How can I use the DATEDIF function in Excel to calculate the difference between two dates in a specific unit, such as days, months, or years?

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The DATEDIF function in Excel is a useful tool for calculating the difference between two dates in a specific unit, such as days, months, or years. It takes three arguments: the start date, the end date, and the unit of measurement. By using this function, users can easily determine the duration between two dates in a desired unit without having to manually calculate it. This can be especially helpful in financial and project management tasks. To use the DATEDIF function, simply input the appropriate arguments and the result will be displayed. This function is a convenient and efficient way to accurately track time differences in various units within Microsoft Excel.

Calculates the number of days, months, or years between two dates.

Warning: Excel provides the DATEDIF function in order to support older workbooks from Lotus 1-2-3. The DATEDIF function may calculate incorrect results under certain scenarios. Please see the known issues section of this article for further details.

Syntax

DATEDIF(**start_date**,**end_date**,**unit**)

<table>
<tr><th>Argument</th><th>Description</th></tr>
<tr><td>start_date
Required</td><td>A date that represents the first, or starting date of a given period. Dates may be entered as text strings within quotation marks (for example, "2001/1/30"), as serial numbers (for example, 36921, which represents January 30, 2001, if you're using the 1900 date system), or as the results of other formulas or functions (for example, DATEVALUE("2001/1/30")).</td></tr>
<tr><td>end_date
Required</td><td>A date that represents the last, or ending, date of the period.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unit</td><td>The type of information that you want returned, where:
<table>
<tr><th>Unit</th><th>Returns</th></tr>
<tr><td>"Y"</td><td>The number of complete years in the period.</td></tr>
<tr><td>"M"</td><td>The number of complete months in the period.</td></tr>
<tr><td>"D"</td><td>The number of days in the period.</td></tr>
<tr><td>"MD"</td><td>The difference between the days in start_date and end_date. The months and years of the dates are ignored.
Important: We don't recommend using the "MD" argument, as there are known limitations with it. See the known issues section below.</td></tr>
<tr><td>"YM"</td><td>The difference between the months in start_date and end_date. The days and years of the dates are ignored</td></tr>
<tr><td>"YD"</td><td>The difference between the days of start_date and end_date. The years of the dates are ignored.</td></tr>
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</td></tr>
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Remarks

Dates are stored as sequential serial numbers so they can be used in calculations. By default, January 1, 1900 is serial number 1, and January 1, 2008 is serial number 39448 because it is 39,447 days after January 1, 1900.

The DATEDIF function is useful in formulas where you need to calculate an age.

I?f the **start_date** is greater than the e**nd_date**, the result will be #NUM!.

Examples

Start_date	End_date	Formula	Description (Result)
1/1/2001	1/1/2003	=DATEDIF(Start_date,End_date,"Y")	Two complete years in the period (2)
6/1/2001	8/15/2002	=DATEDIF(Start_date,End_date,"D")	440 days between June 1, 2001, and August 15, 2002 (440)
6/1/2001	8/15/2002	=DATEDIF(Start_date,End_date,"YD")	75 days between June 1 and August 15, ignoring the years of the dates (75)

Need more help?

You can always ask an expert in the Excel Tech Community or get support in Communities.

See Also

Excel functions (alphabetical)

Excel functions (by category)

How to avoid broken formulas