

Building Excel Worksheets from the Ground Up

Learn how to construct worksheets efficiently and avoid common data-entry pitfalls. This chapter covers essential skills like entering and navigating data, understanding how Excel interprets cell entries, and working with cloud storage through OneDrive. You'll also learn why certain characters like the equal sign require special handling during entry. These foundational skills are critical for accountants who need accurate, well-structured spreadsheets to support financial reporting and analysis.

CREDIT HOURS 2 | FIELD OF STUDY BUSINESS | EXAM QUESTIONS 10

[Start Course ↓](#)[Final Exam Copy ↓](#)

LEARNING ASSIGNMENTS AND OBJECTIVES

Assignment

- Study the full course materials included here.
- Complete the review questions after each chapter.
- Answer 10 final exam questions.
- Final exam is scored immediately, 70% or better passes.
- Certificate of completion is available in your account.
- Failed exams can be retaken free of charge.

Course Objectives

- Identify how best to design Excel worksheets.

Copyright Notice

© 2026 Pacific CPE, LP. All rights reserved.

The materials in this course — including the text, illustrations, exhibits, examples, exam questions, and review questions — are the copyrighted property of Pacific CPE, LP. No portion of this course may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without the prior written permission of Pacific CPE, LP, except for the personal, non-commercial use of the registered learner.

Pacific CPE, LP grants the registered learner a single-seat, non-transferable license to access this course for the purpose of completing the associated continuing professional education credit. Account credentials may not be shared. Group access requires a separate enterprise license.

This course is provided "as is" for educational purposes. While Pacific CPE, LP makes a reasonable effort to ensure the content is current and accurate, the materials should not be relied upon as a substitute for professional advice. Pacific CPE, LP disclaims all liability for any error, omission, or loss arising from the use of, or reliance on, the course content.

Questions about reproduction, licensing, or use of these materials should be directed to support@pacificcpe.com.

Publication Date: June 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

01

Building Worksheets..... 4

1.01 Creating Fresh Workbooks 4

1.02 Getting To Know Excel'S Data Types 13

1.03 Data Entry 101 20

1.04 Linking To Other Documents 43

1.05 Saving The Data..... 49

1.06 What'S Up With The Onedrive? 51

 Test Your Knowledge..... 57

Final Exam Copy..... 66

Glossary..... 64

Index 64

Chapter 1: BUILDING WORKSHEETS

Chapter Objective

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Identify how best to design Excel worksheets.

Before you start building a new worksheet in Excel, it helps to have an overall design in mind. Fortunately, the design aspect of worksheet-building is often the easiest part because you can borrow the design either from another workbook you've created or from a special workbook file — called a template — that provides you with the new worksheet's structure along with some *predefined* text and data.

After you've settled upon the design of your new worksheet, you're ready to begin entering its data. For your data entry chores, you can use several methods. This chapter not only covers all the methods for entering data — from the most basic to the most sophisticated — but also includes hints on when each method is the most appropriate. Note, however, that this chapter doesn't include information on building formulas, which is a major part of creating a new worksheet. Because formula-building is so extensive and so crucial to Excel success, I've devoted an entire book to it.

CREATING FRESH WORKBOOKS

When you launch Excel (without also opening an existing workbook file), the Start screen presents you with two choices for creating a new workbook:

- Open a new workbook (with the generic filename, Book1), consisting of a single, totally blank worksheet (with the generic worksheet name, Sheet1) by clicking the Blank Workbook template.
- Open a new workbook based on the design in one of the other templates displayed in the Start screen or available in the New screen (click the More Templates link or click the New button in the navigation pane).

