

Apex Support Bulletin: Office Insider Program for Office 2016 for Mac

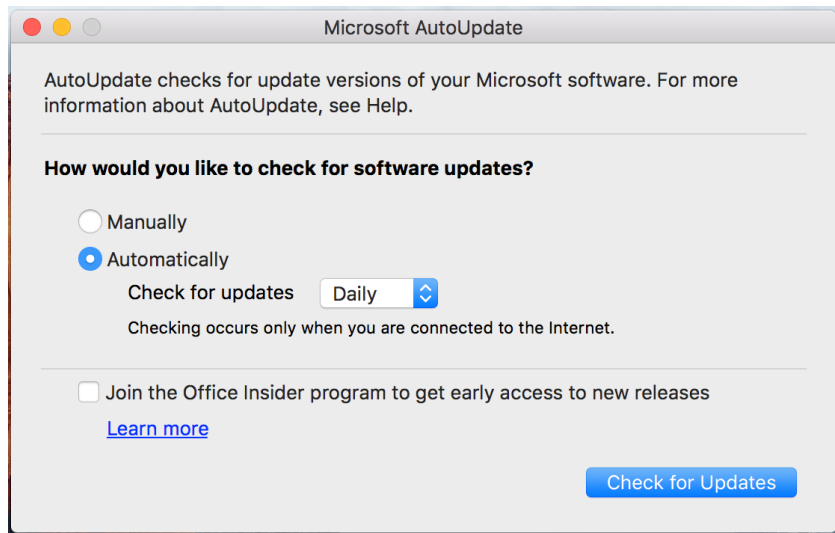
Revision 1.0 [January 7, 2016]

Contact pbowden@microsoft.com

Summary

The Office Insider program is a new initiative to provide Office customers on all platforms to get early access to the very latest builds of the product. The public description can be found at <https://products.office.com/office-insider>

Office 2016 for Mac started its official support for the Insider program on January 5th, 2016 with the release of Microsoft AutoUpdate (MAU) 3.4. The updated MAU contains a checkbox that allows customers to opt-in to the program and be notified of updates that are exclusive to Insiders.



Background

The Mac implementation of the Office Insider program slightly differs from other platforms:

- A Mac Insider can be any type of customer, not just an Office 365 subscriber.
- The Mac Insider opt-in is based on a local computer setting, and does not apply to all computers or your account.
- Mac Insiders will be able to upgrade to a new Office 2016 for Mac update approximately 7 days before it is released to all users.

Solution

The technical implementation of the Insider program involves support for multiple channels in MAU. By default, MAU will use a 'Production' channel when checking for updates, which are based on rules encoded within a set of XML files hosted on Microsoft.com.

When the Insiders box is checked, MAU will switch to a channel called 'External' which refers to a different path on Microsoft.com. You can view the current channel setting by running the following command in Terminal:

```
defaults read com.microsoft.autoupdate2 ChannelName
```

If the ChannelName key has no value or is missing, the 'Production' channel will be used. The following table outlines the valid values for ChannelName.

ChannelName	XML Path
Production	https://www.microsoft.com/mac/autoupdate
External	https://www.microsoft.com/mac/External
Internal	https://www.microsoft.com/mac/Internal
Custom	Value of 'ManifestServer' key

Supportability

Customers who opt-in to the Insiders program should expect to see a release update notification approximately 7 days prior to the Production channel. From an engineering perspective, the build provided to Insiders is a fully functional stable release that is in 'recall' mode. In most cases, the final build sent to the Production channel will be identical to what is provided to the Insider channel. Bugs taken during the recall period are typically issues that cause unexpected crashes that were not found during the normal stabilization period.

If a bug is taken during the recall period, Insiders will get a build update notification at the same time as the Production channel. It is important to realize that the build number will not typically increment, even if a bug is taken during the recall period. Therefore, it's important to look at the build date in addition to the build number to ascertain the exact version the customer is running. You can then compare this information against the release history found on <http://macadmins.software>

Microsoft® Word for Mac

Version 15.17.1 (151217)

Q&A

- Can IT departments disable the Insider checkbox to stop their users from opting in to the program?
Yes. The Terminal command is `defaults write com.microsoft.autoupdate2 DisableInsiderCheckbox -bool TRUE` although many enterprise customers will likely set this preference via a OS X Configuration profile.
- What is the 'Internal' channel?

The Internal channel receives more aggressive and less stable build updates, typically 14 days prior to the Production channel. It is mainly designed for internal Microsoft dogfooding and close partners that need to evaluate bug fixes or new feature implementation. The Internal channel is not exposed through any user interface, but the channel name can be set via the defaults command.

3. How does a user opt-out of the Insider program?

The first step is to uncheck the Insider box. However, this only affects future build update notifications and does not revert the software currently installed. Considering that Insiders will only be running non-Production builds for approximately 7-10 days of each month, there is a high likelihood that the user will already be running the same build as the Production channel. However, if the user has recently installed an Insider build and needs to revert to the previous version, they will need to download and install an older update. Again, <http://macadmins.software> is a good resource to use for finding older releases.