

Learning to Find the Most Frequent Value in Google Sheets: A Step-by-Step Guide

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Introduction to Finding the Most Frequent Value in Google Sheets

The ability to efficiently identify the most frequently occurring value--known statistically as the [mode](#)--is a fundamental requirement for data analysis within spreadsheet applications. When working with [Google Sheets](#), users often need robust methods to calculate this mode, whether the data consists of numerical entries or text strings. Depending on the data type, different formulas must be employed to ensure accuracy and handle scenarios where multiple values share the highest frequency (multimodal distribution).

We will explore two distinct, powerful methods designed for identifying the mode. The first method is straightforward and optimized for finding the most frequently occurring number. The second method utilizes a combination of functions to tackle non-numeric data, such as names or categories, which requires a conversion step before the frequency can be assessed. Both approaches leverage the versatile **MODE.MULT** function, which is critical for returning all modes if the dataset is multimodal.

The following comprehensive guide details both formulas and provides practical examples demonstrating their implementation within a standard Google Sheets environment, ensuring that you can accurately extract frequency data from any range.

Understanding the MODE.MULT Function

The core of both frequency-finding solutions lies in the [MODE.MULT](#) function. This statistical function is specifically designed to return the most frequently occurring values in a dataset. Unlike the simpler **MODE** function, **MODE.MULT** is an array function capable of outputting multiple results simultaneously if two or more values share the highest frequency count. This capability makes it indispensable for complete frequency analysis.

It is important to recognize that when **MODE.MULT** is used, it operates as an [array formula](#), meaning it must be entered correctly (often just by pressing Enter in modern Sheets versions, but traditionally requiring Ctrl+Shift+Enter in some applications) and will spill its results into adjacent cells if multiple modes are found. If only one value occurs most frequently, it returns that single value. If no values repeat, it may return an error depending on the specific application context, though typically it is used on ranges where repetition is expected.

Although **MODE.MULT** is designed for numerical data, we will demonstrate how to preprocess text data into a numerical format, allowing this function to serve as the frequency counter even for non-numeric ranges.

Method 1: Finding the Most Frequent Number

When your dataset contains purely numerical values, the process for determining the mode is highly efficient. We can directly apply the **MODE.MULT** function to the specified range of numbers. This method requires minimal setup and provides immediate results, identifying any and all numbers that appear with the maximum frequency.

Suppose we have a list of numerical entries in column A, spanning from cell A2 to A11. To find the most frequently occurring number within this range, you would use the following simple formula:

=MODE.MULT(A2:A11)

Consider the following example dataset, which illustrates various numerical entries:

	A	B	C	D
1	Numbers			
2	1			
3	2			
4	4			
5	4			
6	5			
7	8			
8	10			
9	12			
10	12			
11	15			
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				

Applying the formula shown above reveals the mode(s) present in the list. The formula is entered into a single cell, and the results will automatically populate the subsequent cells below it if necessary.

The following screenshot demonstrates the application of this technique in practice:

C2 ∇ | fx =MODE.MULT(A2:A11)

	A	B	C	D
1	Numbers		Most Frequent Number	
2	1		4	
3	2		12	
4	4			
5	4			
6	5			
7	8			
8	10			
9	12			
10	12			
11	15			
12				
13				
14				
15				

Upon execution, the formula returns two numbers: **4** and **12**. This indicates that both 4 and 12 occur the same number of times--and more frequently than any other number--within the specified range **A2:A11**. This outcome confirms the efficacy of **MODE.MULT** in handling multimodal datasets.

Method 2: Handling Non-Numeric (Text) Data

A significant challenge arises when attempting to find the mode of text strings (e.g., names, categories, or team names). Since the **MODE.MULT** function is fundamentally numerical, a composite formula is required to first convert the text values into a numerical array representing their position or index, determine the mode of those indices, and then translate the resulting index back into the original text string.

