Errors in a spreadsheet

Application software

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Introduction

In this topic we are going to discuss the following:

- How errors occur in a spreadsheet.

- Error messages and their meanings.

- How to fit errors in a spreadsheet.

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How errors occur in a spreadsheet

- An error in a spreadsheet occurs when a formula or a function can not be completed correctly.

- In a spreadsheet, errors can occur due to the following:
  - **Incorrect input** – eg. Wrong function name.
  - **Use of invalid operators** – eg. Wrong argument separators.
  - **Wrong data type in the arguments**.

- When there is an error, the spreadsheet application will display a **message** in the cell that contains the function.

- Below are some of the common error messages or codes in a spreadsheet.
  - **#DIV/0!** – division by zero
  - **#NAME?** – Name Error
  - **#VALUE!** – Value Error
  - **#REF!** – Reference Error
  - **#N/A** – Not Available Error
  - **#NUM!** – Number Error
  - **#NULL!** – Null Error
  - **#SPILL!** – Spill Error

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Errors and messages

Error	Meaning
#DIV/0!	Divide by zero error occurs when a formula attempts to divide by zero or when a formula references a cell that is blank.
#N/A!	#N/A! error means no value available and it occurs when a formula or a function inside a formula cannot find the referenced data.
#NAME?	#NAME? error occurs when text in the formula is not recognized.
#NULL!	#NULL! error occurs when two or more cell references are not separated correctly in a formula. For example, typing the formula =B3+C3+D3 E3 results into a #NULL! Error. The space between D3 and E3 in the formula instead of a plus sign causes the #NULL! Error.
#NUM!	#NUM! error occurs when a formula has invalid numeric data for the type of operation.
#REF!	An invalid cell reference error occurs when a spreadsheet formula contains incorrect cell references.

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Errors and messages

#VALUE!	#VALUE! error occurs when a wrong type of operand or function argument is used. For example, misspelling a function name or omitting a colon (:) when referring to a range of cells.

How to handle errors in a spreadsheet

a. Verify referencing – always make sure that all cell references used in you formula or functions are pointing to the correct, not empty, or not deleted cells.

b. Check the data types used as arguments in your functions and formulas.

c. Check formula syntax – always make sure that the formula name is typed correct, you can use autocompletion to avoid errors caused by mistyped function names.

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