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What's new Excel / Get started / Basics / Basic tasks in Excel Sign in

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Basic tasks in Excel

Excel for Microsoft 365, Excel 2019, Excel 2016, Excel 2013, Excel 2010

Excel is an incredibly powerful tool for getting meaning out of vast amounts of data. But it also works really well for simple calculations and tracking almost any kind of information. The key for unlocking all that potential is the grid of cells. Cells can contain numbers, text, or formulas. You put data in your cells and group them in rows and columns. That allows you to add up your data, sort and filter it, put it in tables, and build great-looking charts. Let's go through the basic steps to get you started.

Create a new workbook ⌃

Excel documents are called workbooks. Each workbook has sheets, typically called spreadsheets. You can add as many sheets as you want to a workbook, or you can create new workbooks to keep your data separate.

1. Click **File**, and then click **New**.

2. Under **New**, click the **Blank workbook**.

Blank workbook

Was this information helpful?   Yes   No   ✕
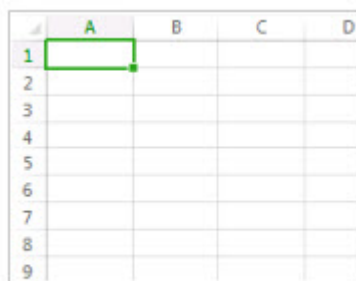
1. Click an empty cell.

   For example, cell A1 on a new sheet. Cells are referenced by their location in the row and column on the sheet, so cell A1 is in the first row of column A.

2. Type text or a number in the cell.

3. Press Enter or Tab to move to the next cell.

Apply cell borders   ∧

1. Select the cell or range of cells that you want to add a border to.

2. On the **Home** tab, in the Font group, click the arrow next to Borders, and then click the border style that you want.

For more information, see Apply or remove cell borders on a worksheet .

Apply cell shading   ∧

1. Select the cell or range of cells that you want to apply cell shading to.

2. On the **Home** tab, in the **Font** group, choose the arrow next to **Fill Color** , and then under **Theme Colors** or **Standard Colors**, select the color that you want.

For more information about how to apply formatting to a worksheet, see Format a worksheet.

Use AutoSum to add your data   ∧

When you've entered numbers in your sheet, you might want to add them up. A fast way to do that is by using AutoSum.
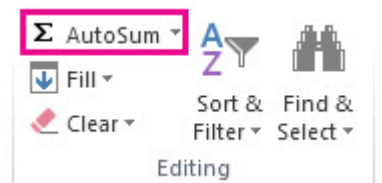
Was this information helpful?   Yes   No   ✕

2. Click the **Home** tab, and then click **AutoSum** in the **Editing** group.

AutoSum adds up the numbers and shows the result in the cell you selected.

For more information, see Use AutoSum to sum numbers

Create a simple formula ⌃

Adding numbers is just one of the things you can do, but Excel can do other math as well. Try some simple formulas to add, subtract, multiply, or divide your numbers.

1. Pick a cell, and then type an equal sign (=).

   That tells Excel that this cell will contain a formula.

2. Type a combination of numbers and calculation operators, like the plus sign (+) for addition, the minus sign (-) for subtraction, the asterisk (*) for multiplication, or the forward slash (/) for division.

   For example, enter **=2+4**, **=4-2**, **=2*4**, or **=4/2**.

3. Press Enter.

   This runs the calculation.

   You can also press Ctrl+Enter if you want the cursor to stay on the active cell.

For more information, see Create a simple formula.

Apply a number format ⌃

To distinguish between different types of numbers, add a format, like currency, percentages, or dates.

