Create Office Add-in projects with Microsoft 365 Agents Toolkit

08/13/2025

A primary tool for developing Microsoft 365 apps and agents, including Office Add-ins, is Microsoft 365 Agents Toolkit.

Add-ins created with Agents Toolkit use the unified manifest for Microsoft 365.

> ⓘ **Note**
>
> The unified manifest for Microsoft 365 can be used in production Outlook add-ins. It's available only as a preview for Excel, PowerPoint, and Word add-ins.

> **Tip**
>
> There's another Visual Studio Code extension that creates Office Add-ins that use the add-in only manifest. See Create Office Add-in projects using Office Add-ins Development Kit for Visual Studio Code.

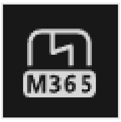
> ⓘ **Note**
>
> For information on clients and platforms that *directly* support Office Add-ins that use the unified manifest for Microsoft 365, see Office Add-ins with the unified app manifest for Microsoft 365.

Install the latest version of Agents Toolkit into Visual Studio Code as described in Install Microsoft 365 Agents Toolkit.

> ⓘ **Important**
>
> You can create an Outlook add-in with the latest released version of Agents Toolkit. To create an add-in for Excel, PowerPoint, or Word, install the prerelease version as described in Install a prerelease version. The toolkit creates projects that use the unified manifest for Microsoft 365. Support for this manifest in Excel, PowerPoint, and Word is preview only.

