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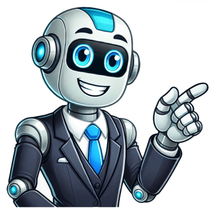

Reason #1 – Cells Formatted as Text Reason #2 – Accidentally Typed the keys CTRL + ` Reason #3 – Values are Different & Result is Different Reason #4 – Don't Enclose Numbers in Double Quotes Reason #5 – Check If Formulas are Enclosed in Double Quotes Reason #6 – Space Before the Excel Formula Now let us look at the solutions for the reasons given above for the Excel formula not working.Now take a look at the first possibility of the formula showing the formula itself, not the result of the formula. For example, look at the below image where the SUM function in excel shows the formula, not the result.The first thing we need to look into is the format of the cells; these cells are D1, D2, and D3. So, now take a look at the format of these cells.It is formatted as text. When the cells are formatted as text, Excel cannot read numbers and return the result for your applied formula.Change the format of the cells to "General" or "Convert to Number." We must first select the cells. Then, on the left-hand side, we can see one small icon. Click on that icon, and choose the option "Convert to Number." Now, we must see the result of the formula. We are still not getting the result we are looking for. Now, we need to examine whether the formula cell is formatted as text or not. Yes, it is formatted as text, so change the cell format to "GENERAL" or "NUMBER." We must see the result now. Often in Excel, when working in a hurry, we tend to type keys that are not required, which is an accidental incident. But if we do not know which key we typed, we may get an unusual result.One such moment is SHOW FORMULAS in excel shortcut key CTRL + `. If we have accidentally typed this key, we may see the result like the picture below.As we said, the reason could be the accidental pressing of the show formula shortcut key.The solution is to try typing the same key again to get back the results of the formula rather than the formula itself.Sometimes, we see different numbers in Excel, but the formula shows different results. For example, the below image displays one such situation.In cells D1, D2, and D3, we have 10 as the value. In cell D4, we have applied the SUM function to get the total value of cells D1, D2, and D3. But the result says 40 instead of 30.All the Excel file calculations are set to automatic. But to enhance the speed of the large data files, the user might have changed the auto calculation to a manual one.We can fix this in two ways. One is we can turn on the calculation to "Automatic."Either we can do one more thing. We can also press the shortcut key F9, which is nothing but "Calculate Now" under the "Formulas" bar.We must pass the numerical values to get the desired result in situations inside the formula. For example, please take a look at the below image; it shows cities and the average temperature in the city.If the temperature is greater than 25, then the average should be 25, and if the temperature is less than 25, then the average should be 20. Finally, we will apply the IF condition in excel to get the results.We have supplied the numerical results double-quotes =IF (B2>25," 25˜," 20"). Unfortunately, when the numbers are passed in double-quotes, Excel treats them as text values. Therefore, we cannot do any calculations with text numbers.Always pass the numerical values without double quotes like the below image.Now, we can do all sorts of calculations with these numerical values.We need to ensure formulas are not wrapped in double quotes. It happens when we copy formulas from online websites and paste them as it is. If the formula is mentioned in double quotes for understanding, we need to remove double quotes and paste them. Otherwise, we may get only the formulas, not the result of the formula.We all humans make mistakes. Typing mistake is one of the errors for the Excel formula not working. We usually commit day in and day out in our workplace. If we type one or more spaces before we start our formula, it breaks the rule of the formulas in Excel. As a result, we may end up with only the Excel formula, not the result of the formula. Let's dive right into the most common cause of formulas not updating: Calculation options set to 'Manual calculation' mode What? 😮 Could it really be that simple? In Excel, it is actually possible to change the calculation setting. You can check and set the current calculation mode like this: 1. Click the Formulas tab. 2. Click on Calculation Options. 3. Verify that the calculation setting is Automatic. 4. Formulas will not recalculate automatically if Excel is set to Manual calculation mode. In the practice Excel workbook, the formula in cell C2 is a simple addition formula: =A2 + B2 You can change the values of A2 & B2 as you wish… …but the formula result will not change while the setting is still in Manual calc mode. 5. To get the correct result, set the Calculation Options to Automatic calculation mode. Voila! Now you can go back to working with Excel as usual! Alternatively… You can also change the calculation mode by going into File > More… > Options > Formulas tab. There are four calculation modes to choose from: Automatic – All dependent formulas in the entire workbook are recalculated as cell values change. Automatic Except for Data Tables – Same as Automatic. But Data Tables are only recalculated if a cell inside the table has changed Manual – The entire workbook is only recalculated if you press F9. Or if you click Calculate Now or Calculate Sheet in the Formulas ribbon Manual / Recalculate before saving – Same as Manual calc mode. But formulas are also recalculated every time you save the file. But why did my Calculation Mode change? Bear in mind that the calculation setting is an application-level setting. If you change the Calculation Mode, this applies to the entire workbook and all other open workbooks. Also, Excel uses the last saved calculation mode of the first workbook opened. All workbooks opened in the same session will use the same mode. Try to open the