

Getting Around on Excel for Mac

A Guided Tour of the Excel Window

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Welcome to Excel

If you're opening Microsoft Excel for the first time, the screen can look a little intimidating. Menus, ribbons, icons, rows, columns, tabs, and toolbars seem to compete for your attention. The good news is that you don't need to understand every feature before becoming productive.

Although this article uses **Microsoft Excel for Mac** for its examples and illustrations, **Windows users shouldn't feel left out**. The Windows version of Excel is remarkably similar. The Ribbon tabs, worksheet layout, formulas, and most commands are organized in much the same way, so Windows users should have little difficulty following along. Although the appearance of the window differs somewhat between the two operating systems, the underlying concepts presented here apply equally well to both.

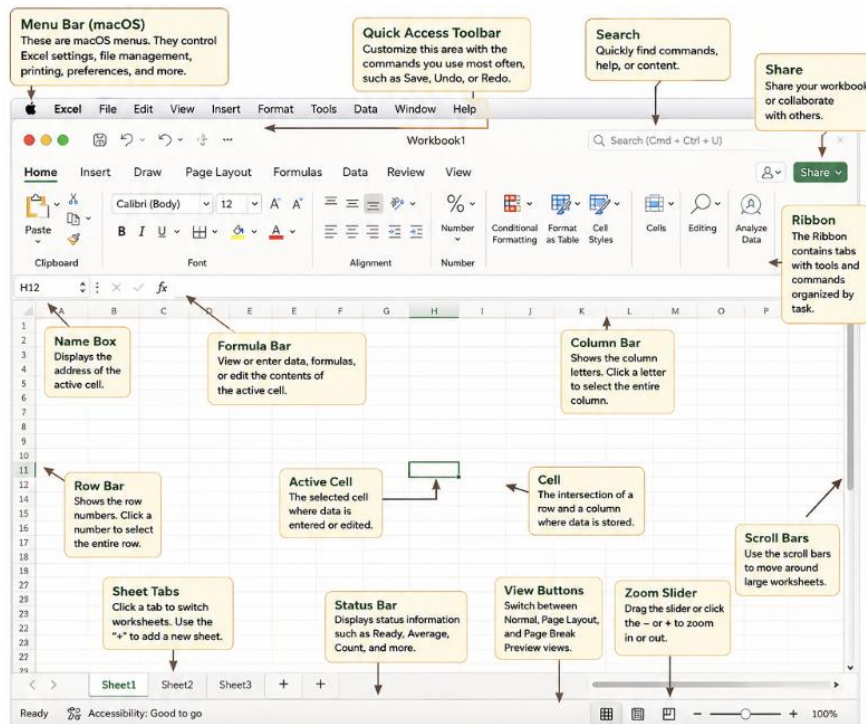
Think of Excel as the cockpit of an airplane. There are dozens of controls available, but you'll use only a handful during your first few flights. As your confidence grows, you'll gradually discover the others.

Let's take a guided tour of the Excel window from top to bottom.

The macOS Menu Bar

At the very top of the screen is the familiar **macOS Menu Bar**. Like every Mac application, Excel places its menus here rather than inside the document window.

The Menu Bar contains commands for opening and saving files, printing, editing, formatting, and changing application preferences. Although many of these commands also appear elsewhere in Excel, the Menu Bar remains the traditional home for file management and program settings.



The Title Bar

Immediately beneath the Menu Bar is the **Title Bar**, which displays the name of the current workbook.

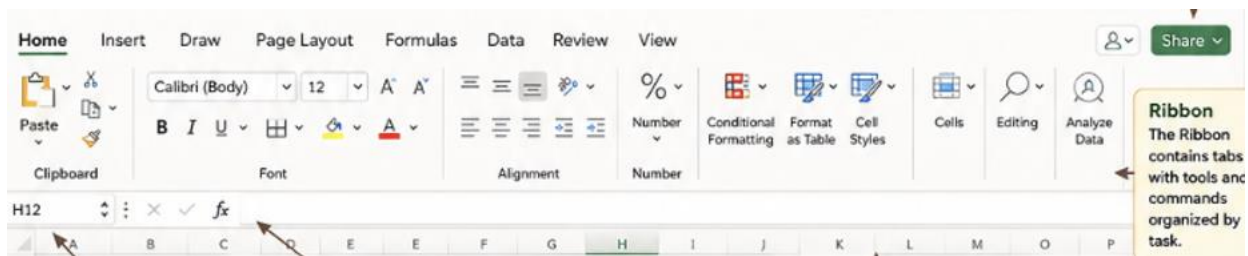
If you haven't saved your work yet, Excel assigns a temporary name until you do. Once saved, the Title Bar displays the workbook's filename, making it easy to identify which document you're editing. You'll also find the familiar macOS window controls for minimizing, maximizing, and closing the workbook.

The Quick Access Toolbar

Near the top of the window is the **Quick Access Toolbar**, a convenient collection of commonly used commands.

By default, it includes buttons such as **Save**, **Undo**, and **Redo**, but you can customize it by adding commands you use frequently. As you become more comfortable with Excel, this toolbar can save countless mouse clicks.

The Ribbon



The largest control area is called the **Ribbon**. Introduced by Microsoft to replace long menus and toolbars, the Ribbon organizes Excel's commands into logical categories called **tabs**. Each tab focuses on a particular type of task.

Home

The **Home** tab is where you'll spend most of your time. It contains commands for cutting, copying, and pasting information, formatting fonts, aligning text, changing number formats, applying colors, borders, and performing other everyday editing tasks.

