

PRODUCT BROCHURE

Rutba Office: Product Brochure

A free desktop office suite: nine applications in one download, on a document engine that opens the Outlook .pst and .ost archives most software cannot touch.

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A free, open-source desktop office suite. Nine applications come in one download (mail, calendar, contacts, documents, spreadsheets, slides, pictures, image editing and video), on a document engine we wrote ourselves, and they work with the network switched off. The menus come in English, Urdu, Arabic and Hindi. It is in open beta, with new releases most weeks.

The engine was the hard part. The suite is what it is for.

Rutba Workspace needed to open a customer's .docx and .xlsx, edit them, and hand them back without quietly destroying the parts it did not understand. Nothing off the shelf did that, so the engine got built: an OOXML package layer that rewrites only what it deliberately edited, a spreadsheet calculation engine, a .pptx renderer, a dependency-free PDF writer, and a mail library that reads the archive formats other clients cannot.

A desktop suite is a better use of that work than a drawer. So it is published free under the AGPL, and a commercial licence exists for anyone who wants to embed it in something closed.

The desktop suite and the hosted product share one engine. Since September the Rutba Workspace apps open and save documents on the same packages the desktop suite ships, so every file a stranger opens in Rutba Office is a test the hosted product benefits from too.

9	applications in one installer
18	engine packages
2,213	engine tests at the 1.43.0 release, none failing
30	file formats read or written

ONE DOWNLOAD

Nine applications, one shell

They share a design system, a set of shortcuts and an engine, so the second app you open behaves like the first.

Mail

Every account, every archive, one inbox IMAP and SMTP for the accounts you use now, with the servers found from the address's domain, and twenty accounts set up from one file. Each account has its own signature, a message can wait in the Outbox and go later, automatic replies answer while you are away, and a junk filter learns from what you mark. It also opens the archives other clients leave behind: Outlook .pst and .ost, .olm, mbox, .eml and .msg.

Calendar

Meetings, kept on your own machine Month, week, day and agenda, calendars with a colour each, and repeats, exceptions and time zones, the Windows zone names Outlook writes included. .ics in and out, and an invitation that arrives in Mail is answered from the message with a reply the organiser's calendar understands. It can keep in step with a CalDAV server you add, show the Hijri date beside the Gregorian, and start the week on the day your language starts it.

Contacts

The address book Mail completes from .vcf and CSV in, merged by address; vCards out. Compose completes from the book and then from the people your mail has seen, a sender is kept from the reading pane in one click, and an address book on a CardDAV server you add stays in step with this one.

Documents

Pages as you type, and everything Word puts on them .docx on an engine we own, under Word's own ribbon from Home through References, Mailings and Review. Pages are laid out on screen with their own headers, footers and page numbers, and stand side by side as the zoom drops. The ruler moves indents, tab stops and margins by hand. Track Changes records what Word records, mail merge fills letters and labels, and a table of contents, an index and a bibliography are fields Word itself updates. Paragraphs can read right to left. Reads and writes .docx, .odt, .rtf and web pages, saves text or Markdown, opens old Word files in full, and exports PDF. It was called Rutba Word until 1.29.

Worksheets

Real formulas, real recalculation .xlsx with a full calculation engine (parser, evaluator and dependency ordering) under Excel's ribbon, every tab and group. Excel 365's newer functions work, LAMBDA and XLOOKUP among them. PivotTables, data bars and icon sets, Power Query for shaping a table or a CSV file, and scripts that run sealed off from the network and your files. A workbook that used to take eleven minutes to open takes six seconds. Reads and writes .xlsx, .ods, .csv and .tsv, and opens .xls from Excel 2.1 to 2003 in full.

Presentations

Slides that survive the round trip .pptx read, edited, rendered and presented, with layout and master inheritance resolved properly, under PowerPoint's ribbon. Shapes move, resize and turn by hand, tables are drawn in their table style, and transitions, animations, narration and video play in the show. Every change is written the way PowerPoint writes it, so PowerPoint reads it back. Reads and writes .pptx and .odp, opens .ppt from PowerPoint 97 to 2003 in full, and exports a deck to video. It was called Presentation until 1.29.

Pictures

A viewer that opens before you blink Every common image format, EXIF read and orientation honoured, and PDFs, clips and sound in the same folder. Thumbnails are made once and kept, and only what is in view is drawn, so a folder of five thousand costs what a folder of fifty does. Pictures can be rated and tagged without the file being touched, and Batch edit resizes, converts and renames a whole folder.