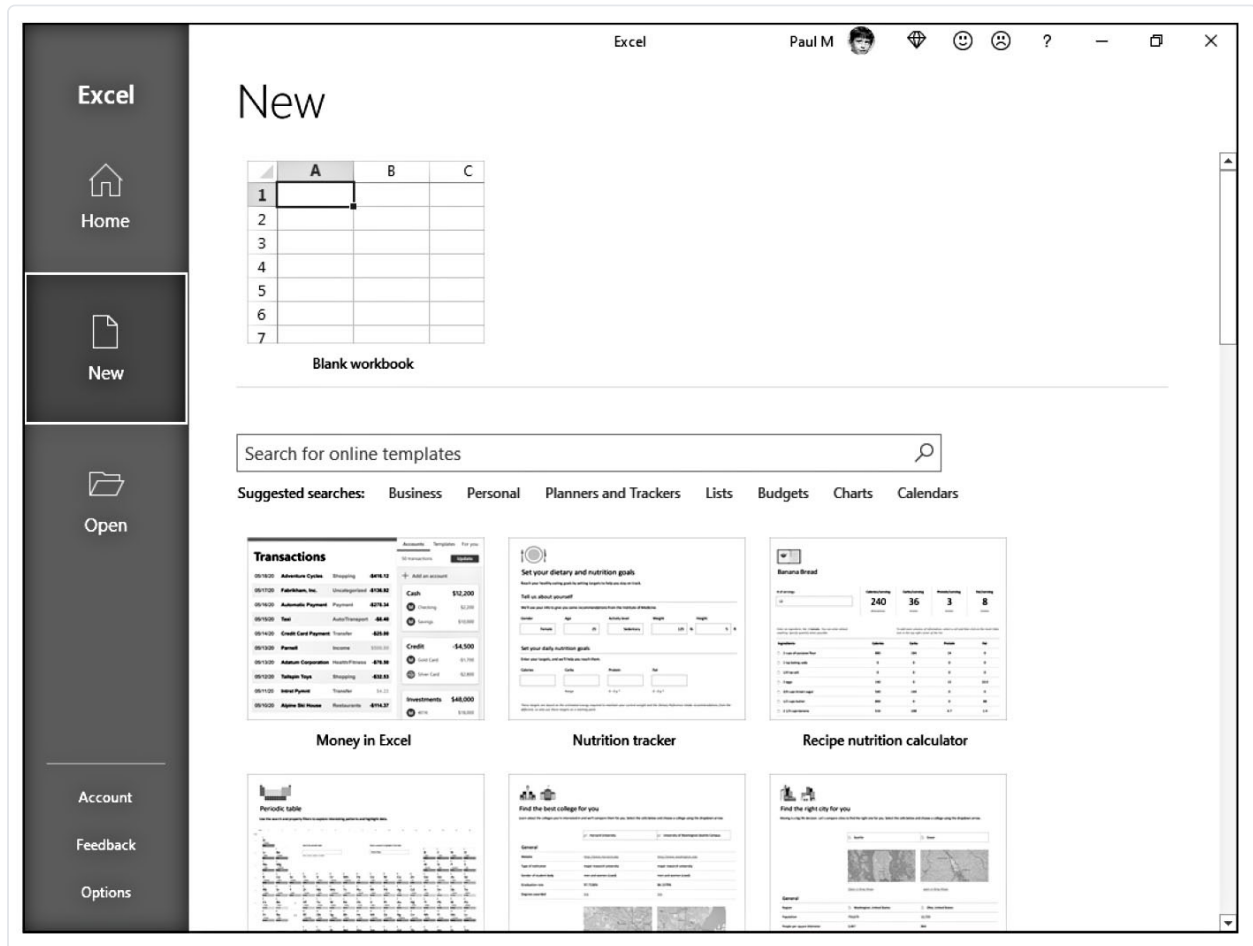
If you select the Blank Workbook template, you can start laying out and building your new worksheet in the Sheet1 tab. If you select one of the other designed templates, you can start by customizing the workbook file's design as well as entering the data for your new worksheet.

Take it from a template

Spreadsheet templates are the way to go if you can find one that uses the design of the worksheet that you want to build (or is close to it, anyway). There are many templates to choose from when you

initially launch Excel and then click the New option in the navigation pane. (See Figure 3-1.) The templates displayed on the New screen run the gamut from budgets and schedules to profit and loss statements, invoices, sales reports, and calendars.

FIGURE 3-1: THE NEW SCREEN IS HOME TO A FISTFUL OF TEMPLATES YOU CAN USE TO GET A HEAD START ON BUILDING A NEW WORKBOOK.

