

## MICROSOFT EXCEL

Sunday  
August 18, 2013

I grew up without any clear sense of purpose, unsure of what interested me, even more unsure of what I actually wanted to do for the rest of my life. A large part of this was due to my inability to focus on any one thing for any length of time, part of it was due to always being moved around, and therefore, never being able to actually get involved with any single thing. Just before my arrest though, I discovered computers, the one and only thing that's ever caught, and more importantly, held, my interest for any length of time, especially this long.

It started out simple enough, using a computer to do research, but before long, I was teaching myself how to design my own websites. A few months later, I was actually making a profit, but my arrest put a hold on any plans I had of doing this full time, or taking it to the next level. Anyway, here I am, years later, and I've once again discovered the joy of computers. This time, I'm determined to make the most out of whatever opportunities come my way, not just because I enjoy computers so much, but also because the more I learn here and now, the better my chances in the future, when I get out of here. And as it was before, everything I'm doing and learning is the result of my having taught myself.

There are 2 basic problems I'm having. The first is that my access is quite limited. In addition to not being able to do things most of us take for granted, like accessing the Internet or even right-clicking on my desktop, I also don't have anything on my computer beyond Excel, Word and Powerpoint, all of from 2003. The second problem is that our library is extremely limited in what it offers in regards to learning how to master computer skills, not because it's against the rules, but because there's just not much of a demand. I, however, want to make the most out of whatever opportunity happens to come my way, hence, I'm hoping that perhaps someone reading this blog might be able to come to my assistance.

Before coming to prison, I never really used Excel all that much. I was more interested in designing websites, so my focus was geared more towards those programs that would help make designing sites easier. (Frontpage, Dreamweaver, etc.) Now, however, I don't have access to these programs, just Excel, Word and Powerpoint, and it's Excel that has me most intrigued.

I used to think of Excel as something used by accountants, something that you needed to be some sort of math genius to use, but I'm quickly finding out that nothing could be further from the truth. With nothing but the help section, I've already managed to learn how to use Excel to not only keep track of the things I want to keep track of, but also how to perform various calculations. The problem I'm having though, is that Excel is capable of so much more, but without the proper materials to learn from, I can't get the most out of it, and this is something I really want to do, to get the most out of Excel. My reason for this is because there really aren't that many opportunities to actually learn something constructive in here, but this is one. In fact, not only can I learn something constructive in here, but I can also learn something I can actually put into use once I'm released, something I can actually make a decent living at.

I've heard of several different books. The first is **Excel 2002 Formulas (Professional Mindware)** by John Walkenbach (September 29, 2001), which is supposed to contain every formula Excel is capable of calculating. Another one is **Microsoft Excel 2002: Microsoft Office Specialist (Certification)** by Barbara Clemens (December 11, 2002). Finally, there's **Succeeding in Business with Microsoft Office Excel 2002: A Problem Solving Approach (First Edition)** and **Succeeding in Business with Microsoft Office Excel 2007: A Problem Solving Approach**.

My questions are numerous, but I'll keep them to the basics. First, has anyone used any of these books, and if so, what did you think? Did Excel 2002 Formulas indeed contain nothing but formulas for Excel? Or was the name deceptive? Were there other books you came across that you found helpful? Any recommendations? As always, any responses can be posted online, snail-mailed to me, or, if you'd prefer, I do have a friend who monitors my e-mail account: [shawnlperrot@hotmail.com](mailto:shawnlperrot@hotmail.com)

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