

SharePoint Collaboration Guide for Accounting Practices

Introduction

SharePoint offers accounting teams a secure and efficient way to collaborate on Excel and Word documents. This guide outlines best practices, workflow tips, browser-based editing options, file sharing, and OneDrive integration—helping your firm streamline operations, improve accuracy, and enhance client service.

Benefits of Using SharePoint

- **Centralised document storage** for client files, reports, and templates
 - **Real-time co-authoring** for faster teamwork and fewer version conflicts
 - **Version tracking and audit trails** to support compliance and accuracy
 - **Granular permission controls** to protect sensitive financial data
 - **Integration with Microsoft 365 tools** like Excel, Word, Power BI, and Outlook
 - **Browser-based editing** for quick access without needing desktop apps
 - **OneDrive sync** for offline access and local file management
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Storing Files in SharePoint via OneDrive

When you save Excel or Word documents to SharePoint, they are stored in the cloud and accessible through **OneDrive for Business**. This ensures:

- Secure cloud-based storage
- Easy access from any device
- Seamless integration with Microsoft 365 apps
- Offline availability through OneDrive sync

Where to Store Files

- Use **SharePoint document libraries** for team-based collaboration
 - Use **OneDrive (linked to SharePoint)** for personal workspaces or drafts
 - Always store client-facing or shared documents in **SharePoint**, not local drives
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Synchronising SharePoint Files with OneDrive

To work offline or manage files locally, you can sync SharePoint libraries using OneDrive:

How to Sync a SharePoint Library

1. Go to the SharePoint site where your documents are stored.
2. Navigate to the document library you want to sync.
3. Click the “**Sync**” button (usually near the top menu).
4. OneDrive will launch and begin syncing the library to your device.
5. You’ll now see the library in your **File Explorer** under your organisation’s name.

Benefits of Syncing

- Access files offline
 - Changes made offline sync automatically when reconnected
 - Use familiar desktop tools (Excel, Word) without needing to open the browser
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Excel Collaboration in SharePoint

- **Real-time editing** for financial models, budgets, and client reports
 - **Version history** ensures audit compliance and easy rollback of changes
 - **Secure sharing** with clients, auditors, or internal teams
 - **Power BI integration** for dynamic dashboards and reporting
 - **Edit in browser or desktop:** Use Excel Online for quick edits or open in Excel desktop for advanced features
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Word Collaboration in SharePoint

- **Live editing** for engagement letters, audit reports, and internal memos
 - **Organised libraries** by client, fiscal year, or service type
 - **Automated workflows** for document approvals, reminders, and archiving
 - **Edit in browser or desktop:** Word Online supports real-time collaboration and comments, while desktop Word offers full formatting and layout control
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Using Browsers (Chrome, Edge, Safari, Firefox) for Document Editing

SharePoint allows users to open and edit Excel and Word files directly in their browser using **Excel Online** and **Word Online**:

Advantages

- No need to install or open desktop apps
 - Instant access from any device
 - Real-time co-authoring with visible cursors and comments
 - Auto-save ensures changes are never lost
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How to Share a File in SharePoint

Steps to Share a Document

1. Navigate to the document in SharePoint.
2. Click the **Share** button.
3. Choose who to share with:
 - Internal team members
 - External clients or auditors
4. Set permissions:
 - **Can edit** or **Can view**
 - Option to block download or set expiration
5. Click **Send** or copy the link to share manually.

Best Practices

- Use **view-only links** for sensitive reports
 - Set **expiration dates** for temporary access
 - Avoid sharing entire folders unless necessary
 - Audit shared links periodically
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Managing File Path Lengths

Long folder names and deep nesting can cause issues in SharePoint and Windows. Here's what to keep in mind:

Key Limits

- **SharePoint URL limit:** 400 characters

- **Windows file path limit:** 260 characters (unless long path support is enabled)
- **OneDrive sync limit:** Also affected by Windows path length

✔ Best Practices

- Use **concise folder names** (e.g., FY25 instead of FinancialYear2025)
 - Avoid **deep nesting** (limit to 3–4 folder levels)
 - Keep **file names short but meaningful** (e.g., ClientA_AuditReport.docx)
 - Use **metadata tagging** in SharePoint instead of long folder paths
 - Enable **long path support** in Windows 10/11 if needed
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Best Practices for Accounting Teams

- Establish **clear naming conventions** for files and folders
 - Set up **permission-based libraries** for sensitive client data
 - Train staff on **co-authoring etiquette** to avoid overwriting work
 - Use **version history and comments** to streamline reviews
 - Automate **document workflows** for approvals and archiving
 - Encourage use of **browser-based editing** for quick collaboration
 - Sync libraries with **OneDrive** for offline access and local file management
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What is Meta Data Tagging?

Metadata tagging is the process of adding descriptive keywords, labels, or tags to digital files to make them easier to organize, search, and manage. This process adds context to data, enabling users and systems to quickly find specific assets like images, videos, or documents within large collections. For example, tagging an image with "beach," "sunset," and "ocean" makes it easily searchable.

Conclusion

SharePoint empowers accounting practices to collaborate securely and efficiently. By centralising your Excel and Word workflows, managing file structures smartly, leveraging browser-based editing, and syncing with OneDrive, your team can reduce errors, stay audit-ready, and deliver exceptional client service.