practice Excel file without any other open workbooks. You will notice that it opens in Manual calculation mode. This was the setting it was last saved with. You can learn more about Calculation Mode behavior from the official Microsoft website. This is especially true if the macro or VBA developer used any of the lines below: Application.Calculation = xlCalculationAutomatic Application.Calculation = xlCalculationManual If you are not working with a macro-enabled workbook, then you can definitely rule this out! Why use 'Manual calculation' mode? Well, if you are working with a large amount of data, you may notice a slight lag or delay in Excel. This is usually caused by Excel automatically recalculating formulas with every change. This can slow your work down quite a lot. So, you can change to Manual calculation mode as you enter or change data and switch back to Automatic later on. Manual calculation shortcuts In Manual mode, you can refresh formulas by pressing F9. You can also click the Calculate Now or Calculate Sheet buttons in the Formulas ribbon. This can help you save time and avoid the stress of waiting for Excel to finish updating formulas! We'll use a dataset that contains student Names and their scores in Math and English. We will go through some of the most common fixes when formulas fail to apply in Excel. Fix 1 – Check Cell Format If you type the formula and see results like the picture shown below, you are seeing the formula as text. You have probably put the cell format as Text. Go to the Number Format of the Home ribbon and check if Text is selected. Solution: Select the cell that is showing this error. W selected cell E5. Go to Number Format on the Home ribbon and select General. Press Enter. Drag the Fill Handle and you will get your desired results in all the other cells. The formulas should start working. Fix 2 – Check for a Space Before the Formula If the formulas still display as texts in the General format, there could be a space in front of the equals sign. Select the cell where this problem is showing and check for a space before the formula. Solution: Select the cell where this problem is showing. We selected cell E5. Delete the space before the formula. Press Enter and you will get the correct result in that cell. Drag the Fill Handle to copy this formula to all the other cells. Alternatively, you can manually go through cells to correct them. Fix 3 – Check If Formulas Are Enclosed in Double Quotes If you put a formula in quotes, it will be used as a string value instead of a formula. Solution: Delete the double quotes from the formula. Press Enter to apply the formula. Drag the Fill Handle to copy the formula to all the other cells if needed. We have the correct result for all the cells and the formula is working properly. Fix 4 – Check If Numbers Are Enclosed in Double Quotes If a cell reference is in quotes, it won't work in most formulas. The formula will return a #VALUE! error. Select the cell and check the Formula Bar to see if this is the problem. Solution: Select the cell where the error is showing. Remove the double quotes from the cell references. Press Enter and you will get the correct result for the cell. Drag the Fill Handle to copy the formula to the rest of the cells. Read More: [Fixed]: Excel Formula Not Showing Correct Result Fix 5 – Check for Circular References If the formula fails to return a value, it could be trying to reference the cell it's in for computation (a circular reference). Here's how you can check the Circular References. Go to the Formulas tab. Go to Formula Auditing. Click Error Checking. Put your cursor over Circular References. That will show you the cell that is causing this problem. Here, the cell E10 contains Circular References. Solution: Fix the range or cell references in the formula that is causing the Circular references. Here, E10 is causing the problem so we removed it from the formula. Press Enter and you will see that your formula is working. Fix 6 – Entering Numbers with Formatting For this example, we want a currency ($) sign in the result but putting the currency sign in the formula doesn't seem to work. This is because currencies are processed in a separate cell format. The $ sign is used to lock the row or column reference for the cell. Solution: Select the cell where you want the currency ($) sign. Delete the currency ($) sign from the formula. Press Enter and you will get the result for the cell. Go to Number Format on the Home ribbon and select Currency. You will get the currency ($) sign in your desired cell. Drag the Fill Handle to get the Currency formal in other cells. You can change the currency symbol by going to Format Cells. Fix 7 – Check If the Automatic Calculation Option Is Selected In this case, the first cell with the formula produces the correct result. But, when you drag the Fill Handle to copy the formula to the other cells, the formula is not working as it's supposed to. One of the possible reasons behind this is that Manual Calculation is selected. With this option, Excel doesn't calculate formula results until you force it to. Solution: Go to the Formulas tab. Go to the Calculations Option. Select Automatic. You will see that your formula is working and you are getting the correct results. Read More: [Fixed!] SUM Formula Not Working in Excel Fix 8 – Check If You Have Deleted a Reference Row, Column, or Cell If you see a #REF! error like the following image, you may have deleted a reference that the function used. Select the cell that is showing the error. We selected cell D5. Check the formula and see if there are any missing values. Solution: Unfortunately, you might not be able to undo cell deletion, so be careful when removing cells from the dataset. Readjust the formula. Fix 9 – Check All Opening and Closing Parentheses In the following image, we wanted to calculate the Total Percentage, but we are not getting the correct results. Since we didn't use the parenthesis, the C5 value is being converted to 8000% for the calculation. Solution: Select the cell where the problem is showing. We selected cell