

How to Easily Find the First Day of Any Month in Google Sheets

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Welcome to this comprehensive guide on manipulating dates within [Google Sheets](#). Extracting specific date components, such as the first day of a month, is a common requirement in financial modeling, scheduling, and data analysis. While there isn't a single dedicated function to perform this action directly, [Google Sheets](#) provides powerful built-in functions that, when combined, offer elegant and effective solutions. This article explores two primary methods for calculating the first day of the month based on any given date.

Understanding how dates are handled in spreadsheet software is crucial. Dates in Google Sheets are stored as sequential [serial numbers](#), where January 1, 1900, is represented by the number 1. When we manipulate dates using arithmetic operations, we are essentially adding or subtracting these numerical values. For instance, subtracting the day number from a date allows us to rewind to the end of the previous month, and adding 1 then advances us precisely to the first day of the current month.

We will delve into the mechanics of both the [DAY function](#) and the [EOMONTH function](#), providing step-by-step instructions and practical examples using sample datasets. Both approaches yield identical results, but offer different logical frameworks, allowing users to choose the [formula](#) that best suits their analytical style and efficiency needs.

Initial Concept: Leveraging EOMONTH for Prior Month Calculation

Before diving into the detailed examples, it is useful to grasp the core logic that the date functions employ. A common technique for isolating the beginning of a period involves first finding the end of the preceding period. The [EOMONTH function](#) (End Of Month) is perfectly designed for this purpose.

The syntax for this powerful function is `=EOMONTH(start_date, months)`. The `months` argument specifies how many months in the future (positive number) or past (negative number) the calculation should look. To find the last day of the month immediately prior to the `start_date`, we use `-1` as the `months` argument.

Therefore, if you want the first day of the current month, you first calculate the last day of the previous month using `EOMONTH(A2, -1)` (assuming A2 holds the date). Once you have the last day of the previous month, simply adding `+1` to the result advances the date to the first day of the desired month. This elegant two-step process forms the basis of one of our main solutions. For instance, the formula `=EOMONTH(TODAY(), -1) + 1` will always return the date of the first day of the previous month, ensuring calculations are dynamically updated relative to the current date.

Summary of Primary Formulas

You can utilize one of the following two robust [formulas](#) to efficiently determine the first day of the

month corresponding to a specific date in Google Sheets. We assume the source date is located in cell **A2** for demonstration purposes.

Formula 1: Utilizing the DAY() Function

=A2-DAY(A2)+1

Formula 2: Utilizing the EOMONTH() Function

=EOMONTH(A2,-1)+1

Both of these streamlined formulas will correctly calculate and return the first day of the month for the date contained in cell **A2**. The following examples will illustrate the practical application of each method using a common dataset.

The subsequent examples show how to implement and apply each solution practically with a common dataset in Google Sheets. Observe the dataset in the image below, which contains various dates in Column A that we will be analyzing.

	A	B	C	D
1	Date	Sales		
2	1/4/2022	22		
3	2/15/2022	31		
4	3/23/2022	14		
5	4/15/2022	15		
6	4/18/2022	15		
7	5/1/2022	17		
8	8/7/2022	22		
9	10/31/2022	25		
10	11/4/2022	24		
11	12/19/2022	40		
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				

Example 1: Getting the First Day of the Month Using the DAY() Function

The first method utilizes the DAY function, a mathematically intuitive approach that capitalizes on how dates are stored as sequential serial numbers. This method requires a strong understanding of date arithmetic within spreadsheet environments. By subtracting the current day number from the full date, we effectively reset the date back to the last day of the previous month.

To implement this, we enter the following precise formula into cell **C2**, targeting the date specified in cell **A2**:

=A2-DAY(A2)+1

Once the formula is entered into **C2**, we can swiftly apply this logic to the entire dataset. Utilizing the fill handle (the small square at the bottom-right corner of the selected cell), we drag the formula down to populate the remaining cells in Column C. This ensures that the calculation is dynamically applied to every date listed in Column A, maintaining data integrity and saving significant manual effort.

C2 ∇ | fx =A2-DAY(A2)+1

	A	B	C	D
1	Date	Sales	First Day of Month	
2	1/4/2022	22	1/1/2022	
3	2/15/2022	31	2/1/2022	
4	3/23/2022	14	3/1/2022	
5	4/15/2022	15	4/1/2022	
6	4/18/2022	15	4/1/2022	
7	5/1/2022	17	5/1/2022	
8	8/7/2022	22	8/1/2022	
9	10/31/2022	25	10/1/2022	
10	11/4/2022	24	11/1/2022	
11	12/19/2022	40	12/1/2022	
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				

As demonstrated by the output image, Column C now accurately displays the corresponding first day of the month for every date present in Column A. This technique is computationally light and highly portable across various spreadsheet applications that use standard date serializations.

Detailed Breakdown of the DAY() Formula Logic

To fully appreciate the elegance of this solution, let us dissect how the components of the DAY function formula interact to achieve the desired result:

The **DAY()** function returns the numerical day component (a number between 1 and 31) from the date provided in cell A2. For example, if A2 is 'October 15, 2023', `DAY(A2)` returns 15.

The subtraction operation `A2 - DAY(A2)` then uses date arithmetic. Since dates are numerical sequences, subtracting the day number from the full date effectively moves the date back by that exact number of days. If today is the 15th, subtracting 15 returns you to the last day of the previous month (September 30, 2023, in this case).