Image & Video

The two jobs that always need a second program Image is a non-destructive editor for cropping, correcting and drawing on a picture, with quick edits and tone tools, and your original is never written to. Video is an editor on a timeline: clips, stills, sound and titles on lanes, transitions between clips, and export with sound to MP4 or WebM. Neither needs ffmpeg or anything native to install.

SIXTY RELEASES IN

Where it has got to

The suite shipped at 1.0 on 7 September 2026 with seven apps, a reduced toolbar and 577 engine tests. Five weeks later it is at 1.43.0, with sixty published releases behind it and 2,213 engine tests. Most of those releases were prompted by somebody using it on their own files and writing down what broke.

1.3 to 1.6: the ribbons, and things on the page

Word, Worksheets and Presentation each got their real ribbon, every tab and group, collapsing when the window is narrow. Underneath it: footnotes and endnotes, character styles and exact line spacing, cover pages and text boxes that survive printing, IRR, RATE and DATEDIF, text that spills over empty neighbours, and a function list read from the engine's own catalogue. A workbook that used to take eleven minutes to open now takes six seconds. Then pictures placed as proper media parts, preset shapes written the way PowerPoint writes them, and a sheet's own drawings painted at the size their author drew them.

1.7: beta, said plainly

The owner used the suite on real files and found problems none of the checks had caught. So the suite is marked beta in the window title, beside the version and above the downloads, and a new check opens every file in a folder in the real application and records what happened. Its first run, over 1,532 public tender documents, set the work for the releases after it.

1.8 to 1.13: a suite rather than an editor

Calendar and Contacts joined as the eighth and ninth apps, and a meeting in a message is answered from the message. A new frame made nine windows read as one product. The word processor lays its pages out on screen and gained a ruler that moves things; Presentation's shapes move by hand. Print, autosave with crash recovery, and an update that announces itself and installs on one click arrived on the way.

1.14 to 1.25: the files people actually have

Pictures stays instant on a folder of thousands. Large workbooks scroll at once; frozen panes, notes, hyperlinks, tables and print areas work in Worksheets. Floating pictures and text boxes print where they sit, and footnotes sit at the foot of their page on screen. Then the Page Layout, Data and Formulas tabs, page borders, watermarks, line numbers and multilevel lists, and in decks the Format Painter, shadows, links and find and replace.

1.26 to 1.28: what was still missing from Word

Equations, tracked changes accepted or rejected, mail merge, a table of contents that refreshes, an index and a table of figures. Password-protected Word, Excel and PowerPoint files open and save. All three document apps gained an accessibility checker and spelling, decks gained sections and hidden slides, and workbooks gained error checking, sparklines and themes.

1.29: new names, and buttons that work

Rutba Word became Documents and Presentation became Presentations, keeping their pins and defaults. Over ninety buttons that had been greyed out started working, the Draw tab and SmartArt among them. Old .doc, .xls and .ppt files of every age open in full, paragraphs, sheets and slides read right to left, Power Query arrived in Worksheets, and Calendar and Contacts learned to sync with CalDAV and CardDAV.

1.30 to 1.37: a review, and a faster save

1.30 was mostly fixes from a read-through of everything since 1.26, with star ratings and tags in Pictures beside them. The releases after it brought all thirty-six WordArt warps, printing that follows the page setup a file keeps, templates of your own, and recording with the camera in Presentations. From 1.37 files are worked on away from the windows, so the rest of the suite keeps answering while one saves.

1.38 to 1.42: Urdu, Arabic and Hindi

The menus and messages come in Urdu from 1.38, Arabic from 1.40 with a choice of digits, and Hindi from 1.42.1. In Urdu and Arabic the window frame turns right to left while each document keeps its own direction. Worksheets and Calendar show Hijri dates, and Arabic print can be justified with kashida. The translations were drafted by machine against a glossary and still wait for a native speaker's review. 1.42.0 was tagged and never published, because its installer did not build.

1.43: a video editor

Video became an editor on a timeline, with clips on lanes, transitions, titles and export with sound. Image gained quick edits and tone tools, Pictures gained Batch edit, Documents lays its pages side by side as the zoom drops, and Ctrl with the mouse wheel zooms the page in every app that shows one.

What is not done

Published binaries are Windows only. The same source builds a macOS .dmg and a Linux AppImage or .deb with one command each, but no build of either is published, so building it yourself is the route today. The Windows builds are not code-signed, so SmartScreen warns on first run. It is telling the truth: the publisher is unverified until the certificate is. Signing in to Gmail or Outlook.com with the provider's own sign-in page is not offered in the published build, so those accounts use an app password. The installer itself has no Urdu or Hindi. And the gap register is public and written from the code. Among what it lists as missing are tracked changes in decks and workbooks, one search across every mail account, the M language in Power Query, and Chinese and Japanese menus.