E5. Insert parentheses by following the PEMDAS or BODMAS rule to fix the formula. Drag the Fill Handle to copy the formula to the rest of the cells. You will see that your formula is working and you are getting all the correct results. Fix 10 – Check If All Required Arguments Are Entered Properly Consider the following dataset with the #N/A error. We used a VLOOKUP function and wrote the formula as shown below. Here, I took G5 as lookup_value, B5:E8 as table_array, and 3 as col_index_number. But, I left the range_lookup blank. The formula isn't working since the default value is TRUE for an approximate match, and this type of searching doesn't work for unsorted string arrays. Solution: Select the cell where the error is showing. Here, I selected cell H5. Write the formula correctly with all the arguments. We used the following formula. =VLOOKUP(G5,B5:E8,3,FALSE) Here, I have selected G5 as lookup_value, B5:E8 as table_array, 3 as col_index_number, and FALSE as range_lookup. Now, I have entered all the arguments properly. Finally, press ENTER and you will see that the formula is working properly and giving you the correct answer. Read More: [Solved]: Excel Array Formula Not Showing Result Fix 11 – Check for Incorrect Syntax of Function A formula might not be working because the syntax is wrong for the use. To check this, select the cell where the error is showing. We selected cell H5. Here's the formula in the cell. =VLOOKUP(G5,B5:E8,3,TRUE) Here, I have selected G5 as lookup_value, B5:E8 as table_array, 3 as col_index_number, and TRUE as range_lookup. The problem with this formula is I selected TRUE as range_lookup while I want an exact match for the lookup_value. TRUE is for approximate match and FALSE is for an exact match. While this might not matter, the problem is that "Jim" is considered to be "below" the string "Angela" if the array is sorted, and the function isn't finding a value. Solution: Select the cell where you want the correct result. We selected cell H5. Write the formula properly with all the correct syntax. We wrote the following formula. =VLOOKUP(G5,B5:E8,3,FALSE) Here, we have selected G5 as lookup_value, B5:E8 as table_array, 3 as col_index_number, and FALSE as range_lookup. We have entered all the syntax correctly. Press Enter and you will see that the formula is working and giving you the correct result. Fix 12. Check Whether Cell References Are Absolute or Relative In the following example, some results are working and others are showing errors. This might be due to lack of absolute cell references in the formula. Select the formula cell and look at the formula bar to see the formula. We have selected cell H5, which contained the following. =VLOOKUP(G5,B5:E8,3,FALSE) Here, I have selected G5 as lookup_value, B5:E8 as table_array, 3 as col_index_number, and FALSE as range_lookup. There is nothing wrong with this formula if you are writing this for that particular cell. But, when you drag the Fill Handle to copy the formula to the other cells, the cells in the formula will iterate accordingly. For the next cell, the table_array has moved one row down, which has started to effectively remove searchable values. Solution: Select the first cell with the formula. Alter the formula to include absolute cell references for lookup arrays: =VLOOKUP(G5,$B$5:$E$8,3,FALSE) Here, I have selected G5 as lookup_value, B5:E8 as table_array, 3 as col_index_number, and FALSE as range_lookup. We used an absolute cell reference for the table_array so that the selected range remains fixed while using Autofill. Drag the Fill Handle to copy the new formula to all the other cells. The new formula works properly. Fix 13 – Check If a Full Path to a Closed Workbook Is Included Here's an example of a formula that references another workbook, where we're getting the #REF! error. In cell E5, which contains the error, the formula is: =C5+D5+'[Biology.xlsx]Biology'!C5 We summed cells C5 and D5, as well as cell C5 from another workbook named Biology.xlsx and the worksheet named Biology. The problem with this formula that the worksheet is closed, and Excel can't find the value without a full file path. Solution: Select the cell with an error. Insert the full file path before the workbook name like the following. You will need to find your workbook's file path manually. =C5+D5+'E:\This PC\Documents\[Biology.xlsx]Biology'!C5 Press Enter and you will get the correct result. Drag the Fill Handle to copy the formula to all the other cells if needed. The formula is working properly. Fix 14 – Enclosing Workbook or Worksheet in Double Quotes If you accidentally or intentionally enclose the worksheet name in a double quote in the formula, then the formula will show an error like the image below. Solution: Select OK to close the error message. Select the cell where the error is showing. Remove the quotes from sheet names. Drag the Fill Handle to copy the formula to all the other cells. Fix 15 – Nesting More than the Allowed Number of Functions Solution: If you are using Excel 2003 or lower, you can use up to 7 nested functions. If you are using Excel 2007 or newer, you can nest up to 64 nested functions. Download the Practice Workbook Formula Is Not Working.xlsx Knowledge Hub Excel options > Formulas > Workbook Calculation > Automatic. If you often switch between these two modes, you can create a custom keyboard shortcut for Excel to speed up your work. You might have accidentally formatted the cells containing the formulas as text. Unfortunately, Excel skips the applied formula when set to text format and displays the plain result instead. The best way to check for formatting is to click on the cell and check the Number group from the Home tab. If it displays "Text," click on that and choose General. To recalculate the formula, double-click the cell and press Enter on your keyboard. People commonly misuse the Show Formulas button by accidentally turning it on. With this turned on, the applied formulas will not work. You can find this setting under the Formulas tab. The Show Formulas button is designed for auditing