Finally, the addition of `+1` increments the resulting date by exactly one day. Following the previous step, which landed on the last day of the previous month, adding 1 immediately yields the first day

of the current month (October 1, 2023). This provides a reliable and straightforward method regardless of month length (28, 29, 30, or 31 days).

This sequence (Date - Day Number + 1) is a fundamental technique for beginning-of-period calculations in spreadsheet software. It is favored by many analysts for its clarity and reliance solely on basic arithmetic and the core DAY function, minimizing dependency on more complex date-specific functions.

Example 2: Getting the First Day of the Month Using the EOMONTH() Function

The second powerful technique employs the EOMONTH function (End Of Month). This function is specifically designed to calculate the last day of a month, making it an excellent tool for date shifting and period boundary identification. Unlike the arithmetic approach of the DAY function, the EOMONTH method handles month and year rollovers internally, often making the logic seem slightly more direct for date manipulation tasks.

The formula structure for this method is entered into cell **C2**, again referencing the source date in **A2**:

=EOMONTH(A2,-1)+1

After entering the formula into the first cell (C2), we repeat the process of dragging and filling the formula down Column C to process the entire list of dates in Column A. This action automatically adjusts the cell references (from A2 to A3, A4, and so on) ensuring that each output cell calculates the first day of the month accurately for its corresponding input date.

C2 ▾ | **fx** =EOMONTH(A2, -1)+1

	A	B	C	D
1	Date	Sales	First Day of Month	
2	1/4/2022	22	1/1/2022	
3	2/15/2022	31	2/1/2022	
4	3/23/2022	14	3/1/2022	
5	4/15/2022	15	4/1/2022	
6	4/18/2022	15	4/1/2022	
7	5/1/2022	17	5/1/2022	
8	8/7/2022	22	8/1/2022	
9	10/31/2022	25	10/1/2022	
10	11/4/2022	24	11/1/2022	
11	12/19/2022	40	12/1/2022	
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Column C now displays the first day of the month for each date in Column A, confirming the validity and reliability of this method. This technique is a powerful alternative for date boundary calculations in [Google Sheets](#).

Detailed Breakdown of the EOMONTH() Formula Logic

The [EOMONTH function](#) streamlines the process of finding period boundaries. Here is the step-by-step interpretation of the formula `=EOMONTH(A2, -1)+1`:

The core component is `EOMONTH(A2, -1)`. The `-1` argument instructs the function to look one month prior to the date in A2. Critically, the EOMONTH function always returns the last day of the specified month. If A2 holds 'October 15, 2023', this part of the formula returns the last day of September 2023 (September 30, 2023).

The external addition operation `+1` then increments this resulting date [serial number](#) by one unit. Since the EOMONTH function reliably landed us on the final day of the previous month, adding one day ensures we land precisely on the first day of the current month (October 1, 2023).

This method is particularly valuable when working with relative dates or performing calculations

involving future periods, as the `months` argument can be easily adjusted. For instance, finding the first day of the month three months from now would simply require changing `-1` to `2` (`EOMONTH(A2, 2) + 1`).

The robust nature of the EOMONTH function makes it a favorite for complex financial and calendar reporting tasks where precise handling of month ends and year boundaries is mandatory.

Comparative Analysis: DAY() vs. EOMONTH()

While both the DAY function and the EOMONTH function provide identical results for finding the first day of the month, their internal mechanisms and suitability for different contexts vary slightly. Choosing the right method often depends on user preference and the complexity of the surrounding worksheet logic.

The **DAY() method** (`A2 - DAY(A2) + 1`) relies purely on arithmetic manipulation of the date serial number. It is extremely fast and efficient. Users who prefer to see the direct mathematical relationship between the date components often favor this approach. It is also often perceived as more universal since the concept of subtracting the current day number is common across many database and spreadsheet platforms.

The **EOMONTH() method** (`EOMONTH(A2, -1) + 1`) is arguably more descriptive of its intent, focusing on month-end calculation rather than day-level subtraction. This method is often preferred when the calculation might involve shifting the date forward or backward across many months, as the `months` argument in EOMONTH provides immediate scalability. If you later needed to find the first day of the month three months from now, adjusting `-1` to `2` (`EOMONTH(A2, 2) + 1`) is highly intuitive.

In summary, use the **DAY() method** for speed and arithmetic simplicity, and use the **EOMONTH() method** for better readability, scalability in multi-month calculations, and when dealing with other date period functions in Google Sheets. Both are fully supported and valid solutions for accurate date handling.

Conclusion and Resources

Mastering date manipulation in Google Sheets significantly enhances your data analysis capabilities. By employing either the arithmetic precision of the DAY function or the structured period handling of the EOMONTH function, users can reliably extract the first day of the month from any given date. These techniques are foundational for creating dynamic reports, aging analyses, and fiscal calendar calculations.

Ensure that when implementing these solutions, the cells displaying the output (Column C in our

examples) are correctly formatted as dates. If the output appears as a large integer, it means the cell is displaying the raw date serial number rather than the human-readable date format. Simply select the cells, navigate to Format > Number > Date, to correct this display issue.

For further reading and comprehensive guidance on the functions discussed, please refer to the official documentation provided by Google.

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