

Quickly document Excel formulas

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Formulas are your main tool in Excel, so you'd think that it would come with some kind of documenting tool. But it doesn't. However, it's easy to print formulas. You'll want to print and save formulas for two reasons:

It can be easier to debug problems when viewing the bigger picture rather than one screen at a time.

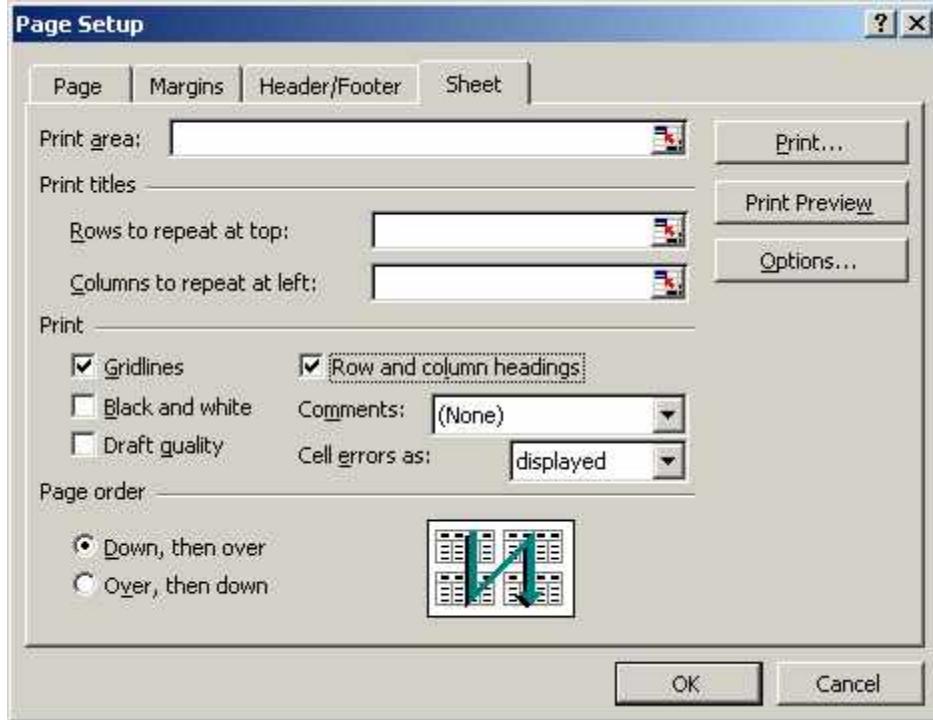
You'll want to maintain a formula history. When you make changes, print new formulas and store them with your application's documentation.

First, save the worksheet, because you're going to make some format changes you'll want to dump rather than save. Next, display the formulas. There are a number of ways to do this, but the quickest is to press Ctrl + ` . (That second character, ` , is just to the left of the digit 1; it isn't the ordinary single quote that's just to the left of the Enter key.) This combination toggles the worksheet between formulas and the results of those formulas.

Unfortunately, column widths won't automatically adjust to display complete formulas, so, click the intersecting header cell (the one to the left of the column header row and at the top of the row header column) to select the entire worksheet. Then, double-click any right borderline in the column header row to apply an AutoFit property to all of the columns in the worksheet.

	A	B	C	D
1	Hours	Minutes	Total	
2	5	34	5:34	
3	3	2	3:02	
4	2	19	2:19	
5	6	20	6:20	
6	10	25	10:25	
7			27:40:00	
8	Click here to select worksheet			
9	Double-click here to adjust column widths			
10				
11				
12				

Next, choose Page Setup from the File menu. Click the Sheet tab and in the Print section, check Gridlines and Row And Column Headings.



Adding these two attributes will make it easier to match each formula to its cell. A simple worksheet of formulas isn't very helpful; you need to know where each formula belongs.

	A	B	C
1	Hours	Minutes	Total
2	5	34	=SUM(TIME(A2,B2,0))
3	3	2	=SUM(TIME(A3,B3,0))
4	2	19	=SUM(TIME(A4,B4,0))
5	6	20	=SUM(TIME(A5,B5,0))
6	10	25	=SUM(TIME(A6,B6,0))
7			=SUM(C2:C6)
8			
9			=SUM(TIME(A2:A6,B2:B6,0))

At this point, you can print the worksheet as you normally would. If you're documenting changes, you might want to print just the cells you've updated, added, or deleted, instead of printing the entire worksheet. That'll make changes easier to track. If you must print the entire worksheet, find some other way to identify the changed formulas — highlighting them will work nicely. When you're done, close the worksheet immediately, without saving. Otherwise, you might accidentally save the formula-accommodating column widths. If that does happen, simply select the entire worksheet as I described above and reset them.

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