

Excel is the Skill You Need or Need to Improve



It's Time to Improve Your Excel Skills

Excel (or any spreadsheet program, try [OpenOffice](#) if you don't have Excel) should be the go-to tool for any medical practice manager who is tasked with data analysis.

Examples of some of the data you should be analyzing in your practice:

- What are my net collection percentages by payer?
- Am I receiving reimbursement at cost plus for any vaccines and injectables I am supplying to patients?
- Do I know the potential value of a contract offered by a payer or an Independent Physician Association?
- What is the cost of adding a new physician, NP, PA or service line to my practice?

Your practice management system may already crunch numbers for you, but:

1. Is it exactly the information you need?
2. Is it in the format in which you need it?
3. Is all the data I need to analyze found inside the practice management system?

What if you don't trust the information coming from your practice management system? Many managers don't. One of the first rules to data analysis is "Know What You Are Looking At". Are you confident that the data you received is the data you asked for? You may need a conversation with your practice management system support team to be sure you understand where

the system is pulling data from and if it is the date you want.

A clear understanding of how your practice management system filters and reports your data is critical to producing INFORMATION. Data only has the potential to become information when it is accurate and actionable.

How to learn Excel or improve your Excel skills:

If you know only enough Excel to get by, Nate Moore's series on Excel is a great place to start. Because he is in the healthcare field, his examples make sense. His videos (new ones regularly) are free [here](#).

I first wrote about Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) back in 2013 [here](#) and the list of offerings just keeps growing. Coursera offers buckets of **free** courses, including courses on Excel like these:

- Microsoft: [Microsoft office Fundamentals: Outlook, Word and Excel](#)
- PricewaterhouseCoopers Accounting Firm: [Problem Solving With Excel](#)
- Rice University: [Introduction to Data Analysis Using Excel](#)

For those of you that have the basics of Excel under your belt, proceed to learning about **Pivot Tables**. They will become your new best friend.

Big list of all kinds of free courses [here](#).

Monday Special: A Resource for Increasing Everyone's Basic Computer Knowledge

☒ Have you ever discovered a new software shortcut you can use that improves your efficiency? Or someone is working with you and shows you a faster way to do something? What a great moment and a great feeling of success that is – it's almost like winning a prize!

Sometimes I'll be working with Excel and just KNOW there's an easier way to do something, but don't have the time, the energy, or the patience to find out what it is. Not that going to Help is that hard or time-consuming, but it's a mindset that I will find out some other time how to do it faster. That "other time" never comes.

We're getting ready to have Brown Bag Training classes (30 minutes, during lunch, staff bring their lunch, not mandatory) at my practice to bring staff up to speed on some basics. I'm sure we'll give them some great tips, and I'm sure we'll learn a lot too. The point is to get everyone together and build our group knowledge by sharing what everyone knows.

In preparing our handouts for the classes, we'll use the [great article by David Pogue](#), a tech writer for the NY Times. The article has 1228 comments full of tips from readers! Here a few to whet your appetite:

- 1. You can enlarge the text on almost any Web page. In Windows, press Ctrl and the plus or minus keys (for bigger or smaller fonts); on the Mac, it's the Command key and plus or minus.*
- 2. Instead of the painstaking task of highlighting a whole document or web page with the mouse cursor, hit Control*

+ A to select all.

3. You can tap the Space bar to scroll down on a Web page one screenful. Add the Shift key to scroll back up.
4. If you are having a problem in Windows and need to ask somebody for advice, try this: in Windows, use the Print-Screen button on your keyboard to take a picture of what's on your computer screen. You can then paste that (CTRL-V) into a Microsoft Word document. Double click on it in Word and you will get options to crop it and resize it. Then email it. Showing somebody the problem you are having is a lot easier than trying to describe it.

What's your favorite tip or trick?

Grownup Back to School: Make Fall a Time to Reorganize Your Virtual Backpack and Pencilbox

[LifeHacker](#) had a [great post](#) today that I thought was worth sharing. It's about using the change of seasons as a catalyst to get yourself reconoitered and back on track. The article advises you to:

- De-clutter your computer
- Empty your Inbox – he uses the trusted trio of *Followup*, *Archive* and *Hold*. I like *Followup*, and *Do Not Delete* and *Archive*.

- Reorganize your paper filing cabinet
- Teach yourself keyboard shortcuts (*My son taught me Ctrl+C (copy) and Ctrl+V (paste) not too long ago and I have no idea how I ever did anything without these two friends – try them instead of using right click or tool bar icons and you might be surprised how automatic it becomes and how fast it is)
- Consolidate your email addresses, phone numbers, and calendars

Here are my additions to the list:

- Learn three things about Excel that you continue to do the long/hard way because you're too busy to learn the shortcut (yes, I'm talking to myself here.) Try [this site](#), [or this one](#).
- Catch up on your shredding (at home I have a box of to-do shredding, and a to-be shredded drawer that needs emptied – yes, I'm talking to myself again.)
- Reorganize your online filing cabinet – [here's a great beginner article about files and folders](#), and here's a short video tutorial from Expert Village on [organizing files in Windows](#).
- Delete unneeded email or understand archiving – here's a [website](#) with information on using AutoArchive in Outlook (me again.)

What's your secret weapon to getting/staying organized and ahead of the information deluge?