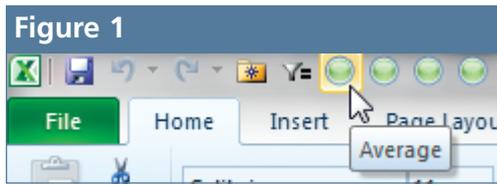# EXCEL ‹‹‹‹‹‹

By Bill Jelen

Don't Fear the AutoSum!

I spent the last month out of my comfort zone. I usually do my seminars for people who use Excel 40-60 hours a week. Over the last month, I was working on a book for people who have never used Excel. This is a confusing paradigm shift. Rather than dealing with pivot tables and VLOOKUP, I was answering questions about the name for the intersection of a row and column, plus far too many simple questions about using AutoSum.

They say that the best swordsman in the world should never fear the second-best swordsman in the world. Instead, the danger comes from a person who has never wielded a sword because that person will do things you never expected. I had to laugh long and hard when a simple question from an Excel rookie actually taught me something new.

First, some background. There are supposedly 750 million people who use Excel. Twenty percent of those people never do anything more than open an Excel attachment from an e-mail and print the document. Another 20% are people who will enter data into a spreadsheet, do some formatting, and then attach that document to an e-mail.

Figure 1

That means there are 300 million people (750 million x 40%) who claim to "use Excel" but *have never entered a formula in Excel!*

Can you imagine 300 million potential job applicants who will swear they use Excel who have never even clicked the AutoSum button? Imagine you hire an accounting department administrative assistant who swears he uses Excel every day. Yet when he shows up at work, you realize his use of Excel has never included AutoSum, let alone VLOOKUP, IF, or pivot tables.

For the last few months, I talked with people who have never opened Excel and listened to their frustrations. There's a lot of stuff that you and I take for granted that causes a lot of fear in Excel rookies. Someone could enter "11-12" in a cell intending it to stand for Fiscal Year 2011-2012, yet, out of the blue, Excel changes that entry to 12-Nov. This is mystifying behavior to the Excel rookie.

Imagine my surprise when I got the following silly question: "OK…The AutoSum button is really a dropdown. When you open the dropdown, you can choose to AutoAverage, Auto-Count, AutoMax, or AutoMin. Can you change the default behavior of that AutoSum button? Can you get one-click access to AutoAverage?"

I literally shook my head in amusement at this rookie question. But then, I started to wonder…*could* you get one-click access to AutoAverage? I'd never considered such a question. Right-click on the Quick Access Toolbar and choose Customize Quick Access Toolbar. In the left dropdown, choose All Commands. Scroll down, and, sure enough, there's an icon called Average. Hover over that icon, and it confirms that this icon is generally found on Home tab | Editing | AutoSum Average.

A few minutes later, I had found similar icons for Count, Max, and Min. I now have four icons sitting on my Quick Access Toolbar that will perform an AutoAverage, AutoCount, AutoMax, and AutoMin. Frustratingly, Microsoft uses the "green crystal ball" icon for all four commands, so you have to be a for-

Figure 2

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2	East	12,307	13,538	16,246	24,369	
3	Central	16,588	18,247	21,896	32,844	
4	West	14,460	15,906	19,087	28,631	
5	Total					

tuneteller to tell them apart (see Figure 1). I put them in alphabetical order as an easy way to remember.

Here are some more AutoSum tricks:

Select a range of cells, as in Figure 2, and click any of the "Auto" icons. Excel will quickly add AVERAGE, COUNT, MAX, or MIN—depending on which icon you clicked—to all of the blank cells around your numbers.

In Figure 3, someone has already used the AutoSum in rows 4, 7, and 12. Select cell B13 and click the AutoSum icon. The resulting formula will amazingly be =SUM(B4,B7,B12). This trick only works with AutoSum, not the other icons.

In Figure 4, the filter is turned on and column A has been filtered. If you choose cell B13 and click AutoSum, Excel will insert =SUBTOTAL(9,B2:B12), which is the formula to total the visible cells. As you change the filter, the total will always show the sum of the visible cells. This shortcut doesn't work directly with AutoAverage and the others, but you can change the first argument of

the formula (9) to a 1 for Average, 2 for Count, 4 for Max, or 5 for Min.

Back to those 300 million people who claim to be "using Excel" during your new hire interview. Excel MVP Tom Urtis has developed an amazing Excel Aptitude Test. For $20, you can test your job applicant's knowledge of the important features in Excel. It begins with a test of 36 questions. If the person is a true superstar, it will take them into a bonus 24 questions. At the end of the test, you'll not only see the candidate's score, but also an exact assessment of where the person needs more training. Compared to the $100 test offered by Microsoft, the Excel Aptitude Test is a great way to make sure your new hire really "knows Excel." Visit http://xat. atlaspm.com to learn more. **SF**

Bill Jelen is the host of MrExcel.com and the author of 35 books about Microsoft Excel. His latest book, Don't Fear the Spreadsheet*, teaches Excel beginners the skills they need to function in a spreadsheet-centric work environment. Send questions for future articles to IMA@MrExcel.com.*

Figure 3

	A	B
1	East 1	1000
2	East 2	1000
3	East 3	1000
4	East Total	3000
5	Central 1	335
6	Central 2	335
7	Central Total	670
8	West 1	400
9	West 2	400
10	West 3	400
11	West 4	400
12	West Total	1600
13	Grand Total	

Figure 4

	A	B
1	Product	Sales
3	B	1,655
7	B	1,393
11	B	2,420
12	B	1,362
13	Total Visible	