Excel Part 1 - Introduction

Microsoft Office is a family of programs that work together. Word is for documents and letters. Excel is for spreadsheets, numbers, and lists. PowerPoint is for presentations. Outlook is for email and calendars. OneNote is for notes. Access is for databases. In this series we focus on Excel, the program that keeps data in rows and columns. Excel runs on Windows, on Mac, and in a web browser.

1. What Excel does

Excel does four jobs. It stores data in rows and columns. It calculates, with formulas. It analyzes, by sorting and filtering lists. And it presents, with charts. Every video in this series shows you where each of these tools lives.

2. The top of the Excel screen

This is how Excel looks. We read the screen from the top to the bottom, and from the left to the right. At the top left is the title bar, with the AutoSave switch, the Save button, and the Undo and Redo buttons, followed by the name of the file. In the middle is the Search box. Below them is one row with the Ribbon tabs, and at the right end of that row are the Comments and Share buttons. Under the tabs is the Ribbon itself, which shows the buttons of the tab you chose.

3. The grid

Under the Ribbon, on the left, is the Name Box, and next to it is the formula bar. The Name Box shows the address of the selected cell, and the formula bar shows what is inside it. Below

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them is the grid. Columns are named with letters, and rows are named with numbers. Where a column and a row meet, you get a cell. A cell is named by its column letter and its row number, so the cell where column B meets row three is B3. At the bottom are the sheet tabs, and then the status bar.

Example: Let us say you want to open a new Excel file. What you do is click File, then New, then Blank workbook. Excel opens an empty workbook with one sheet, called Sheet1.

Example: Let us say you want to type a number in cell B3. What you do is click cell B3, and look at the Name Box. It now says B3. Type sixty five, and press Enter. The number sixty five now sits in cell B3.

Summary

You have now met the Office family and the four jobs of Excel: store, calculate, analyze, and present. You know the parts of the screen, from the title bar to the status bar. You know that a cell is named by its column letter and its row number, such as B3, and how to open a new workbook. Next, we look at the Ribbon.

Sources

- Microsoft Support - Excel specifications and limits – https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/excel-specifications-and-limits-1672b34d-7043-467e-8e27-269d656771c3
- Microsoft Support - Use AutoSum to sum numbers in Excel – https://support.microsoft.com/en-US/Excel/use-autosum-to-sum-numbers-in-excel
- Microsoft Support - Show the Developer tab – https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/show-the-developer-tab-406c0207-f711-40ef-9ae8-36349f0ab292
- Microsoft Support - Keyboard shortcuts for the File menu – https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility/office-accessibility/keyboard-shortcuts-for-the-file-menu-in-microsoft-365-for-windows
- Microsoft Support - File formats supported in Excel – https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/file-formats-that-are-supported-in-excel-0943ff2c-6014-4e8d-aaea-b83d51d46247
- Screens checked in a real copy of Microsoft Excel for Windows (November 2026)

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