

How to Easily Filter Multiple Columns in Google Sheets

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Google Sheets is a powerful tool for modern data analysis, offering flexible ways to manipulate and visualize information. One of the most essential tasks in working with large datasets is filtering, which allows users to quickly isolate and examine subsets of data based on specific criteria. While standard filtering works well for single columns, mastering the ability to filter based on rules spanning multiple columns is critical for complex decision-making.

Traditional filtering methods often limit users to selecting predefined values within a single column, or applying simple logical operations sequentially. However, to handle nuanced business requirements--such as finding products sold in the "East" region OR having a sales total above \$5,000--a more sophisticated approach is required. This is where the advanced functionality of Google Sheets, utilizing custom formulas within the filter condition dialogue, becomes indispensable.

This guide details the expert method for setting up and executing complex, multi-column filters using logical functions like OR and AND. By employing these techniques, analysts can move beyond simple sorting and gain profound insights into their data, filtering for specific ranges, keywords, phrases, or conditions across an entire dataset simultaneously.

Prerequisite: Preparing Your Data for Analysis

Before applying any advanced filtering techniques, ensuring your data is structured correctly is paramount. The data should be organized in a clean table format, where the first row contains clear, descriptive headers. These headers define the context of each column (e.g., Region, Product, Sales), which is crucial for building accurate filtering logic. If your data lacks consistent structure or contains merged cells, the filtering mechanism may not function as intended.

For our detailed example demonstrating multi-column filtering, we will use a hypothetical dataset illustrating the sales performance of various products across different regions. This dataset is concise yet complex enough to require advanced criteria application.

Let's enter the following sample data, which tracks the total sales volume for specific products across defined geographical regions for a company. Note the clean arrangement with headers in Row 1.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Region	Product	Revenue		
2	East	A	10		
3	East	A	6		
4	East	B	8		
5	East	C	14		
6	West	A	10		
7	West	B	19		
8	West	B	22		
9	West	C	14		
10	North	A	18		
11	North	B	8		
12	North	C	4		
13	North	C	7		
14	South	A	7		
15	South	B	11		
16	South	B	13		
17	South	C	8		
18					
19					
20					
21					

Initiating the Filter Process

To begin filtering, the primary step is activating the filtering capability across your dataset. This is universally achieved by selecting a cell within the data range--typically cell **A1**, which is the top-left corner of the data table--and then accessing the main toolbar. This action establishes the boundaries of the data that the filter will govern.

Once your initial cell is selected, navigate to the **Data** tab located in the Google Sheets menu bar. Within this menu, select the option labeled **Create a filter**. This action instantly places filter icons next to each column header, signifying that the dataset is now filter-ready.

The application of the standard filter feature sets the stage for utilizing the more powerful Custom formula option, which is the gateway to combining criteria from multiple columns. The visual representation below confirms the proper initiation of the filter tool on our sample data.

The screenshot shows the Google Sheets interface with the 'Data' menu open. The spreadsheet contains the following data:

	A	B	
1	Region	Product	Revenue
2	East	A	
3	East	A	
4	East	B	
5	East	C	
6	West	A	
7	West	B	
8	West	B	
9	West	C	
10	North	A	
11	North	B	
12	North	C	
13	North	C	
14	South	A	
15	South	B	
16	South	B	
17	South	C	
18			

The 'Data' menu is open, showing options such as 'Sort sheet by column A, A → Z', 'Sort sheet by column A, Z → A', 'Sort range', 'Create a filter', 'Filter views', 'Slicer', 'Data validation', 'Pivot table', 'Randomize range', 'Named ranges', 'Protected sheets and ranges', 'Cleanup suggestions', and 'Column stats'. The 'Create a filter' option is highlighted.

Applying the Logical OR Condition: Finding Flexible Matches

The core challenge in multi-column filtering arises when you need to view rows that satisfy one condition OR another condition, regardless of which column the condition applies to. For instance, we might seek all records where the **Region** is "East" or where the **Product** is "A." This flexible matching is achieved using the logical OR function within a custom filter formula.

The OR function is designed to return a result of TRUE if any single condition it evaluates is met. In the context of filtering, if the formula evaluates to TRUE for a given row, that row is displayed; otherwise, it is hidden. This makes the OR function ideal for generating inclusive lists that combine different subsets of data based on varying column attributes.

To implement this, you do not apply the formula to both columns individually. Instead, you select the filter icon for the primary column (in this case, **Region**) and then choose the "Filter by condition" option. This directs Google Sheets to evaluate a single, comprehensive formula against the entire dataset for every row.

Step-by-Step Implementation of the OR Formula

To configure the OR filter, click the Filter icon next to the **Region** column header. In the filter menu that appears, navigate to **Filter by condition**. Crucially, in the subsequent dropdown menu, you must bypass the standard conditions (like "text contains" or "is equal to") and scroll down to select the ultimate flexibility option: **Custom formula is**.

