Excel Interview Questions with Answers (Shweta Ghotekar)

# 1. VLOOKUP Interview Questions & Answers

Q: What is VLOOKUP and when would you use it?  
A: VLOOKUP is a vertical lookup function that searches for a value in the first column of a range and returns a value in the same row from a specified column. Used for looking up employee names, prices, regions, etc.  
  
Q: What are the limitations of VLOOKUP?  
A: It only looks to the right of the lookup column, breaks if columns are inserted, and is slower on large datasets.  
  
Q: Example of VLOOKUP:  
=VLOOKUP("South", A2:D100, 4, FALSE) → Returns value from 4th column where "South" is found.  
  
Q: Why does VLOOKUP break if columns are inserted?  
A: Because column index number is static (like 4), so inserting columns changes the data layout but not the formula.

# HLOOKUP Interview Questions & Answers

## HLOOKUP Interview Questions & Examples

Q1: What is HLOOKUP?  
A: HLOOKUP searches for a value in the first row of a table and returns a value from a specified row number in the same column.  
  
Syntax:  
=HLOOKUP(lookup\_value, table\_array, row\_index\_num, [range\_lookup])

Q2: Practical Example  
| | A | B | C |  
|---------|-------|--------|--------|  
| Dept | HR | IT | Sales |  
| Salary | 40000 | 50000 | 45000 |  
  
=HLOOKUP("IT", A1:C2, 2, FALSE)  
Result: 50000

Q3: VLOOKUP vs HLOOKUP Summary  
| Feature | VLOOKUP | HLOOKUP |  
|------------|---------------------|--------------------|  
| Orientation| Vertical | Horizontal |  
| Looks in | First column | First row |  
| Use when | Data in columns | Data in rows |

Q: What is the difference between VLOOKUP and HLOOKUP?  
A: VLOOKUP searches vertically down columns, HLOOKUP searches horizontally across rows.  
  
Q: When is HLOOKUP used?  
A: When data is organized in rows, like quarters or months.  
  
Example: =HLOOKUP("Q1", A1:D4, 2, FALSE)

# XLOOKUP Interview Questions & Answers

## Q. XLOOKUP Interview Questions & Practical Examples

Q1: What is XLOOKUP in Excel?  
A: XLOOKUP is a modern lookup function that replaces older functions like VLOOKUP and HLOOKUP. It can look up values in vertical or horizontal arrays and return values from the left or right of the lookup column.  
  
Syntax:  
=XLOOKUP(lookup\_value, lookup\_array, return\_array, [if\_not\_found], [match\_mode], [search\_mode])

Q2: Find Employee Name from ID  
Dataset:  
| Emp ID | Name | Department |  
|--------|-------|------------|  
| 101 | Raj | HR |  
| 102 | Seema | IT |  
| 103 | Amit | Finance |  
  
Formula:  
=XLOOKUP(102, A2:A4, B2:B4)  
Result: Seema

Q3: Handle Missing Values with Custom Message  
=XLOOKUP(105, A2:A4, C2:C4, "Not Found")  
Result: Not Found

Q4: Return Multiple Columns  
=XLOOKUP(103, A2:A4, B2:C4)  
Result: Amit | Finance

Q5: Lookup with Approximate Match (Grades)  
Grade Table:  
| Marks | Grade |  
|-------|--------|  
| 90 | A+ |  
| 80 | A |  
| 70 | B |  
| 60 | C |  
| 50 | D |  
  
=XLOOKUP(85, A2:A6, B2:B6, , -1)  
Result: A

Q6: Reverse Lookup (Search Right to Left)  
| Name | Emp ID |  
|-------|--------|  
| Raj | 101 |  
| Seema | 102 |  
| Amit | 103 |  
  
=XLOOKUP("Seema", A2:A4, B2:B4)  
Result: 102

Q7: Find Last Matching Entry (Bottom to Top Search)  
| Date | Product | Sales |  
|------------|---------|-------|  
| 01-Jul-24 | Pen | 100 |  
| 02-Jul-24 | Pencil | 80 |  
| 03-Jul-24 | Pen | 150 |  
  
=XLOOKUP("Pen", B2:B4, C2:C4, "Not Found", 0, -1)  
Result: 150

Q: What is XLOOKUP and how is it better?  
A: XLOOKUP is the modern replacement for VLOOKUP and HLOOKUP. It can search both directions (left and right), return default values, and doesn't break when columns are inserted.  
  
