



MICROSOFT TEAMS: A CHEAT SHEET

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 03** Executive summary
- 03** What is Microsoft Teams?
- 05** How do I use Microsoft Teams?
- 06** Who are Microsoft Teams' competitors?
- 07** Who does Microsoft Teams affect?
- 07** When and where is Microsoft Teams available?
- 07** How do I get Microsoft Teams?

MICROSOFT TEAMS: A CHEAT SHEET

This comprehensive guide covers everything you need to know about the chat-based communication and collaboration platform Microsoft Teams, one of the most popular Zoom alternatives.

BY NICK HEATH & SUSAN HARKINS

Microsoft's chat and collaboration platform Teams may have arrived some time after Slack, but thanks to its integration with Microsoft 365, has a few tricks of its own up its sleeve. TechRepublic's cheat sheet about Microsoft Teams is a quick introduction, as well as a "living" guide that will be revised periodically as new updates are released.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is Microsoft Teams? A chat and collaboration platform for [Microsoft 365](#) customers designed to simplify group work.

How do I use Microsoft Teams? As well as the chat-based communications, Teams' integration with other Microsoft services allows users access to shared files and calendars, collaborative editing, and easy switching between voice, video, and text chat.

Who does Microsoft Teams affect? The service is available to most subscribers to the cloud-based Microsoft 365 suite.

When and where is Microsoft Teams available? Microsoft Teams is available to Microsoft 365 customers and supports 93 languages and dialects.

How do I get Microsoft Teams? Microsoft Teams is enabled by default for most organizations using Microsoft 365.

WHAT IS MICROSOFT TEAMS?

Teams is Microsoft's take on chat-based communication for business; Teams is also Microsoft's answer to competing platforms such as Slack. Slack stock continues to lose value, despite a good revenue flow--analysts cite Microsoft Teams as part of that decrease. In July 2019, Microsoft Teams slid by Slack with 13 million daily users; as of April 2020, [Microsoft Teams has 75 million daily active users](#).

In its simplest form, the service allows users to set up Microsoft Teams, each of which is essentially a hub for group chat rooms, which are called channels (conversations).

Multiple chat rooms or channels can be created within a Team, and to help keep chats easy to follow, conversations are threaded, flow from top to bottom, and notify users of updates. If users need face-to-face conversation, they can jump straight into voice or video chats with other channel participants with a single click. The number of [participants in a Microsoft Teams video chat is now a maximum of nine](#). Microsoft integrated the Kaizala messaging service for large-group communication into Teams in June 2019.

However, Microsoft is pushing the platform as being more than just a chat hub. Teams is integrated with Microsoft 365, which means it is tied to other Microsoft Office services, such as Word and Excel, as well as its cloud storage and sharing services such as SharePoint, PowerPoint, OneNote, [Planner \(which is being rebranded as Tasks\)](#), and Power BI.

Any documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and the like that are shared within a Team are synced with a copy stored in Microsoft's OneDrive cloud storage and a local SharePoint environment, so every Team member always has access to the latest version. Collaborative editing of this shared content is also possible, with each user's changes reflected in the Office software in real time.

Alongside this integration with Microsoft's wider suite of services, new functionality, such as Teams for healthcare organizations (February 2020), is being added all the time.

Even if someone doesn't like using Microsoft Teams, the service's integration with Microsoft 365 means that important updates or content generated within the collaboration platform can be flagged up outside of Teams; for instance, Microsoft Delve might highlight an update to an important shared file.

Microsoft Team channels can also communicate with outside services via Connectors. Connectors already exist to push updates from GitHub, Evernote, Zendesk, MailChimp, SAP SuccessFactors, Salesforce, and many more to Teams' channels, and an API framework is available to allow more to be built, also allowing businesses to link their own internal apps. Microsoft Teams supports over 100 Connectors and shipped with 85 Bots. From within Chat, every Team channel has access to T-Bot, a bot that can answer simple questions about how to use Microsoft Teams.

Access to files, internal sites, and dashboards is automatically controlled by Microsoft 365 Groups and SharePoint, with users able to create a new Group or attach the Team to an existing Group when creating the Team.

Microsoft Teams is designed to meet the same security and data protection standards as Microsoft 365 and

is Microsoft 365 Tier C compliant. The service enforces two-factor authentication, single sign-on through Active Directory, and encryption of data in transit and at rest. Microsoft is also adding controls to help organizations protect sensitive information from being shared or leaked. Information barriers allow firms to limit which team members can communicate and collaborate with each other. Secure Private Channels lets organizations control which team members can see conversations and content in a specific Teams channel.

HOW DO I USE MICROSOFT TEAMS?

