

## History of Microsoft Excel 1978 – 2013 [Infographic]



How long have you been using Microsoft Excel?

Have you ever thought how Excel or the other electronic spreadsheet softwares came to existence?

In today's post, we will go back in time to trace the origin of Excel. So, here we go:

While the origin of electronic spreadsheets can be traced back to 1978, but it wasn't until 1982 when Microsoft jumped into the arena of

Electronic spreadsheets with a product known as MultiPlan.

Multipan was Microsoft's first electronic spreadsheet program. It was introduced in 1982 as a competitor for VisiCalc (the first ever electronic spreadsheet program). The key difference between Multiplan and its competitors was Microsoft's decision to use RIC1 addressing instead of the A1 addressing which was introduced by VisiCalc.

Multipan was very popular on CP/M systems, but on MS-DOS systems it lost fame to Lotus 1-2-3. This thing motivated Microsoft to develop another spreadsheet product Excel. The first version of Excel was released in 1985 for Mac. Later in November 1987, the first Windows version was released.

### It all started with VisiCalc:

In 1978, Harvard Business School student Dan Bricklin developed a program called VisiCalc. It was a relatively small program with few basic capabilities. It could only calculate data within a matrix of 5 columns by 20 rows.

To make VisiCalc more powerful Bricklin hired Bob Frankston, who is also known as the co-creator of VisiCalc. Frankston made the program fast and with better arithmetic. VisiCalc was an instant success and the duo were able to sell around 1 million copies of the program.

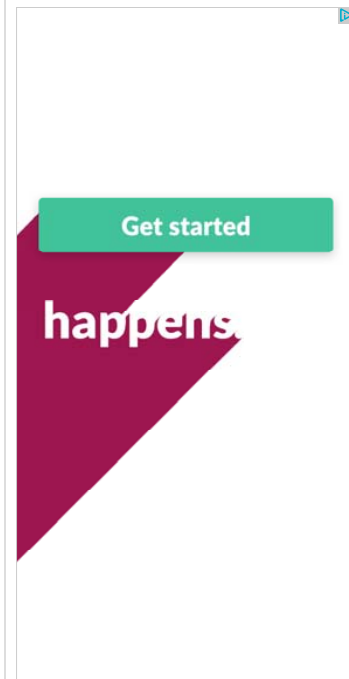
**Note:** You can still download an original copy of Visicalc from Dan Bricklin's website: <http://www.bricklin.com/history/vcexecutable.htm> [size: 27 K]

### What followed VisiCalc?

After the phenomenal success of VisiCalc, a team headed by Mitch Kapor in 1983, developed a new spreadsheet program called Lotus 1-2-3. Mitch and his team power packed Lotus 1-2-3 with charting, graphing and rudimentary database capabilities along with the basic arithmetic. This made Lotus 1-2-3 a new favourite in the industry.

Although, before this in 1982 Microsoft had already launched Multiplan but it was outshined by Lotus 1-2-3. And this thing provoked Microsoft to come up with Microsoft Excel and rest is history.

The Infographic on History of Microsoft Excel:



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This infographic takes a closer look at the history of Excel, circa 1978-2013.

# THE HISTORY OF Microsoft Excel

FROM [1978 - 2013]

## How Electronic Spreadsheets came to Existence?

In 1978, Harvard Business School student Dan Bricklin (the father of Modern Day Spreadsheets) had to do some analysis task for his case study. To do this he had two alternatives: 1) do it by hand or 2) use a clumsy mainframe program. Bricklin thought there must be a better way.

He envisioned "an electronic blackboard and electronic chalk in a classroom". By the fall of 1978, Bricklin had programmed the first working prototype of his concept which he named VisiCalc. The first version of VisiCalc could manipulate a matrix of five columns and 20 rows. Though it wasn't even close to the modern day spreadsheets but still VisiCalc was an instant success.

**VisiCalc - The First Ever Electronic Spreadsheet**

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## A Brief History of Microsoft Excel

1978

It was the first ever electronic spreadsheet program, originally released for the Apple II. Capabilities include: Basic arithmetic operations, Instant automatic recalculation and Scrolling.

1980

SuperCalc was a spreadsheet application published by Sorcim, it was originally bundled along with WordStar. SuperCalc was notable for being one of the first spreadsheet programs capable of iteratively solving circular references.

1982

Multiplan was an early spreadsheet program developed by Microsoft. A fundamental difference between Multiplan and its competitors was Microsoft's decision to use R1C1 addressing instead of the A1 addressing introduced by VisiCalc.

1983

Lotus 1-2-3 improvised on all the basics embodied in SuperCalc. Along with being a spreadsheet, it also offered integral charting, graphing and rudimentary database operations.

