Formulas are equations that perform calculations. Excel provides various ways to enter formulas on a sheet. The best format depends on the kind of calculation that you want to perform. All formulas begin with an equal sign (=). You can type formulas into a cell manually. Use a formula that refers to a range of cells when you work with data that is located in different parts of a sheet or on another sheet—for example, to divide the sum of the numbers in column A by the sum of the numbers in column B. When your formula refers to other cells, you can change the data in any of the cells, and Excel recalculates the results automatically. Functions are predefined formulas that simplify entering calculations.

**Enter a simple formula**

See the results of basic mathematical calculations by typing simple formulas into cells. Excel uses operators to perform addition (+), subtraction (−), multiplication (×), and division (/).

1. Click the cell where you want the formula results to appear.
2. Type an equal sign (=), followed by the numbers and operator for the calculation that you want to perform.
   For example, to divide 480 by 15, type \(\text{=480/15}\).
3. Press RETURN.
   The result (32, in our example) appears in the cell.

**Enter a formula that refers to values in cells**

1. In a sheet that contains columns of numbers, click the cell where you want the formula results to appear.
2. Type an equal sign (=).
3. Click the first cell that you want to include in your calculation.
4. Type an operator, for example, /.
5. Click the next cell that you want to include in your calculation.
   The formula appears in the cell and in the Formula Bar. If you don’t see the Formula Bar, on the View menu, click Formula Bar.
6. Press RETURN.
   The results of the calculation appear in the cell.
Tip To quickly apply a formula to adjacent cells in a column, double-click the fill handle on the first cell that contains the formula. Excel calculates the results in each cell of the column automatically.

▼ Enter a formula that contains a function

Functions are predefined formulas that simplify manual entry and help you perform complex operations. For example, you can use a function to total all the values in a column or to find the smallest number in a range of cells.

1. In a sheet that contains a range of numbers, click the empty cell where you want the formula results to appear.
2. Type an equal sign and a function, for example =MIN.
3. Type an opening parenthesis, select the range of cells that you want to include in the formula, and then type a closing parenthesis.

4. Press RETURN.

   In our example, the MIN function returns the smallest number in cells A1 through C5.