

**Using Excel with  
Axiom 2020**  
Requirements and Limitations

**AXIOM**

# Introduction

Axiom supports use of Microsoft Excel 2013 and higher 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 newer versions of Microsoft Excel have some major differences as compared to earlier versions of Excel, some of which impact the availability and behavior of certain Axiom functionality. This document discusses the requirements and limitations for using Excel 2013 and higher with Axiom 2020.x.

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

## Limitations of Excel for use with Axiom

The following summarizes the key limitations of Excel that impact Axiom functionality.

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

Microsoft Excel is 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 is performed using the spreadsheet emulation engine used by the Axiom Windows Client.

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

Our testing indicates that newer versions of Excel (meaning 2013 and higher) have significantly slower performance as compared to using Axiom with prior versions of Excel. This is mainly due to certain changes made to the way Excel handles workbook and worksheet protections.

Axiom 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, and/or perform these processes using Scheduler instead. Optionally, you can also choose to disable the Axiom system configuration setting **ExcelWorksheetPasswordProtectionEnabled**. Disabling password protection for worksheets can improve system performance in Excel.

<b><i>Limitation of Excel:</i></b>	User interface changes to one file per window
<b><i>Effect on Axiom Software:</i></b>	Axiom files honor this behavior

One of the major differences in newer versions of Excel as compared to prior versions is the treatment of working with multiple files. In Excel 2013 and higher, each file is opened in a separate window, whereas in older versions it was possible to open multiple files in the same window. Newer versions of Excel do not provide any native support for opening multiple files within the same window.

When Axiom clients 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 in Excel. For several Axiom 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 for Excel. When using Axiom with Excel, each file will open in a separate window, using the native file handling behavior of Excel.

This change has the following impacts when working in Excel:

- 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

Although most Microsoft Excel spreadsheet features are supported for use in the Windows Client, there are some exceptions. A small handful of newer Excel functions are not supported, as well as cell comments and pivot tables. Other features may have some limitations. For more information, see the following topic in Axiom Help: *Windows Client design considerations for Axiom files* (AX2289).

## Axiom roadmap for Excel

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

- Over time we will evaluate opportunities to enhance the Windows Client to support any currently unsupported features of Excel.

- We do not believe we will be able to support use of Excel 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 newer versions of Excel 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 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, unless Microsoft decides to allow it as a supported option. 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.