

Excel – Sample Interview Questions and answers

- 1) What is central order of operations used to make calculations on MS Excel?

The fundamental order of operation used in Excel is the well-known PEMDAS. It stands for: parentheses, exponents, multiplication, division, addition, subtraction. It is the universal order of operations used by Excel. If anomaly whatsoever is reported check the alignment of the above order to spot if any parameter has been left missing.

- 2) Can you define a function on MS Excel?

A function may be defined as something which furthers the motive of an operation. For instance, the most common examples of function include the likes of SUM, AVERAGE and VLOOKUP. The numbers put into a function for the respective operation are basically known as arguments. The result is known as the output.

- 3) Which are the functions do you think you can essentially count on?

While functions must be selected in accordance with the color of the problem, possibly the most preferable functions include the likes of INDEX MATCH, PIVOT TABLES and IF statements. For instance, the INDEX MATCH is a viable tool which is used to look up values from a table. On the other hand, PIVOT TABLES should always be the professional's pick in that they allow you to get through complex data and come up with accurate results.

- 4) Speaking of Pivot Tables, can you give an idea as to how a user can drag columns to the sections of the Pivot Table?

So far as sections are concerned, the pivot table feature has a number of such sections in order for the user to drag large columns of data to facilitate simpler calculations. They include:

- Report Filter: As the name suggests, the purpose of this is to filter a table parameter one at a time in order to consolidate a certain degree of lucidity.
- Column Labels: Chiefly, this section is used to label the various columns in order to summarize the data into segregated outlooks.
- Row Labels: Like the column label, the row label is concerned with labeling the various rows in order to simplify the given data.

- Values: Basically, this criterion is used to specify or name the data column or data row. For instance, the cost of items, date of delivery etc.

5) Would you then venture to conclude that pivot tables have no demerit whatsoever?

Well, that would be far from the truth. In fact, one of the most significant demerits of the feature is it works only when the input data is set out in the flat file format. Yet another sore point of pivot tables lies in the fact they need to be refreshed each time for data alterations. Therefore, it may be said that one can such alternatives as SUMIFS and COUNTIFS to pivot tables in order to elude the above complications.

6) What kinds of spreadsheets have constructed on Excel so far?

- Constructed dashboards on Excel for intricate business affairs.
- Built revenue projection charts.
- Excel may also be used as a project management platform.
- Automating daily affairs and projection statements using the IF statements and other conditional logic.
- Business estimates in the interest of production and sales.

7) Do you have any idea of freeze panes on MS Excel?

Freeze panes are useful tools. Basically, they are used to lock a particular row or column. It is chiefly done for the purpose of row- or column-specific task. It's easier done when you take help of the highlighting.

8) Can you give us an idea on how one can quickly return to a specified area in the worksheet?

By using a name box, one can easily return to the required area in a worksheet. All you need to do is type the address of the cell in the name box.

9) Is there any particular use of cell reference in the calculation?

Indeed, cell reference is particularly useful in that it saves some time. Elementarily, cell reference is used in order to avoid writing the data again and again for the purpose of calculation. The location to which a particular cell is directed is known as the cell reference.

10) Can you give us the uses of the VLookUp function?

As the name suggests, the VLookUp does a quick vertical search for a particular value in the first column of the table. Next, the function returns the searched value in the same row in the index position.

11) How do you provide Dynamic Range in 'Data Source' of Pivot Tables?

We follow the steps in following order to provide Dynamic Range in 'Data Source' of Pivot Tables:

1. Create a Named range using Offset function.
2. Base the pivot table using the Named range created in Step 1.

12) If you add either new rows or new columns to the pivot table source data, the pivot table is not updated even when you click on 'Refresh Data'. Why and what is the solution?

This happens because the newly added data is outside the range of Pivot table's underlying data. To cure this either provide dynamic range to the Pivot Table or manually update the pivot table's source data.

13) Is it possible to make Pivot Table using multiple sources of data?

