Managing Your Workbook

Some worksheet tasks require you to step back from those molecule-sized cells that occupy the better part of your attention and take a larger look instead at the entire worksheet—or sometimes, the entire workbook. You may, for example, decide you need to supplement those default three worksheets with a fourth, or write a formula that reaches over into a second sheet and references a data cell from there. Or you may want to subject several sheets to the same formats for the sake of uniformity, or protect a sheet so that no one will be able to overwrite all the intricate work you’ve committed to its cells. Well, we’re going to address that grab bag of worksheet- and workbook-wide topics right here.

Adding Worksheets to Your Workbook

A worksheet is a big place—over 16 billion cells are at your disposal, offering you way more space than you’ll likely ever need to ply your data management tasks. And that’s just for starters, because Excel is happy to grant you even more room than that—a lot more room if you need it, in the form of additional worksheets.

Remember that by default Excel supplies the user with three worksheets, each outfitted with that same 16-billion cell allotment; each with the same addresses (i.e., every worksheet has a cell A4, a cell Z235, etc.); each available to receive values, text, formulas, charts—all the data you can conjure. Moreover, you can add even more sheets as events warrant—as many sheets as your computer’s memory can support, in fact. The question is why you’d want to.

After all, if you can’t make do with 16 billion cells, you must be doing something more than a little out of the ordinary—like giving a name to every grain of sand in Coney Island, or assigning tracking numbers to all of Imelda Marcos’s shoes. Short of that, the question remains: why would you ever need more than one worksheet?

We’ll start with the usual answer to that question: it depends. For a great many spreadsheet tasks, one sheet will suffice; but there may be good reasons to assign your data to several sheets.
For example, you may want to compose a collection of complex formulas on one worksheet and present the results on another. That’s what *Excel dashboards* do; these are workbooks in which complex number crunching is performed on one sheet, and an assortment of charts built on those numbers is laid out on another worksheet—the one that viewers will see (and as you’ll see, worksheets can be completely hidden from view, too, even as the data on them remains usable).

Another reason you might want to deploy more than one worksheet is to place the same kind of data in the same addresses across worksheets. That means something like this: If you’re running a small business, you could assign each employee his or her own worksheet and enter the same information for each in the same cell on the respective worksheets—say, every employee name in that sheet’s cell A1, the social security number in cell A2, salary in A3, and so on. This approach gives your data entry a uniformity that enables you to easily find equivalent information in the same location across sheets.

Still another reason to use multiple worksheets is a practical one. You may need to enter a large variety of information—say, several different tables—and rather than commit all of these to one worksheet (which would require considerable scrolling up and down the sheet in order to see it all), you could place some tables on another sheet, which you could access more efficiently by just clicking a sheet tab and viewing that data straight away.

But let’s now turn to a workbook and introduce a few features of worksheets—in the plural.

**Clicking Through the Worksheets**

As indicated, Excel starts you off with three worksheets, called Sheet1, Sheet2, and Sheet3 by default, though you can rename any sheet, as you’ll see. You’ll find tabs representing the sheets in the lower left of your screen, as shown in Figure 9–1.

![Figure 9–1. Keeping tabs on your sheets: The three default sheets](image)

Click any tab and you’ll be taken to that worksheet, which should look just like any other one. As already indicated, all the addresses on the sheets are identical, meaning that their cell references are the same (which raises a question I’ll answer in a little while: How exactly does one differentiate between cell S12 on Sheet1 and cell S12 on Sheet2?).