

How to Find the Most Frequent Value in Google Sheets

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The Most Frequent Value in Google Sheets, often referred to as the statistical Mode, represents the data point or value that appears with the highest regularity within a specified range. Identifying this value is a fundamental aspect of primary Data Analysis and descriptive statistics, allowing users to quickly summarize large datasets and uncover crucial patterns or common trends. Unlike the mean (average) or median (middle value), the mode focuses purely on frequency of occurrence. While Google Sheets offers dedicated functions to calculate the mode for numerical data, determining the most frequent text string requires a more sophisticated combination of functions, utilizing powerful array processing techniques.

Understanding how to efficiently calculate the mode is vital for tasks ranging from inventory analysis--determining the most commonly sold item--to academic research--identifying the most frequent response in a survey. This guide provides a comprehensive breakdown of the necessary formulas for both numeric and text data, ensuring clean and accurate results even when dealing with scenarios involving multiple tied modes.

Core Functions for Frequency Analysis in Google Sheets

To successfully identify the most frequently occurring value across various data types in your spreadsheet, you must employ specialized functions. For numerical data, Google Sheets provides the robust **MODE.MULT** function. This function is essential because standard `MODE` only returns a single result, even if multiple values share the highest frequency. **MODE.MULT**, conversely, is designed to spill the entire list of most frequent values when entered into a single cell, thereby handling ties gracefully.

However, spreadsheet functions like **MODE.MULT** are inherently designed to operate on numeric inputs. Therefore, when attempting to find the most frequent string (text), a composite approach is required. This powerful methodology combines functions like INDEX, MATCH, and **MODE.MULT** into a single array formula. This technique effectively converts the text values into numerical positional references, allowing **MODE.MULT** to calculate the most common position index, which is then translated back into the original text string using the **INDEX** function.

The following two methods illustrate the specific formulas required to handle both numerical and text data ranges:

Method 1: Find Most Frequently Occurring Number

```
=MODE.MULT(A2:A11)
```

Method 2: Find Most Frequently Occurring Text

```
=INDEX(A2:A11,MODE.MULT(MATCH(A2:A11,A2:A11,0)))
```

It is critical to note that both of these methods rely on the versatility of the **MODE.MULT** function, which is capable of returning an array of results. This capability ensures that if there are multiple values that share the maximum frequency count--meaning the data is multimodal--the formula will correctly identify and display all of them, preventing misinterpretation of the [Data Analysis](#).

Method 1: Finding the Most Frequent Numeric Value

When working exclusively with numerical data, such as sales figures, test scores, or quantities, the process of finding the mode is straightforward thanks to the specialized statistical functions provided by Google Sheets. The use of **MODE.MULT** is highly recommended over the deprecated or single-result versions of the mode function (like `MODE`` or `MODE.SNGL``). **MODE.MULT** is designed to handle modern spreadsheet needs, particularly those involving multimodal distributions where identifying all modes is crucial for accurate statistical description.

To use this method, you simply define the range containing your numerical inputs. For example, if your numbers are located in the range A2 through A11, you input the concise formula shown previously. When you execute this formula in an empty cell, Google Sheets automatically identifies the highest frequency count and returns all associated numbers. If only one number holds the highest frequency, only that single value is returned. If, however, two or more numbers tie for the highest frequency, the results will "spill" down into consecutive cells below the initial formula cell, displaying every value that qualifies as a mode.

This simplicity makes **MODE.MULT** the authoritative solution for rapid numerical frequency identification in large datasets. It prevents the need for manual counting or complex workarounds involving `COUNTIF` and large array comparisons, streamlining the [Data Analysis](#) workflow significantly.

Detailed Example: Applying MODE.MULT to Numeric Data

Consider a scenario where we are tracking the number of customer inquiries received daily over a 10-day period. Suppose we have the following list of numbers in [Google Sheets](#), located in the range A2:A11:

	A	B	C	D
1	Numbers			
2	1			
3	2			
4	4			
5	4			
6	5			
7	8			
8	10			
9	12			
10	12			
11	15			
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				

Our objective is to determine which number of inquiries occurred most often during this period. We utilize the function specifically designed for multiple numeric modes:

=MODE.MULT(A2:A11)

The successful implementation of this formula is visualized in the following screenshot, demonstrating its practical application within the spreadsheet environment. Note that the formula is entered once (in cell B2 in this typical setup), and the results populate the subsequent cells as needed:

C2 ∇ | fx =MODE.MULT(A2:A11)

	A	B	C	D
1	Numbers		Most Frequent Number	
2	1		4	
3	2		12	
4	4			
5	4			
6	5			
7	8			
8	10			
9	12			
10	12			
11	15			
12				
13				
14				
15				

Upon execution, the formula returns two distinct numbers: **4** and **12**. This indicates that both 4 inquiries and 12 inquiries occurred with the exact same maximum frequency, which is 3 times each. These are the two numbers that occur most frequently in the specified range **A2:A11**. This outcome confirms the dataset is bimodal, and **MODE.MULT** correctly provides a comprehensive result set, enhancing the accuracy of the descriptive statistics derived from the data.

Method 2: Finding the Most Frequent Text Value

Finding the mode for categorical data, or text strings, presents a challenge because statistical functions like **MODE.MULT** are not natively designed to process non-numeric inputs. To overcome this limitation, we employ a sophisticated array formula that leverages three key functions--**MATCH**, **MODE.MULT**, and **INDEX**--to translate text frequency into a numerical problem.

