

# How to Convert Dates to Days of the Week in Excel

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In Microsoft Excel, the necessity often arises to transform standard date entries into their corresponding day of the week. While the built-in WEEKDAY function is available for this purpose, it returns a numerical value (typically 1 to 7) representing the day. For example, applying the WEEKDAY function to a specific date like July 1, 2019, will return a numeric value such as 2, indicating Monday, depending on the optional return type argument chosen. This numerical output, however, is often less practical for visual reporting than the actual name of the day.

To overcome the limitation of numerical output, we typically employ the powerful TEXT function. This function allows us to format any value, including a serial date, using specific formatting codes. By using date codes like "ddd" or "dddd," we can directly convert the underlying date value into its abbreviated or full weekday name, respectively. This method ensures clarity and readability in your spreadsheets, making data analysis significantly easier and more intuitive for end-users.

## Employing the TEXT Function for Day Conversion

The core mechanism for converting a numerical date representation into a readable weekday name relies entirely on the TEXT function. This function requires two essential components: the original value, typically a reference to the cell containing the date, and the formatting instruction, which is the specific code dictating the output format. Understanding these formatting codes is paramount to achieving the precise result in Microsoft Excel.

We utilize standardized formatting codes specifically designed for day representations. While sequences of one or two 'd's are used for the day number (e.g., 1 or 01), to extract the actual day of the week name, we must utilize the sequence of three or four 'd's. These codes are integrated within the Custom Number Formatting syntax, which governs how date and time data is displayed within a cell, and the TEXT function leverages this syntax to return a corresponding text value.

The following two formulas represent the most efficient way to execute this conversion, assuming that your source date is located in cell **A2**. These formulas transform the numerical date value into a text string containing the weekday name, making them invaluable for reporting tasks where immediate clarity is essential:

### Formula 1: Convert Date to Abbreviated Day of Week (e.g. "Thu")

```
=TEXT(A2, "ddd")
```

### Formula 2: Convert Date to Full Name of Day of Week (e.g. "Thursday")

```
=TEXT(A2, "dddd")
```

It is critical to remember that the input argument, **A2** in these examples, must contain a valid Excel date serial number or a reference to a cell containing one. If the cell contains unrecognised text, a calculation error, or an invalid date format, the TEXT function will likely return an error (such as #VALUE!) or an incorrect interpretation, highlighting the importance of input data hygiene prior to calculation.

## Understanding Formatting Codes: "ddd" vs. "dddd"

The distinction between using three 'd's ("ddd") and four 'd's ("dddd") lies solely in the desired level of detail for the output weekday name. Both formats are standard conventions used within Microsoft Excel's date and time formatting syntax, but they serve different aesthetic and reporting requirements depending on the context of the spreadsheet.

The format code "**ddd**" instructs Excel to return the standard abbreviated three-letter name for the day of the week. For instance, Sunday is returned as "Sun," Monday as "Mon," and so forth. This compact format is highly beneficial when working with extensive datasets, charts, or reports where visual space is a constraint, but clarity regarding the day is still necessary. It provides an efficient visual summary without contributing unnecessary clutter to the spreadsheet interface.

Conversely, the format code "**dddd**" demands the full, descriptive name of the day of the week. Utilizing this code will yield "Sunday," "Monday," "Tuesday," and so on. This full-name format is typically preferred in formal business documents, detailed management reports, or whenever the audience requires maximum clarity and the explicit avoidance of abbreviations. Choosing the correct format code is essential to ensure that the visual presentation of your extracted data perfectly aligns with the documentation standards of your specific project.

The following illustration provides a practical dataset that we will use to demonstrate both of these powerful conversion techniques in the ensuing examples, allowing us to see the formulas applied to multiple entries simultaneously. This list of dates will serve as our foundation for the practical walkthroughs:

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	<b>Date</b>					
2	12/4/2022					
3	10/14/1995					
4	12/1/1990					
5	12/26/1994					
6	4/15/1978					
7	10/4/1960					
8	8/3/1955					
9	8/12/2021					
10	10/22/2022					
11	2/2/2003					
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
20						
21						

## Step-by-Step Implementation: Abbreviated Weekday Conversion

To begin our practical application, we will focus on converting the list of dates in Column A (starting from cell **A2**) into their abbreviated weekday names, populating the results in Column B. This process explicitly utilizes Formula 1, employing the "ddd" format code within the TEXT function syntax.

