

Introduction

Excel worksheets are used in many walks of life: business, education, home finances, and even hobbies (such as keeping track of your baseball-card collection). In my house, we use Excel for a lot, from our taxes (boring!) to our ever-growing recipe collection (yummy!). Often, I use Excel in place of a calculator. After all, Excel is like a calculator on steroids!

In the workplace, Excel is one of the most commonly used analysis and reporting tools. Financial statements, sales reports, inventory, project scheduling, customer activity — so much of this stuff is kept in Excel. The program's capability to manipulate and give feedback about the data makes it attractive. Excel's flexibility in storing and presenting data is like magic.

About This Book

This book is about the number-crunching side of Excel. Formulas are the keystone to analyzing data — that is, digging out nuggets of important information. What is the average sale? How many times did we do better than average? How many days are left on the project? How much progress have we made? That sort of thing.

Formulas calculate answers, straight and to the point. But that's not all. Excel has dozens of built-in functions that calculate everything from a simple average to a useful analysis of your investments to complex inferential statistics. But you don't have to know it all or use it all; just use the parts that are relevant to your work.

This book discusses more than 150 of these functions. But rather than just show their syntax and list them alphabetically, I assemble them by category and provide real-world examples of how to use them alone, and in formulas, along with step-by-step instructions and illustrations of the results.

Within this book, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and want to visit one of these web pages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading this as an e-book, you've got it easy — just click the web address to be taken directly to the web page.

Foolish Assumptions

I assume that you have a PC with Excel loaded. That's a no-brainer! Nearly all the material is relevant for use with earlier versions of Excel as well. I also assume that you know how to navigate with a keyboard and mouse. Last, I assume that you have used Excel before, even just once. I do discuss basics in Chapter 1 but not all of them. If you really need to start from scratch, I suggest that you read the excellent *Excel All-in-One For Dummies*, by Paul McFedries and Greg Harvey (Wiley).

Other than that, this book is written for the Office 2021 version of Excel, but just between you and me, it works fine with older versions of Excel. There could be a function or two that isn't in an older version or works slightly differently. But Microsoft has done an excellent job of maintaining compatibility between versions of Excel, so when it comes to formulas and functions, you can be confident that what works in one version works in another.

Icons Used in This Book

This book uses icons in the margins to grab your attention. Here's a guide to what the icons mean:



TIP

The Tip icon highlights information that'll make your life easier — at least when it comes to Excel.



REMEMBER

The Remember icon marks some basic concept that you'll want to keep tucked away somewhere in your brain.



WARNING

As it implies, the Warning icon is used for serious stuff. This icon tells you to be careful — usually because you can accidentally erase your data or some such horrible event.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

Once in a while, some tidbit is interesting to the tech-head types but not to anyone else. I mark these paragraphs with the Technical Stuff icon. You can read these items or ignore them as you see fit.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the material in the print or e-book you're reading right now, this product also comes with some access-anywhere goodies on the web. Be sure to check out the free online Cheat Sheet to find the Excel order of operations, Excel cell references worth remembering, common Excel error messages, and more. To get the Cheat Sheet, simply go to www.dummies.com and type **Excel Formulas & Functions For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the Search box.

Where to Go from Here

Roll up your sleeves, take a deep breath, and then forget all that preparing-for-a-hard-task stuff. Using Excel is easy. You can hardly make a mistake without Excel's catching it. If you need to brush up on the basics, go to Chapter 1. This chapter is also the best place to get your first taste of formulas and functions. After that, it's up to you. The book is organized more by area of focus than anything else. If finance is what you do, go to Part 2. If working with dates is what you do, go to Part 4. Seek, and you will find.

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Getting Started with Excel Formulas and Functions