Introduction

Excel is Fun! Why? Because your efficient use of Excel can turn a three hour payroll calculating chore or a five hour reporting task into a five minute breeze. You save a lot of time. That time adds up to extra time for your more enjoyable endeavors in life such as vacations! In addition, your bosses and employees will notice that you are efficient and can produce professional looking reports that impress. This of course leads to promotion more quickly. Still, further, your knowledgeable and efficient use of Excel can land you a job during an interview. Employers are like dry sponges ready to soak up any job candidate that can make their entity more efficient with Excel skills! Save time?, get promoted?, get the job?, and have more time for vacation? – That sounds like a great skill to have!

In the working world, almost everyone is required to use Excel. Amongst the people who are required to use it, very few know how to use it well; and even amongst the people who know it well, very few of those people know how to use it efficiently to the point where grace and beauty can be seen in a simple spreadsheet!

This handout will take you from the very beginning basics of Excel and then straight into a simple set of efficiency rules that will lead you towards Excel excellence.

What Is Excel?

You use Word to create letters, flyers, books and mail merges. You use PowerPoint to create visual, audio and text presentations. You use Google to research a topic and find the local pizza restaurant. You use Excel to make **Calculations**, **Analyze Data** and **Create Charts**. Although databases (such as Access) are the proper place to store data and create routine calculating queries, many people around the planet earth use Excel to complete these tasks. Excel’s row and column format and ready ability to store data and make calculations make it easy to use when compared to a database program. However, Excel’s essential beauty is that you can make calculations and analyze/manipulate data quickly and easily “on the fly!” This easy to use, planet earth “default” program must be learned if you want to succeed in today’s working world.

Open up The Excel Is Fun!.xls workbook and click on the “What is Excel” sheet tab

Here is an example of how Excel can make payroll calculation quickly and with fewer errors than by hand (Figure 1):

Here is an example of how Excel can manage data, sorting by time, quickly and with fewer errors than by hand (Figure 2 and Figure 3):

Rows, Columns, Cells, Range Of Cells

Rows are horizontal and are represented by numbers. In our example (Figure 4) the color blue has been added to show row 5.

Columns are vertical and represented by letters. In our example (Figure 4) the color yellow has been added to show Column B.

A cell is an intersection of a row and a column. In our example the color green has been added to show cell B5. In our example column B and row 5 can be detected because the column and row headers are highlighted in a light-steel-blue color (Figure 4). In addition, you can see that the name box shows that cell B5 is selected (Figure 4 and 5).

B5 is the name of this cell. It can be thought of as the address for this cell. It is like the intersection of two streets. If we wanted to hang out at the corner of Column B Street and Row 5 Street, we would be hanging out at the cell address B5.

Later when we make calculations in Excel (making formulas), B5 will be called a cell reference.

A range of cells is two or more cells that are adjacent. For example you can see three blue cells D9, E9, and F9. This range would properly be expressed as D9:F9, where the colon means from cell D9 all the way to cell F9

Worksheet, Sheet Tab, Workbook

A worksheet is all the cells (65536 rows, 256 columns worth of cells). A worksheet is commonly referred to as “sheet.”

The Sheet tab is the name of the sheet. By default they are listed as Sheet1, Sheet2. In our example () the sheet we are viewing is named “Rows and Columns.” You can see other worksheets that have been given names in our example. Can you say what they are?

Naming your sheets helps you to keep track of things in a methodical way. Navigating through a workbook, understanding formulas and creating headers/footers is greatly enhanced when you name sheets. To name your sheet, double-click the sheet tab (this highlights the sheet tab name) and type a logical name that describes the purpose of the sheet. Navigating through a workbook, understanding formulas and creating headers/footers is greatly enhanced when you name sheets.

A workbook is all the sheets (up to 256 worksheets). To name your workbook click the File menu and then Save As (Keyboard Shortcut = F12). Figure 7 shows the Save As dialog box:

Save in = Where do you want to save it?

File name = what do you want to call it?

Save as type = what type of file is it? (.xls? or .htm? or .xlt?)

Naming your workbook helps you to find it later and helps to create headers/footers.