Microsoft Teams is designed to provide an easier way for small groups of people to communicate and collaborate. The de facto approach of communicating via group emails and sharing files via a patchwork of different services is difficult, at least that seems to be Microsoft's rationale, with the potential for missed messages and files. This is the problem Microsoft Teams is designed to solve.

Microsoft argues that Teams' trump card is its tight integration with Office services and Groups, which allows users to seamlessly and securely switch between editing documents, shared dashboards and planners, and group chat, video, and voice calls. That simplicity of just setting up a Team and having access to all these shared services--without the need to spend hours configuring them--is part of what Microsoft sees as Teams' selling point. Microsoft Teams integration with email also allows messages sent to a designated Team address to be copied to a conversation in Teams.

Full-featured dialing capabilities weren't originally available, but Microsoft Teams now supports call history, hold/resume, speed dial, transfer, forwarding, caller ID masking, extension dialing, multi-call handling, simultaneous ringing, and voicemail.

As Teams gains new features, Microsoft is encouraging users of Skype for Business to start planning to migrate to the platform. Microsoft Teams is available in an increasing number of meeting room setups, with full services accessible via Microsoft Teams Rooms (formerly Skype Room Systems version 2) and on Surface Hub. Due to Microsoft Teams incorporating these features, support for Skype for Business will end on 31 July 2021, with new Microsoft 365 customers moved onto Microsoft Teams by default.

Microsoft answered calls to make cross-organization working in Team easier in March 2018, when it began rolling out guest access for users without a corporate account. The service is also available to US [government agencies that use Microsoft 365](#).

Since launch Microsoft has integrated apps and services with Teams, both in-house Microsoft 365 such as Excel, as well as those from select partners like Trello, InVision, and SurveyMonkey. Users can include information directly from these apps in their conversations without having to include screenshots or hyperlinks. Searching for people has also been improved, with the addition of a [Microsoft Graph API](#)-powered app

called “Who” that will allow users to search for people in their organizations by name or topic.

Well-established features of Microsoft Teams now include recordings of meetings being uploaded to the Azure cloud, alongside timestamped transcriptions, with automatic translation of chat messages and of automated captions.

Microsoft has also integrated Teams with its augmented-reality headset HoloLens to enable a Remote Assist feature. This feature allows a worker in the field wearing the prototype headset to share video of what they’re looking at with an expert back at the head office using Microsoft Teams.

Announced at the end of March 2020, Teams is set to launch a new Teams edition for the consumer. These personal accounts will look a little different, but will offer the same primary features as the business version.

WHO ARE MICROSOFT TEAMS’ COMPETITORS?

Microsoft Teams’ main challengers are the chat and collaboration services [Slack](#), Zoom, Google Meet, and GoToMeeting, although none of the competitors are as robust and full-featured as Teams.

Slack released before Microsoft Teams, and speaking from personal experience, using a mix of Slack and Google Apps for Work provides a relatively straightforward way of collaborating and communicating with colleagues. Slack has also released its Enterprise Grid service, [targeted at serving the needs of organizations with between 500 and 500,000 users](#).

Slack is also available as a Freemium product, with the price rising to \$15 with customized pricing available. Microsoft Teams also offers users a limited set of features for free, although the full service requires a Microsoft 365 for business subscription, costing about \$12.50 per user per month, which also includes a full suite of Office services. The free version of Microsoft Teams has all the primary features.

Since the free version of Microsoft Teams was introduced in July 2018, there’s been marked growth in Teams’ user numbers.

As of March 2019, there were 500,000 organizations using Microsoft Teams; by July 2019 more than 13 million people were using Teams--more than were using its rival Slack at the time; and by April 2020, Microsoft Teams has 75 million daily active users. Industry-leading organizations are rolling out Teams enterprise-wide; in fact, 20 customers have more than 100,000 employees actively using Teams as of **March 2020**.

WHO DOES MICROSOFT TEAMS AFFECT?

The service is available to subscribers to the cloud-based Microsoft 365 suite. Microsoft says it is available to “most” Microsoft 365 commercial customers--with Teams being enabled for Business Essentials, Business Premium, E1, E3, and E5 plan subscribers.

Microsoft Teams for Education has a range of features designed to help teachers and students, such as the ability to pull timetables from the school information system, integrated OneNote class notebooks, and assignment management tools to assist teachers in grading and providing feedback.

Microsoft Teams is cross platform, with clients for Windows, Mac, Linux, Android, and iOS.

WHEN AND WHERE IS MICROSOFT TEAMS AVAILABLE?

Microsoft Teams is available to Microsoft 365 customers and is in 93 languages and dialects.

HOW DO I GET MICROSOFT TEAMS?

Microsoft Teams is enabled by default for most organizations using Microsoft 365, with the only requirement being a subscription to one of the licence plans outlined above. A free edition, supporting all the primary features, is now available.



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