**How To Create A Simple, Effective Gantt Chart In Excel**

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A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet is one of the most versatile business tools around. It’s no surprise that Excel is a common default project management tool for teams that use the Office suite.

As your team grows and projects become more complex, you might want to apply more advanced [project management methods](https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/project-management-methodologies/) and tools—without investing in new software. Here’s how to make a Gantt chart in Excel to accommodate complex agile project management within the familiar tool.

**What Is a Gantt Chart?**

A Gantt chart is a [project management tool](https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/software/best-project-management-software/) that helps you visualize timelines for your project at a glance. It lists the project tasks that need to be completed down the left column and dates across the top row. A bar represents the duration of each task, so you can see at once when each task will begin and end.

The visual makes it easy to plan a project and set realistic delivery dates because you can assign realistic start and finish dates for tasks that are contingent on the completion of other tasks.

The basic layout of a Gantt chart is similar to a spreadsheet, which makes it an easy fit for a tool like Excel.

**How To Make a Gantt Chart in Excel**

Follow these steps to make a Gantt chart in Excel from scratch.

**Step 1: Create a Project Table**

Start by entering your project information into the spreadsheet, like you would for more basic, spreadsheet-based project management.

The farthest left column should list the project’s tasks, with one row per task. Additional columns should list these details for each task:

* Start date: when you’ll begin working on the task.
* End date: when you’ll finish the task.
* Duration (number of days): how much time the task requires.

You can manually enter the duration of the task or use one of these Excel formulas to fill in those cells automatically:

* End date – Start date = Duration
* End date – Start date + 1 = Duration

For example, if Start date is column B, End date is column C and Duration is column D, then the formula in cell D2 would be C2-B2 or C2-B2+1.

Alternatively, you can find the End date by entering the Start date and the Duration and using this formula:

* Start date + Duration = End date

Or, if you have a hard deadline for a task and know how long it takes to complete, you can enter the End date and Duration and find the necessary Start date with this formula:

* End date – Duration = Start date

Graphical user interface, application, table, Excel

Description automatically generated

Your table will be where you enter all of your data while working on the project.

**Step 2: Make an Excel Bar Chart**

To start to visualize your data, you’ll first create an Excel stacked bar chart from the spreadsheet.

1. Select the “Start date” column, so it’s highlighted.
2. Under “Insert,” select “Chart,” then “Stacked Bar.”

This will create a stacked bar chart (a bar graph where the bars are horizontal from the left) with your Start dates as the X-axis.

Chart, histogram

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The bar chart will visualize your Gantt chart’s most important data points

**Step 3: Input Duration Data**

The next step is to add another series to your Excel chart to reflect each task’s duration. To do this:

1. Right-click on the chart, and select “Select data” from the menu.
2. A “Select data source” window will open, with “Start date” already listed as a series.
3. Click the “Add” button under “Legend entries (series),” and an “Edit series” window will open.
4. Name your series by typing in the name (i.e., “Duration”) or placing your cursor in the name field and clicking on the column header in the spreadsheet.
5. Click the icon next to the “Series values” field to open a new “Edit series” window.
6. With this window open, select the cells in your Duration column, excluding the header and any empty cells. Alternatively, you can fill in the “Series values” field with this formula: =’[TABLE NAME]’!$[COLUMN]$[ROW]:$[COLUMN]$[ROW]. For example: =’New Project’!$D$2:$D$17
7. Once the “Series name” and “Series values” fields are filled in, click OK to close the window.
8. You’ll again see the “Data source” window, now with “Duration” added as a series. Click OK to add the series to your chart.

Graphical user interface, table

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When you enter your duration data into the table, your Gantt chart will serve as a quick and easy way to track your project.

**Step 4: Add Task Descriptions**

You’ll open the “Select data source” window again to get your chart to reflect the task names, instead of row numbers along the left side.

1. Right-click on the chart to open the “Select data source” window.
2. Select “Start date” in the left “Series” list, and click “Edit” on the right “Category” list. An “Axis labels” window will open.
3. With this window open, select the cells in your Start date column, excluding the header and any empty cells. Alternatively, you can fill in the “Axis labels” field with this formula: =’[TABLE NAME]’!$[COLUMN]$[ROW]:$[COLUMN]$[ROW]. For example: =’New Project’!$B$2:$B$17
4. Click OK on the “Axis labels” window and the “Select data source” window to add this information to your chart.

You’ll now have an Excel bar chart that lists your tasks and dates—in reverse order. (Don’t worry; we’ll fix that in a minute.)

**Step 5: Transform Into a Gantt Chart**

To turn your Excel stacked bar chart into a visual Gantt chart, you need a few tweaks.

First, remove the portion of each bar representing the Start date, and leave just the portion representing the task duration.

1. Click any bar in the chart, and you’ll select all of them.
2. With all the bars selected, right-click and select “Format data series” from the menu to open a “Format data series” window.
3. Under “Fill,” select “No fill.”
4. Under “Border color,” select “No line.”

Now, fix the order of your tasks.

1. Click the list of tasks on the left side of the chart to select them and open a “Format axis” window.
2. Under “Axis options,” select “Categories in reverse order.”
3. Click “Close” to close the window and update your chart.

Now you should have a proper Gantt chart with your tasks listed in chronological order and your dates listed across the top of the chart.

Chart

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