google.com/search?q=i+hate+excel&rlz=1C1CHBF_enUS741US741&oq=i+hate+excel&aqs=chrome.0.0l6.1857j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)” will give you all kinds of ideas

You know what your company needs better than I do, so I’m not going to do a feature-by-feature comparison, but there are some common surprises that I can point out now to save you some time.

# Tableau is not trying to be Excel

If you are using Excel as the yardstick, you’ll find all kinds of ways that Tableau falls short, where “falls short” means “isn’t exactly like Excel”. But Tableau isn’t trying to be exactly like Excel. Excel is a spreadsheet program that also does charts. Tableau does handle data in tables, but its main focus is visualizations.

It’s like how I have both a microwave and a toaster in my kitchen. They are both kitchen appliances, but if I want to heat up a bowl of soup, I’m not going to pour it into the top of my toaster. The “best” tool is dependent on what you want to accomplish at that moment.

# Cost. Geez Louise, cost.

Tableau is expensive. I’m not saying it isn’t worth it, but it costs so much more than Excel that I want to point that out early. They do offer a free version called Tableau Public, but you can only use that if you are willing to have your data be publicly available. If you are using Tableau for work, like I am, that probably isn’t an option for you. Though if your whole company is a ga-ga over Tableau, they may not balk at the cost.

# “Easy” is relative

When I first started asking people what they thought of Tableau, I heard a lot of “it’s so easy to use!” That is true…sometimes. If you want to have a simple table of data and a pie chart, Excel is easier. Both because there are fewer steps, and because you already know how to make a pie chart in Excel.

The kinds of situations where Tableau really knocks it out of the park are things like “a map of your city, with roads overlaid on the image, with each zip code in different colors, and circles of varying sizes showing the sales at each of your ten stores”. To learn how to do that in R would take you a long time, but it is absolutely faster in Tableau. Hands down faster.

# Change a viz on the fly

Imagine you have a table of clean, well-organized data. (Hahaha. *Imagine*.) Which product would be faster to make a series of bar charts and trend lines? In my experience, Excel and Tableau are about even there. However, Tableau is ahead of Excel when it comes to *updating* a visualization. For example, imagine that you are presenting a visualization to a group of managers, showing sales per month. In the middle of the presentation, one manager says, “I won’t want this in months. I want this data in quarters.” With Tableau, you can make that change while the presentation is still live on the projection screen, and save yourself the trouble of having a second meeting. Is this a common scenario for you?

# Not “either…or” but “both…and”

Data people love to argue about their favorite tools-- “R is best!” “Python all the way!” “Excel is the most powerful tool I know!” But the reality is that most people who use Tableau *also* use Excel. For example, Excel is great at gathering and cleaning data, and you probably have all kinds of best practices along those lines. You could do that work in Excel, then pull it into Tableau for the visualization step. Tableau connects to data from a ton of different sources (Excel, text files, SQL databases, all kinds of things). And beyond data import, there are lots of features that are complementary between the two products.

# Pretty, pretty pictures

I had a manager once who formatted Excel spreadsheets so that everything was black text on dark gray backgrounds, and when he included data on a PowerPoint slide he made sure the text was too small for anyone to read “so they don’t get lost in the weeds”. Not everyone understands the importance of good document design, but you do. You know how a visualization can help people understand data, influence how they feel, and help tell a story. This is one of Tableau’s strengths and, much to their credit, their default style settings are really attractive. It does not take a lot of time to make something look good in Tableau. In fairness, I’ve seen plenty of Excel visualizations that looked just as good. If you are one of those people that know all the formatting tricks in Excel, then this point may not be a solid win for Tableau. Or if your boss is going to make you make everything black text on gray backgrounds anyway.

Good luck with the product evaluation. I hope these tips were helpful. Don’t spend all “the big money” in one place.

*An FAQ, written for Office Live Small Business, the precursor of Office 365.*

**E-mail: frequently asked questions**

Find answers to common questions about using e-mail in Microsoft Office Live Small Business.