1. Select the cells that have numbers you want to format.

General ▾

$ ▾ % , ◄.0 .00 .00 ►.0

Number ⌟

3. Pick a number format.

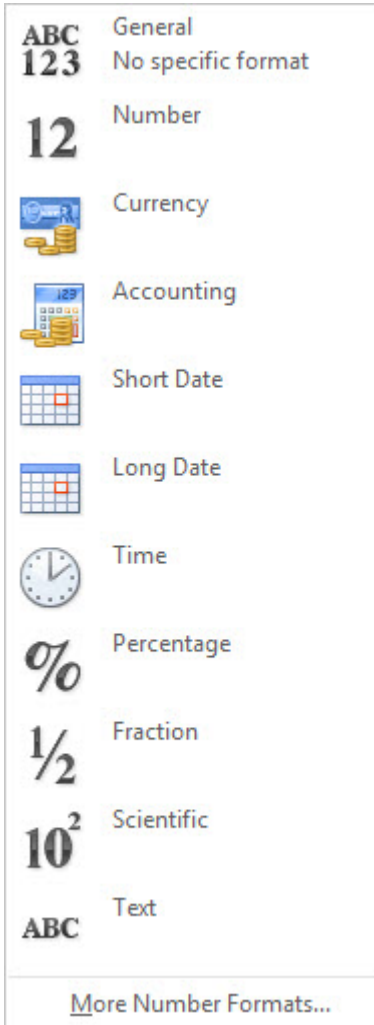|	
ABC 123	General No specific format
12	Number
	Currency
	Accounting
	Short Date
	Long Date
	Time
%	Percentage
½	Fraction
10²	Scientific
ABC	Text

More Number Formats...

If you don't see the number format you're looking for, click **More Number Formats**. For more information, see Available number formats.

Put your data in a table ⌃

A simple way to access Excel's power is to put your data in a table. That lets you quickly filter or sort your data.

1. Select your data by clicking the first cell and dragging to the last cell in your data.
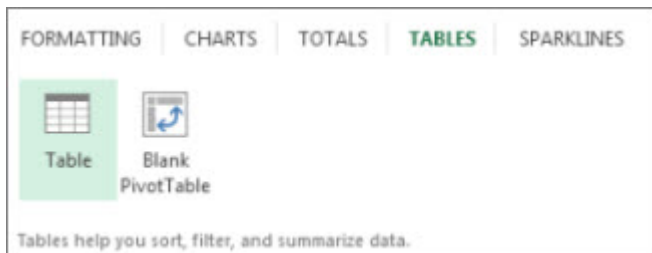
Was this information helpful?   Yes   No

✕

2. Click the **Quick Analysis** button ⬚ in the bottom-right corner of the selection.
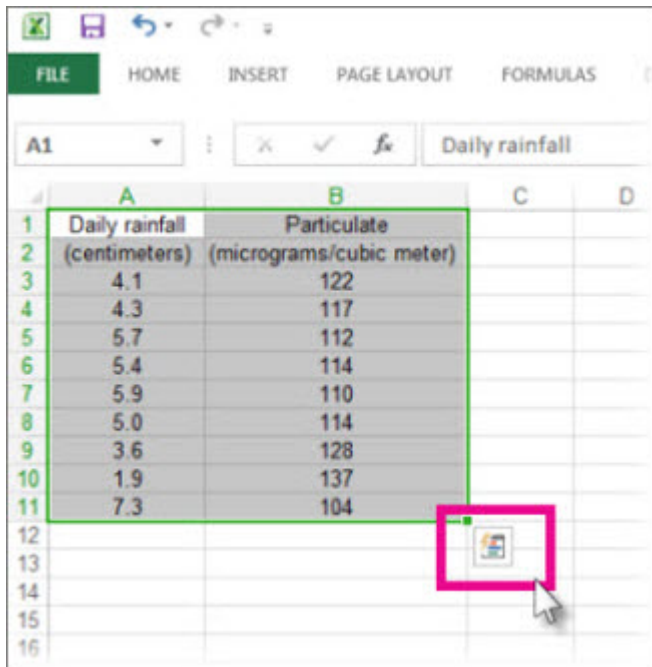
3. Click **Tables**, move your cursor to the **Table** button to preview your data, and then click the **Table** button.
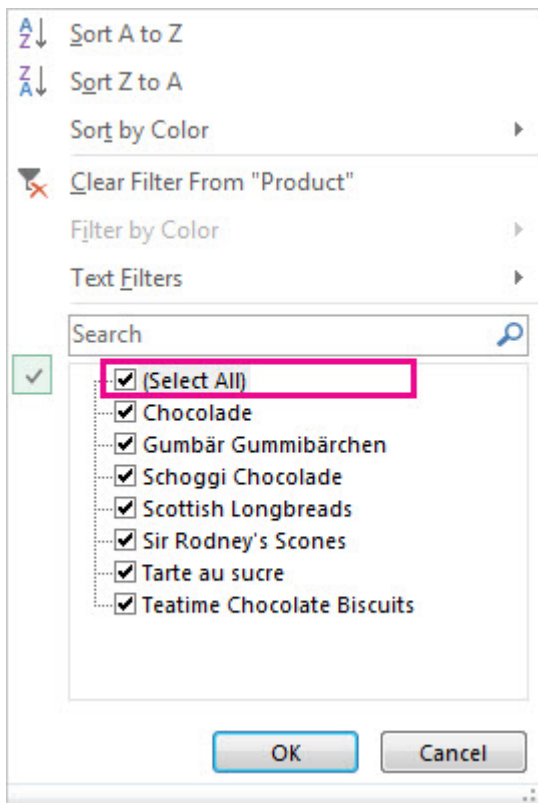

