

— MICROSOFT 365 · RELEASE PREFERENCES GUIDE

Targeted Release is retiring: **move to Standard, Deferred or Frontier**

Microsoft retires Targeted Release for Microsoft 365 services in January 2027, and the act-by date is 31 October 2026. From November you can no longer change who's on it. Here's how to map your rings to the new model.

The dates

Now to 31 Oct 2026	The act-by date (MC1490899, published 7 Oct 2026)
November 2026	Targeted Release assignments frozen. A unified Release preferences experience arrives in the admin center
January 2027	Targeted Release retired for Microsoft 365 feature delivery
If you do nothing	Targeted Release users fall back to your general-availability preference. Microsoft won't change your settings for you
Not affected	Microsoft 365 Apps update channels, Windows update channels, Insider programs and Message Center

Map your rings

1

See who's on Targeted Release

Note whether it's everyone or selected users, and who those users are.

WHERE Microsoft 365 admin center > Settings > Org settings > Organization profile > Release preferences

2

Map to the new model

Targeted for everyone becomes Standard release, or Deferred if you need about 30 days to check major changes. Targeted for select users becomes Deferred for the organisation, with pilot, IT and help desk users as Standard release exceptions.

Set it and tell people

3

Set the general-availability timing

Choose Standard or Deferred and add user or group exceptions. It needs Office Apps Admin, Security Admin or AI Admin, and can take up to 24 hours.

WHERE Admin center > Copilot > Settings > All settings > Copilot release preferences



4

Give early testers Frontier

Frontier is an opt-in preview ring. It isn't covered by general-availability service levels.

WHERE Copilot > Settings > View all > Copilot Frontier

5

Update your change runbook

Warn pilot users that moving to Deferred can remove features they already had.

6

Watch for the November post

Microsoft will announce the unified Release preferences experience in Message Center.

Watch out for

- A maximum of 100 exceptions, and every member of a security group counts toward the limit.
- The setting sits under Copilot but governs SharePoint, OneDrive, Teams, the new Outlook, Office for the web and the admin center.
- Deferred delays major updates by about 30 days, not every change.

Checklist

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Current ring written down | ☐ Mapping agreed |
| ☐ GA timing set | ☐ Exceptions under 100 |
| ☐ Frontier testers chosen | ☐ Runbook updated |

Sources

1. MC1490899, Targeted Release retirement - mc.merill.net/message/MC1490899
2. Plan for the retirement of Targeted release - learn.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/admin/manage/targeted-release-retirement
3. Configure the Standard and Deferred release options - learn.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/admin/manage/configure-release-options
4. Set up the Standard or Targeted release options - learn.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/admin/manage/release-options-in-office-365

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|---|--|

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