We start by selecting cell **B2**, which will be the destination for the first calculated weekday result. Into this cell, we must input the specific formula designed for abbreviation. The formula references the date in **A2** and applies the "ddd" format mask, ensuring the output is a three-letter abbreviation that is easy to read and consume:

To convert the date in cell **A2** to the abbreviated day of the week, we can type the following formula into cell **B2**:

```
=TEXT(A2, "ddd")
```

Once the formula is correctly entered into **B2**, the efficiency of Excel's automated processing comes into play. Instead of manually typing or adjusting the formula for every subsequent row, we simply utilize the fill handle--the small square located at the bottom right corner of the selected cell. By clicking and dragging this fill handle downwards, the formula is automatically copied and adjusted using relative cell referencing across the entire range in Column B:

We can then click and drag this formula down to each remaining cell in column B:

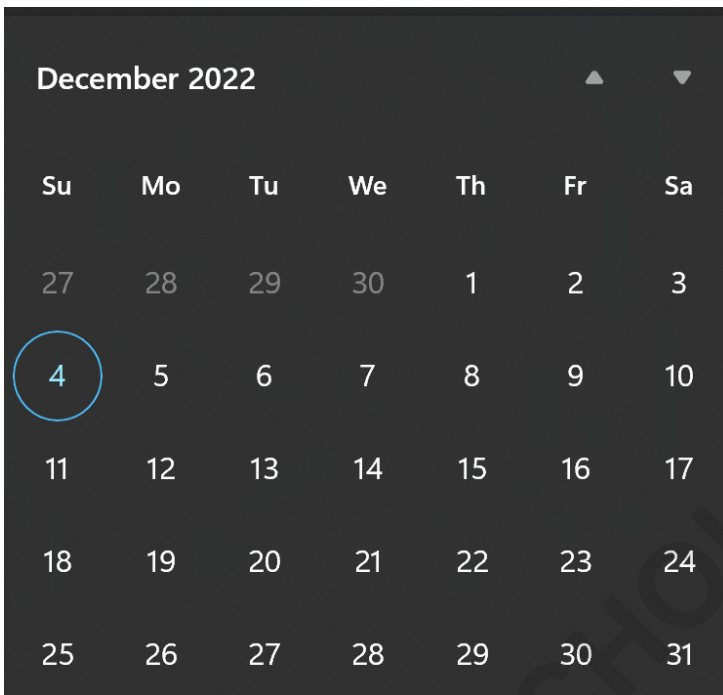
	A	B	C	D	E
1	<b>Date</b>	<b>Day of Week</b>			
2	12/4/2022	Sun			
3	10/14/1995	Sat			
4	12/1/1990	Sat			
5	12/26/1994	Mon			
6	4/15/1978	Sat			
7	10/4/1960	Tue			
8	8/3/1955	Wed			
9	8/12/2021	Thu			
10	10/22/2022	Sat			
11	2/2/2003	Sun			
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					

As depicted in the resultant table above, Column B now accurately displays the abbreviated day of the week for each corresponding date entry found in Column A. This rapid transformation is one of the key benefits of mastering the TEXT function for date manipulation within large or small data sets. It is important to reiterate that the resulting values in Column B are now standard text strings, which impacts how they are handled in subsequent formulas or calculations.

A crucial step in any data validation process is manual verification. We can easily verify that the days of the week are correct by cross-referencing a reliable external calendar source for one or two of the input dates. This validation step reinforces confidence in the formula's integrity and

confirms data accuracy within the spreadsheet environment.

For example, we can check a calendar to confirm that the day of the week for the initial date of **12/4/2022** is indeed a **Sunday**, aligning perfectly with the output generated by our formula in cell B2:



The image shows a calendar for December 2022. The days of the week are abbreviated as Su, Mo, Tu, We, Th, Fr, Sa. The dates are arranged in a grid. The date 4 is circled in blue, indicating it is a Sunday.

