

How to Calculate the Average in Google Sheets, Ignoring Zeros and Blanks

Authored by
stats writer

January 16, 2026

RECOMMENDED CITATION

stats writer (2026). *How to Calculate the Average in Google Sheets, Ignoring Zeros and Blanks*. PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES. Retrieved from <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=126334>

To accurately calculate the average of a range of values in Google Sheets, it is frequently necessary to exclude specific data points that would otherwise skew the result. A common requirement is to ignore both blank cells and cells containing the value zero. While standard averaging functions automatically handle blank cells, they include zero values in the calculation, which can lead to a misleading representation of performance or output, especially when zero signifies 'no activity' rather than a measured zero quantity. The optimal tool for this precise conditional calculation is the AVERAGEIF function. This function provides the necessary control by allowing you to define a specific criteria for inclusion, effectively ensuring that only positive, meaningful data points contribute to the final arithmetic mean. By setting the criterion to filter out any value equal to zero, we achieve a statistically cleaner and more representative average.

The implementation of this solution is straightforward, but understanding the underlying logic is essential for advanced data handling. We must leverage the non-equality operator within the function's syntax to successfully isolate and exclude unwanted values. This method not only improves data accuracy but also enhances the integrity of your analytical reports, preventing misinterpretation caused by extraneous data points.

Understanding the AVERAGEIF Function in Google Sheets

The AVERAGEIF function is designed specifically for calculating the average of a range based on a single condition or criterion. Unlike the simpler AVERAGE function, AVERAGEIF requires two primary arguments (and an optional third): the range being evaluated and the condition that must be met. This conditional logic is crucial when dealing with real-world data sets that often contain null entries or placeholder values like zero.

The syntax for the function is: `=AVERAGEIF(range, criterion,)`. When we aim to ignore zero values, the 'criterion' argument becomes the focus. We must construct a text string that tells Google Sheets to evaluate whether the contents of the specified cells are anything *other than* zero. This is achieved using the standard relational operator for "not equal to," which is `<>`.

When applying this logic, the formula takes a highly efficient form. If the range to be evaluated and the range to be averaged are the same (which is standard practice in this scenario), the structure is simplified. Here is the concise formula used to calculate the average in a specified range while explicitly ignoring zeros and relying on the default behavior to handle blank cells:

`=AVERAGEIF(B2:B11, "<>0")`

In this specific example, `B2:B11` represents the range of cells being evaluated and averaged. The criterion `"<>0"` instructs the function to only include values that are **not equal to zero**. This elegantly solves the requirement, ensuring that only positive or negative non-zero values contribute

to the final result, providing a robust method for cleansing calculations.

Why Ignoring Zeros and Blanks Matters for Data Set Integrity

The decision to exclude zeros and blanks is not merely a technical preference; it is often a fundamental requirement for maintaining the statistical integrity of a data set. In many business and analytical contexts, a zero value does not represent an actual measurement but rather a proxy for 'missing data,' 'no sales activity,' or 'non-participation.' Including these zeros artificially reduces the calculated average, leading to inaccurate conclusions about the typical performance or true central tendency of the data.

For instance, if you are averaging the sales performance of a team, and some employees recorded zero sales during the period (perhaps they were on leave), including those zeros would lower the team's average. The true measure of an active employee's performance should only consider those who contributed a non-zero sales figure. By using the conditional averaging method, we ensure that the resulting average accurately reflects the contribution of the active population being measured.

Furthermore, it is important to reinforce that Google Sheets handles blank cells inherently well. By default, both the standard **AVERAGE** function and the conditional **AVERAGEIF** function automatically skip empty cells, assuming they contain no numerical data. Therefore, our primary focus when constructing the formula is strictly on eliminating the zero values. The combination of the function's default behavior (ignoring blanks) and our specified criteria (ignoring zeros) achieves the desired outcome seamlessly.

Thus, we only need to specify in the formula that cells should not be equal (" $\neq 0$ ") to zero as well. This rigorous approach prevents ambiguity and ensures that statistical analysis is grounded in relevant, meaningful data points.

Implementing the Formula to Exclude Zero Values

The core of this solution lies in the precise application of the criterion argument within **AVERAGEIF**. When Google Sheets evaluates the formula, it iterates through every cell in the defined range (e.g., **B2:B14**) and checks whether the value meets the condition specified in the criterion argument.

The syntax " $\neq 0$ " is interpreted as a logical test: "Is the value in this cell not equal to zero?" Any cell containing 1, 10, -5, or any other non-zero number passes the test and is included in the average calculation. Conversely, any cell containing the number 0 fails the test and is excluded. Importantly, blank cells--which are automatically skipped by the function--do not interfere with this evaluation process.