HOW IT IS BUILT

Two decisions shape everything else

Documents live in the backend

The OOXML engine inflates with zlib and works in Node buffers. A document opens, edits and saves in Node, on a worker thread of the main process, and the window draws the view model it is sent. A spreadsheet asks for the viewport it is about to paint and nothing else, which is why the size of a workbook has no bearing on the size of a window.

We only rewrite what we edit

An .xlsx is a zip of XML parts, and almost everything a young engine will not implement for years lives in a part that can be carried through untouched. Charts, pivot caches, macros, signatures and embedded media come back byte-for-byte. Fidelity degrades only where we deliberately touched something, which is also where the tests are.

Fifteen years of Outlook mail, opened without Outlook

.pst and .ost are read in full: the node and block B-trees, the heap, property and table contexts, folders, messages, recipients and attachments. Verified against a real 906 MB .ost, with 467 folders and 12,172 messages indexed in under a second.

That exercise found three things no amount of reading the specification would have given. Outlook 2013 and later compress the larger data blocks of an .ost with zlib, which is not in the published structure and which a reader that

does not notice sees as an archive full of empty messages. In an .ost the hierarchy and contents tables are mostly not materialised, so the folder tree has to come from the node B-tree's parent pointers. And a view table that does exist may still carry no subject column.

The substitution tables for Outlook's block encoding are transcribed from Microsoft's published [MS-PST] open specification and checked three ways when they load: each is a permutation of 0 to 255, and encode and decode are exact inverses in both directions. A damaged table decodes nothing rather than decoding wrongly.

- IMAP and SMTP for live accounts
- Outlook .pst and .ost, read in full
- Outlook for Mac .olm
- Unix mbox, .eml, .emlx and .msg
- A local store, so an archive stays searchable

WHAT IT DOES NOT SEND

Unplug the machine and everything still works

There is no account, no sign-in to us and no usage data collected. These are claims about a published repository, which anyone can check.

Credentials go to the operating system

Mail passwords are handed to the OS keystore (DPAPI on Windows, Keychain on macOS, libsecret on Linux) and never to a file the application can read back in clear text. Where there is no keystore, the password is not stored.

Message bodies cannot phone home

Mail renders in a frame with an empty sandbox: no scripts, no forms, no same-origin access. The content policy blocks every remote fetch, so a tracking pixel cannot report that you opened the message. Remote images load only when you ask, per message.

Deleting is not destroying

Removing a file moves it to the operating system trash. An office suite should never be the reason something is unrecoverable.

What it contacts, stated plainly

On its own the suite makes two requests. It asks GitHub whether a newer release exists, shortly after launch and then every six hours; nothing from your files or accounts goes with it, though the update library adds a random installation number it keeps in your profile. About once a day the launcher asks office.rutba.io for an announcement, sending the version and the operating system and no identifier. Each is a switch, and when it is off the request is not made. Everything else goes where you point it: the servers of the mail accounts you add and any CalDAV or CardDAV server you add. When you add a mail account, finding its servers asks the domain's own configuration, and Mozilla's public database only if the domain has none; at the same time it asks Microsoft's autodiscover service about the address, unless the address is a Google one.

Free for everyone. Commercial when the AGPL does not fit.

Rutba Office is published under the GNU Affero General Public License v3.0. Installing it and using it, at home, in a business or on a thousand machines, carries no obligations at all, because copyleft binds distribution and leaves use alone.

The obligations start when you hand the software, or a service running it, to somebody else. If that does not fit what you are building (embedding the engine in a closed-source product, distributing a modified version without publishing your changes, or operating it as a hosted service without the section 13 source-availability requirement), Tech Style Ltd offers a separate commercial licence that removes them.

It is a conversation rather than a price list, because the terms depend on what you are building.

- Use it anywhere, including commercially, at no cost
- Read, modify and redistribute the source under the AGPL
- Commercial licence for closed-source embedding
- Engine packages usable without the desktop shell
- Community support on the public issue tracker

MAINTAINED IN THE OPEN

The issue tracker is the support desk

Bugs, feature requests and the arguments about what happens next all live on GitHub, where anyone can read them and see what was decided and why. There is no ticket queue behind a login.

CONTACT

Talk to us

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