Within the input field provided for the custom formula, you will define the combined criteria. The formula must use absolute column references (e.g., A:A for the entire Region column, B:B for the entire Product column) and must evaluate to a boolean (TRUE or FALSE) result. For our specific requirement--Region is "East" OR Product is "A"--the formula structure is defined as follows:

=OR(A:A="East", B:B="A")

It is important to understand the syntax: the formula starts with the equals sign, followed by the logical function **OR**. Inside the parentheses, we list the conditions, separated by a comma. The first condition checks if any cell in column A equals "East"; the second checks if any cell in column B equals "A." The filter applies this logic across all rows.

Once you enter the formula and click **OK**, the data is instantly filtered. The resulting table displays every row that satisfies either the regional criterion or the product criterion. This demonstrates how a single Custom formula applied to one column's filter menu can effectively control the visibility of data across the entire sheet based on multiple column values.

	A	B	C	D
1	Region	Product	Revenue	
2	East			
3	East			
4	East			
5	East			
6	West			
7	West			
8	West			
9	West			
10	North			
11	North			
12	North			
13	North			
14	South			
15	South			
16	South			
17	South			
18				

Filter menu for Column A (Region):

- Sort A → Z
- Sort Z → A
- Sort by color
- Filter by color
- Filter by condition
 - Custom formula is: `=OR(A:A="East", B:B="A")`
- Filter by values
- [Select all](#) - [Clear](#)

The filtered output clearly shows rows where Column A is "East" (even if Product is not "A") and rows where Column B is "A" (even if Region is not "East"). This confirms the successful application of the inclusive OR logic.

	A	B	C	D	
1	Region ▼	Product ▾	Revenue ▾		
2	East	A	10		
3	East	A	6		
4	East	B	8		
5	East	C	14		
6	West	A	10		
10	North	A	18		
14	South	A	7		
18					
19					
20					
21					
22					
23					

Applying the Logical AND Condition: Ensuring Strict Criteria

In contrast to the inclusive nature of the OR function, data analysis often requires strict, simultaneous matching across multiple fields. This scenario demands the use of the logical AND function. The AND function mandates that a row must satisfy all specified conditions concurrently in order for that row to be displayed. If even one condition fails, the entire row is hidden.

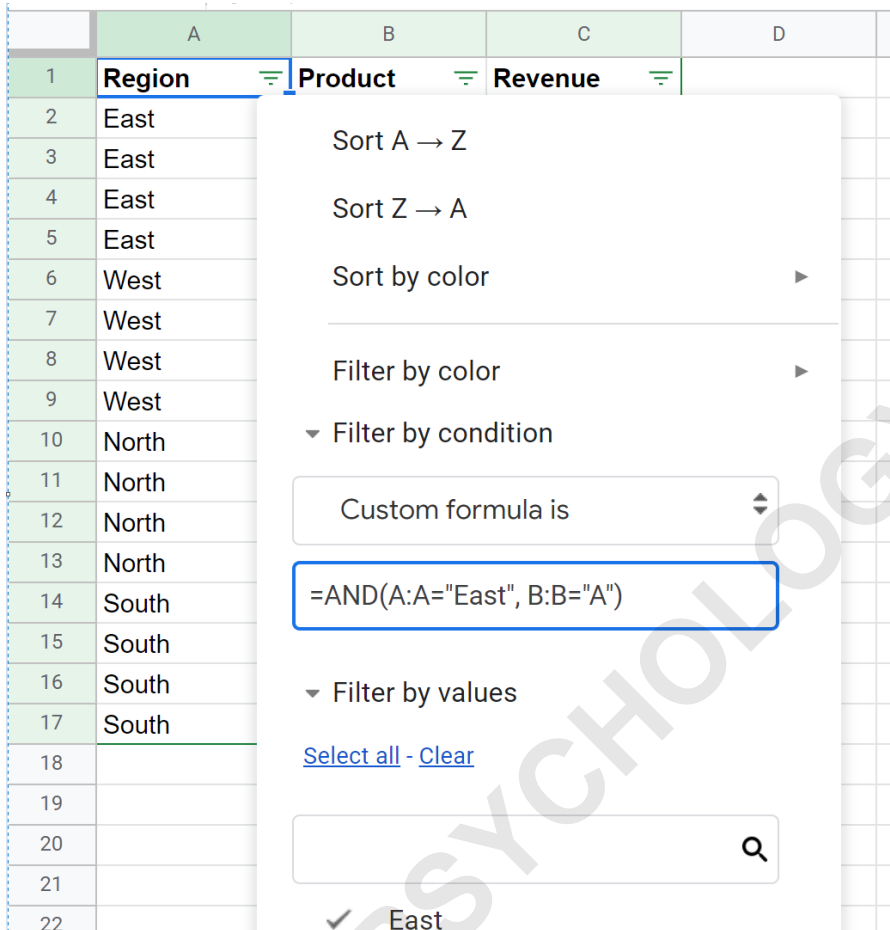
For example, if the business goal shifts from finding products in "East" OR product "A" to finding only records that are in the "East" region AND are specifically Product "A," the AND function provides the precision necessary for this targeted inquiry. This is extremely useful for generating highly specific reports, such as inventory counts of a specific product type in a dedicated geographic area.