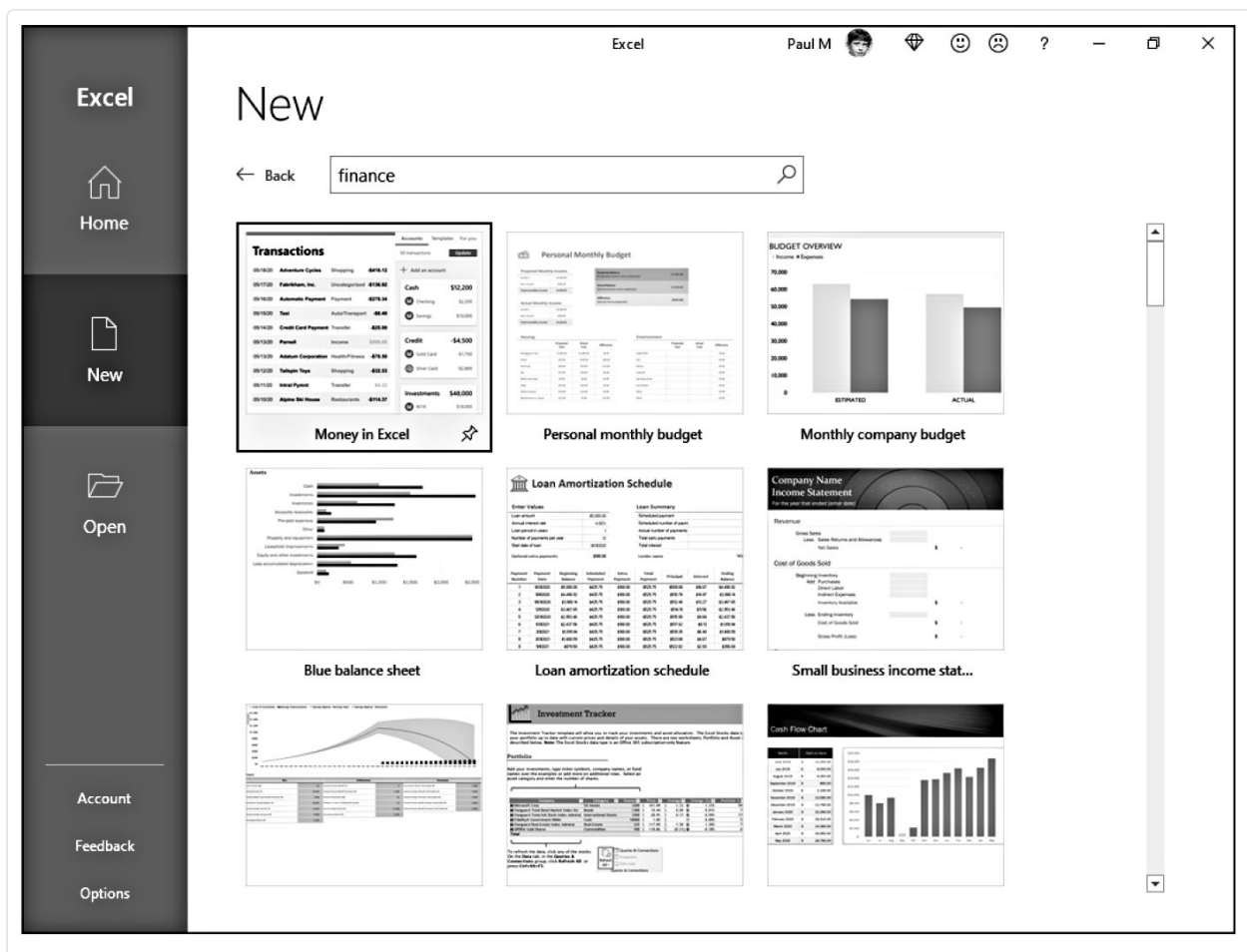


If none of the templates displayed on the New screen fit the bill, you can search for templates. This screen contains links to common suggested searches: Business, Personal, Planners and Trackers, Lists, Budgets, Charts, and Calendar. When you click one of these links, the New screen displays your choices in that particular category.

Tip

If the type of template you're looking for doesn't fit any of the categories listed in the Suggested Searches, you can run your own template search. Click the Search for Online Templates text box, type one or more keywords describing the type of template (such as **finance**), and then press Enter or click the Start Searching button (the magnifying glass icon). Excel displays the search results as shown in Figure 3-2, which displays the templates that Excel uncovers based on a search for **finance**.

