

# 17 Billion Reasons to Love Excel 2007

By Bill Jelen

January 30, 2007, marks the start of a brand new world for people who spend their days creating computer spreadsheets. On that day, Microsoft will release the retail version of Microsoft Excel 2007. This is the most significant release of Excel ever. It is hard to say if Microsoft feels threatened by advances in Star Office, but the development team has delivered a stellar new version of the software.

First, the grid size increases from 16 million cells per worksheet to 17 billion cells. That is billion with a “B”. You no longer will be tortured by data sets with 65,537 rows of data – the new Excel can hold 1.1 million rows of data. For people who ever tried to place daily dates going across the columns and found that the old Excel couldn’t quite hold 9 months of days, you will love that Excel 2007 offers 16,000 columns – enough for 46 years of weekdays going across your spreadsheet. The last column is now labeled XFD. These are amazing new limits on the spreadsheet. To put it in perspective, you could start listing the name of every living person on Earth and only fill up 40% of Sheet1!

Even if your spreadsheets never occupy more than a screen full of data, you will love these new features in Excel 2007:

- **Data visualizations** - use icon sets, data bars, and color scales to quickly see the largest or smallest numbers in your data set.
- **Sort by color** - do you ever mark cells for review with a red font? You can now easily sort or filter based on color. Sort all of the red cells to the top, or filter to see just the cells with a blue font.
- **Charting Improvements** – a new charting engine will allow you to create fresh looking charts in a couple of mouse clicks. Fans of PowerPoint will be thrilled that the Excel 2007 charts now copy perfectly to PowerPoint presentations. Also, settings in Excel allow your charts to match the slide theme from PowerPoint.
- **New SmartArt Graphics** allow you to create 76 different types of business graphics, from Process Charts to Relationship Charts, Venn Diagrams, and more.
- **Better pivot table features** allow you to create powerful filters on the results of the pivot table. If you want to limit your analysis to records from last month or next quarter, this is 2 clicks away.
- **Live preview** allows you to see formatting changes by simply hovering over the option.
- **Table logic** keeps your formulas consistent. Define your spreadsheet as a table and Excel will ensure that your formulas remain consistent throughout. Enter a formula in the first row, and Excel will copy the formula down to all of the rows. You won't have the annoying problem of trying to drag the fill handle down 5000 rows of data.

If you are not yet a spreadsheet guru, you may be frustrated that you can't find the features that you need in the old version of Excel. Microsoft has introduced a new menu system called the Ribbon just for you. Instead of tiny icons, you now have big icons with words, inviting you to try out some of the powerful features such as conditional formatting or automatic subtotals. If you are a spreadsheet guru, you will find comfort that Excel still responds to all of the old short cut keys, including the Ctrl+ and Alt+ shortcuts. Even though there is no longer an Edit menu, Excel 2007 still knows that Alt+ESV means Edit – Paste Special – Values. Similar menu changes appear in Word 2007, PowerPoint 2007, Access 2007 and the Compose Mail portion of Outlook 2007.

While spreadsheet fans are not the type of people to camp-out overnight as teens did while waiting for the PlayStation 3 release, the improvements coming in Excel 2007 are worthy of the same amount of hype.

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