



Using Excel 2013 or 2016
with Axiom Software 2018
Requirements and Limitations

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Introduction

Axiom Software supports use of Microsoft Excel 2013 and 2016 with the Axiom Excel Client, including use of Excel 365 ProPlus (Click-to-Run application for Windows).

It is important for clients to understand that Microsoft Excel 2013 and 2016 have some major differences as compared to earlier versions of Excel, some of which impact the availability and behavior of certain Axiom Software functionality. This document discusses the requirements and limitations for using Excel 2013 or 2016 with Axiom Software 2018.x.

Although use of Microsoft Excel remains a key benefit of Axiom Software for administrators and power users, for most end user deployments we recommend using the Axiom Windows Client. The Windows Client provides the same Axiom Software functionality as the Excel Client, without the reliance on Microsoft Office.

Limitations of Excel 2013/2016

The following summarizes the key limitations of Excel 2013/2016 that impact Axiom Software functionality.

<i>Limitation of Excel 2013/2016:</i>	Defect affecting server deployments
<i>Effect on Axiom Software:</i>	Excel cannot be used on Axiom Scheduler Servers

Current versions of Microsoft Excel – including 2013, 2016, and Excel 365 – are not supported for use on the Axiom Scheduler Server. This is due to a Microsoft defect that affects the way these Excel versions operate in server environments (as compared to prior versions like Excel 2010). Therefore, all Scheduler processing in Axiom Software is performed using the spreadsheet emulation engine used by the Axiom Windows Client.

<i>Limitation of Excel 2013/2016:</i>	Degradation of performance in secure Excel files
<i>Effect on Axiom Software:</i>	Slower performance working with spreadsheet files in Axiom Software

Our testing indicates that Excel 2013 and 2016 have significantly slower performance as compared to using Axiom Software with prior versions of Excel. This is mainly due to certain changes made to the way Excel 2013 and 2016 handle workbook and worksheet protections.

Axiom Software administrators and other power users may want to consider using the Axiom Windows Client when working with larger files and processes that perform more slowly in Excel 2013 and 2016, and/or perform these processes using Scheduler instead. Optionally, you can also choose to disable the Axiom Software system configuration setting **ExcelWorksheetPasswordProtectionEnabled**. Disabling password protection for worksheets can improve system performance in Excel 2013 and 2016.

Limitation of Excel 2013/2016:	User interface changes to one file per window
Effect on Axiom Software:	Axiom Software files honor this behavior when running in 2013/2016

One of the major differences in Excel 2013 and 2016 as compared to prior versions of Excel is the treatment of working with multiple files. In Excel 2013 and 2016, each file is opened in a separate window. Excel 2013 and 2016 do not provide any native support for opening multiple files within the same window.

When Axiom Software customers first started using Excel 2013, they experienced this new behavior and asked us if we could find a way to support the old behavior when working with Axiom Software in Excel 2013. For several Axiom Software releases we provided an environment that emulated the old behavior, but unfortunately this workaround caused other issues that negatively impacted the user experience.

Given these issues, and given that Microsoft has shown no signs of potentially returning to the previous behavior or supporting it as an option, we have decided to remove the "multiple-files-single-window" emulation behavior in Excel 2013 and 2016. When using Axiom Software with these Excel versions, each file will open in a separate Excel window, using the native file handling behavior of Excel 2013 and 2016.

This change has the following impacts when working in Excel 2013 and 2016:

- The Axiom file tabs are still available, and you will see the full tab strip when working in each separate Excel window. But when you click on a file tab to switch to that file, you are no longer changing the active file in the current window. Instead, you are switching to the other window where that file is open.
- With a few exceptions, Axiom forms can no longer be opened within Excel. Instead, Axiom forms are opened in the browser. The main exception to this rule is the Axiom Home file, which continues to open as a web tab in the Excel window even if it is an Axiom form. Axiom forms used as dialogs and task panes will also continue to open as normal within the context of the application.
- Each open window maintains its own set of ribbon tabs and task panes. This means that as you move from window to window, the currently active ribbon and task pane may change, and each may be in a different state. Additionally, manually opened task panes are not populated to each Excel window; instead they will only be present in the window where you opened the task pane.

Note that one benefit of the multiple windows behavior is that it is much easier to view two files side-by-side.

We want to emphasize that the Windows Client continues to provide the "multiple-files-single-window" behavior, and can be used by all customers.

Compatibility with the Windows Client

Excel 2013 and 2016 introduce some new functionality that is not compatible with the Axiom Windows Client:

- If you apply sheet protection manually in Excel 2013 or 2016, then the file cannot be opened in the Windows Client. Microsoft changed the encryption methodology in a way that that is not compatible with the Windows Client. However, if you use the Axiom Control Sheet to apply sheet protection, then Axiom can apply the protection in a way that works on both platforms (as well as allow the protection to work seamlessly with other Axiom features).

This is not necessarily an exhaustive list; there may be other functionality specific to Excel 2013 and 2016 that is not supported by the Windows Client. We will continue to update the design considerations for the Windows Client as any new issues are identified.

Axiom Software roadmap for Excel 2013/2016

The following summarizes our plans for addressing these differences in future versions of Axiom Software:

- Over time we will evaluate opportunities to enhance the Windows Client to support any currently unsupported features of Excel 2013 and 2016.
- We do not believe we will be able to support use of Excel 2013 or 2016 on the Axiom Scheduler Server unless Microsoft addresses the defect that is preventing it. We have reported this issue to Microsoft and they have logged it, but currently they have no plans to fix it.
- We have communicated the performance issues introduced in Excel 2013 to Microsoft, but at this time we do not expect Microsoft to address the underlying changes that are causing these issues. However, as we continue to enhance Axiom Software we will continue to evaluate potential changes to our product that may address or alleviate these performance issues, such as the previously mentioned option to disable password protection for worksheets. In the meantime we have viable alternatives in using the Windows Client and in using Scheduler.
- We do not believe we will be able to provide the "multiple-files-single-window" behavior with Excel 2013 or 2016, unless Microsoft decides to allow it as a supported option for these versions of Excel. We will continue to evaluate ways to improve the user experience with multiple files in these versions, while still honoring the native behavior of Excel.