

How to Calculate Years and Months Between Dates in Excel

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In the modern professional environment, the ability to perform complex **data analysis** within a **spreadsheet** is an essential skill for professionals across various sectors. Calculating the precise duration between two specific calendar dates is a frequent requirement in fields ranging from **financial planning** to large-scale **project management**. **Microsoft Excel** provides a robust suite of tools to handle these temporal calculations, allowing users to move beyond simple subtraction to more nuanced results. By utilizing specific functions, you can isolate the number of whole years and the remaining months to create a clear picture of time elapsed. This process begins with entering your data in a standardized date format, typically "MM/DD/YYYY," ensuring that the software recognizes the inputs as chronological values rather than static text strings. Once your data is correctly formatted, you can leverage the hidden power of specialized formulas to automate your reporting and improve the accuracy of your timelines.

Excel: Calculate Years & Months Between Two Dates

To achieve a professional and readable result when measuring time spans, you can utilize the **DATEDIF** function. This function is unique because it does not appear in the standard formula autocomplete list, yet it remains one of the most effective ways to calculate the difference between dates in **Microsoft Excel**. By combining multiple instances of this function with text strings, you can generate a custom output that clearly states both the year and month components of the duration.

```
=DATEDIF(A2, B2, "y") & " years " & DATEDIF(A2, B2, "ym") & " months"
```

Understanding the Fundamentals of Date Storage

Before diving into specific formulas, it is important to understand how **Microsoft Excel** processes time. The software treats every date as a unique serial number, starting from January 1, 1900. This underlying numeric system is what allows the **DATEDIF** function to perform mathematical operations on what appear to be calendar entries. By converting a human-readable date into a serial value, the engine can calculate the exact number of days between two points and then translate that difference back into years, months, or days based on the user's requirements.

For instance, consider a scenario where cell **A2** contains the start date **1/4/2005** and cell **B2** contains the end date **1/1/2022**. When the combined formula is applied, **Microsoft Excel** calculates that there are 16 full years and 11 additional months between these two points. The result is then presented as a single cohesive string: **16 years 11 months**. This level of detail is particularly useful for tracking employee tenure in **human resources** or determining the age of physical assets in **asset management**.

Exploring the DATEDIF Function Mechanics

The **DATEDIF** function requires three specific arguments to function correctly: the start date, the end date, and the unit interval. The unit interval is a text code that tells the function which part of the date difference to return. Common intervals include:

"**Y**": Returns the total number of complete years in the period.

"**M**": Returns the total number of complete months in the period.

"**D**": Returns the total number of days in the period.

"**YM**": Returns the difference between the months, ignoring the days and the years.

"**MD**": Returns the difference between the days, ignoring the months and the years.

By mastering these intervals, you can extract precise temporal data tailored to your specific reporting needs. The **syntax** must be followed strictly, including the use of quotation marks around the unit code, to avoid errors in your **data analysis** workflows.

Example: Calculate Years & Months Between Two Dates in Excel

To illustrate the practical application of this method, let us examine a dataset containing various start and end dates. This approach is highly scalable, allowing you to process hundreds of rows of data simultaneously by simply dragging the formula down the column.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Start Date	End Date			
2	1/4/2005	1/1/2022			
3	3/15/2007	3/15/2022			
4	4/14/2008	4/18/2022			
5	4/19/2008	4/19/2022			
6	6/20/2013	5/20/2022			
7	7/10/2015	6/10/2022			
8	7/11/2016	6/15/2022			
9	8/14/2016	7/29/2022			
10	8/15/2017	10/30/2022			
11	9/12/2018	12/23/2022			
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					

In the image above, we have a list of project milestones. To calculate the duration of each project in a format that is easy for stakeholders to read, we need to combine the year and month calculations into a single cell. This is achieved through a process known as **concatenation**, where the ampersand symbol (&) is used to join different formula results and text labels together.