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

## Converting Dates to the Full Weekday Name

Following the successful abbreviation conversion, we now demonstrate the equally straightforward process of extracting the full, descriptive name of the day. This requires a minor but significant modification to the formatting argument used in the TEXT function, switching the format mask from "ddd" to "dddd" to request the expanded text string output.

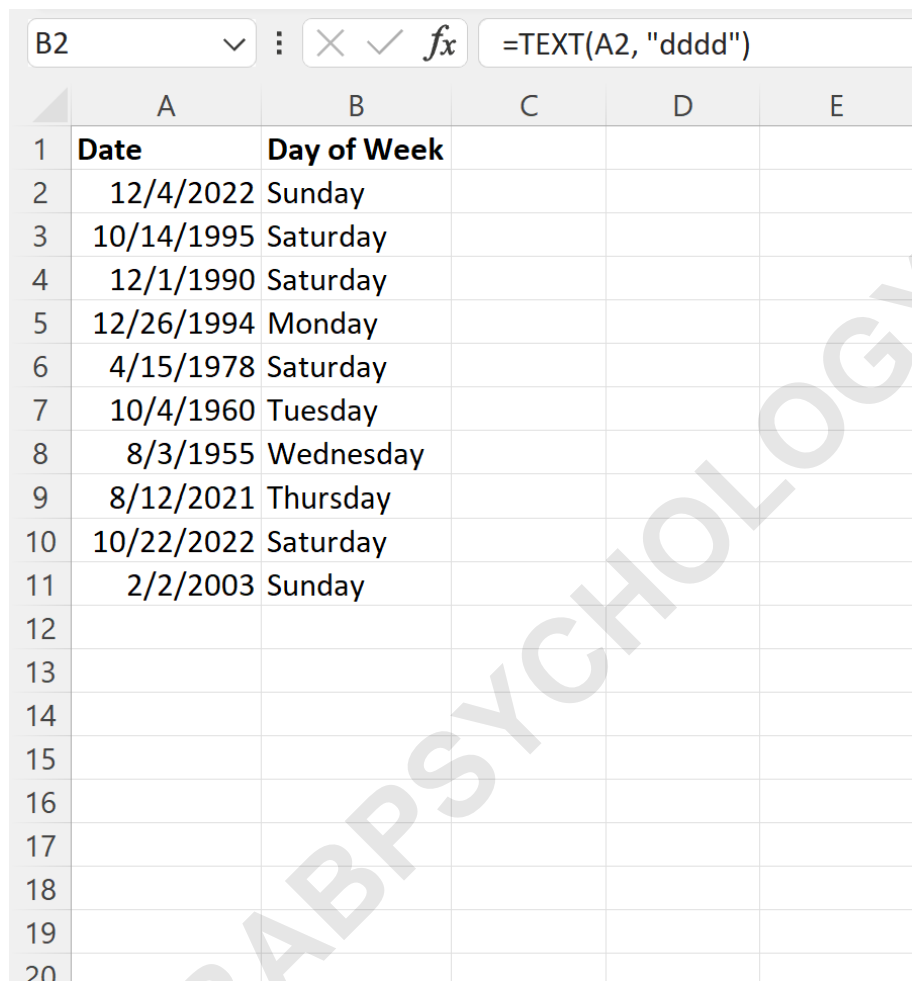
Similar to the previous scenario, we will apply the formula starting in cell **B2**. This time, however, we use Formula 2 to ensure the full name is returned. This conversion is often preferred when the resulting spreadsheet is intended for formal presentation, official reporting, or distribution where abbreviations might introduce ambiguity or be stylistically discouraged.

