

21 Comparing ChatGPT and Copilot

Microsoft 365 Copilot shares several similarities and some important differences with the popular public ChatGPT service. Some Microsoft 365 Copilot users still opt to use ChatGPT on occasion, but policies (discussed in Part III) should dissuade them from doing so. This chapter provides clarity about what to use when and why, along with the similarities and differences.

Shared Similarities

Both are excellent at text generation, data analysis, images, and even coding assistance. Both use advanced machine learning techniques to generate human-like text.

They share some architectural similarities, in that they run on top of Azure. In fact, Azure OpenAI hosts a variety of large language models (LLMs) developed by OpenAI, and others. Some examples of LLMs that run on Azure OpenAI include Microsoft 365 Copilot, GPT-5.x, gpt-image-1, and Codex.

Microsoft CTO Kevin Scott summarized the arrangement with OpenAI nicely: “We build big supercomputers to train AI models; our partner OpenAI uses these supercomputers to train frontier-defining models; and then we both make these models available in products and services so that lots of people can benefit from them. We've been at it for almost five years now. There's no end in sight to the increasing impact that our work together will have.”¹ In fact, Microsoft can contractually leverage OpenAI's frontier models until 2032.

In addition to using new models from OpenAI, Microsoft 365 Copilot is constantly being updated and improved with Anthropic's models as well.

The Differences, at a Glance

Feature	ChatGPT	Microsoft 365 Copilot
Data Source	Public web data and OpenAI dataset	Internet + your private Microsoft 365 data (Word, Excel, emails, etc.)
User Experience	1. Website 2. Mobile app 3. Behind the scenes of third-party LLM apps and chat bots	a. Within the Microsoft 365 apps b. Through the Microsoft365.com website c. In some of the Office mobile apps
Prompt Flexibility	Works fine with general prompts	Thrives on specific, contextual prompts within M365 applications
Privacy & Security	Limited control over data used for training and outputs	Microsoft 365 security tools protect your data and outputs
Traceability & Logging	Limited traceability of prompts and outputs	Comprehensive logging of prompts and outputs within M365 environment
Citation of sources	Doesn't cite	Adds hyperlinks when possible Users can query specific files to search/generate content from
Integrations	Many public plugins from the GPT store	Seamless integration with M365 applications plus Agents and extensions (see Chapter 22)
User Inputs to LLM Training	No direct feedback loop from users to LLM training	Copilot content is not used to train the next LLM release
Cost	Free and paid tiers based on usage and features	\$30/user/month

Of course, the main difference is that Microsoft 365 Copilot is specifically designed to assist users with tasks and information related to Microsoft 365, while ChatGPT is a more general-purpose conversational AI model.

The other big difference is security. Your company data is not traversing the Internet like prompts or responses to ChatGPT. Within the walled garden of your Microsoft 365 ecosystem, it leverages your private documents, emails, and spreadsheets to augment its responses.

Which to use when?

- **For personal use or exploring creatively**, ChatGPT's open access and diverse dataset make it a perfect playground. Its prompts can be quite vague, and it will willingly create an answer. Just remember, in the business context, use the tool responsibly knowing the gaps in data security and potential biases.
- **For businesses prioritizing data security, privacy, and personalized content**, Microsoft 365 Copilot is the better option. Its secure environment, private data foundation, and deep Microsoft 365 integration make a safer way to boost productivity, generate data-driven insights, and automate tedious tasks.

Close, but no Compliance

Ultimately, the decision between the two depends on the use cases, tolerance for risk, and appetite for costs.

In short, if you have Microsoft 365 Copilot, use it for work purposes, and use public models like ChatGPT or Gemini for personal use.

With all that flexibility, it's time to cover how you can extend Copilot to leverage other sources of data!

¹https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7193273937273712643?updateEntityUrn=urn%3Ali%3Afs_feedUpdate%3A%28V2%2Curn%3Ali%3Aactivity%3A7193273937273712643%29