The crucial steps involve first converting the text strings into numerical positions using the **MATCH** function. **MATCH** is used to find the relative position of each text item within the list, generating an array of indices. Since identical text strings will return the exact same index number, this creates a numerical array where the frequency of the index number corresponds directly to the frequency of the text string. This resulting numerical array is then fed into **MODE.MULT**, which calculates the most frequent index (position). Finally, the **INDEX** function uses this most frequent position number to retrieve the actual text string from the original data range. This composite formula acts as a powerful workaround, enabling true text-based mode calculation in [Google Sheets](#).

Detailed Example: Applying the Array Formula to Text Data

Imagine we are analyzing a list of team names, attempting to find which team name appears most often--perhaps indicating the highest volume of transactions or mentions. Consider the following list of text strings in the range A2:A11:

	A	B	C	
1	Teams			
2	Mavs			
3	Warriors			
4	Mavs			
5	Hawks			
6	Nets			
7	Spurs			
8	Mavs			
9	Celtics			
10	Knicks			
11	Spurs			
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				

We need to apply the specialized array formula to find the most frequently occurring team name in this list:

=INDEX(A2:A11,MODE.MULT(MATCH(A2:A11,A2:A11,0)))

The screenshot below demonstrates the output after entering this formula. Like the numeric example, this formula is entered into one cell (e.g., B2) and automatically spills the results into adjacent cells if multiple text strings tie for the highest frequency:

	A	B	C	D
1	Teams		Most Frequent Name	
2	Mavs		Mavs	
3	Warriors			
4	Mavs			
5	Hawks			
6	Nets			
7	Spurs			
8	Mavs			
9	Celtics			
10	Knicks			
11	Spurs			
12				
13				
14				
15				

The formula successfully returns the text value **Mavs**. This confirms that 'Mavs' is the text string that occurs most frequently within the specified list. If 'Knicks' or any other team name had occurred with the same maximum frequency, the formula would have returned both names, displaying them vertically in the results column. This comprehensive handling of ties is what makes this array formula superior for complex categorical [Data Analysis](#).

Deconstructing the Complex Array Formula

Understanding the mechanism behind the text mode formula, `=INDEX(A2:A11,MODE.MULT(MATCH(A2:A11,A2:A11,0)))`, is essential for confident data manipulation. It operates in an array context, processing the entire range simultaneously, rather than cell by cell. The processing occurs from the innermost function outward:

MATCH(A2:A11, A2:A11, 0): This is the core engine for converting text into numbers. The MATCH function looks up every value in the range A2:A11 against the same range. By using 0 for the match type, it enforces an exact match. Crucially, the function returns the row index (position) of the *first* occurrence of each value in the range. For example, if 'Mavs' first appears in A2 (position 1), every subsequent 'Mavs' entry will also return 1. This generates an array of numbers (indices) where the most frequent number index corresponds to the most frequent text value.

MODE.MULT(...): This function receives the array of indices generated by MATCH. It identifies the

index number that appears most frequently. In our example, if the index '1' appeared 4 times, and all other indices appeared 3 times or less, **MODE.MULT** returns the array {1}. If indices '1' and '5' both appeared 4 times, it would return {1; 5}. This result is the numerical position(s) of the mode(s).

INDEX(A2:A11, ...): The outermost **INDEX** function uses the original range A2:A11 and the position index (or array of indices) returned by **MODE.MULT**. It retrieves the actual value located at that determined position, thereby transforming the calculated numeric mode back into the original text string. Since **MODE.MULT** handles multiple results, **INDEX** can also return multiple corresponding text strings, effectively resolving ties in text data.

Advanced Considerations and Alternative Methods

While the **MODE.MULT** and its array counterpart provide the most elegant and efficient solutions for finding the most frequent values, specific scenarios might require alternative approaches or careful management of data types. One crucial consideration is handling empty cells or non-standard values. Both **MODE.MULT** and the **MATCH** function used in the text formula are designed to ignore logical values (TRUE/FALSE) and text when processing numerical data, which typically keeps the calculation clean. However, if the dataset contains errors, the formulas may return an error, requiring wrapper functions like **IFERROR**.

For users who prefer not to use complex array formulas, especially for text data, an alternative involves using the **QUERY** function. The **QUERY** approach groups the data and counts frequencies, then sorts and limits the results to the entry with the highest count. While sometimes more readable for text data, the **QUERY** function can be slower on extremely large datasets and is less versatile in handling immediate ties compared to the spilling behavior of the **MODE.MULT** array formula.

Another related function to be aware of is **FREQUENCY**. The **FREQUENCY** function calculates how often values occur within a range of values, or "bins," and is primarily useful for creating frequency distributions, but it does not directly return the mode itself. For the direct calculation of the mode, the methods utilizing **MODE.MULT** remain the most authoritative and efficient solution in Google Sheets.

Summary of Essential Functions

To summarize, the functionality of finding the mode in Google Sheets is split based on the nature of the data. Mastery of these functions allows for accurate and efficient descriptive statistics:

The following explains how to perform other common tasks in Google Sheets:

MODE.MULT: The definitive function for finding the most frequent number or array of numbers,

capable of handling multimodal datasets by returning multiple values.

INDEX: Used in conjunction with **MODE.MULT** to look up and return the text value corresponding to the most frequent numerical index position.

MATCH: Crucial for text mode calculation, translating each text string into its numerical position relative to the array, thus creating a numerical dataset suitable for frequency analysis.

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