formulas, displaying the formula instead of the result when pressed. This might be a good tool if you want to better understand Excel formulas, but it stops them from working. In this case, turning it off may help resolve the issue. Go to the Formulas tab > Formula Auditing Group and click the Show Formulas button. Even if you're using an Excel function for beginners, a missing or an extra character might be why your Excel formula isn't working. For example, when you enter an additional equal to ('=') or apostrophe (') in a spreadsheet cell, calculations are not performed, causing problems for users. The issue typically occurs when users try to copy a formula from the web. However, it is simple to fix this problem. Just head over to the cell, select it, and remove the apostrophe or space at the beginning of the formula. The same goes for the formula's parentheses. When writing a lengthy formula, make sure you match all parentheses, so the calculations take place in the correct order. Excel helps you by showing parentheses pairs in different colors, so you can easily follow them. Excel will display an error message when there's a missing or extra parenthesis. You might have to separate function arguments to get the desired outcome depending on which Excel formulas you're using. You should generally separate arguments using commas, but this may vary depending on your Regional Settings. For example, in North American countries, you must enter commas to separate arguments, while in Europe, the right character is set to a semicolon. If you've used the wrong separating character, Excel might show the "We found a problem with this formula" error. You can try both options and check which one works for you. If you're used to using commas instead of semicolons, or vice versa, you can edit Excel settings to avoid repeating the same error. Open Excel's File menu and go to More > Options. From the left pane, select Language. In the Office display language section, click the Add a language button. Select the wanted language to install and click Install. Select it again and click Set as Preferred. Test if Excel formulas are now working. To sync Office settings across your devices when logging in with your Microsoft account, check the Store my authoring languages in the cloud for my account option. Excel allows users to recalculate formulas manually if they prefer not to use automatic calculation settings. You can do this with these methods: For recalculating an entire spreadsheet, press F9 on your keyboard or choose Calculate Now under Formula Tab. Alternatively, you can recalculate an active sheet by pressing Shift + F9 on your keyboard or selecting Calculate Sheet from the Calculation group under Formula Tab. You could also recalculate all formulas across all worksheets by pressing the Ctrl + Alt + F9 keyboard combination. Moreover, if you prefer recalculating just one formula from a sheet, select the cell and press Enter. Excel formulas might show the wrong results if it uses circular referencing, which refers to the same cell where it does the calculations. Most of the time, Excel will notify you about a circular reference, but it might not do it every time. Fortunately, you can manually check for this type of reference if you keep getting wrong results out of Excel formulas. Open the Formulas tab, go to Formula Auditing, and select Error Checking > Circular References. Excel will show which cells have added a circular reference to the formula. Go to the indicated cells and edit the formula so it doesn't include the cell showing the results. For example, if the C13 cell shows the result for =SUM(C1:C13), change C13 to C12 within the formula to fix it. The truth is, there's not much room for error when writing an Excel formula. A missing parenthesis or the wrong cell format is enough to stop Excel formulas from working as intended. However, you should know how to fix the issue as you'll save a lot of time having Excel do the calculations for you. Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit , provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made . You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. We have all experienced it, and often at the worst possible moment. For whatever reason, Excel's formulas aren't calculating correctly. The good news is that it is usually something simple. Once we know the most likely causes, it is easier to troubleshoot the problem. So, in this post, we look at the most likely reasons for Excel formulas not calculating. The 14 reasons and fixes in this post, should give you what you need to know. So, if you're concerned that Excel has stopped calculating or that numbers aren't updating, we have the answer for you. Table of Contents Watch the video Watch the video on YouTube Excel has two calculation options, Automatic and Manual. Most users don't even know these two modes exist. Yet, frustratingly, in some circumstances, they can change without us knowing it. Automatic calculation is the default mode. This is where formulas recalculate after any change affecting the result of a calculation. Excel formulas are efficient at handling calculations. In the background, Excel knows which cells impact which formulas. Therefore, the Automatic calculation mode recalculates the minimum number of cells. This ensures Excel is fast while keeping all the values up-to-date. This is the behavior that we understand and expect. However, due to the size and complexity of some spreadsheets or due to 3rd party add-ins, calculation speed can become very slow. This leads some users to change Excel's option to Manual calculation mode. Consequently, Excel doesn't recalculate anything. In Manual calculation mode, we can change cell values, but nothing happens. Therefore, we must explicitly tell Excel when to recalculate. Therefore, if Excel is in manual calculation mode, it would appear there is an issue because we see Excel formulas not calculating. NOTE: Unfortunately, Excel can change between Manual and Automatic calculation modes without us knowing it. So check out this post: Why does Excel's