To begin the calculation, select cell **B2** (or whichever cell is designated for your output) and input the following comprehensive formula:

=DATEDIF(A2, B2, "y")&" years "&DATEDIF(A2, B2, "ym")&" months"

After entering the formula, you can apply it to the rest of your dataset by clicking the small square in the bottom-right corner of the active cell (the fill handle) and dragging it down through the remaining rows in your column. This action instructs the software to update the cell references relatively, ensuring each row calculates its own unique date range.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Start Date	End Date	Years & Months Between Dates				
2	1/4/2005	1/1/2022	16 years 11 months				
3	3/15/2007	3/15/2022	15 years 0 months				
4	4/14/2008	4/18/2022	14 years 0 months				
5	4/19/2008	4/19/2022	14 years 0 months				
6	6/20/2013	5/20/2022	8 years 11 months				
7	7/10/2015	6/10/2022	6 years 11 months				
8	7/11/2016	6/15/2022	5 years 11 months				
9	8/14/2016	7/29/2022	5 years 11 months				
10	8/15/2017	10/30/2022	5 years 2 months				
11	9/12/2018	12/23/2022	4 years 3 months				
12							
13							
14							
15							

Once the formula has been propagated, the column will display the full duration for every entry. This automated approach significantly reduces the risk of manual calculation errors, which is vital when managing budgets in **financial planning** or deadlines in **project management**.

Customizing the Visual Output and Formatting

Depending on the requirements of your report, you may want to adjust how the results are displayed. The **concatenation** method is highly flexible, allowing you to insert commas, additional words, or even different symbols to improve clarity. For example, adding a comma between the year and month values can make long lists of durations much easier for the eye to scan quickly.

The following modified formula demonstrates how to include a comma within the text string for better aesthetic presentation:

=DATEDIF(A2, B2,"y")&" years, "&DATEDIF(A2, B2,"ym")&" months"

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Start Date	End Date	Years & Months Between Dates				
2	1/4/2005	1/1/2022	16 years, 11 months				
3	3/15/2007	3/15/2022	15 years, 0 months				
4	4/14/2008	4/18/2022	14 years, 0 months				
5	4/19/2008	4/19/2022	14 years, 0 months				
6	6/20/2013	5/20/2022	8 years, 11 months				
7	7/10/2015	6/10/2022	6 years, 11 months				
8	7/11/2016	6/15/2022	5 years, 11 months				
9	8/14/2016	7/29/2022	5 years, 11 months				
10	8/15/2017	10/30/2022	5 years, 2 months				
11	9/12/2018	12/23/2022	4 years, 3 months				
12							
13							
14							
15							

As shown in the updated example, the output now includes a comma separator. Small adjustments like these are essential when preparing documents for executive review or external publication. You can also further customize this by adding logic to handle singular versus plural terms (e.g., "1 year" vs "2 years"), though that requires a more advanced use of the "IF" function alongside your date logic.

Professional Use Cases for Temporal Calculations

The ability to accurately measure time intervals is a cornerstone of professional reporting. In **human resources**, these formulas are used to calculate employee seniority, which often dictates benefits eligibility, vacation accrual, and retirement vesting schedules. Without a standardized way to calculate these periods, organizations would struggle to maintain equitable treatment across their workforce.

In the realm of **asset management**, tracking the age of equipment or infrastructure is critical for predicting maintenance cycles and replacement costs. By using the "Y" and "YM" intervals, managers can see exactly how long a piece of machinery has been in service, allowing for more precise depreciation schedules and operational planning. This data-driven approach ensures that capital expenditures are timed perfectly to avoid equipment failure.

Official Documentation and Troubleshooting

It is important to note that while the function is powerful, it is considered a "legacy" feature. You

can find the complete **documentation** for the function on the official Microsoft support site. Occasionally, users may encounter a "#NUM!" error, which typically occurs if the start date is later than the end date. Ensuring that your chronological order is correct is the first step in troubleshooting any issues with your temporal formulas.

Conclusion and Further Learning

Mastering date-based formulas is a significant step toward becoming an expert user of productivity software. By understanding how to manipulate serial dates and combine functions into meaningful text strings, you can provide deeper insights into your data. To continue expanding your technical proficiency, consider exploring the following tutorials which explain how to perform other common tasks in the application:

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