You can COUNT on Excel

By Marie Herman CAP-OM, ACS

There are many occasions where it is helpful to count items in Excel. Sometimes you just want to know how many cells have something in them, no matter what that something is. Other times, you want to know how many cells DON'T have something in them. Still other times you might want to count only cells that include some specific text. Maybe you want to count certain cells where other cells in the same row meet certain criteria. Fortunately, Excel has many ways to help you to count data. Let's take a look at a few of the options available to you and how they differ from each other. These functions are available in all versions since Office 2007. ▸▸

For the following examples, I will use this data:

	A	B	C
1	Owner	Description	Order
2	Mary	apple	$25.50
3	Joe	orange	$51.00
4	Bill	lemon	$22.63
5	Mary	lime	$43.87
6	Sue	watermelon	$35.65
7	Jean	lime	$27.09

COUNT

The function COUNT counts the number of selected cells that contain numbers and only numbers. If you have text in a field, it will not be counted by the COUNT formula. The format is =COUNT(range), so to count number of orders, the formula would be =COUNT(C2:C7) and the result would be 6.

COUNTIF

The function COUNTIF counts the contents

of a cell if it matches what you specify. Format is =COUNTIF(range,criteria). If you wanted to know the number of orders where Mary is the owner, the function would be =COUNTIF(A2:A7,"Mary"). Note that the criteria must be in double quotes. The answer would be 2.

The COUNTIF function can be used with math formulas. Here is a summary of what we might do related to the orders column of our data:

You can use the COUNTIF function in combination to find ranges of numbers. For example, if you wanted to count the number of orders that were between $25 and $30, you could use this formula: =COUNTIF(C2:C7,">=25")-COUNTIF(C2:C7,"<=30"). What that breaks down to is count all entries in the orders column that are greater than or equal to $25.

Then subtract the number of entries that are higher than $30. The result is the number of entries between $25 and $30.
The COUNTIF function also allows you to search for a partial match within a cell. For example, I could search for the letters "me" in the cells of our example. The formula to find those letters in the description field would be =COUNTIF(B2:B7, "*me*"). The asterisk replaces any number of characters. If you just wanted to replace one character, you would use a question mark.
The answer in this case would be 3, as Excel would find the "me" in the cells that say lime and watermelon. I put the asterisk in twice – before and after the "me". That's so that it wouldn't matter if there was text before or after the letters I was

Criteria	Formula	What It Does
Count if greater than	**=COUNTIF(C2:C7,">25")**	**Count the cells that have a value greater than 25.**
Count if less than	**=COUNTIF(C2:C7,"<25")**	**Count the cells that have a values less than 25.**
Count if equal to	**=COUNTIF(C2:C7,"=25")**	**Count the cells that have a value equal to 25.**
Count if not equal to	**=COUNTIF(C2:C7,"<>25")**	**Count the cells where the value is not equal to 25.**
Count if greater than or equal to	**=COUNTIF(C2:C7,">=25")**	**Count the cells that have a value greater than or equal to 25.**
Count if less than or equal to	**=COUNTIF(C2:C7,"<=5")**	**Count the cells that have a value less than or equal to 25.**

looking for. If I only wanted entries that ended in "me", I would only put the asterisk in front and Excel would not have counted watermelon.

COUNTIFS

The function COUNTIFS counts the contents of a cell if it matches what you specify, but it also allows you to specify more than one parameter. Format is =COUNTIFS(criteria_range1, criteria1, criteria_range2, criteria2). This function assumes an AND criteria, meaning both criteria 1 AND criteria 2 must be met in order to be counted. If only one is met, the cell will not be counted. All criteria ranges need to have the same number of rows and columns. If you wanted to know the number of orders for limes where Mary was the owner, you would use the function =COUNTIFS(A2:A7,"Mary",B2:B7,"lime"). The answer would be 1.

COUNTA

The function COUNTA counts the number of selected cells that are not empty. If anything is in the cell (including text or numbers), it will be counted. Format is =COUNTA(range). If you wanted to count the total number of entries in the first column, the format would be =COUNTA(A2:A7). The answer would be 6.

COUNTBLANK

The function COUNTBLANK counts the number of selected cells that are empty. If there is even a space in a cell, it is not empty and won't be counted. I often use this feature to track outstanding responses with meeting invitations. Leave the cells blank if the invitees have not responded. Complete the cells with Yes or No as needed (and use the COUNTIF functions to count those results). The blank cells then can be counted to track the remaining number of responses needed. The format is =COUNTBLANK(range).

Excel can do more counting than what I have shown you here, but I think you can see even with this small taste how useful they can be. You can COUNT on Excel to help you manage your data!

Marie Herman CAP-OM, ACS operates a successful business, MRH Enterprises (www.mrhenterprises.com), whose services include teaching computer and other classes in-person and via the internet, writing articles, and conducting workshops and other speaking engagements.

She can be reached at execsecmagazine@mrhenterprises.com.