

How to Learn Excel and Be a Spreadsheet Champion

How You Can Learn Excel and Become a Spreadsheet Champion

I am often asked, “Hey Vikram, you blog about Excel. Tell me something. How does one *learn* Excel?” This got me thinking about all the methods I’ve used and still use to master this software. I made a list of all those methods and today I’d like to tell you – my readers – about how can one go about learning this great piece of work by Microsoft called MS Excel.

In this article, I’ll first discuss the broad areas that one can consider learning. For each of these areas, I’ll give a list of resources which you might consider using to master the respective areas. In the end, I’ll give a list of some other resources that you may use for your continuous learning and to improve your skills further (learning Excel is a never -ending process you see!).

So, let’s begin...



HOW TO LEARN AND MASTER MS EXCEL

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The Different Areas to Learn in Excel

Microsoft Excel is not a software that can serve only one specific purpose. It can be used in a variety of ways by a variety of people to do a variety of tasks. Its scope is really wide and what you want to learn in Excel essentially depends on what you want to use Excel for.

I divide the different learning areas in Excel into 9 different categories, which I have listed below with their meaning and significance. These categories are not totally distinct in the sense that one particular topic in Excel can fall under more than one of these areas. I'd advise you to read these fully and then decide which are the areas in Excel that you'd want to master first.

For each area, I've listed a few books and courses that I

highly recommend. These books and online courses are the best that I could find and are sufficient. **You don't need to keep looking around for better resources. I've already made the effort for you.** Most of these courses have been personally taken by myself, and I've read most of the books that I'd recommend below. So instead of wasting any time in looking for the 'best', I'd advise you to take action and enroll in few of these courses and purchase a few of these books and start your learning journey. I've made this list after a lot of research and would recommend to use it as a guide. I'll keep updating the list (in fact this whole post) whenever I come across a better course or book.

So let's start looking at the different areas you might consider learning in MS Excel.

Area #1 – The Basics

The knowledge of Excel 'basics' is essential for *all* users of Excel, no matter what their purpose is. Why? Because, Excel Basics is nothing but what it is – basics. It is the foundation of the knowledge one gains in Excel in order to use its basic features. 'Basics' is not essentially a topic by itself. It is used to refer to the understanding of the basic Excel features and the methods to use these features. It involves the knowledge of the different components of Excel window and worksheets. It also includes the knowledge of basic Excel shortcut keys and basic Excel functions. After learning Excel basics, one is able to use MS Excel for basic purposes viz. making calculations, making and formatting cells and data tables etc.

Recommended Courses

#1 [Excel 2016 – The Complete Excel Mastery Course for Beginners](#) by Steve McDonald

#2 [Microsoft Excel 2016 Beginner Level Course](#) by Hudson Courses

#3 [Microsoft Excel Step by Step Training for Beginners!](#) by Jed Guinto

Recommended Books

#1 [Learn Excel 2016 Essential Skills with The Smart Method](#) by Mike Smart

#2 [Microsoft Excel Start Here The Beginners Guide](#) by C. J. Benton

Area #2 – Keyboard Shortcuts

Keyboard shortcuts are not something that you can use in isolation for any purpose – whether basic or advanced. The knowledge of keyboard shortcuts complements your knowledge in other areas by enabling you to work much faster in Excel worksheets. The knowledge of keyboard shortcuts is a basic, but essential requirement for any Excel user to become more efficient.



Recommended Course

[Ultimate Excel Shortcuts Course – Become 10X Faster on Excel](#) by CA Vikram Narsaria

Area #3 – Functions and Formulas

Excel is basically a calculation-based software. Calculations and analysis are the main purposes for which Excel is used. And the knowledge of Excel functions and formulas is essential in order to make calculations and do analysis in Excel. Some functions serve basic purposes – for example, SUM, COUNT, LEN, etc. Knowing these functions is imperative for any Excel user. Again, there are some advanced functions which are recommended only for advanced users.