Syntax:  
=XLOOKUP(lookup\_value, lookup\_array, return\_array, [if\_not\_found], [match\_mode], [search\_mode])  
  
Q: What is 'match\_mode'?  
A: It controls type of match: exact (0), exact or next smaller (-1), exact or next larger (1), wildcard (2).  
  
Q: What is 'search\_mode'?  
A: It controls the direction: first-to-last (1) or last-to-first (-1).

# 4. INDEX & MATCH Q&A

Q: What does INDEX do?  
A: It returns the value of a cell at the intersection of a row and column within a range.  
  
Q: What does the number '2' indicate in =INDEX(B2:B6, 2)?  
A: It returns the 2nd value from the range B2:B6.  
  
Q: What does MATCH do?  
A: MATCH returns the position of a value in a list. Example: MATCH("Mango", A1:A5, 0) → 3  
  
Q: Why use INDEX-MATCH over VLOOKUP?  
A: It's more flexible, can look to the left, and doesn't break with column insertions.

# 5. COUNTA Function

Q: What does COUNTA do?  
A: COUNTA counts all non-empty cells in a range.  
  
Example: =COUNTA(A1:A10) → Counts how many cells are not blank.  
  
Q: How is COUNTA different from COUNT?  
A: COUNT counts only numeric values. COUNTA counts numbers, text, dates, etc.

# 6. Logical Functions (IF, AND, OR)

Q: How does the IF function work?  
A: IF tests a condition and returns one value if TRUE and another if FALSE.  
  
Example: =IF(A2>5000, "Bonus", "No Bonus")  
  
Q: How to use multiple conditions?  
A: Use AND/OR inside IF.  
=IF(AND(A2="South", B2>5000), "Top Performer", "Average")  
  
Q: What is the use case in interviews?  
A: Used in bonus calculation, grading systems, performance evaluation.

# 7. Basic vs Advanced Excel

Q: What are basic Excel skills?  
A: Data entry, formatting, basic formulas (SUM, AVERAGE, COUNT).  
  
Q: What are advanced Excel skills?  
A: Pivot Tables, VLOOKUP, INDEX-MATCH, data cleaning, charts, dashboards, Power Query.  
  
Q: How do you clean raw data?  
A: Remove duplicates, trim spaces, convert text to columns, handle blanks.

# 8. Scenario-Based Questions

Q: How to find duplicates?  
A: Use Conditional Formatting → Highlight Duplicates.  
  
Q: How to make dropdown list?  
A: Use Data Validation → List.  
  
Q: How to summarize data?  
A: Use Pivot Tables for region-wise, category-wise summaries.

# 9. Practice Exercises with Answers

Q1: Use VLOOKUP to return sales for "East"  
A: =VLOOKUP("East", A2:D100, 3, FALSE)  
  
Q2: Use INDEX-MATCH to find employee name by ID  
A: =INDEX(B2:B100, MATCH("E102", A2:A100, 0))  
  
Q3: IF+AND to check high sales in South  
A: =IF(AND(A2="South", B2>5000), "High", "Low")  
  
Q4: Use COUNTA to count all filled feedbacks  
A: =COUNTA(D2:D100)

# 10. What is a Pivot Table?

A Pivot Table is a powerful tool in Microsoft Excel used to summarize, analyze, explore, and present large amounts of data.

# 11. Purpose of a Pivot Table (Interview Answer)

“A Pivot Table is used to quickly summarize large datasets. It allows me to group, filter, sort, and calculate data without writing formulas. For example, I can easily find total sales by region or average marks by subject with just a few clicks.”

# 12. What is a Pivot Table and why is it used?

A: A Pivot Table is a data summarization tool in Excel. It helps analyze large datasets quickly by allowing grouping, filtering, sorting, and aggregation (like sum, count, average) without any formulas.

# 13.Can you give an example where you used a Pivot Table?

A: Yes, for example, in a sales dataset, I used a Pivot Table to calculate the total sales by region and product. This helped management identify which region was performing best.