Yes, if the multiple sources are different worksheets in the same workbook.

14) By any means can you repeat 'row headings' in the Pivot Table?

Yes, however this option is available in Excel 2010 or later.

Is it possible to display the text in the data area of Pivot Table?

No, it's not possible as we could only show text either in 'Row Labels' or 'Column Labels'. However, if needed, we can show count of text records.

15) Upon refreshing a Pivot Table, it always loses the formatting like the column width. How this can be corrected?

Format loss in Pivot Table can be stopped by simply changing the pivot table options. Go to "Pivot Table Options" and turn on the "Enable Preserve Formatting" and disable the "Auto Format" option.

16) Can you change the default summary function for data from COUNT to SUM?

Unfortunately, we can't change default settings of the data fields. However, by default, if any cell in the selected range is blank or text, it will be default to COUNT else to SUM.

17) When you link to a pivot table cell, a GETPIVOTDATA formula is created. How would you avoid this?

In Excel 2007 or later, by disabling the 'Generate GetPivotData' and in previous versions by manually giving the cell reference instead of using the mouse pointer to locate the cell.

18) How would you enable automatic refresh in Pivot Table upon opening the workbook without using macros?

This can be done from Pivot Table Options. Go to "Table Options" --> Data --> Select 'Refresh data when opening the file.'

19) How can you hide the error values in data field of Pivot Table?

This can be done from Pivot Table Options. Go to "Table Options" --> "Layout & Format" --> Enable "For error values show:" and provide the value to be shown for error values. Leave it empty for Null values.

20) Which 3 report formats for Pivot Tables are available in Excel 2007 or later?

Compact, Report and Tabular.

21) How can you disable automating sorting in Pivot Tables?

Go to 'More Sort Options' after you right click on 'Pivot Table' and choose 'Sort' menu. Then click on 'More Options' and finally uncheck the 'Sort automatically when the report is created.'

22) Which event do you use to check if a Pivot Table is modified?

Event 'PivotTableUpdate' in worksheet containing that 'Pivot Table'.

23) Which option is used to add column(s) in Pivot Tables to compute the values in run-time?

For eg. if the underlying source table contains cost price and sales price, how would you compute 'Profit'.

We can use 'Calculated Field' to dynamically insert formulated values.

24) How will you check the memory consumed by your PivotTable in Kilobytes?

You can display the memory used by a pivot cache, by using the following VBA properties of Pivot Table. PivotCaches.MemoryUsed - It returns the total memory used in bytes. Divide the result by 1024 to have it in Kilobytes.

25) What is Syntax of VLOOKUP?

VLOOKUP Syntax: =VLOOKUP(lookup_value,table_array,col_index_num,[range_lookup])

What is the difference between function and formula in MS-Excel?

Formula:- It's a statement which is written by the user (user-created) to be calculated. A formula can contain values, cell references, defined names, and functions.

	SUM	⋮	X	✓	f _x	=A2+A3+A4				
1	Number	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
2	12									
3	14									
4	56									
5	=A2+A3+A4									

This is Formula, created by user

Functions: - Functions are in-built codes provided in MS-Excel, such as IF, COUNT, SUM, AVERAGE and so on. If additional functions are required, we can create them through VBA. They are called user defined functions. This will carry out an operation of some kind and provide an output value. Functions are used inside formulas.

26) What is a Dashboard and what are the important things we should keep in mind while creating a dashboard?

Dashboard is a technique used to present important information through graphical representation. It is helpful in presenting huge data in a single computer screen so it can be monitored with a glance.

27) What is the IF function in Microsoft Excel?

'If function' is one of the logical functions in Excel. We use this function to check the logical condition and specify the value whether it's true or false. 'If function' has three arguments but only the first argument is mandatory and other two are optional.

28) Define Vlookup and how to use it?

Vlookup is a lookup function used to find the data in the large spreadsheet by lookup value in another worksheet. To use the Vlookup function, we should have common values in both data which acts like unique key or primary key.