Recommended Courses

#1 [Microsoft Excel – Advanced Excel Formulas & Functions](#) by

Chris Dutton

#2 [Microsoft Excel – Advanced Formulas And Functions](#) by Infinite Skills

#3 [Excel: Learn basic and advanced formulas quick and easy](#) by Adam Holczer

#4 [Master Excel Formulas Tips & Tricks](#) by Scott Falls

Recommended Books

#1 [Excel 2016 Formulas and Functions \(includes Content Update Program\) \(MrExcel Library\)](#) by Paul McFedries

#2 [Microsoft Excel Functions and Formulas](#) by Bernd Held, Theodor Richardson and, Julitta Korol

#3 [Excel Formulas and Functions For Dummies](#) by Ken Bluttman

Area #4 – Data Analysis

Data Analysis is not an essential, but a highly recommended area to learn in Excel. Data Analysis means using a raw set of data and extracting useful information from it based on which decisions can be taken. Again, there are some basic Data Analysis tools that all Excel users are expected to know – for example, sort, filter, conditional formatting, etc. Then there are some advanced Data Analysis tools like Pivot Tables, What-if Analysis, Solver, Analysis ToolPak, Power Pivot, etc. Pivot Tables is a common tool used for data analysis purposes even by basic users. The other tools are only used by advanced users.



Recommended Courses

#1 [The Data Analyst Skills Training course \(DAST\) with Excel](#) by Skillfin Learning

#2 [Excel Data Analysis: Produce Great Reports, Basic Statistics](#) by Tom Vorves

#3 [Advance Analytics with Excel – data analysis toolpak/Solver](#) by Gopal Prasad Malakar

#4 [Data Modelling and Analysis with Excel Power Pivot \(Bestselling\)](#) by Ian Littlejohn

#5 [Microsoft Excel – Data Analysis with Excel Pivot Tables \(Bestselling\)](#) by Chris Dutton

Recommended Books

#1 [Excel Data Analysis For Dummies](#) by Stephen L. Nelson and E. C. Nelson

#2 [Microsoft Excel Data Analysis and Business Modeling](#) by Wayne Winston

Area #5 – Charts and Diagrams



Charts and Diagrams can be considered as a sub-area of Data Analysis. All users who use data analysis tools in Excel don't necessarily use charts and diagrams. Charts and Diagrams are a great way to show a visual representation of meaningful information from a data after analyzing the data using pivot tables, etc. Excel offers a variety of charts and there are several options to modify charts to suit one's needs and style. The knowledge of charts and diagrams is imperative for one who wants to use Excel worksheets in presenting data in a visual manner.

Recommended Courses

#1 [Excel Charts: Visualization Secrets for Impressive Charts \(Bestselling\)](#) by Leila Gharani

#2 [Excel 2016 Course – Excel Advanced Charts](#) by Mach 42 Productions

Recommended Books

#1 [Data at Work: Best practices for creating effective charts and information graphics in Microsoft Excel](#) by Jorge Camoes

#2 [Excel 2013 Charts and Graphs \(MrExcel Library\)](#) by Bill Jelen

Area #6 – Excel Dashboards

Excel Dashboard is a tool used mostly by managers and business leaders in tracking key metrics and to take decisions based on them. It is normally a one pager and generally contains various charts, tables and interactive views that are backed by data. This is not something that is required to be learned by every Excel user. If you really need this, you should definitely go ahead and master making Excel dashboards.



Recommended Courses

#1 [Excel Dashboards Masterclass](#) by Andreas Exadaktylos

#2 [Excel Dashboards: Build a Dashboard from Scratch!](#) by Abdelrahman Abdou

#3 [Excel Dashboard Secrets – Create Awesome Excel Dashboard](#) by Amey Dabholkar

#4 [Excel Dashboard – Basic to Advanced](#) by Yoda Learning

Recommended Books

#1 [Excel Dashboards and Reports](#) by Michael Alexander

#2 [Dashboards for Excel](#) by Jordan Goldmeier

Area #7 – Financial Analysis and Modelling (Specific to finance professionals)

If you are a Finance professional, you'd surely be knowing about the need to learn Financial Analysis and Financial Modelling. For others, this might not be a useful area to learn. Financial Analysis uses Advanced Excel and Data Analysis techniques to manipulate and present financial information in a way that is useful for an organization in order to take strategic and tactical decisions.

Recommended Courses

#1 [The Complete Financial Analyst Course 2017](#) (**Bestselling**) by 365 Careers

#2 [Excel Crash Course: Master Excel for Financial Analysis](#) by Tim Vipond

#3 [The Financial Analyst Skills Training \(FAST\) course 2017](#) by Skillfin Learning

Recommended Books

[Financial Analysis with Microsoft Excel 2016](#) by Timothy R. Mayes, Todd M. Shank

Area #8 – Excel VBA

Excel VBA is definitely a necessary skill to have if you don't just want to *use* Excel, but what you really want is to *program* Excel in such a way that it works like magic. Excel VBA (Visual Basic for Applications) is essentially the language in which Excel has been programmed, and if you want you too can learn Excel VBA and use it to speed up your everyday repetitive tasks in Excel and perform some really cool tricks. In other words, Excel VBA is nothing but Excel programming. So, learn it if you really want to become an Excel super-user. Excel VBA can also empower you to build programs based on Excel. I'd recommend users to learn the other areas in Excel

first and then only come to learning Excel VBA.