This formula is highly flexible and can be adapted for any range of numerical data. For instance, if you wished to calculate the average of all values greater than a certain threshold, you would simply adjust the criteria to " >100 ". Since our goal is specifically to exclude zero, the $<>0$ operator is the most direct and efficient method. The following example demonstrates this exact implementation using a realistic data set structure.

Step-by-Step Example: Calculating Sales Average & Ignoring Zero and Blank Cells

Suppose we have the following data set in Google Sheets that shows the total sales made by various employees at a company. Notice that this data includes both blank cells (for employees who might not have reported or were not assigned sales) and zero values (for employees who actively reported zero sales).

	A	B	C	D
1	Employee	Sales		
2	A	10		
3	B			
4	C	4		
5	D	14		
6	E	6		
7	F			
8	G	3		
9	H	0		
10	I	12		
11	J	0		
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				

First, let's examine what happens if we simply used the standard **AVERAGE** function across the range **B2:B14**. The standard average function would automatically ignore the blanks but would include the zeros, potentially lowering the average performance figure.

The formula `=AVERAGE(B2:B14)` would include 8 total data points (B2, B3, B5, B7, B8, B10, B12, B14), summing the values (10+0+4+14+6+0+3+12) and dividing by 8.

D2 ▾ | *fx* =AVERAGE(B2:B11)

	A	B	C	D
1	Employee	Sales		Avg. Sales
2	A	10		6.125
3	B			
4	C	4		
5	D	14		
6	E	6		
7	F			
8	G	3		
9	H	0		
10	I	12		
11	J	0		
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				

As shown above, the standard average sales per employee who had a non-blank value is **6.125**. This figure is calculated by including the two zero entries in the denominator, suggesting a lower overall output than is truly representative of successful sales activity.

However, suppose we wanted to only calculate the average for employees who had a sales value that was neither blank nor equal to zero. We must employ the **AVERAGEIF** function to apply the exclusion logic.

We could type the following formula into an output cell, such as cell **D2**, to execute the conditional average calculation:

=AVERAGEIF(B2:B14, "<>0")

This formula tells Google Sheets to inspect the range **B2:B14** and only average those values that successfully pass the test of being "not equal to zero." The resulting calculation will provide a much cleaner measure of average successful sales. The following screenshot shows the result of using this formula in practice:

D2 fx =AVERAGEIF(B2:B11, "<>0")

	A	B	C	D
1	Employee	Sales		Avg. If Not Zero and Not Blank
2	A	10		8.166666667
3	B			
4	C	4		
5	D	14		
6	E	6		
7	F			
8	G	3		
9	H	0		
10	I	12		
11	J	0		
12				
13				
14				
15				

Interpreting the Results and Data Validation

The conditional formula calculated the average by only using the values that were not blank and were strictly greater than zero, resulting in a significantly higher and more accurate figure (**8.167**). This difference highlights the statistical impact of treating zero as an excluded value versus an included data point.

To validate this result, we can manually check which data points were included in the calculation. The cells containing non-zero, non-blank values in the range B2:B14 are: 10 (B2), 4 (B5), 14 (B7), 6 (B8), 3 (B12), and 12 (B14).

The total number of entries included in the calculation is 6. The sum of these entries is $10 + 4 + 14 + 6 + 3 + 12 = 49$.

We can confirm that this is correct by manually calculating the average of all values that are not blank or equal to zero:

Average of Values Greater than Zero: $(10 + 4 + 14 + 6 + 3 + 12) / 6 = \mathbf{8.167}$.

This manual calculation perfectly matches the value calculated by our **AVERAGEIF** formula, confirming that the "<>0" criteria successfully ignored all undesirable data points, including both zeros and the inherently ignored blank cells. This validation step is essential to ensure confidence

in complex conditional analyses within the data set.

Advanced Alternatives: Using AVERAGEIFS for Multiple Criteria

While **AVERAGEIF** is sufficient for ignoring zeros and blanks (as it only requires one criterion: `<>0`), users with more complex data analysis needs might require the function's plural counterpart: **AVERAGEIFS**. This function allows for the application of multiple criteria, which can be beneficial if you need to enforce several conditions simultaneously.

For example, suppose you needed to calculate the average sales while ignoring zeros *and* only including sales records from the 'East Region'. The **AVERAGEIFS** function structure is slightly different, requiring the average range to be specified first: `=AVERAGEIFS(average_range, criterion_range1, criterion1, criterion_range2, criterion2, ...)`.

The formula to exclude zeros while also filtering for the East Region would look like this:

First criterion: The sales range (B2:B14) must not be equal to zero ("`<>0`").

Second criterion: The region range (C2:C14) must be equal to "East" ("`East`").

Although **AVERAGEIFS** can handle the exclusion of zero values, for the simple task of ignoring zeros and blanks, **AVERAGEIF** remains the cleaner and more concise solution. Understanding both functions provides maximum flexibility when performing statistical calculations within Google Sheets.