FIGURE 3-2: SEARCHING FOR FINANCE-RELATED TEMPLATES.

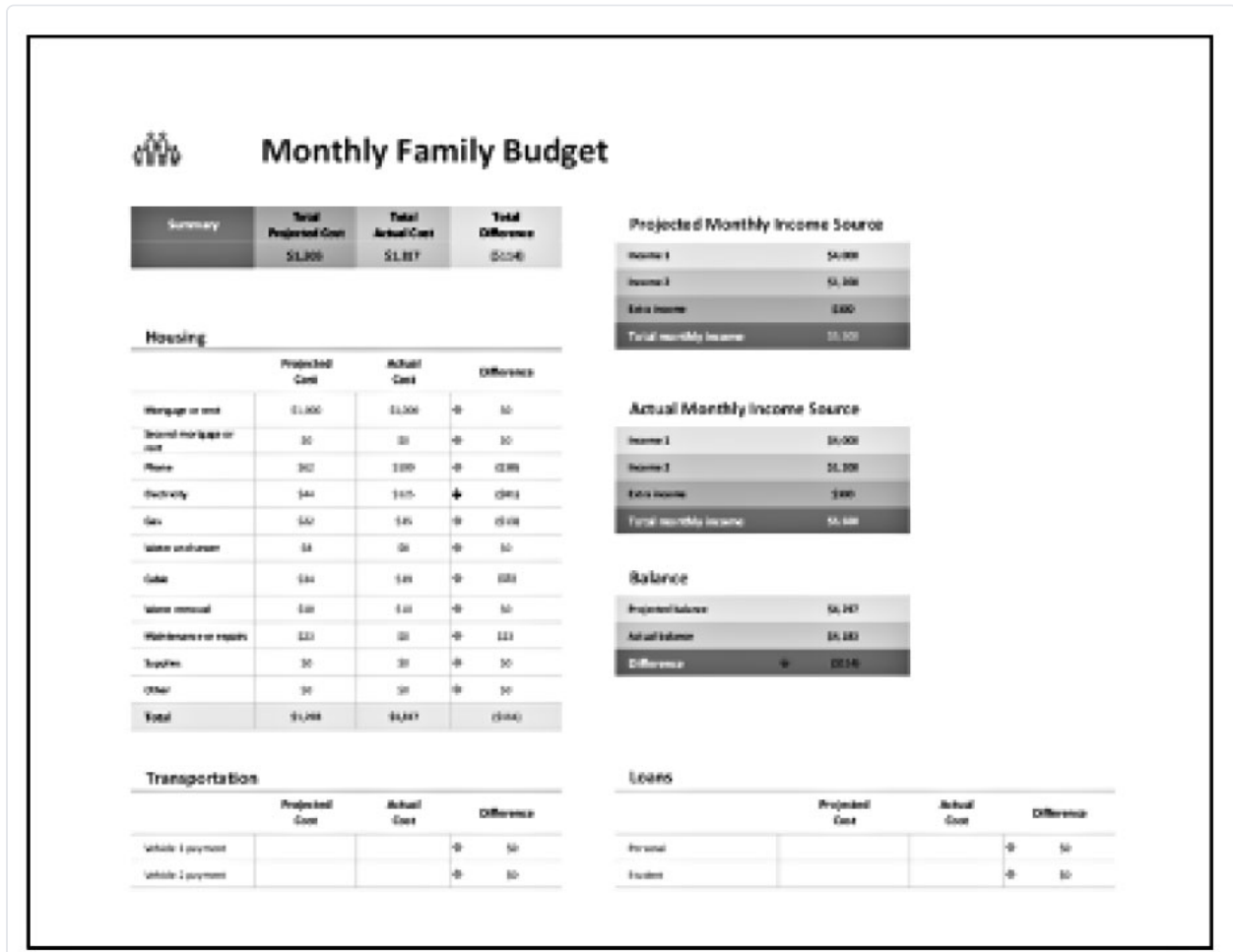


Downloading the template to use

When you locate a template with a design that you can adapt to your worksheet needs, you can download the template. Click the template's thumbnail on the New screen. Excel then opens a dialog box similar to the one shown in Figure 3-3, containing a more extensive description of the