4. Click the arrow ▾ in the table header of a column.

5. To filter the data, clear the **Select All** check box, and then select the data you want to show in your table.
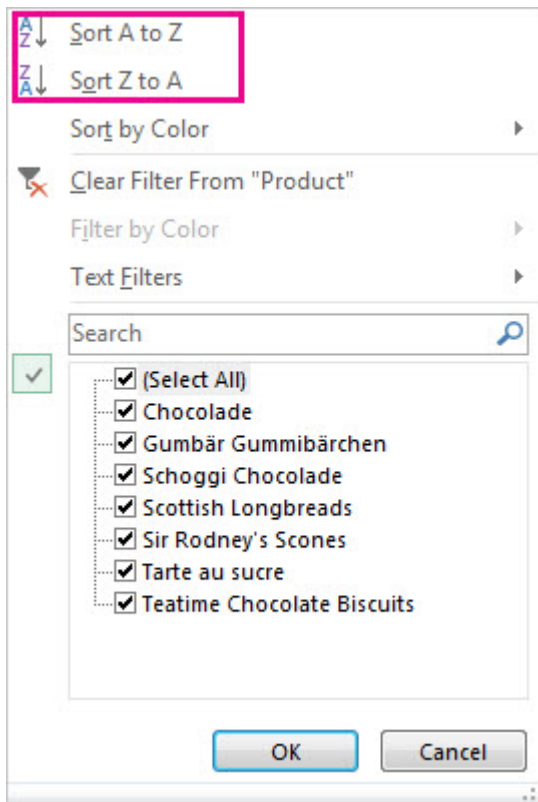
Was this information helpful?   Yes   No

6. To sort the data, click **Sort A to Z** or **Sort Z to A**.

7. Click **OK**.

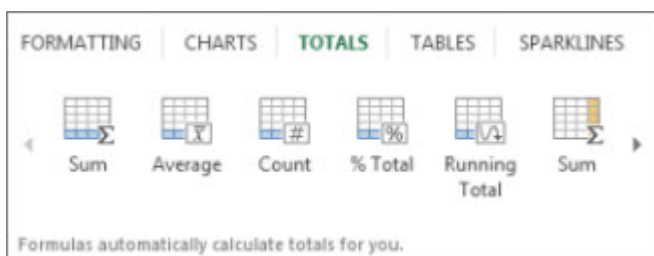Was this information helpful?   Yes   No   ✕

Show totals for your numbers using Quick Analysis

The Quick Analysis tool (available in Excel 2016 and Excel 2013 only) let you total your numbers quickly. Whether it's a sum, average, or count you want, Excel shows the calculation results right below or next to your numbers.

1. Select the cells that contain numbers you want to add or count.

2. Click the **Quick Analysis** button in the bottom-right corner of the selection.

3. Click **Totals**, move your cursor across the buttons to see the calculation results for your data, and then click the button to apply the totals.


Add meaning to your data using Quick Analysis

Conditional formatting or sparklines can highlight your most important data or show data trends. Use the Quick Analysis tool (available in Excel 2016 and Excel 2013 only) for a Live Preview to try it out.

1. Select the data you want to examine more closely.

2. Click the **Quick Analysis** button in the bottom-right corner of the selection.

3. Explore the options on the **Formatting** and **Sparklines** tabs to see how they affect your data.
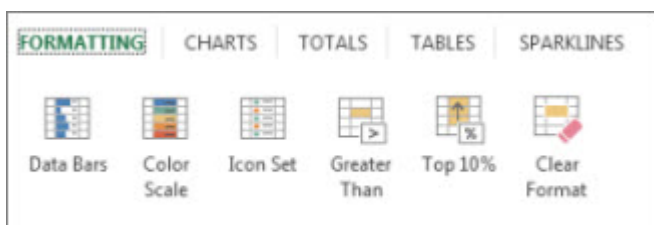
Was this information helpful?   Yes   No