Recommended Courses

#1 [The Ultimate Excel Programmer Course \(Bestselling\)](#) by Daniel Strong

#2 [Ultimate Excel VBA \(Bestselling\)](#) by Mark Talbert

#3 [Excel VBA Macros: Hyper-disambiguated Excel VBA Programming](#) by Grant Gamble

#4 [Become an Excel VBA Expert for Beginners](#) by EDUmobile Academy

Recommended Books

#1 [Excel 2016 Power Programming with VBA \(Mr. Spreadsheet's Bookshelf\)](#) by Michael Alexander

#2 [Excel VBA in easy steps](#) by Mike McGrath

#3 [Excel 2016 VBA and Macros \(includes Content Update Program\) \(MrExcel Library\)](#) by Bill Jelen and Tracy Syrstad

Area #9 – Advanced Excel

‘Advanced Excel’ is a term that is commonly heard these days among professionals and other Excel users. ‘Advanced Excel’ is not a specific tool to learn in Excel. It is a term that is generally used to describe a combination of various advanced tools discussed above. In other words, if you master all the tools in areas 1 to 5 above, you can be termed as an advanced Excel user. Some people like to include the knowledge of Excel VBA in the definition of ‘advanced Excel user’ but I don’t think VBA is an essential skill to have (although it can change the way you think of and use Excel totally!) unless you want to make programs based on Excel.

Recommended Courses

- #1 [Microsoft Excel – Excel from Beginner to Advanced \(Bestselling\)](#) by Kyle Pew
- #2 [Advanced Excel – Beginner to Ninja level \(includes Charts\)](#) by Rishabh Pugalia
- #3 [Microsoft Excel 2016 Master Class: Beginner to Advanced](#) by Bruce Myron and Joe Parys
- #4 [Microsoft Excel 2016 Advanced Training Master Class](#) by Simon Sez IT

Recommended Books

- #1 [Excel 2016 Bible \(Bestselling\)](#) by John Walkenbach
- #2 [Learn Excel 2016 Expert Skills with The Smart Method](#) by Mike Smart

In addition to the above, you may use the following tools to complement your learning. Excel keeps improving and you can use the below-mentioned resources to keep yourself abreast with the latest developments and new tricks.

Websites

Below is the list of my favorite websites on Excel. You can find a lot of value from the articles given on these websites. There are thousands of websites and blogs which have Excel as their primary topic. Below are arguably the best ones among those.

- #1 [Excel-Jet](#)
- #2 [Chandoo](#)
- #3 [Contextures](#)
- #4 [Excel Easy](#)
- #5 [Tech On The Net](#)

YouTube Channels

There are a lot of helpful YouTube channels that may help you learn some real cool Excel techniques. Some of those are run by Excel MVPs (Microsoft Certified Excel Super-users). I'd encourage you to subscribe to these channels and learn from their tutorials. Some of my best learning has come from these channels and I urge you to subscribe to these immediately.

#1 [ExcellsFun](#)

#2 [Excel Campus](#)

#3 [Excel Tutorials](#)

#4 [MyExcelOnline.com](#)

#5 [Computergaga](#)

Forums and Groups

Below, I've listed a few forums and groups where you can post any queries you might have. These are communities having thousand of Excel users as their members. So, you can expect to get your queries resolved right away.

#1 [Quora.com](#)

#2 [Advanced Excel Tips and Tricks](#)

#3 [MICROSOFT EXCEL AND ACCESS PROFESSIONALS](#)

#4 [Microsoft Excel | Help & Support with your Formula, Macro, and VBA problems | A Reddit Community](#)

Google

No matter what we want information about, we cannot ignore Google. And Excel is no exception. So whenever you want to know about anything specific in Excel, just type in your search query and you'd normally get the answer you are looking for.

So that's about it for today! I hope this article would help you decide your priorities in respect of the areas you's like to learn in Excel, and the resources would help you learn Excel to its core.

Below are the links for a couple of helpful articles you may be interested in reading.

[Become An Excel Ninja – Course Review](#)

[10 Best Online Courses to Make You an Excel Wizard](#)

Goodbye for now. Have a great day.

Happy Learning!