* [Can I create new e-mail accounts that include the name of my business?](http://office.microsoft.com/client/helppreview.aspx?AssetID=HA102746311033&ns=OFLV20&lcid=1033#1)
* [Can I read my e-mail in Office Live Small Business?](http://office.microsoft.com/client/helppreview.aspx?AssetID=HA102746311033&ns=OFLV20&lcid=1033#2)
* [Can I create e-mail addresses for employees or specific positions at my business or organization?](http://office.microsoft.com/client/helppreview.aspx?AssetID=HA102746311033&ns=OFLV20&lcid=1033#3)
* [Before I signed up for Office Live Small Business, I already had a Web site and e-mail addresses based on the domain for my business. Can I transfer the site and the e-mail addresses to Office Live Small Business?](http://office.microsoft.com/client/helppreview.aspx?AssetID=HA102746311033&ns=OFLV20&lcid=1033#4)
* [I can’t see my e-mail when I sign in to Office Live Small Business. What can I do?](http://office.microsoft.com/client/helppreview.aspx?AssetID=HA102746311033&ns=OFLV20&lcid=1033#5)
* [What is the difference between an e-mail account and an Office Live Small Business user account?](http://office.microsoft.com/client/helppreview.aspx?AssetID=HA102746311033&ns=OFLV20&lcid=1033#6)
* [I have more than one e-mail address for my business. Is there some way that I can read all of my e-mail messages in one place?](http://office.microsoft.com/client/helppreview.aspx?AssetID=HA102746311033&ns=OFLV20&lcid=1033#7)
* [Can I delete an e-mail account that I created in Office Live Small Business?](http://office.microsoft.com/client/helppreview.aspx?AssetID=HA102746311033&ns=OFLV20&lcid=1033#8)
* [Can I set up a way for customers to send me e-mail directly from my Web site?](http://office.microsoft.com/client/helppreview.aspx?AssetID=HA102746311033&ns=OFLV20&lcid=1033#9)
* [Can I change the e-mail address I used when I signed up for Office Live Small Business?](http://office.microsoft.com/client/helppreview.aspx?AssetID=HA102746311033&ns=OFLV20&lcid=1033#10)
* [I created an e-mail account in Office Live Small Business. Can I automatically forward that mail to another e-mail service?](http://office.microsoft.com/client/helppreview.aspx?AssetID=HA102746311033&ns=OFLV20&lcid=1033#12)
* [I created an e-mail address in Office Live Small Business, but I don’t want to read my e-mail on the site. Does Office Live Small Business have a POP3 service that I can use?](http://office.microsoft.com/client/helppreview.aspx?AssetID=HA102746311033&ns=OFLV20&lcid=1033#13)

**Can I create new e-mail accounts that include the name of my business?**

Yes. To do this, first [register a domain name](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102403521033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033) or [redirect an existing domain](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102319561033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033). Then, [create the new e-mail accounts](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102262931033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033).

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**Can I read my e-mail in Office Live Small Business?**

Yes, if your e-mail address is accessible to Office Live Small Business. Your e-mail address is accessible if any of the following are true:

* The address ends in “hotmail.com”, “live.com”, or “msn.com” **and** is either the address you used to sign up for Office Live Small Business or was added as a [user account](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102297051033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033).
* The address was [created in Office Live Small Business](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102262931033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033), with an ending of “officeliveusers.com”.
* The address was [created in Office Live Small Business](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102262931033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033) based on your domain name.

For more information, see [Access your e-mail](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102262881033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033).

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**Can I create e-mail addresses for employees or specific positions at my business or organization?**

Yes. You can [create many e-mail accounts](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102262931033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033) for free. If your site uses the free domain that Office Live Small Business provided to you, the e-mail addresses you create all end with “officeliveusers.com”.

If you first [register a domain name](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102403521033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033) based on the name of your business or [redirect an existing domain](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102319561033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033), you can also create e-mail addresses that are based on the domain name for your business. For example, if you register or redirect the domain "www.adventure-works.com", you can create e-mail addresses such as "webmaster@www.adventure-works.com".

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**Before I signed up for Office Live Small Business, I already had a Web site and e-mail addresses based on the domain for my business. Can I transfer the site and the e-mail addresses to Office Live Small Business?**

Yes. This is called full redelegation. However, for the smoothest transition, we recommend that you do the following:

1. [Partially redirect](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102319561033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033) your domain (which moves the Web site to Office Live Small Business, but not the e-mail accounts).
2. [Create a new e-mail account](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102262931033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033) based on your domain.
3. Using your previous e-mail provider, forward your e-mail messages from your old e-mail account to the new e-mail account.
4. [Fully redirect](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102319561033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033) your domain. After you fully redelegate your domain, you cannot do a partial redelegation. If you have fully redelegated your domain, and are having problems accessing your e-mail, contact your previous e-mail provider.

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**I can’t see my e-mail when I sign in to Office Live Small Business. What can I do?**

There are a few possible causes for this issue.

* **Are you signed in to a different account?**   If you have more than one account, you may have signed in to Office Live Small Business using an account that is not associated with the e-mail you want to read. If you want to use a different account, you can [sign in](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=XT102744271033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033) again.
* **Is the e-mail address inaccessible to Office Live Small Business?**   Office Live Small Business can access e-mail addresses that you [create in Office Live Small Business](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102262931033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033). It can also access addresses that end with “hotmail.com”, “live.com”, and “msn.com”. However, if your e-mail address is provided by another company, such as addresses that end with “gmail.com”, “yahoo.com”, “mail.com”, or “aol.com”, you cannot read your e-mail directly in Office Live Small Business. Instead, consider using Microsoft Office Outlook or [Windows Live Mail](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=XT102750311033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033), which enable you to read e-mail from many accounts in one place.
* **Does a “service is temporarily unavailable” message appear?**   Occasionally, Office Live Small Business must do maintenance or repairs on the e-mail servers. If this message appears, try again later.

