

# Deciphering **Microsoft**

## **365 SKUs:**

To **scale smart** and  
**keep the chaos at bay**



# When did Microsoft get so complicated?

Buying Microsoft 365 used to be easy. Now it's a maze of SKUs, features, and plan names that change faster than most teams can keep up with.

This guide breaks it down simply — what's in each plan, what add-ons matter, and how to make the right choice for your business.



## Chapter 1: Know your options

### Business Standard (The starter kit)

#### Includes:

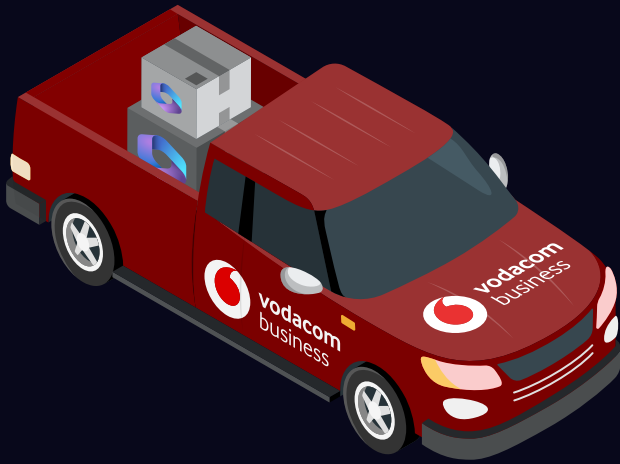
- Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook – Core productivity tools for creating documents, managing email, and working with spreadsheets and presentations.
- Exchange – Email hosting and calendar functionality.
- Teams – For basic chat, video calls, and collaboration.
- OneDrive (1TB per user) – Cloud storage for secure file sharing.
- SharePoint – Create secure intranet sites and manage documents (set-up required for full functionality).



**What it lacks:** Device management, advanced security tools, and control over external data sharing.

**Use it if:** You're a small team working mostly in-office, don't handle sensitive data, and just need solid productivity tools.

## Business Premium (The smart upgrade)



### Includes everything in Business Standard, plus:

- Microsoft Defender for Business – Protects devices from malware, ransomware, phishing, and other threats with endpoint protection and basic threat analytics.
- Microsoft Intune – Lets you manage which devices can access your data, apply remote wipe if something's lost or stolen, and enforce compliance policies.
- Microsoft Entra ID Premium P1 – Provides conditional access, identity protection, and reporting for secure logins and access control.

**Use it if:** Your team works remotely, uses personal devices, or frequently shares files outside the office.

## Enterprise E3 (The compliance upgrade)

### Includes everything in Business Premium and adds:

- Unlimited OneDrive storage – For companies with high file volume or archival needs (requires configuration).
- Microsoft Purview Data Loss Prevention (DLP) – Scans outgoing emails/files for sensitive data like credit card numbers or personal info.
- eDiscovery – Helps you search and preserve content for audits or investigations using tools like Content Search and Core eDiscovery in Microsoft Purview.
- Microsoft Entra ID Premium P1 – Adds conditional access, dynamic groups, and reporting features for better identity and access control.

**Use it if:** You need tighter access policies, handle regulated data, or need to demonstrate compliance with standards like POPIA, HIPAA, or GDPR.



# Enterprise E5 (The full arsenal)



Includes everything in E3, plus:

- **Microsoft Defender for Endpoint P2**  
Goes beyond antivirus: detects and responds to advanced threats across all endpoints with threat hunting and automation.
- **Power BI Pro** – Creates live dashboards and data visualisations from Excel, SQL, or other sources.
- **Microsoft Sentinel** – A security information and event management (SIEM) tool for large-scale threat monitoring (requires configuration).
- **Teams Phone** – Adds cloud-based calling to Teams, replacing your traditional phone system (may require additional calling plans or direct routing).
- **Audio Conferencing** – Lets people join Teams meetings via phone dial-in.
- **Microsoft Entra ID Premium P2** – Adds advanced identity governance and privileged identity management.
  - **Use it if:** You have a large, distributed team, face complex security threats, or rely heavily on real-time analytics and unified communications.

# Chapter 2: Add-ons to fix gaps

You don't always need a new plan. Sometimes, a well-placed add-on does the job. Microsoft only offers certain services as add-ons.

## What can be added on?

Some Microsoft 365 apps and features are designed to be purchased separately, either to extend the capabilities of your current plan or to address a specific business need. These include:

- **Power BI Pro** – For advanced data analytics

[Included in E5].

- **Teams Phone** – To add voice calling to Teams

[Included in E5].

- **Audio Conferencing** – To allow dial-in access to Teams meetings [Included in E5].

- **Microsoft Defender for Endpoint P1 or P2** – For enterprise-grade device protection [P1 included in Business Premium; P2 included in E5].

- **Microsoft Intune** – For device and app management [Included in Business Premium, E3, and E5].

- **Microsoft Purview** – A suite of compliance and data protection tools, including Information Protection and Sensitivity Labels. It helps classify, encrypt, and manage sensitive data across Microsoft 365. [Included in E3 and E5].

- **Microsoft 365 Copilot** – AI-powered productivity assistant for Office apps (requires a compatible plan) [Requires eligible Microsoft 365 plan and Copilot licence; not included by default].

- **Project and Visio** – Available as separate licences for project management and diagramming [Sold separately].



## Chapter 3: What about Microsoft Viva?

Microsoft Viva is Microsoft's employee experience platform designed to improve productivity and engagement. Below are a few of the available modules:

- **Viva Insights:** Provides managers and individuals with data-driven insights into work habits, meeting loads, and focus time — to help prevent burnout and improve productivity.
- **Viva Learning:** Centralises training content from Microsoft Learn, LinkedIn Learning, and your own custom sources.
- **Viva Topics:** Uses AI to automatically organise company knowledge into topic cards across Microsoft 365.
- **Viva Goals:** Helps teams align their objectives and track progress with built-in dashboards.

Viva is a global product and is fully available in South Africa via Microsoft 365 add-ons. You can choose individual Viva modules or go for the full Viva Suite, depending on what your business needs.

Microsoft 365 doesn't have to be a headache — or a test of your patience. You don't need every feature — you just need the right ones for your team, your industry, and your size. This guide helps you make smart calls on when to upgrade and which add-ons you need.

Request a call to see whether it's time for an upgrade.



