Mac Best Practices

Using Windows via Virtual Machine

Excel for Mac is a cumbersome product, so we strongly recommend using the Windows version. This way, you can set the gray window background, and utilize all the shortcut keys that we teach in our courses.

If you have a Mac, you can install a virtual machine (VM), enabling you to easily start up an instance of Windows anytime.

We recommend using VMware Fusion or Parallels.[*] With this software, you can use your Mac exactly how you normally would, but you also have the option to do your Excel (or other Office application) work in a Windows environment.

For detailed setup instructions, please refer to your VM software's respective website.

* Note that you will need a valid license for both Windows and Microsoft Office – the virtual machine alone does not include any additional software.

Excel for Mac

In some cases, a Windows virtual machine may not be viable, and you are stuck with Excel for Mac. Be sure to check out our Mac Excel Guide to make sure you adhere to best practices.

Excel for Mac 2016

We recommend choosing Excel for Mac 2016, because it implements many of the "native" shortcut keys (that traditional Windows users are accustomed to) are the same. While some exceptions remain (e.g. you cannot press **Alt + =** for the SUM function, or press **Alt** to access KeyTips on the ribbon/menus), this version is passable.

Excel for Mac 2011

Mac users who unfortunately have the older **Excel for Mac 2011** should open the Mac Excel Guide mentioned above, and refer to page 3 (Mac Excel Compatibility). This section goes over the Mac equivalents for the most frequently used keyboard shortcuts.