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**What is the difference between an e-mail account and an Office Live Small Business user account?**

After you [create an e-mail account](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102262931033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033) in Office Live Small Business, you can read the e-mail sent to that account by signing in to Office Live Small Business or to [http://mail.live.com](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=XT102750131033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033). Those e-mail accounts cannot access any of the features and services on Office Live Small Business, other than e-mail. When you create new user accounts for yourself or for employees, you can then give those accounts permission to edit your Web site, collaborate using Business Applications, and more.

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**I have more than one e-mail address for my business. Is there some way that I can read all of my e-mail messages in one place?**

Yes, you have a few options to choose from. You can use [Microsoft Office Outlook Connector](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102262951033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033) or [Windows Live Mail](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=XT102750311033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033). These both enable you to read e-mail from multiple accounts in one place, and both are free.

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**Can I delete an e-mail account that I created in Office Live Small Business?**

Yes. For more information, see [Create or delete e-mail accounts](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102262931033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033).

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**Can I set up a way for customers to send me e-mail directly from my Web site?**

Yes. You can add a [Contact Us](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102263741033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033) page to your Web site. Customers can then fill out a form on that page to send e-mail to the address that you choose.

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**Can I change the e-mail address I used when I signed up for Office Live Small Business?**

No. The e-mail address that you used when you signed up will always be the “owner” account. You can, however, [create additional user accounts](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102297051033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033), and give those accounts permission to do tasks, such as edit your Web site, or to collaborate using Business Applications.

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**I created an e-mail account in Office Live Small Business. Can I automatically forward that mail to another e-mail service?**

Yes, although there are some differences based on the account. To set up forwarding, do the following:

1. Sign in to Office Live Small Business, and on the left navigation bar, click **E-Mail**.
2. Under **Mail**, click **Inbox**.
3. On the actions bar, on the right side, click **Options**, and then click **More options**.
4. Under **Manage your account**, click **Forward mail to another e-mail account**, and then follow the directions on the page.

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**I created an e-mail address in Office Live Small Business, but I don’t want to read my e-mail on the site. Does Office Live Small Business have a POP3 service that I can use?**

No. However, you can use Microsoft Office Outlook, [Microsoft Office Outlook Connector](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102262951033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033), or [Windows Live Mail](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=XT102750311033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102746311033) to read e-mail from several accounts in one place.

*An article to address a common customer support issue, focusing on issues raised in customer feedback data, written for Office Live Small Business, the precursor of Office 365.*

**Why can't I see my e-mail?**

If you've signed in to your Microsoft Office Live Small Business account, but can't see your e-mail messages in the Inbox or on the Home page, there are a few possible causes for this issue.

* **Are you signed in to a different account?**   If you have more than one Office Live Small Business user account, you may have signed in to Office Live Small Business with an account that is not associated with the e-mail that you want to read. If you want to use a different account, you can [sign in](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=XT102744271033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102516071033) again.
* **Is the e-mail address inaccessible to Office Live Small Business?**   Office Live Small Business can access e-mail addresses that you [create in Office Live Small Business](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102262931033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102516071033). It can also access addresses that end with hotmail.com, live.com, and msn.com. However, if your e-mail address is provided by another company, such as addresses that end with gmail.com, yahoo.com, mail.com, or aol.com, you cannot read your e-mail directly in Office Live Small Business. Instead, consider using Microsoft Office Outlook or [Windows Live Mail](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=XT102750311033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102516071033), which enable you to read e-mail from many accounts in one place.
* **Does a “service is temporarily unavailable” message appear?**   Occasionally, Office Live Small Business must do maintenance or make repairs on the e-mail servers. If this message appears, try again later.

**Notes**

* To view billing and account information, or to use advanced administrative features, you must sign in using the e-mail address that you used when you signed up for Office Live Small Business.
* For information about how to obtain a domain name that is based on the name of your business, see [Register a domain name](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102403521033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102516071033).
* For information about how to create e-mail accounts, see [Create or delete e-mail accounts](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=HA102262931033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102516071033).
* For more information about the e-mail management tools that Office Live Small Business offers, see [Use e-mail to manage and grow your business](http://office.microsoft.com/search/redir.aspx?AssetID=XT102513471033&CTT=5&Origin=HA102516071033).

**See Also**

* [Create or delete e-mail accounts](http://office.microsoft.com/client/helppreview.aspx?AssetID=HA102262931033&ns=OFLV20&lcid=1033&CTT=3&Origin=HA102516071033)
* [Redirect your domain name to Microsoft Office Live Small Business](http://office.microsoft.com/client/helppreview.aspx?AssetID=HA102319561033&ns=OFLV20&lcid=1033&CTT=3&Origin=HA102516071033)
* [Register a domain name](http://office.microsoft.com/client/helppreview.aspx?AssetID=HA102403521033&ns=OFLV20&lcid=1033&CTT=3&Origin=HA102516071033)
* [Update your e-mail account information](http://office.microsoft.com/client/helppreview.aspx?AssetID=HA102262921033&ns=OFLV20&lcid=1033&CTT=3&Origin=HA102516071033)