For example, pick a color scale in the **Formatting** gallery to differentiate high, medium, and low temperatures.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2	Avg High	40	38	44	46	51	56	67	72	70	59	45	41
3	Avg Low	34	33	38	41	45	48	51	55	54	45	41	38
4	Record High	61	69	79	83	95	97	100	101	94	87	72	66
5	Record Low	0	2	9	24	28	32	36	39	35	21	12	4

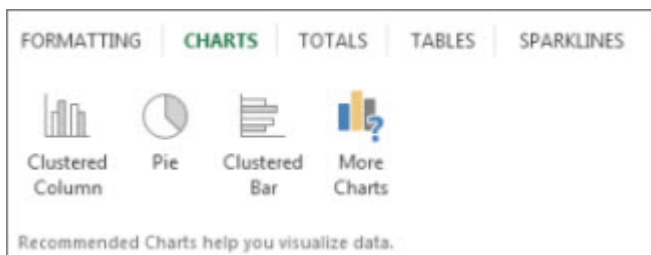4. When you like what you see, click that option.

Learn more about how to analyze trends in data using sparklines.

Show your data in a chart using Quick Analysis ⌃

The Quick Analysis tool (available in Excel 2016 and Excel 2013 only) recommends the right chart for your data and gives you a visual presentation in just a few clicks.

1. Select the cells that contain the data you want to show in a chart.

2. Click the **Quick Analysis** button 🗎 in the bottom-right corner of the selection.

3. Click the **Charts** tab, move across the recommended charts to see which one looks best for your data, and then click the one that you want.

FORMATTING **CHARTS** TOTALS TABLES SPARKLINES

Clustered Column   Pie   Clustered Bar   More Charts

Recommended Charts help you visualize data.

Note: Excel shows different charts in this gallery, depending on what's recommended for your data.

Learn about other ways to create a chart.

Sort your data ⌃

Was this information helpful?   Yes   No   ✕

1. Select a range of data, such as A1:L5 (multiple rows and columns) or C1:C80 (a single column). The range can include titles that you created to identify columns or rows.

2. Select a single cell in the column on which you want to sort.

3. Click ▲↓ to perform an ascending sort (A to Z or smallest number to largest).

4. Click ▼↓ to perform a descending sort (Z to A or largest number to smallest).

To sort by specific criteria

1. Select a single cell anywhere in the range that you want to sort.

2. On the **Data** tab, in the **Sort & Filter** group, choose **Sort**.

3. The **Sort** dialog box appears.

4. In the **Sort by** list, select the first column on which you want to sort.

5. In the **Sort On** list, select either **Values**, **Cell Color**, **Font Color**, or **Cell Icon**.

6. In the **Order** list, select the order that you want to apply to the sort operation — alphabetically or numerically ascending or descending (that is, A to Z or Z to A for text or lower to higher or higher to lower for numbers).

   For more information about how to sort data, see Sort data in a range or table .

Filter your data   ∧

1. Select the data that you want to filter.

2. On the **Data** tab, in the **Sort & Filter** group, click **Filter**.
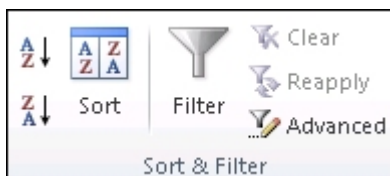
Was this information helpful?   Yes   No   ✕

4. To select by values, in the list, clear the **(Select All)** check box. This removes the check marks from all the check boxes. Then, select only the values you want to see, and click **OK** to see the results.

For more information about how to filter data, see Filter data in a range or table.

Save your work ∧

1. Click the **Save** button on the **Quick Access Toolbar**, or press Ctrl+S.

    If you've saved your work before, you're done.

2. If this is the first time you've save this file:

    a. Under **Save As**, pick where to save your workbook, and then browse to a folder.

    b. In the **File name** box, enter a name for your workbook.

    c. Click **Save**.

Print your work ∧

1. Click **File**, and then click **Print**, or press Ctrl+P.

2. Preview the pages by clicking the **Next Page** and **Previous Page** arrows.

    The preview window displays the pages in black and white or in color, depending on your printer settings.

    If you don't like how your pages will be printed, you can change page margins or add page breaks.

3. Click **Print**.

Was this information helpful?   Yes   No   ✕

Find and apply a template ⌄

Excel allows you to apply built-in templates, to apply your own custom templates, and to search from a variety of templates on Office.com. Office.com provides a wide selection of popular Excel templates, including budgets.

For more information about how to find and apply templates, see [Download free, pre-built templates](#).

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Was this information helpful?   Yes   No   ✕

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