

Tip Sheet: Google Sheets

Charity Insights Canada Project (CICP)

Community Education Centre (CEC): <https://carleton.ca/cicp-pcpob/cec/>



Anatomy of a Spreadsheet

Across the top of the spreadsheet there are Tabs like File, Edit, View and Data. Each tab has drop down menus with related tools and commands. There is a ribbon below the tabs with commonly used tools and commands

Tip: If you forget where a tool lives, use the Menus Search box on the left hand side of the ribbon.

Columns, Rows, Cells and Range

- Columns run vertically and are labeled with letters (A, B, C...).
- Rows run horizontally and are labeled with numbers (1, 2, 3...).
- A cell is where a column and row meet (example: A1).
- A Range is a group of selected cells (example: A1:C10).

Tip: You can check the cell reference as it is shown in the Name Box (top left of sheet)

Entering Data

“Select to Affect”: Select a cell and start typing to enter data. When done, press [Enter]. You will move to the next cell DOWN.

- You can also press these after entering data:
- [Shift + Enter] → Move to next cell UP
- [Tab] → Move to next cell RIGHT
- [Shift + Tab] → Move to next cell LEFT

Fill handle: the tiny green box in the bottom right of a cell. Use this to copy formulas or patterns in the data. Excel tries to identify the pattern for you.

Tip: [Ctrl + A] or [⌘ + A] will select table contents, hit again to select formatted headers and then again to select the whole sheet.

Editing Data

- **click on a cell** and type to write over the data in the cell
- **double click in a cell** to modify the existing data in the cell

Tip: To undo press [Ctrl + Z] on a PC or [⌘ + Z] on a Mac

Cut, Copy and Paste Data

You can cut, copy, and paste a cell, column, row, or range.

Keyboard shortcuts for these options:

- To copy: PC [Ctrl + C] Mac [⌘ + C]
- To cut: PC [Ctrl + X] Mac [⌘ + X]
- To paste: PC [Ctrl + V] Mac [⌘ + V]





Tip: If you select a column, row, cell or range to copy or cut, and make a mistake, just hit escape to deselect.

Move handle: The hand that appear when you hover over the borders of a cell, column, row or range that is selected. You can click, hold down, then drag the contents to another part of the spreadsheet.

Tip: When moving or pasting data, if there is already data where you move/paste to, it will be written over. But if you select an entire row or column and move it, it will insert between existing columns and rows. Look for the black line to indicate where it will be placed.

Simple Formatting

In the ribbon, there are options to change the formatting of your data:

- Font type, colour, and size
- Fill colours for cells or ranges
- Borders
- Alignment of data in cells (top, bottom, right or left alignment)

Tip: Text is best aligned to the left and numbers to the right. You may notice this is how Google Sheets aligns the data when you first enter it.

Sorting Data

Sorting Data arranges your data in a specific order based on one or more columns, such as alphabetical order, numerical size, or date.

How to Sort Data:

- Select the whole table using [Ctrl + A] or [⌘ + A]
- Go to Data - Sort Range - Advanced Range Sorting Options
- Select: My data has a header row

Tip: You can also sort data by more than one column in a hierarchical order.

Filtering Data

Filtering temporarily hides rows that do not meet specific criteria, allowing you to view only the data you need without deleting anything.

How to Filter Data:

- Choose any cell in the table
- Click the Filter symbol in the ribbon (dropdown options then appear in column headers)
- Click a dropdown option and check/uncheck items you want to filter by
- If you are done with filtering, hit the Filter button to stop clear all filters





Tip: If you convert your data to a formatted table, column headers will have dropdown options for filtering and sorting (check out the extra resources for a video on formatting Tables)

Formulas

Google Sheets acts like a calculator, but instead of typing numbers directly, you can use cell references (like A1 or B2).

All formulas in Excel start with an equals sign (=)

- Add: =A1 + B1
- Subtract: =A1 - B1
- Multiply: =A1 * B1
- Divide: =A1 / B1

For example, if cell A1 contains 10 and B1 contains 5, typing =A1 + B1 into another cell will return 15.

Tip: Using cell references instead of typing numbers directly allows Google Sheets to automatically update calculations whenever data changes, saving time and reducing errors.

Functions

Google Sheets includes built-in functions that act like advanced calculator buttons. Instead of adding or averaging numbers manually, you can let Google Sheets do the work for you. Using functions saves time and ensures results update automatically when values change.

All functions start with an equals sign (=) and use parentheses:

- The **SUM** function adds multiple numbers or cells at once.

=SUM(A1:A5)

This adds all values from cell A1 through A5.

- The **AVERAGE** function calculates the mean (average) of a set of numbers.

Example:

=AVERAGE(A1:A5)

This adds the values in A1:A5 and automatically divides by the number of entries.

Tip: When putting in cell values or a range in a function or formula, you can select the cell or range, and Google Sheets will write it in for you.

Tip: You can also have Google Sheets do some more of the work for you, by using options under Functions Σ in the ribbon. When you use these Google Sheets will start writing the function for you.