The setup process mirrors that of the OR function: navigate to the filter icon of your primary column (Region), select **Filter by condition**, and choose **Custom formula is**. The only difference lies in substituting the logical operator.

To apply a filter where the Region is "East" **and** the Product is "A," you replace the OR function with the AND function, maintaining the identical column references and criteria structure. The resulting formula is concise and highly restrictive:

=AND(A:A="East", B:B="A")

When this formula is executed, the filter processes each row, ensuring that the value in Column A is exactly "East" AND simultaneously the value in Column B is exactly "A." Only rows that satisfy both criteria completely are returned in the filtered view.



The screenshot shows a Google Sheet with columns A, B, C, and D. Column A is labeled 'Region' and contains values: East, East, East, East, West, West, West, West, North, North, North, North, South, South, South, South. Column B is labeled 'Product' and contains values: Sort A → Z, Sort Z → A, Sort by color, Filter by color, Filter by condition, Custom formula is, Filter by values, Select all - Clear, East. Column C is labeled 'Revenue'. Column D is empty. A filter menu is open over column A, showing the custom formula `=AND(A:A="East", B:B="A")` selected.

	A	B	C	D
1	Region	Product	Revenue	
2	East	Sort A → Z		
3	East	Sort Z → A		
4	East	Sort by color		
5	East	Filter by color		
6	West	Filter by condition		
7	West	Custom formula is		
8	West	=AND(A:A="East", B:B="A")		
9	West	Filter by values		
10	North	Select all - Clear		
11	North			
12	North			
13	North			
14	South			
15	South			
16	South			
17	South			
18				
19				
20				
21				
22				

The resulting data will contain significantly fewer rows than the OR filter, as it strictly enforces the simultaneous fulfillment of both conditions. This demonstrates the power of the AND function in narrowing down large datasets to isolate only the most relevant, intersecting records, which is a staple technique in detailed data analysis.

	A	B	C	D
1	Region	Product	Revenue	
2	East	A	10	
3	East	A	6	
18				
19				
20				
21				
22				
23				
24				
25				
26				
27				
28				
29				
30				

Advanced Custom Formula Syntax and Best Practices

The real strength of using the **Custom formula is** option lies in its ability to combine logical functions and incorporate other standard [Google Sheets](#) functions, allowing for filtering based on numerical ranges, dates, or calculations. Understanding key syntactical rules is essential for avoiding errors.

Use Absolute References: Always reference the entire column (e.g., `A:A` or `C:C`) rather than a specific cell range (e.g., `A1:A10`). The filter logic inherently applies the formula row-by-row across the entire defined dataset.

Boolean Output is Mandatory: The custom formula must ultimately evaluate to either **TRUE** or **FALSE**. Functions like `IF`, `OR`, `AND`, and comparison operators (`=`, `>`, `<`) naturally yield boolean results, making them ideal for filtering.

Handling Text and Numbers: Text criteria (like "East" or "A") must be enclosed in double quotes. Numerical criteria (like `>1000`) should not be quoted.

Furthermore, these logical operators can be nested to create even more complex criteria. For example, to find all sales where the Region is "West" AND (the Product is "A" OR the Sales value is greater than 1000), you would construct the formula as: `=AND(A:A="West", OR(B:B="A", C:C>1000))`. This demonstrates how nested logic can pinpoint specific data points that satisfy highly granular conditions across three or more columns.

Expanding Filtering Beyond Basic Text Matches

The custom filter capability extends far beyond simple equality checks. It allows for filtering based on comparative metrics, making it possible to address complex business queries like isolating high-value transactions or analyzing date ranges.

Numerical Range Filtering: To filter for sales figures (Column D) between 500 and 1500, you would use: `=AND(D:D>=500, D:D<=1500)`. This powerful combination of the AND function and comparison operators is the standard method for establishing lower and upper bounds.

Exclusionary Filtering: To display all rows EXCEPT those in the "North" region, you would use the standard filter method for simple exclusion, or the Custom formula: `=NOT(A:A="North")`.

Filtering by Date: Date-based filtering often uses functions like `TODAY()` or `DATE()`. For instance, to view records from the last 30 days, the formula might be: `=A:A > (TODAY()-30)`, assuming Column A contains the transaction date.

Mastering these custom formulas ensures that Google Sheets users can transform static data tables into dynamic, query-driven analytical tools, facilitating faster and more accurate reporting across any number of columns.