calculation mode keep changing? To determine which calculation mode is enabled, click Formulas > Calculation Options (drop-down). The tick inside the drop-down identifies which calculation option is applied. Click Automatic to ensure the calculation happens automatically. Calculation mode is an application-level setting; therefore, it applies to all open workbooks. If you want to remain in Manual calculation mode, here are some useful shortcuts. F9: Calculates formulas that have changed since the last calculation, and formulas dependent on them, in all open workbooks. Shift + F9: Calculates formulas that have changed since the last calculation, and formulas dependent on them, in the active worksheet. Ctrl + Alt + F9: Calculates all formulas in all open workbooks, regardless of whether they have changed since the last time or not. Ctrl + Shift + Alt + F9: Rechecks dependent formulas and then calculates all formulas in all open workbooks, regardless of whether they have changed since the last time or not. This is probably the #1 reason why we see Excel formulas not calculating. TOP TIP: Add the Automatic/Manual calculation options to your QAT. This is an easy way to switch between modes and identify which mode is active. When looking at cell values, we decide what kind of data it is. We know instinctively that numbers can be aggregated, but text cannot. Unfortunately, Excel isn't so clever. Within Home > Number, we can select the cell format. If a cell is formatted as text instead of a number, Excel may not calculate and may not display the value we expect. Look at the screenshot below. In Cell B4, the SUM of B2:B3 equals 1; 1+1 = 1 is definitely wrong. This is because B3 is formatted as text, and the SUM function ignores text. So, while the calculation may look like 1+1 = 1 (which is wrong), it is actually 1+0 = 1 (which is correct). To fix this, here are 3 options: Manual change Change the cell format from Text to another format (General is a good option to start with) Double-click on the problem cell to go into edit mode Press return to commit the formula If the cell has a green triangle: Click on the cell Select Convert to number from the warning drop-down Adding zero to the number Select any blank cell. Copy the cell Select the cells to be converted to numbers Click Home > Paste > Paste Special… In the Paste Special window, select Add, then click OK #1 specifically relates to numbers formatted as text, but #2 and #3 can be used in many scenarios where numbers are stored as text. The apostrophe (') is a special character in Excel. Whenever an apostrophe is entered at the start of a value or formula, this tells Excel that everything that follows is text. This special character ensures we can store numbers as text. For example, if we wanted to hold an employee number containing leading zeros, Excel might remove the zeros on data entry. Therefore, we insert the apostrophe to ensure Excel understands this as text. However, sometimes an apostrophe can appear when we don't want it. This often happens when the data is imported from an external system. The screenshot below shows a calculation that doesn't work as expected. The formula in Cell B4 is SUM(B2:B3), therefore 1 + 1 = 2, yet the value in B4 equals 1. This is because cell B3 contains a value with an apostrophe preceding it. Either remove the apostrophe manually or use techniques #2 and #3 listed in the section above to fix the issue. There is a similar impact on formulas. For example, in the screenshot below, the SUM function has a leading apostrophe; therefore, it is treated as text. As it's a formula, you will need to remove the apostrophe manually. Then you're good to go. Leading and trailing spaces are a big problem, they often occur in imported text, but we cannot see them with our eyes. Let's look at an example. In the screenshot above, the formula in Cell B13 is: =SUMIFS($B$2:$B$9,$A$2:$A$9,A13) We are performing a basic SUMIFS function to add the values for product Alpha. Based on the data, the value should be 50, but it calculates as zero. The problem is that all the values in Cells A2:A9 have trailing spaces. Rather than "Alpha", used in Cell A13 for the SUMIFS function, the value in the data is "Alpha " (with trailing spaces). Excel views these as different values. As a result, there is no match. To fix this, there are lots of options. Some suggestions are: Manually removing the space from the data Adding the trailing space into our SUMIFS criteria Using the TRIM function to remove extra spaces from the start/end of the text If there are no spaces in the middle of the text, we can use Find and Replace to remove extra spaces. Another text/number mix-up issue occurs when numbers are included in double-quotes. Look at the screenshot below. There is a problem; 100+50+100 definitely does not equal 200. In this scenario, there is a minimum sale volume of 50; therefore, using an IF function, the value in row 3 has increased correctly from 30 to 50. Consequently, the total should be 250. So, what's happened? The problem is due to the calculation in Cell C3. The formula is: =IF(B3 Formula Auditing > Error Checking > Circular References which displays the circular references in any of our open workbooks. As shown in the screenshot above, Cell B5 has a circular reference. Once we remove that, it will calculate correctly. In Excel, we usually view the results of calculations. However, with one mouse click or one shortcut, we can quickly toggle to show formulas rather than results. Turning on show formulas can easily be performed by accident or saved in this state by a previous user. To display the formula results again, click Formulas > Formula Auditing> Show Formulas, or use the shortcut key Ctrl + ` (the key to the left of the 1 key on a standard windows keyboard). One thing we learn in Excel quite early on is the use of the dollar ($) symbol to lock cell references. For example: If we enter =A1 into a cell and copy it down, it will change to =A2. If we enter =A$1 and copy the cell down, it will remain as =A$1. We get used to this referencing