To convert the date in cell **A2** to the full name of the day of the week, we can type the following formula into cell **B2**:

```
=TEXT(A2, "dddd")
```

Once the formula is correctly entered in the initial cell, the procedure for extending the calculation remains identical. We use the fill handle to drag the formula down the length of the data set in Column B. Microsoft Excel automatically manages the relative reference adjustments, propagating the full-name conversion accurately across all rows containing a date input:

We can then click and drag this formula down to each remaining cell in column B:



The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet with the following data:

	A	B	C	D	E
1	<b>Date</b>	<b>Day of Week</b>			
2	12/4/2022	Sunday			
3	10/14/1995	Saturday			
4	12/1/1990	Saturday			
5	12/26/1994	Monday			
6	4/15/1978	Saturday			
7	10/4/1960	Tuesday			
8	8/3/1955	Wednesday			
9	8/12/2021	Thursday			
10	10/22/2022	Saturday			
11	2/2/2003	Sunday			
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					

The final output confirms that Column B now displays the full name of the day of the week for every date present in Column A. This method is exceptionally robust and handles all standard Excel date formats reliably, making it the universally preferred method for textual date conversions that require explicit weekday names.

### Alternative Approach: Formatting Cells Directly

While the TEXT function is excellent for creating a new column of text data derived from dates, there is an alternative method available if your goal is solely to change how an existing date is displayed, without creating a separate column or fundamentally converting the data type to text.

This involves utilizing the cell's inherent Custom Number Formatting feature directly.

If you select the cells containing the original dates (e.g., Column A) and apply a custom format code, the cell will visually display the weekday name while retaining the underlying numerical date value (the serial number). This technique is highly advantageous for data sets intended for pivot tables or further calculations because the cell still technically holds a date, which allows for mathematical operations, unlike the static text output of the TEXT function.

To implement this method, select the range of cells you wish to format, right-click, and choose the "Format Cells" option. Navigate to the "Number" tab, select the "Custom" category, and enter either "ddd" or "dddd" into the Type field provided. Upon clicking OK, the dates will instantly display as weekdays. Critically, if you examine the formula bar for those cells, you will still see the original date, confirming that only the display format has been altered, not the underlying data value.

## Troubleshooting and Localization Considerations

Even with highly efficient functions like TEXT, users occasionally encounter unexpected issues. Understanding the typical pitfalls ensures smoother data processing and reliable results when converting dates to weekdays in Microsoft Excel. Proper troubleshooting often involves checking the input data type.

One of the most frequent issues is the **\*\*Invalid Date Input\*\***. If the cell referenced (e.g., A2) does not contain a valid Excel date serial number--perhaps it is formatted as generic text, or the date structure is ambiguous--the TEXT function will return a **#VALUE!** error or provide an incorrect interpretation. Users must always verify that their source column is correctly recognized by Excel as a numerical date before applying the conversion formula.

Another crucial factor is **\*\*Locale Settings\*\***. The output of the TEXT function (e.g., "Mon" in English vs. "Lun" in Spanish) is dependent on the language settings of the user's operating system and Excel application. While the "ddd" and "dddd" codes themselves are universal format identifiers, the resulting language of the weekday name will adjust according to the local settings. Users preparing reports for international audiences may need to use alternative constructions, such as nested IF or CHOOSE statements combined with the WEEKDAY function, to guarantee a specific language output irrespective of the recipient's local machine configuration.

## Summary of Date Conversion Techniques

In summary, converting a date to a day of the week in Excel is best handled through two primary, highly efficient methods, each serving a distinct purpose:

**Using the TEXT function:** This method creates a new column containing the weekday name as a static text string. This is ideal for final reporting, labeling, and display where no further date calculations are necessary. Use `=TEXT(A2, "ddd")` for abbreviation or `=TEXT(A2, "dddd")` for the full name.

**Applying Custom Number Formatting:** This method alters only the display appearance of the cell, leaving the underlying date serial number intact for calculations. This is the preferred method when the data must remain date-compatible for subsequent analysis or reporting tools.

Both techniques offer clean, professional ways to enhance the readability of your data sets, moving beyond the simple numerical output provided by the WEEKDAY function alone. The choice between them depends entirely on whether your final output requires a text string for display or a numerical date value for ongoing computation.

For related topics and further mastery of Microsoft Excel's powerful date and time manipulation capabilities, please review the following resources:

[How to Convert Date of Birth to Age in Excel](#)

[How to Calculate the Number of Months Between Dates in Excel](#)