

Lesson 2-3: Use AutoSum to quickly calculate totals

anecdote

I ran an Excel course for a small company in London a couple of years ago.

The boss had sent his two office staff to learn a little more about Excel.

Before the course began I asked the delegates how long they had been using Excel. They told me that they'd been using it for two years to do all of their office reports.

When I showed them AutoSum they gasped in delight. "This will save us hours" they told me.

I was curious how they had been doing their reports before.

Believe it or not, they had been adding up all of the figures in each column with a calculator and then manually typing the totals at the bottom of each column.

In this case the boss had given them Excel as he had heard it was very good. Unfortunately he had not initially seen the need to train the staff in its use.


With no training it seemed quite logical to them to use it like a word processor and the boss had still been delighted that his staff were using such impressive technology.

Excel's AutoSum feature is a really useful and fast way to add the values in a range of cells together.

- 1 Open *First Quarter Sales and Profit-2* from your sample files folder (if it isn't already open).
- 2 In cell A9 Type the word **Total** followed by the <Tab> key.

The cursor moves to the right and is now in cell B9:

7	Paris	35,000	26,000	31,000
8	Munich	12,000	15,000	13,000
9	Total			

- 3 Click Home→Editing→  (this is the Autosum button).



Something interesting has happened to the worksheet:

	A	B	C	D
3		Jan	Feb	Mar
4	New York	22,000	29,000	19,000
5	Los Angeles	42,000	39,000	43,000
6	London	18,000	20,000	22,000
7	Paris	35,000	26,000	31,000
8	Munich	12,000	15,000	13,000
9	Total	=SUM(B4:B8)		
10				

Excel has placed a marquee around the number range that AutoSum has guessed we want to work with. The pattern of dots that marks the boundary of the marquee is called the *marching ants* (that really is the technical term for them)!

The marching ants surround all of the numbers in the column above, up to the first blank cell or text cell (in this case, up to the word Jan).

=Sum(B4:B8) is your first glimpse of an Excel Formula. Formulas always begin with an equals sign. This formula is using the SUM function to compute the Sum (or total) of the values in cells B4 to B8.


First Quarter Sales and Profit-2

tip

Entering an AutoSum using only the keyboard

You can also execute an AutoSum using the keyboard shortcut:

<Alt>+<=>.

- Press the <Enter> key or click the AutoSum button  once more to display the total January sales:

	A	B	C	D
3		Jan	Feb	Mar
4	New York	22,000	29,000	19,000
5	Los Angeles	42,000	39,000	43,000
6	London	18,000	20,000	22,000
7	Paris	35,000	26,000	31,000
8	Munich	12,000	15,000	13,000
9	Total	129,000		

- Type the word **Total** in cell E3 and press the <Enter> key once.

The cursor moves down one row and is now in cell E4.

	B	C	D	E
3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
4	22,000	29,000	19,000	
5	42,000	39,000	43,000	

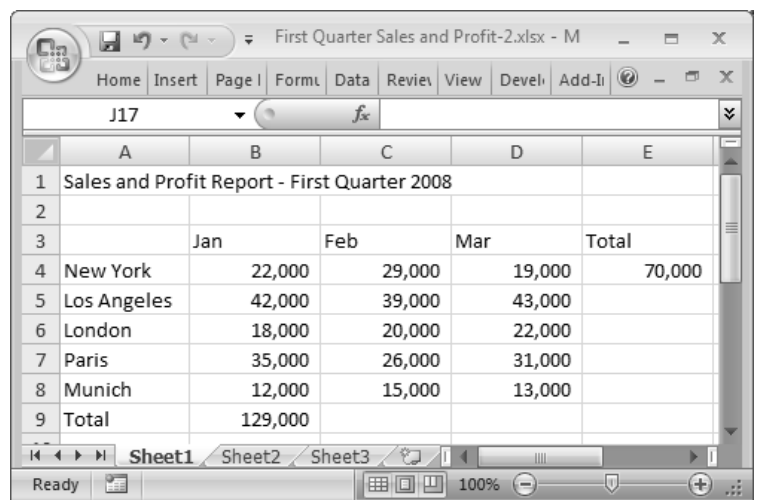
- Use AutoSum to calculate sales for January..

- Click Home→Editing→AutoSum. 

This time AutoSum correctly guesses that you want to sum the values to the left of cell E4:

	B	C	D	E
3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
4	22,000	29,000	19,000	=SUM(B4:D4)
5	42,000	39,000		SUM(number1, [number2], ...)
6	18,000	20,000	22,000	

- Press the <Enter> key, or click the AutoSum button once more.



- Save your work as First Quarter Sales and Profit-3.