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How to Subtract Dates in Excel

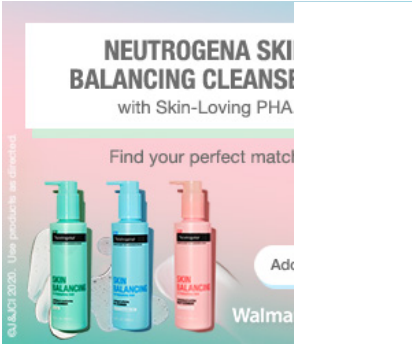
Dates in Excel

If you want to subtract dates in Excel, it helps to understand the way that Excel stores dates.

Dates are stored as positive integers in Excel. It is only the [formatting](#) of an Excel cell that causes its contents to be displayed as a date, rather than an integer.

The numbering system used for Excel dates varies with different computer systems, but most commonly, the numbering system is:

integer	equivalent date (mm/dd/yyyy)
1	01/01/1900
2	01/02/1900
3	01/03/1900
⋮	
42735	12/31/2016



As Excel dates are internally stored as simple integers, you can subtract dates in Excel, in the same way that you can subtract any other integers.

I.e. to subtract dates in Excel:

1. Type the start date and the end date into your spreadsheet;
2. Subtract the start date from the end date;
3. Ensure the result is formatted as a number.

(The easiest way to do this is to select the cell and then select the 'General' format from the drop-down menu in the **Home** tab of the Excel ribbon).

The result from the subtraction formula is equal to the number of days between the two dates.

Excel Date Subtraction Examples

Column C of the following spreadsheet shows three examples of Excel date subtraction formulas. In each case, the date in column A is subtracted from the date in column B.

Formulas:

	A	B	C
1	Start Date	End Date	Difference
2	03-Jan-2011	18-Jan-2011	=B2-A2
3	19-Nov-1986	26-Nov-2020	=B3-A3
4	09-Mar-2011	23-Jun-2012	=B4-A4

Results:


	A	B	C
1	Start Date	End Date	Difference
2	03-Jan-2011	18-Jan-2011	15
3	19-Nov-1986	26-Nov-2020	12426
4	09-Mar-2011	23-Jun-2012	472

Note that, in the results spreadsheet above, the cells in columns A and B are formatted with a date format, but the cells in column C are formatted with the 'General' format.

**Changing Excel Cell Formatting**

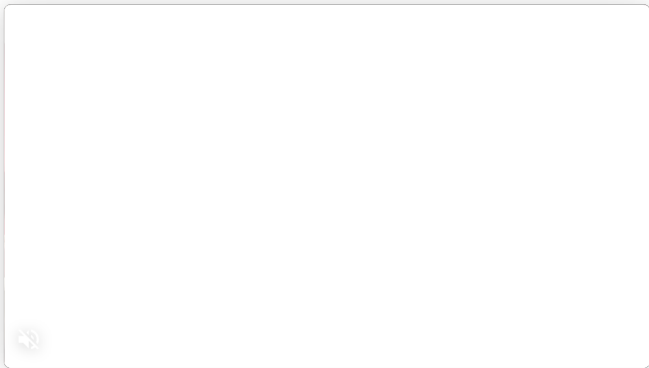
If the result of your date subtraction is displayed as a date, but you require a simple number, you will need to change the formatting of the results cell, to display a number.

The easiest way to do this is to select the **General** formatting option from the drop-down format menu of the Excel ribbon. This is generally located in the 'Number' group, on the **Home** tab of the ribbon (see below):



Format a cell to display a number by selecting the 'General' format from the drop-down menu on the ribbon

[See also How to Subtract Times in Excel >>](#)



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