Syntax=VLOOKUP (lookup_value,table_array,col_index_num,[range_lookup])

29) Explain Pivot table and why it is important?

Pivot table allows quick summarizing of large data. We could aggregate large numbers and do analysis in a very quick and efficient way. Pivot table takes care of several scenarios in a quicker way and could be customized rapidly to suit our requirements. Why do we use it?

- Pivot table gives us flexibility and analytical power
- It is a time saver source in Excel
- Making a dynamic pivot chart
- Could be linked to external data also and hence gives flexibility.

30) Find day of the week for a particular date?

We could use Weekday function in excel to calculate day of the week. Example: In cell A1, we have entered today's date and we want to return the weekday counting from Sunday. Steps to Follow

Enter the formula in Cell B1 `WEEKDAY(A1,1)`, second argument (1) determines to what day excel will assign the value, press Enter. Formula will return 3, it means today is 3rd day of the week.

31) What is absolute reference and relative reference in excel formula?

Relative cell references are default in excel, means the references change dynamically when they are copied and pasted in different places. e.g., if a formula with reference to cell A1 is copied and pasted one row down and two columns right, the new reference will point to cell C2.

However, absolute cell references do not change when we copy the formula and paste them in any cell.

They will have dollar sign “\$” in the reference. if a formula that refers to \$A\$1 is copied and pasted one row down and one two columns right, the new reference will still point to cell A1 as both the row and column are locked. If a reference to cell \$A1 is copied and pasted one row down and two columns to the right, the new reference will point to cell C2 — only the row number will change, because the column letter is locked by dollar sign.

32) What is Excel Macro and why do we use it?

Excel Macro is a program or set of instructions that is written or recorded to perform some tasks. It helps user to automate some repetitive and lengthy task that is done on a regular basis.

33) What is Countif function and how to use it?

We use Countif function to count the specified cells, with a given condition or criterion.

34) What is Nested IF function?

When we have multiple conditions to meet, we can make use of IF function 7 times, which is called Nested IF function. Example: In cell A1, there is drop down list of A, B, C & D. If A is selected then cell B1 should return Excellent, on selection of B result should be good, for C result should be Bad and D should be poor.

35) What is VLOOKUP?

VLOOKUP stands for ‘Vertical Lookup’. It is a function that makes Excel search for a certain value in a column (or the ‘table array’), in order to return a value from a different column in the same row.

36) What is a Pivot Table, and What are the Different Sections of a Pivot Table?

A Pivot Table is used to summarise, sort, reorganize, group, count, total or average data stored in a table. It allows us to transform columns into rows and rows into columns. It allows grouping by any field (column) and using advanced calculations on them.

A Pivot table is made up of four different sections:

- **Values Area:** Values are reported in this area
- **Rows Area:** The headings which are present on the left of the values.
- **Column Area:** The headings at the top of the values area make the columns area.
- **Filter Area:** This is an optional filter used to drill down in the data set.

37) What is Conditional Formatting? How can it be used?

A conditional format changes the appearance of cells based on conditions that you specify. If the conditions are true, the cell range is formatted; if the conditions are false, the cell range is not formatted.

38) What is the default value of last parameter of VLOOKUP?

TRUE/1 . It refers to finding the closest (approximate) match and assuming the table is sorted in ascending order. Whereas, FALSE/0 refers to exact match.

39) What is the main limitation of VLOOKUP function?

The lookup value should be at the most left side column in the table array. VLOOKUP only looks right. It cannot look right to left.

40) Does VLOOKUP look up case-sensitive values?

No, it is not case-sensitive. The text 'ram' and 'RAM' is identical for VLOOKUP.

41) How to find duplicates in a column?

Use CONDITIONAL FORMATING to highlight duplicate values. OR use COUNTIF function as shown below. For example, values are stored in cells D4:D7.

=COUNTIF(D4:D7,D4)

Apply filter on the column wherein you applied COUNTIF function and select values greater than 1.