syntax quickly. However, this makes it easy to make mistakes when copying formulas to other cells. Look at the screenshot above. There is definitely an issue with the calculation in Cell D6. Double-click on the cell, and the problem will quickly reveal itself. Yes… somebody forgot that $ symbols had been used in the formula in Cell C6, then they copied the formula into Cells D6 to F6. Unfortunately, it's easily done; I've done it myself many times. How can we find these types of errors? The only way is to check our work as we go, and apply a healthy bit of skepticism to any calculation result. It's better to self-review and find an error than to sit in a meeting with your manager, and them find it. To help reduce the number of errors we make, Excel is programmed to auto-correct / auto-change some data as we enter it. This is great most of the time, and who knows how often it has saved us from an embarrassing mistake. However, auto-correction can cause problems at other times. For example, what do we want if we enter 1/1 into Excel? Do we want the result of 1? Or do we want 1st January? In this case, Excel assumes we want 1st January of the current year. Dates are the most common type of automatic conversion. Dates in Excel are actually numbers, based on the number of days since 31st December 1899. So, assuming the current year is 2022, if we enter 1/1, Excel thinks we want 1st January 2022 (which is the number 44562). We can see this when we change the date to a number format. We tried to enter a value of 1/1 and ended up with a value of 44562. Hmmm… that could cause us an issue. We have already seen above in #3 that leading zeros can be a problem. If we try to enter a number with leading zeros, such as 0005321, Excel assumes we don't want the leading zeros and converts the number to 5321. To retain leading zeros, we should either: Add an apostrophe at the start Convert the data type to text before entering value This is one of my pet peeves. Hidden rows and columns cause so many problems for Excel users. In my opinion, they should be avoided at all costs. Let's look at an example: Look at the screenshot above. The formula in Cell B5 is: =SUM(B2:B4) Is this result correct? Actually, Yes. But the hidden row make the result look wrong. This is because the hidden row contains an additional value, as we can see when we unhide row 3. If we want a calculation that excludes hidden cells, we should consider using the AGGREGATE or SUBTOTAL function. Computers store numbers using binary (a mixture of 1 and 0's). Yet we learn numbers using a decimal base 10 system. As a result, Excel must convert between binary and decimal numbers, which can lead to some unexpected differences. We know one-third (1/3) cannot be expressed as a decimal; it calculates as 0.333333… recurring into infinity. So we tend to use an approximation with a reduced number of digits. In binary, there are also numbers that have a recurring number into infinity. One-tenth (1/10) can easily be expressed as a decimal: 0.1. But in binary, it is 00011001100110011… recurring into infinity. Excel calculates to 15 significant digits. Therefore, it is possible for minor rounding differences to occur due to the conversion from binary to decimal. While this may be insignificant, if this is used in a logic statement, it can lead to an alternative result. Check out this post for more details: Excel can calculate the wrong results: WARNING In this post we have given you the most likely reasons we find Excel formulas not calculating as expected. I trust these 14 techniques have helped to solve your problem. If you've found any other simple issues which cause incorrect calculations, please add them in the comments below. Related posts: Discover how you can automate your work with our Excel courses and tools. The Excel Academy Make working late a thing of the past. The Excel Academy is Excel training for professionals who want to save time. Microsoft Excel is a spreadsheet application that has been used by millions of people worldwide for more than three decades. Pivot tables, graphing tools, calculations, and a macro programming language are included. In contrast to other apps such as Word, spreadsheet software calculates values using mathematical formulas and data in cells. However, there are times when the Excel formulas do not work properly. These issues can arise due to various reasons, such as incorrect syntax, referencing errors, or data inconsistencies This article will assist you in fixing Excel formula issues helping you streamline your data analysis and improve productivity. How to Fix Excel Formulas Not WorkingIf an Excel formula is not working properly and returns an error or incorrect result. To fix it, follow the steps below: Problem: Change the Calculation Options from Manual to AutomaticIf you are unable to update the value you have input and it returns the same value, Excel's calculation option may be set to manual rather than automatic. Fix: Change the Calculation Option from Manual to Automatic Step 1: Open the spreadsheet that is giving you problems. Go to the Formulas tab, then select the Calculation option Step 2: From the dropdown option, select Automatic Problem: Cell Set to Text FormatYou may have formatted the cells containing the formulas incorrectly as text. When Excel is set to text format, it ignores the applied formula and does not display the result. Fix: Change the Cell from Text Format to either General or NumberTo resolve this issue, follow the procedures below: Step 1: Select the cell where the formula is not being calculated Step 2: Navigate to Home, and you'll see a Dropbox with multiple data kinds in the center. Choose General or Number Step 3: Now, click the cell once more and Select Enter. The formula will be automatically calculated, and the result will be displayed in the cell Problem: Show Formulas Button Is Turned OnIf show formulas button is turned on accidently then the applied formulas will not work. Fix: Turn off the Show Formulas ButtonThe Show Formula button is intended for auditing formulas, therefore when