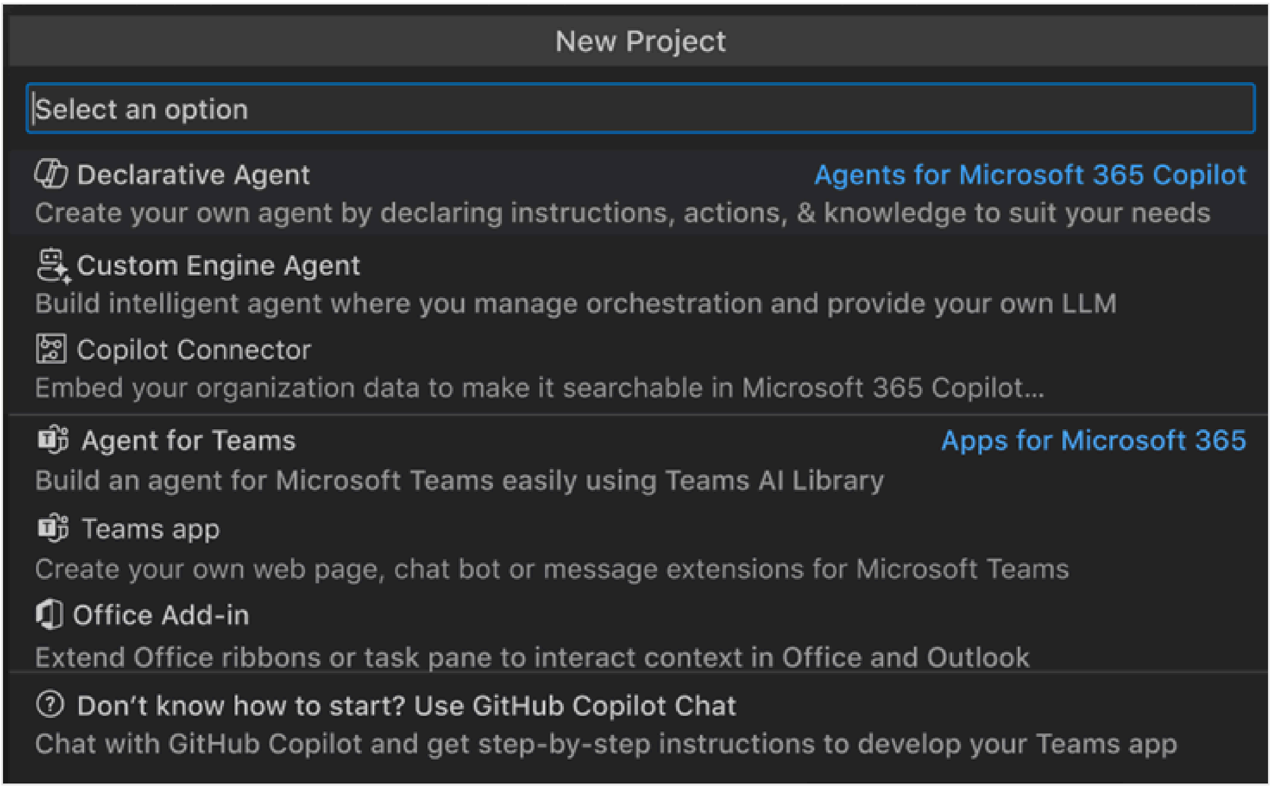
Create an Office Add-in project

1. Open Visual Studio Code and select the Agents Toolkit icon in the **Activity Bar**.



2. Select **Create a New App**.

3. The **New Project** dropdown menu opens. The options listed will vary depending on your version of Agents Toolkit. Select **Office Add-in**.



New Project

Select an option

Declarative Agent — Agents for Microsoft 365 Copilot
Create your own agent by declaring instructions, actions, & knowledge to suit your needs

Custom Engine Agent
Build intelligent agent where you manage orchestration and provide your own LLM

Copilot Connector
Embed your organization data to make it searchable in Microsoft 365 Copilot...

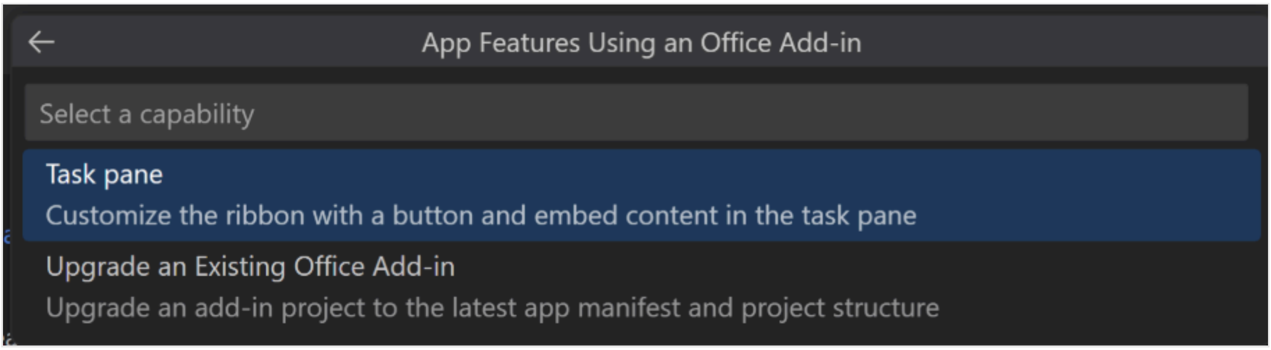
Agent for Teams — Apps for Microsoft 365
Build an agent for Microsoft Teams easily using Teams AI Library

Teams app
Create your own web page, chat bot or message extensions for Microsoft Teams

Office Add-in
Extend Office ribbons or task pane to interact context in Office and Outlook

Don't know how to start? Use GitHub Copilot Chat
Chat with GitHub Copilot and get step-by-step instructions to develop your Teams app

4. The **App Features Using an Office Add-in** dropdown menu opens. The options listed will vary depending on your version of Agents Toolkit. Select **Task pane**.



App Features Using an Office Add-in

Select a capability

Task pane
Customize the ribbon with a button and embed content in the task pane

Upgrade an Existing Office Add-in
Upgrade an add-in project to the latest app manifest and project structure

5. In the **Workspace Folder** dialog that opens, select the folder where you want to create the project.

6. Give a name to the project (with no spaces) when prompted. Agents Toolkit will create the project with basic files and scaffolding. It will then open the project *in a second Visual Studio Code window*. Close the original Visual Studio Code window.

   > ⓘ Note
   >
   > The project that's generated is configured to be installable on Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, and Word. You can edit the manifest and source files as needed to change which Office applications are supported.

7. In the Visual Studio Code **TERMINAL** navigate to the root of the project and run `npm install`.

8. After the installation completes, verify that you can sideload your add-in from Visual Studio Code. The steps to sideload vary depending on the Office application on which you want to test the add-in.

Sideload in Excel, PowerPoint, or Word

> ⓘ Note
>
> This section only applies if you are developing the add-in on a *Windows* computer.