1985

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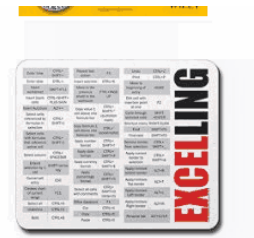
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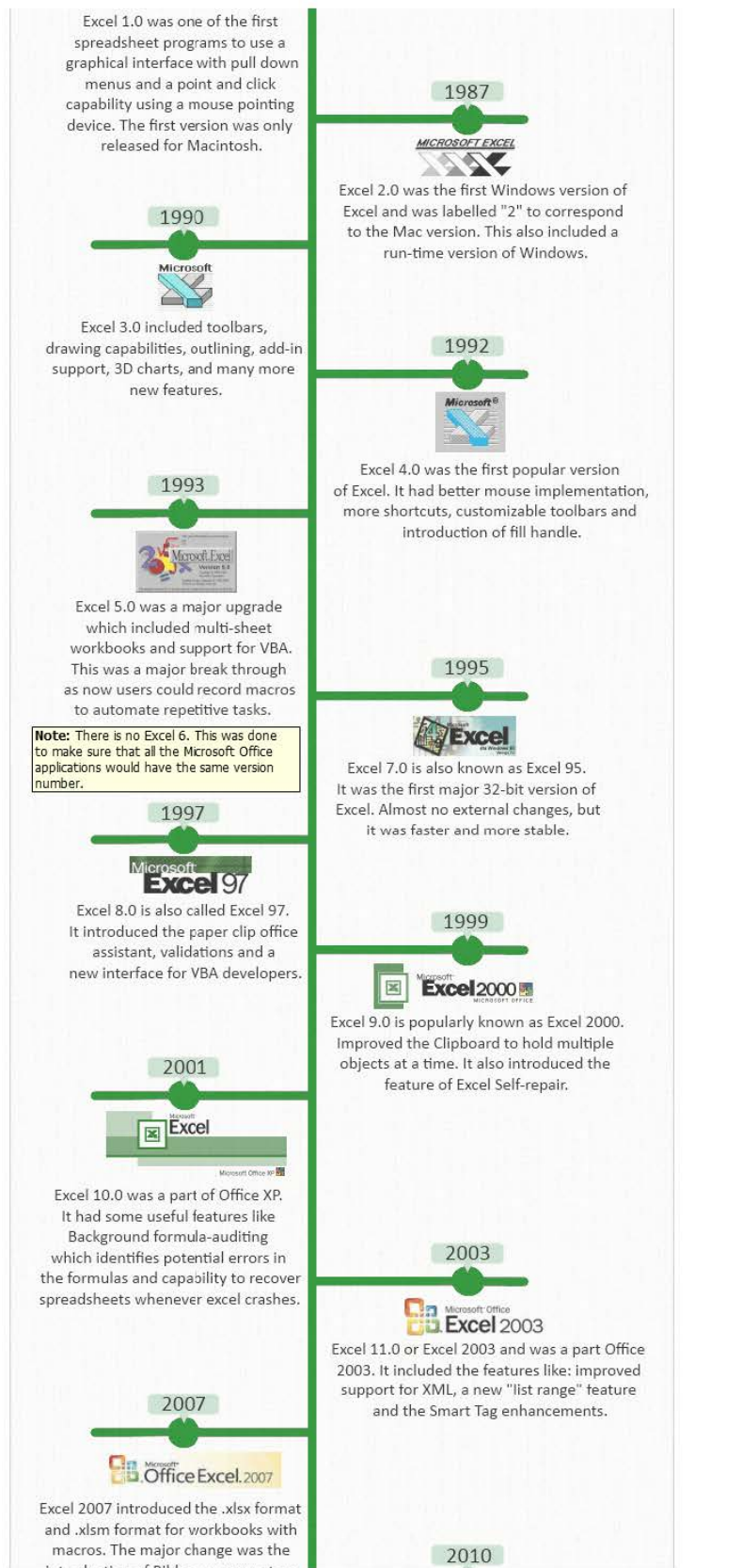
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Introduction of Ribbon menu system.

**Note:** There is no Version 13 of Microsoft Excel. May be this has some connection with Numerology. :-)

**2013**



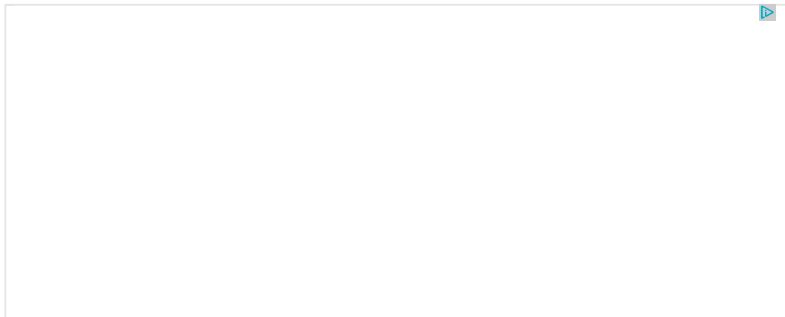
Excel 15.0 also known as Excel 2013, is the latest version of Microsoft Excel. It has lots of new features like PowerView, FlashFill and 50 new functions.

**Excel 2010**

Excel 14.0 also known as Excel 2010 was a major upgrade. New features include extended image editing capabilities, sparkline graphics, improved pivot tables, ability to customise the ribbon and more conditional formatting options.

Sources:  
<http://dssresources.com/history/sshistory.html>  
[http://spreadsheetpage.com/index.php/resource/excel\\_version\\_history](http://spreadsheetpage.com/index.php/resource/excel_version_history)  
<http://chandoo.org/wp/2010/01/13/history-of-excel-timeline>  
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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microsoft\\_Excel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microsoft_Excel)

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**About Ankit Kaul**  
 Ankit is the founder of Excel Trick. He is tech Geek who loves to sit in front of his square headed girlfriend (his PC) all day long. :D. Ankit has a strong passion for learning Microsoft Excel. His only aim is to turn you guys into 'Excel Geeks'.

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