

# How can I use the COLUMN function in Excel?

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## RECOMMENDED CITATION

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The COLUMN function in Excel is a useful tool that allows users to retrieve the column number of a specific cell or range. This function can be used in various ways, such as creating dynamic formulas, referencing cells in calculations, and organizing data. To use the COLUMN function, simply input the cell reference or range into the function, and it will return the corresponding column number. This function is particularly helpful for data analysis and organization, as it can save time and eliminate errors. It is a powerful feature that can enhance the efficiency and accuracy of Excel users.

The COLUMN function returns the column number of the given cell reference. For example, the formula **=COLUMN(D10)** returns 4, because column D is the fourth column.

## Syntax

### COLUMN()

The COLUMN function syntax has the following argument:

**reference** Optional. The cell or range of cells for which you want to return the column number.

If the reference argument is omitted or refers to a range of cells, and if the **COLUMN** function is entered as a horizontal array formula, the **COLUMN** function returns the column numbers of reference as a horizontal array.

### Notes:

If you have a current version of [Microsoft 365](#), then you can simply enter the formula in the top-left-cell of the output range, then press **ENTER** to confirm the formula as a dynamic array formula. Otherwise, the formula must be entered as a legacy array formula by first selecting the output range, entering the formula in the top-left-cell of the output range, and then pressing **CTRL+SHIFT+ENTER** to confirm it. Excel inserts curly brackets at the beginning and end of the formula for you. For more information on array formulas, see [Guidelines and examples of array formulas](#).

If the reference argument is a range of cells, and if the **COLUMN** function is not entered as a horizontal array formula, the **COLUMN** function returns the number of the leftmost column.

If the reference argument is omitted, it is assumed to be the reference of the cell in which the **COLUMN function** appears.

The reference argument cannot refer to multiple areas.

## Example

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Formula	=COLUMN()						
2	Output	2						
3	Description	Column in which the formula appears						
4								
5	Formula	=COLUMN(B13)						
6	Output	2						
7	Description	Column number of the reference B13						
8								
9	Formula	=COLUMN(B2:D2)						
10	Output	2	3	4				
11	Description	Column numbers of the cells in the range B2:D2. Note that the output is an array.						
12								