Insert

The **Insert** tab allows you to add objects to your worksheet, including tables, charts, pictures, shapes, SmartArt graphics, hyperlinks, and text boxes. Whenever you want to place something new into your spreadsheet, this is usually the first tab you'll visit.

Draw

If your version of Excel supports it, the **Draw** tab lets you use a stylus, Apple Pencil, or mouse to sketch, highlight, annotate, or mark up worksheets using digital ink.

Page Layout

The **Page Layout** tab controls how your worksheet appears when printed. Here you'll find options for margins, page orientation, paper size, print areas, page breaks, and themes. Before printing a large worksheet, it's always worth spending a minute on this tab.

Formulas

The **Formulas** tab contains one of Excel's greatest strengths. Here you'll find hundreds of built-in mathematical, financial, statistical, logical, engineering, and text functions. You can also define named ranges, trace formulas, and troubleshoot calculation errors. If spreadsheets have a "power center," this is it.

Data

The **Data** tab is the home of organization. Here you'll find commands for sorting records, filtering information, validating data entries, removing duplicates, importing information from

external sources, and refreshing connected data. If you're using Excel as a simple database, you'll visit this tab frequently.

Review

The **Review** tab contains tools for proofreading and collaboration. It includes spell checking, comments, workbook protection, accessibility checking, and features designed to make sharing spreadsheets with others easier.

View

The **View** tab changes how you see your workbook rather than what's inside it. You'll find commands for freezing rows and columns, displaying gridlines, arranging multiple workbook windows, changing zoom levels, and switching among Normal, Page Layout, and Page Break Preview views.

THE RIBBON TABS: WHAT THEY DO	
Home	Everyday commands for working with data: Cut, Copy, Paste, formatting, fonts, alignment, number formats, styles, cells, and editing tools.
Insert	Insert tables, pictures, charts, shapes, text boxes, links, symbols, and other elements into your worksheet.
Draw	Use pens, highlighters, and erasers to draw on your worksheet. Add handwriting or sketch ideas directly in your file.
Page Layout	Control how your worksheet looks when printed: themes, margins, orientation, size, print area, breaks, and page setup options.
Formulas	Work with formulas and functions: Insert Function, AutoSum, Recently Used functions, Define Names, and Formula Auditing tools.
Data	Import and manage data: Get Data, Sort, Filter, Text to Columns, Data Validation, Remove Duplicates, and more.
Review	Check spelling and grammar, add comments, protect sheets and workbooks, and track changes.
View	Change workbook views, show or hide gridlines and headings, freeze panes, arrange windows, and adjust zoom.

The Formula Bar

Just beneath the Ribbon sits the **Formula Bar**.

Whenever you click a cell, the Formula Bar displays its contents. If the cell contains text or a number, you'll see that information. If it contains a formula, you'll see the formula itself—even though the worksheet displays only the calculated result.

As you progress through this series, you'll spend a great deal of time working with the Formula Bar while creating and editing formulas.

The Name Box

To the left of the Formula Bar is the **Name Box**.

Normally it displays the address of the active cell, such as **A1** or **H12**. You can also type a cell address into the Name Box and press **Return** to jump instantly to another location in a large worksheet. Later, you'll discover that the Name Box can also store names for important ranges of cells.

Rows, Columns, and Cells

The worksheet itself consists of thousands of rows and columns.

Rows are numbered along the left side of the screen, while columns are identified by letters across the top. Where a row and column intersect, they form a **cell**, the basic building block of every spreadsheet.

The cell outlined with a bold border is called the **active cell**, and that's where your next entry will appear. Every cell has its own address. For example, the cell located at Column C and Row 8 is called **C8**.

Worksheet Tabs

Along the bottom of the window are the **Worksheet Tabs**.

Each tab represents a separate worksheet within the current workbook. Click a tab to switch between worksheets, or click the + button to create a new one.

Think of a workbook as a three-ring binder and each worksheet as one page inside that binder. Many Excel users create separate worksheets for budgets, inventories, customer lists, or monthly reports while keeping everything together inside a single workbook.

The Status Bar

At the bottom of the window you'll find the **Status Bar**.

Besides displaying messages about the current worksheet, it can instantly calculate the **Sum**, **Average**, **Count**, and other statistics for any group of selected cells—a handy feature that many Excel users overlook.

View Controls and Zoom

In the lower-right corner are the **View** buttons and the **Zoom Slider**.

The View buttons let you switch among Normal View, Page Layout View, and Page Break Preview, while the Zoom Slider enlarges or reduces the worksheet without changing the actual size of your data. Zooming simply makes your worksheet easier to read while you work.

Scroll Bars

Finally, the vertical and horizontal **Scroll Bars** allow you to move around large worksheets that extend beyond the visible screen.

An Excel worksheet can contain more than one million rows and over sixteen thousand columns. Fortunately, most spreadsheets use only a tiny fraction of that capacity, but it's nice to know the room is there if you need it.

Becoming Comfortable with Excel

At first glance, Excel may appear to have more buttons than anyone could possibly need. Don't let that discourage you. Most experienced users rely on only a small percentage of the available commands during their daily work.

As you continue through the **Spreadsheets for Everyone** series, you'll become familiar with the parts of the Excel window that matter most. We'll learn how to enter and edit data, format worksheets, write formulas, create charts, sort and filter information, use Excel as a simple database, and discover the many shortcuts that make spreadsheets such powerful tools.

Before long, the Excel window will no longer seem mysterious. Instead, it will feel like a comfortable workspace where you can organize information, solve problems, and let the computer do the heavy lifting.