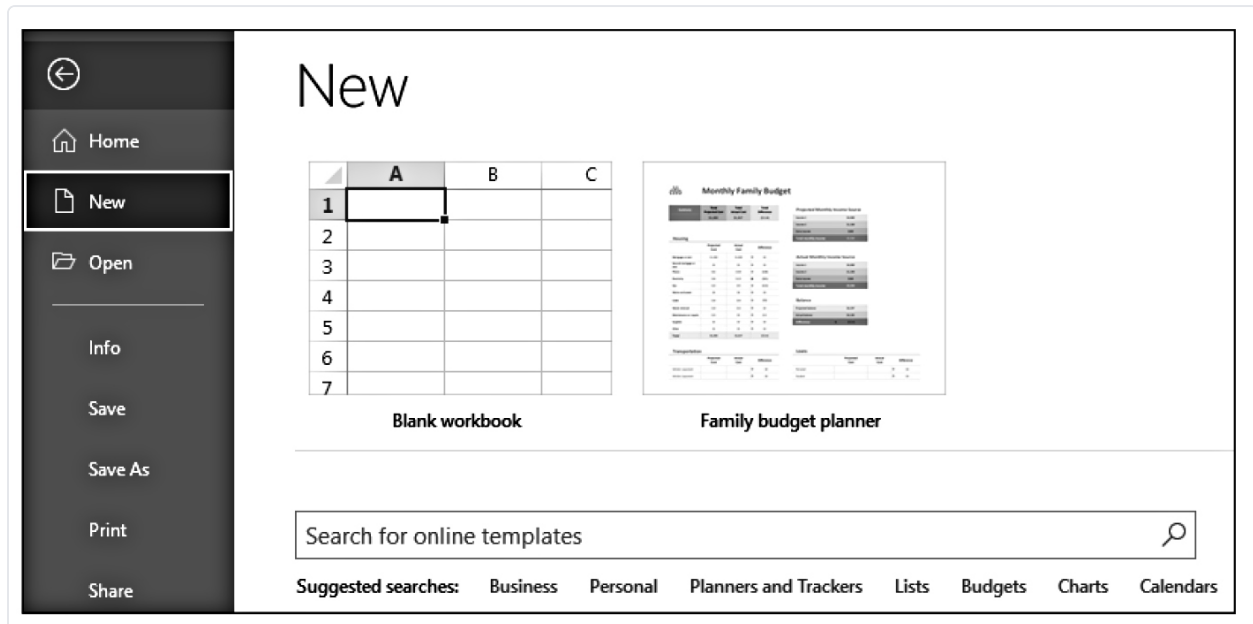
template and its download file size. To download the template and create a new Excel workbook from it, click the Create button. Excel creates the new workbook and gives it the same name as the template, but with a “1” tacked on to the end (for example, Family Budget Planner1).

FIGURE 3-3: WHEN YOU CLICK A TEMPLATE THUMBNAIL, EXCEL DISPLAYS MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE TEMPLATE.



If you return to the New screen (by choosing File→New or by pressing Alt+FN, you see the template you downloaded, as shown in Figure 3-4. You can click the downloaded template to create another new workbook based on that file (which will have a “2” tacked on to the filename).

FIGURE 3-4: THE DOWNLOADED TEMPLATE NOW APPEARS IN THE NEW SCREEN.



To customize a worksheet generated from one of the installed templates, you replace the placeholder entries in the new worksheet with your own data. For strategies on entering your labels and values into the cells of a worksheet, see “Getting to Know Excel’s Data Types” later in this chapter.

Note that when filling in or replacing the data in a worksheet generated from one of these ready-made templates, you have access to all the cells in the worksheet: those that contain standard headings as well as those that require personalized data entry.

After you finish filling in the personalized data, save the workbook just as you would a workbook that you had created from scratch. (See the “Saving the Data” section at the end of this chapter for details on saving workbook files.)

Saving changes to your customized templates

You can save the customization you do to the templates you download to make the workbooks you create from them easier to use and quicker to fill out. To save your changes as a new template file, follow these steps:

1. Choose **File→Save As**, or press **Alt+FA**.

The Save As screen opens where you select the location where the customized template file is to be saved.