42) How to create cross tabulation in Excel?

Use Pivot Table and select one variable in Row label and the other variable in Column label.
How Index and Match Function works?

Index function returns a value from a range based on row number.

= INDEX(range, row_number)

Match function returns the relative position of a value in range.

= MATCH(lookup_value, range, match_type)

match_type can be exact match, largest/smallest value that is less than or greater than equal to lookup_value.

43) Is it possible to sum up the Rows and Column number in the Excel sheet? If yes, then how is it possible?

Yes, it is possible; users can sum up the rows and column number by using SUM function. The total sum of the rows and columns, in an Excel worksheet, can be calculated by this function.

44) Is it possible that users can prevent copying of the cell from any self-made worksheet?

Yes, it is possible. And it is done especially when data in the worksheets are not to be disclosed. To protect the sheet from copying, users need to follow these simple steps

Go to Menu bar > click on Review > select Protect Sheet > set a Password. Hence, by setting a password, sheets can be secured from getting copied.

45) What are the useful functions in Microsoft Excel?

Following are the useful functions in MS Excel.

Date And Time Functions – Now(), Datevalue(), Weekday(Now())

Math And Financial Functions Like; Sqrt, Degree, Rand(), Gcd

Index Match – Vlookup And Index Match

Logical Functions Like; If, And, False, True

Pivot Tables

46) Can a Pivot table use multiple sources of data?

Yes, Pivot table can use multiple sources of data but only when the multiple sources are different worksheets, from the same workbook.

47) How can users check that the Pivot Table is modified?

To check the pivot table is modified, the user can use “PivotTableUpdate” in the worksheet containing the pivot table.

48) How can you disable the automatic sorting of information in a pivot table?

For disabling the automatic sorting of data in pivot tables:

Click on more Sort Options > Right Click on ‘Pivot tables’ > Select ‘sort menu’ > select ‘More Options’ > deselect ‘Sort automatically’. And the automatic sorting will be disabled.

49) What are pivot tables and also mention its use?

It is a table or kind of tool and it allows a quick summarization of data in large quantity. It performs functions like sorting, counting, total or average of the data that are saved in the spreadsheet and it displays the result in another spreadsheet. It saves a lot of time. It is one of the most helpful too and also allows to link external data sources to Excel sheet.

50) What is the difference between SUBSTITUTE and REPLACE function in MS-Excel?

The SUBSTITUTE function basically substitutes one or more instances of previous text with the new text. The syntax for this is:

Syntax: SUBSTITUTE (text, old Text, new Text, [instance Number])

Whereas the REPLACE function swaps the part of the text string with another set of text. The Syntax for this is:

Syntax: REPLACE (old Text, start Number, Number Characters, new Text)

51) Differentiate between COUNT, COUNTA, COUNTIF, and COUNTBLANK in MS-Excel.

COUNT is used to count the cells that contain numbers, dates, etc. (any value stored as a number.)

COUNTA or Count All is such a function that is used to count any cell value containing numbers, text, logical values, etc.

COUNTBLANK is cell or cells with an empty string.

COUNTIF and COUNTIFS count cells matching any particular criteria.

52) What are absolute, relative, and mixed cell references?

- An absolute cell reference means that the cell in question stays consistent, even if the formula is moved. The (\$) symbol is used to denote an absolute cell reference.
- A relative reference means that when the formula is moved, the reference is changed based on the number of rows and columns by which it is moved.
- A mixed reference is one in which either the row or column is absolute, and the other one is relative. For example, B\$2 means that when the formula is moved, the column will change, but the row will not, as oppose to \$B2, which does the opposite.

53) What are the three wildcard characters in Excel searches?

A question mark (?) replaces a single character. For example, “Jo?n” returns “John” and “Joan.” An asterisk (*) replaces multiple characters. For example, “J*n” will return “John” and “Joan,” as well as “Jon.” A tilde (~) before a wildcard character is used to search for that character. For example, to find “*” you would search for “~*.”