selected, it displays the formula rather than the result. As a result, if you previously turned it on, turning it off may help remedy the problem. Here's how to go about it: Step 1: Navigate to the Formula Tab and click the Show Formulas button under the Formula Auditing Group Excel formulas Not UpdatingThe value provided by your Excel formula does not automatically update, which means that the formula displays the old value even after you modify the values of the dependent cells. When Excel formulas do not update automatically, it is most likely because the Calculation setting has been set to Manual rather than Automatic. To resolve this, simply return the Calculation option to Automatic: Step 1: Navigate to the Formulas tab on the Excel ribbon, then to the Calculation group, click the Calculation Options button, and then select Automatic. Excel formulas Not CalculatingIf your Excel formula isn't working, the reason can be that a cell displays the function rather than the calculated value, it could be due to one of the following issues. Problem: Incorrect Excel FormulaWhile working with Excel, even if you are new to using Functions, a common issue that may arise is the presence of missing or extra characters. For Example, if you use (=) an equal sign or apostrophe(') in a cell can prevent calculations from being performed correctly. This problem may occur when users haven't typed the formula and copied it from other sources. Fix: Check your Excel FormulaYou can fix this problem by following the below tips: Step 1: Select the cell with the formula and remove any unnecessary apostrophes or spaces at the beginning of the formula Step 2: You should take care of parenthesis while using lengthy formulas. Ensure that all opening and closing parenthesis match correctly so that the opening and closing parenthesis match correctly so that calculations happen in the right order. Excel can help you with this by displaying parenthesis in different colors to make it easier to track them Excel will show an error if there is a missing or extra parenthesis in your formula. Keep in mind these common formula problems to make your Excel experience smoother and more productive. Problem: Wrong Characters UsageYou have to use separate function arguments to use for the excel formulas to calculate and give desired correct outputs. Fix: Use Proper Characters to Separate ArgumentsTo get the desired results in Excel, it's essential to know how to separate functions and arguments correctly. Depending upon the Excel formula you're using and your regional settings, you may need to use commas or semicolons to separate arguments. Using the wrong separator can lead to a "We Found a Problem with this Formula" error in Excel. There's a way to adjust Excel settings to avoid repeating this error: Step 1: Open Excel's File menu Step 2: Go to More and select Options Step 3: Select Language from the left pane Step 4: In the office display language section, click on the" Add a language" button Step 5: Choose the desired language to install and click Install Step 6: Select the newly installed language and click "Set as Preferred" Step 7: Test your Excel Formulas to see if they are now working correctly To sync Office settings across your device when logging in with your Microsoft account, check the Store my authoring languages in the Cloud for My Account option. If users don't prefer to use automatic calculation settings, Excel allows users to Recalculate formulas manually. You can do this by following below methods: For Recalculating the entire sheet, you can press F9 on your keyboard or choose to Calculate Now under the Formula tab. You can also recalculate an active sheet by pressing Shift +F9 on your keyboard or by selecting the Calculate sheet from the Calculation group under Formula Tab. You can also recalculate all formulas across all worksheets by pressing the Ctrl+ Alt +F9. Check for Circular ReferenceIf Excel uses circular reference it might sometimes show wrong results. Most of the time, Excel will notify you about a circular reference, but it might not do it every time. Note: Circular reference refers to the same cell where is does the calculations. You can manually check for this type of reference if you continuously getting wrong results out of Excel formulas. Follow the below steps: Step 1: Open the Formulas Tab Step 2: Go to Formula Auditing Step 3: Select Error Checking Circular Reference Now Excel will show which cells have added a circular reference to the Formula. Go to the indicated cells and edit the formula so it doesn't include the cell showing the results. Check for any syntax errors.Check missing or extra charactersEnsure correct cell reference. Use Excel's Formulas auditing tools to trace precedents and dependents, and evaluate complex Formulas to identify the issue. Excel Formula error message occurs due to the following reasons: Division by zeroValue not foundIncorrect data types. To correct these errors, you can use functions such as IFERROR or ISERROR to display custom messages or handle specific situations. Follow the below steps to troubleshoot Excel Formulas: Step 1: Check the Formula syntax Step 2: Use formula auditing tools Step 3: Handle Error values Step 4: Verify data types Step 5: Ensure correct argument separators Step 6: Review conditional formatting and data validation rules. To avoid common Excel formulas: Double- Check formula syntaxEnsure correct cell referenceMatch parenthesis carefullyUse correct argument separatorsBe careful about the data types.Use formula auditing toolsYes, Error messages can be customized in Excel Formula using Functions like IFERROR and ISERROR. By providing specific messages or alternative values. Readers help support Windows Report. We may get a commission if you buy through our links. Read our disclosure page to find out how can you help Windows Report sustain the editorial team. Read more Key notes If you enable the auto-calculate option, Excel will automatically update the formulas when the values change.To see the calculated output instead of the formula, make sure the cell