# 14. How do you refresh a Pivot Table after updating the data?

A: Right-click on the Pivot Table and select “Refresh”, or use the shortcut Alt + F5.

# 15. What types of calculations can you do in a Pivot Table?

A: You can calculate Sum, Count, Average, Max, Min, and even use Calculated Fields for custom formulas.

# Scenario-Based Interview Questions & Answers(pivot table)

🧑‍💼 You are given a dataset with Date, Region, Product, and Sales Amount. How would you find out which region sold the most "Pens" last year?

✅ I would use a Pivot Table. First, I would apply a filter for the last year’s dates and for the Product = 'Pen'. Then, I’d drag Region into Rows and Sales Amount into Values. This would show total Pen sales by Region. Finally, I’d sort the values from largest to smallest to find the top-selling region.

* 🧑‍💼 How will you find the monthly sales trend for each product?

✅ I would create a Pivot Table and drag Product into Rows and Date into Columns. Then I’d group the date field by Month (and Year if needed). I’d drag Sales into Values. This would give me a clean layout of monthly sales for each product.

* 🧑‍💼 You have employee-wise sales data. How can you find the top 3 performing employees?

✅ I’d create a Pivot Table with Employee Name in Rows and Sales Amount in Values. Then I would sort the sales in descending order and apply a filter to show only the top 3 items using the ‘Value Filters’ > ‘Top 10’ option and change it to 3.

* 🧑‍💼 You have a dataset of customer orders. How would you find how many unique customers placed orders in each region?

✅ Pivot Tables don’t count unique values by default, but in Excel 2013 and above, I can use the 'Distinct Count' option. I’d place Region in Rows and Customer ID in Values, then change the aggregation to ‘Distinct Count’. This gives me the number of unique customers per region.

* 🧑‍💼 If your data keeps updating daily, how would you make sure the Pivot Table always includes the new data?

✅ I would convert my dataset into an Excel Table (Ctrl + T) before creating the Pivot Table. Tables expand automatically with new data, so the Pivot Table will always reflect the latest entries when refreshed.

# Advanced Pivot Table Topics for Interviews

## ✅ 1. Filter & Slicer in Pivot Table

🔹 Use Case: You want to analyze sales by region, but allow the user to choose product category dynamically.

📊 Example Setup: Drag Region → Rows, Sales → Values, Product Category → Filters or use a Slicer.

💬 Interview Question:

* Q: What is the difference between a Filter and a Slicer in a Pivot Table?

A: A Filter is placed above the Pivot Table to filter the entire table by one or more values. A Slicer is a visual filter that creates buttons for users to click and filter data interactively. Slicers are easier to use, especially for dashboards.

## ✅ 2. Grouping Data (Date and Numbers)

🔹 Use Case: You want to group daily sales data into months or group Age into bands (e.g. 18–25, 26–35).

📊 Example Setup: Right-click on the Date field > Group > Select Months and Years. For numeric data like Age, group manually into ranges.

💬 Interview Question:

* Q: Can you group data in Pivot Tables? How?

A: Yes, we can group both dates and numbers. For dates, right-click and select group by Month/Quarter/Year. For numbers, right-click and group into custom ranges, which is useful in age or salary analysis.”

## ****3. Calculated Field****

🔹 Use Case: You want to calculate Profit in the Pivot Table as Sales - Cost.

📊 Example Setup: Go to PivotTable Analyze → Fields, Items & Sets → Calculated Field. Name: 'Profit', Formula: = Sales - Cost

💬 Interview Question:

* Q: What is a Calculated Field in Pivot Table? When do you use it?

A: A Calculated Field is used when we want to add a custom formula inside the Pivot Table that doesn't exist in the original data, such as calculating profit, tax, or profit margin.

## ✅ 4. Pivot Chart

🔹 Use Case: You want to visually present the summary from Pivot Table.

📊 Example Setup: After building a Pivot Table → Go to Insert > Pivot Chart → Select Column or Line Chart.

💬 Interview Question:

* Q: What is the difference between a normal chart and a Pivot Chart?

A: A Pivot Chart is directly linked to a Pivot Table and updates when filters or data change. It’s dynamic. A regular chart is static and not linked to filtering or grouping logic.