

Microsoft's talking paper clip is back



By **John D. Sutter**, CNN

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Bill Gates retired "Clippy" as a default feature of Microsoft Office in 2001. The company is bringing the character back in a game.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

Microsoft's "Clippy" cartoon returns in a game

The cartoon paper clip used to pop up in Word and Excel, offering help

Some users hated Clippy, and Microsoft started phasing him out in 2001

Clippy's comeback is limited to a game that teaches people to use Office

(CNN) -- If you remember "Clippy" -- that googly-eyed paper clip that once hopped out of the corner of the computer screen to "help" with Microsoft Office tasks -- chances are you don't remember him fondly.

Many Office users cringed when the Microsoft cartoon delivered cheerily obvious messages like: "It looks like you're writing a letter."

"I know I'm writing a f-ing letter, you stupid paperclip," one hater wrote on a Facebook page dedicated to Clippy's demise.

Well, like it or not, Clippy is back.

But there's good news: You don't have to deal with him if you don't want to.

After killing off the cartoon paper clip, Microsoft decided to revive him (I guess it's a him?) in limited fashion as part of a learn-how-to-use-Office game called "Ribbon Hero 2: Clippy's Second Chance."

The game is just something you download to get better at using Office, if you want to. Clippy takes people through challenges in this game, but he doesn't show up automatically in Word, PowerPoint or Microsoft's other Office apps.

Part of the reason Office users got so annoyed at the paper clip in the past was that he would appear unexpectedly when they were trying to work. (And, really, who can work when a paper clip with eyes is staring at them?)

[Microsoft's description of "Ribbon Hero 2"](#) is stirring chatter online:

"Yes, we turned Office into a game! If you're going to spend time immersed in the inner workings of Office, by golly it should be fun.

"In Ribbon Hero 2, you'll hop on board Clippy's stolen time machine and explore different time periods. With each time period, you get to explore a new game board with challenges you must complete to get to the next level."

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The Atlantic's James Fallows has a hilarious take on that language:

"Here is a question I wish I could answer: Is this Microsoft tone genuinely corny-earnest, reflecting the kind of middle-school pep-rally sensibility that you can only imagine Apple hipsters sneering and snickering at (making you want to punch the hipsters) and Google engineers looking at in amazement?

"Or is it triple-backflip hipsterism itself, an Onionesque by-golly mockery of corniness? I suppose this is one of the enduring mysteries of life."

What's more, [there's a video about Clippy's return](#), too.

Clippy was a default part of early versions of Microsoft Office, starting with Office 97. In 2001, the [company stopped having the cartoon show up by default](#) in its software. Microsoft even [created an ad campaign making fun of the paper clip](#), saying they were putting him out of work.

By 2007, the company had eliminated Clippy entirely.

What do you think of his return?

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