1. Select **View | Run** in Visual Studio Code. In the **RUN AND DEBUG** dropdown menu, select one of these options:

   - **Excel Desktop (Edge Chromium)**
   - **PowerPoint Desktop (Edge Chromium)**
   - **Word Desktop (Edge Chromium)**

2. Press `F5`. The project builds and a Node dev-server window opens. This process may take a couple of minutes. Eventually, the desktop version of the Office application you selected opens.

   > ⓘ Note
   >
   > If this is the first time that you have sideloaded an Office Add-in on your computer (or the first time in over a month), you may be prompted to delete an old certificate and/or to install a new one. Agree to both prompts.

3. A **Contoso Add-in** tab with two buttons will appear on the **Home** ribbon. Use one button to perform an action in the open Office document. Use the other to open the add-in's task pane.

   > ⓘ Note
   >
   > Regardless of which button you select, a **WebView Stop On Load** prompt appears. Select **OK**.

   > 💡 Tip
   >
   > Sideloading in Office on Windows also makes the add-in available in Office on the web, so you can test it on that platform too. After this step is complete, minimize the Office on Windows application window and in a browser, navigate to `https://excel.cloud.microsoft/`, `https://word.cloud.microsoft/`, or `https://powerpoint.cloud.microsoft/`, whichever is appropriate for the add-in you're testing. Open a new or existing document in the Office application on the web. The buttons should appear on the **Home** ribbon just as they do in Office on Windows.

4. To stop debugging and uninstall the add-in, select **Run | Stop Debugging** in Visual Studio Code.

   > ⓘ Note
   >
   > If the preceding step seems to have no effect, uninstall the add-in by opening a **TERMINAL** in Visual Studio Code, and then running the command `npm run stop`. Closing the server window doesn't reliably stop the server and closing the Office application doesn't reliably cause Office to unacquire the add-in.

Other ways to sideload

See Sideload Office Add-ins that use the unified manifest for Microsoft 365 for alternative ways to sideload an Excel, PowerPoint, or Word add-in, including through the app store in Teams.

Sideload in Outlook

> ⓘ Note

If your development computer is Windows, be sure that your Outlook client is classic Outlook for Windows, not new Outlook on Windows. There is currently a bug that prevents add-ins created with Agents Toolkit from properly sideloading in new Outlook for Windows or in Outlook on the web.

1. Ensure that your account in your Microsoft 365 developer tenancy is also an email account in desktop Outlook. If it isn't, follow the guidance in Add an email account to Outlook.

2. **Close Outlook desktop**.

3. In Visual Studio Code, open Agents Toolkit.

4. In the **ACCOUNTS** section, verify that you're signed into Microsoft 365.

5. Select **View** | **Run** in Visual Studio Code. In the **RUN AND DEBUG** dropdown menu, select the option, **Outlook Desktop (Edge Chromium)**, and then press F5. The project builds and a Node dev-server window opens. This process may take a couple of minutes and then Outlook desktop will open.

   ⓘ Note

   If this is the first time that you have sideloaded an Office Add-in on your computer (or the first time in over a month), you may be prompted to delete an old certificate and/or to install a new one. Agree to both prompts.

6. Open the **Inbox** *of your Microsoft 365 account identity* and open any message. A **Contoso Add-in** tab with two buttons will appear on the **Home** ribbon (or the **Message** ribbon, if you have opened the message in its own window).

7. Click the **Show Taskpane** button and a task pane opens. Click the **Perform an action** button and a small notification appears near the top of the message.

   ⓘ Note

   Regardless of which button you select, a **WebView Stop On Load** prompt appears. Select **OK**.

8. To stop debugging and uninstall the add-in, select **Run** | **Stop Debugging** in Visual Studio Code.

ⓘ Note

If the preceding step seems to have no effect, uninstall the add-in by opening a **TERMINAL** in Visual Studio Code, and then running the command `npm run stop`. Closing the server window doesn't reliably stop the server and closing the Office application doesn't reliably cause Office to unacquire the add-in.

Develop your project

Now you can change and develop the project. In places where the guidance in the Office Add-ins documentation branches depending on what type of manifest is being used, be sure to follow the guidance for the unified manifest.