2. Select **This PC**.

Excel selects the Documents folder, which is the place you want to be.

If you really want to store your personal templates elsewhere (say, on your OneDrive), you're free to do so. Just note that you'll have to jump through a few extra hoops to tell Excel where you store your custom templates. I show you how to navigate those hoops right after these steps. For now, just remember the location you select because you'll need it later.

3. **Use the Enter File Name Here text box to type the filename you want to use.**
4. **In the Save as Type list (which appears just below the Enter File Name Here text box), select Excel Template (.xltx).**

If you need your new template file to be compatible with earlier versions of Excel (versions 97 through 2003), click Excel 97–2003 Template (.xlt) rather than Excel Template (.xltx). When you do this, Excel saves the new template file in the older binary file format (rather than the newer XML file format) with the old .xlt filename extension instead of the newer .xltx filename extension. If your template contains macros that you want the user to be able to run when creating the worksheet, click Excel Macro-Enabled Template (.xlsm).

If you're using the default Documents folder as the save location, Excel changes the selected folder to a subfolder of Documents named Custom Office Templates as soon as you change the file type from Excel Workbook to Excel Template.

5. **Click Save.**

Excel saves your custom template in the location you selected.

After the Save As dialog box closes, you still need to close the customized workbook file in the Excel work area.

6. **Choose File→Close, or press either Alt+FC or Ctrl+W to close the customized workbook file.**

If you saved your customized template file in any folder other than the one currently listed as the Default Personal Template Location in the Excel Options dialog box, you need to tell Excel about this folder and where it is by following these steps:

1. **Choose File→Options→Save (Alt+FTS).**

Excel opens the Excel Options dialog box and selects the Save tab.

2. **Click the Default Personal Templates Location text box and enter the complete filename path for the folder where you saved your initial personal template file.**

For example, if I created a Templates subfolder within the Documents folder on my personal OneDrive to store all my personal Excel template files, I'd enter the following pathname in the Default Personal Templates Location text box:

C:\Users\Paul\OneDrive\Documents\Templates

3. **Click OK to put the new setting into effect.**

After designating the location of your personal templates folder as described in the preceding steps, the next time you open the New screen (choose File→New), you see two new headings below the Blank Workbook template (and above the Search box):

- **Office:** Click this heading to view and search for Office Excel templates.
- **Personal:** Click this heading to view your custom templates.

To generate a new workbook from one of your custom templates, click the Personal heading to display thumbnails for all the templates you've saved in the designated personal templates folder. To open a new Excel workbook from one of your custom templates, click the template's thumbnail.

Creating your own workbook templates

You certainly don't have to rely on workbook templates created by other people. Indeed, often you can't do this because, even though other people may generate the type of template that you need, their design doesn't incorporate and represent the data in the manner that you prefer or that your company or clients require. When you can't find a ready-made template that fits the bill or that you can easily customize to suit your needs, create your own templates from workbooks that you've created or that your company has on hand. The easiest way to create your own template is to first create an actual workbook prototype, complete with all the worksheets, text, data, formulas, graphics, and macros that it requires to function.

When readying the prototype workbook, make sure that you remove all headings, miscellaneous text, and numbers that are specific to the prototype and not generic enough to appear in the new template. You may also want to protect all generic data, including the formulas that calculate the values that you or your users input into the worksheets generated from the template and headings that never require editing.

After making sure that both the layout and content of the boilerplate data are hunky-dory, use the Save As command to save the workbook in the Excel Template (.xltx) file format in your personal templates folder so that you can then generate new workbooks from it. (For details on how to save a workbook as a template, refer to the steps in the previous section, "Saving changes to your customized templates.")

As you may have noticed when looking through the sample templates included in Excel (refer to Figure 1-4, for example) or browsing through the templates that you can download from the Microsoft Office.com website found at <http://office.microsoft.com>, many worksheet templates hide the familiar worksheet grid of cells, preferring a look very close to that of a paper form instead. When converting a sample workbook into a template, you can also hide the grid, use cell borders to underscore or outline key groups of cells, and color different cell groups to make them stand out.

Designing a workbook from scratch