format is set to "General". Excel is essentially one big calculator that can also display numerical data in the form of spreadsheet tables and graphs. Formulas (or functions) are the cornerstone of Excel that perform a multitude of calculations and display them within spreadsheet cells. Excel's formulas make it one of the most essential MS Office applications. However, sometimes Excel might not always calculate formulas automatically. When that happens, the formulas don't automatically update when users change the values they're based on. Alternatively, sometimes Excel might just display the formulas within cells instead of their results. If either of those scenarios sounds familiar, check out some of the resolutions for them below. If Excel functions don't auto-calculate when you modify the values they're based on, the default automatic calculation mode probably isn't enabled. Click the File tab at the top left of Excel.Click Options, which opens the Excel Options window. Click the Formulas tab on the left of the window.Is the Manual option there selected? If so, select the Automatic setting.Click OK to close the Excel Options window. If an Excel spreadsheet displays all its formulas within cells, the Show Formulas option is probably enabled. To disable that option, click the Formulas tab in Excel. Then click the Show Formulas button on that tab. You can also press the Ctrl + ` hotkey to toggle the Show Formulas button off/on. Excel will also display formulas instead of calculated output in cells when the cells have a text format. To check if that's the case, select a spreadsheet cell that's displaying a formula. You might see Text in the format drop-down menu shown in the snapshot directly below. Select General on the drop-down menu. Then the cell will display calculated output when you click within the formula bar (with the cell selected) and press the Return key. Excel won't automatically calculate formulas when they haven't been entered correctly. One of the things hardest to spot is a space in the formula just ahead of the equals (=). When there's a space right at the beginning of the formula, its cell will display the function instead of a result for it. So, make sure there aren't any spaces at the start of functions. If the formula contains spaces anywhere else, Excel will display #Name? in its cell. So, that's how you can fix an Excel spreadsheet that doesn't automatically calculate its formulas. Thereafter, the spreadsheet's cells will automatically display the results for formulas as expected. For any other questions or suggestions, feel free to reach for the comments section below. RELATED ARTICLES TO CHECK OUT: This tutorial explains the most common mistakes when making formulas in Excel, and how to fix a formula that is not calculating or not updating automatically.Can someone imagine using Microsoft Excel without formulas? I believe no one can. And hardly anything could compare to the frustration caused by Excel formulas stop working all of a sudden. When this happens, a bunch of questions immediately flash across your mind. Why is my Excel formula not calculating? Why doesn't this formula update its value automatically? Is my Excel corrupt or is this due to some malicious virus? And how do I get my Excel to calculate and update formulas automatically again? Don't worry, most likely your Excel is all right, and you will get all the answers in a moment. Symptoms: Excel formula not working correctly, it returns an error or a wrong result. This section provides a summary of the most common mistakes people make when creating formulas in Excel and solutions to fix them. As you know, the arguments of Excel functions are entered within the parentheses. In complex formulas, you may need to enter more than one set of parentheses, one within another, to indicate the order in which the calculations should take place. When creating such a formula, be sure to pair the parentheses properly so that you always have a right parenthesis for every left parenthesis in your formula. Microsoft Excel displays the parentheses pairs in different colors as you enter them in a formula. If your formula is short of one or more parentheses, Excel displays an error message and suggests a correction to balance the pairs. Please see How to highlight and match parenthesis pairs for more information. All Excel functions have one or more required arguments. Some functions also have optional arguments, which are enclosed in [square brackets] in the formula's syntax. A formula must contain all of the required arguments, otherwise Excel displays "You've entered too few arguments for this function" alert. If you have entered more arguments than allowed by the formula's syntax, you will get "You've entered too many arguments for this function" error message. When nesting two or more Excel functions into each other, e.g. creating a nested IF formula, remember about the following limitations: In Excel 2016, Excel 2013, Excel 2010 and Excel 2007, you can use up to 64 nested functions. In Excel 2003 and lower, only up to 7 nested functions can be used. In Excel formulas, any value enclosed in double quotes is interpreted as a text string. What it means is that if you enter a formula like =IF(A1>0, "1"), Excel will treat number 1 as text, and therefore you won't be able to use the returned 1's in other calculations. To fix this, just remove the double quotes around "1": =IF(A1>0, 1). So, whenever you are writing a formula for numerical values, follow this simple rule: don't enclose numbers in double quotes unless you want them to be treated as text. When using a number in an Excel formula, don't add any decimal separator or currency sign like $ or €. Remember that in Excel formulas, a comma is typically used to separate a function's arguments, and the dollar sign makes an absolute cell reference. For instance, instead of entering $50,000 in your formula, input simply 50000, and use the Format Cells dialog (Ctrl + 1) to format the output to your liking. Numbers formatted as text values are another common reason for Excel formulas not