Gantt Charts in Excel

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I've heard you can create a Gantt chart using Excel, but Gantt charts are not listed as an option. Am I missing something? - Gail Buller, Dixon, California

Nope. Excel doesn't offer Gantt as a chart type, but it's fairly easy to create such a chart by using a stacked bar chart. Follow these steps:

1. Start with a new workbook and enter your task data, as shown in FIGURE 1. Column A contains the task descriptions; column B, the start date for each task; and column C, the number of days to complete the task. Column D contains formulas that determine the completion date for each task. For example, the formula in cell D2 is =B2+C2-1. Column D isn't essential, but including it will tell you exactly when a particular task is scheduled to end.

2. Create a stacked horizontal bar chart from the data in range A2:C13. The Chart Wizard will probably guess these series incorrectly, so you'll need to set the category axis labels and data series manually. The category (x-axis) labels should be range A2:A13; the Series 1 data, B2:B13; and the Series 2 data, C2:C13.

3. Remove the chart's legend, and adjust the chart's height (or change to a smaller font) so that all x-axis labels are visible.

4. In the Format Axis dialog box, select the following Scale options for the x-axis: Categories in reverse order and Value (y) axis crosses at maximum category. This displays the tasks in order from top to bottom.

5. Access the Format Axis dialog box for the y-axis. Set the Minimum and Maximum values to correspond to the earliest and latest dates in your project. Note that you can enter actual dates into this dialog box. To display weekly intervals, set the Minimum to a Monday, the Maximum to a Sunday, and the Major Unit to 7.

6. Select the data series that corresponds to the data in Column B and go to the Format Data Series dialog box. Set Border to None and Area to None. This hides the first data series--the start dates--making the chart resemble a Gantt chart.

7. Apply other formatting as desired. For example, you can add grid lines and a title

If you adjust your project schedule, the chart will be updated automatically. If you use dates outside the original date range, you'll need to change the scaling for the y-axis.

gantt.xls

	A	B	C	D
1	**Task**	**Start Date**	**Duration**	**End Date**
2	Planning Meeting	12/29/97	1	12/29/97
3	Develop Questionnaire	12/30/97	11	1/9/98
4	Print and Mail Questionnaire	1/13/98	9	1/21/98
5	Receive Responses	1/16/98	15	1/30/98
6	Data Entry	1/16/98	18	2/2/98
7	Data Analysis	2/3/98	4	2/6/98
8	Write Report	2/9/98	12	2/20/98
9	Distribute Draft Report	2/23/98	1	2/23/98
10	Solicit Comments	2/24/98	4	2/27/98
11	Finalize Report	3/2/98	5	3/6/98
12	Distribute to Board	3/9/98	1	3/9/98
13	Board Meeting	3/17/98	1	3/17/98

Sheet1

Note – The vertical divisions represent weeks – not some other meaningless division of dates!