This sophisticated method employs three primary functions working in concert: **MATCH**, **MODE.MULT**, and **INDEX**. This combination allows us to bypass the numerical limitation of the mode function and accurately identify the most frequently occurring text value(s).

The complete formula structure used for finding the most frequent text value(s) in the range A2:A11 is as follows:

=INDEX(A2:A11,MODE.MULT(MATCH(A2:A11,A2:A11,0)))

This complex formula represents a standard and highly reliable solution for calculating the text mode in Google Sheets, capable of returning multiple text values if the text distribution is multimodal.

Deconstructing the Text Frequency Formula

To fully appreciate the power and logic behind the text mode formula, it is essential to break down the role of each component function, starting from the innermost operation and moving outward. This process illustrates how text data is transformed into numerical indices, analyzed for frequency, and then converted back into readable text.

The Inner **MATCH** Function: `MATCH(A2:A11, A2:A11, 0)`

The [MATCH](#) function is the first crucial step. It compares every element in the range (A2:A11) against the entire range itself. The purpose here is not to find a single match, but to generate an array of numerical indices. For every value in the range, the function returns the position (index number) of its first occurrence within that range. Identical text strings will therefore generate identical index numbers. For example, if "Apple" first appears in row 2 (index 1 relative to the range A2:A11), every instance of "Apple" will be converted to the number 1 in the resulting array. This transformation successfully converts the text frequency problem into a numerical frequency problem.

The Middle **MODE.MULT** Function: `MODE.MULT(...)`

The output array of indices generated by **MATCH** is fed directly into the **MODE.MULT** function. Since this array consists entirely of numbers, **MODE.MULT** can now reliably calculate the mode. It determines which index number occurs most frequently. This result represents the position of the most common item in the original list. If two different items occur with the same maximum frequency, their respective index numbers will both be returned by **MODE.MULT**.

The Outer **INDEX** Function: `INDEX(A2:A11, ...)`

Finally, the result(s) from **MODE.MULT** (which are the index number(s) of the most frequent item(s)) are passed to the [INDEX](#) function. The **INDEX** function retrieves the value at a specified position within a range. By using the original range **A2:A11** and the mode index calculated in the previous step, **INDEX** effectively translates the most frequent index number back into the original text string. This completes the process, providing the user with the actual text value that occurs most often.

Practical Application: Finding the Most Frequent Text

Let us now apply the complex, combined formula to a dataset containing text entries, such as a list of team names. Suppose we have the following data in Google Sheets:

	A	B	C	
1	Teams			
2	Mavs			
3	Warriors			
4	Mavs			
5	Hawks			
6	Nets			
7	Spurs			
8	Mavs			
9	Celtics			
10	Knicks			
11	Spurs			
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				

The objective is to find the team name that appears most frequently within this list. We utilize the formula derived in the previous section:

=INDEX(A2:A11,MODE.MULT(MATCH(A2:A11,A2:A11,0)))

This formula is entered into a blank cell. It processes the text, converts it to numerical indices, finds the most frequent index, and retrieves the corresponding text. The subsequent screenshot illustrates the practical result of executing this formula:

C2			<code>=INDEX(A2:A11,MODE.MULT(MATCH(A2:A11,A2:A11,0)))</code>	
	A	B	C	D
1	Teams		Most Frequent Name	
2	Mavs		Mavs	
3	Warriors			
4	Mavs			
5	Hawks			
6	Nets			
7	Spurs			
8	Mavs			
9	Celtics			
10	Knicks			
11	Spurs			
12				
13				
14				
15				

The formula successfully returns the text **Mavs**. This confirms that 'Mavs' is the text value that occurs most frequently in the designated list, demonstrating the successful conversion and analysis of non-numeric data using this powerful array formula structure.

Additional Resources

Mastering frequency analysis is just one step in maximizing your data processing capabilities in Google Sheets. Understanding how to combine statistical and lookup functions, particularly through the use of array outputs, is key to advanced spreadsheet manipulation. For further learning, consult the official documentation for related functions and advanced data tasks.

The following resources explain how to perform other common statistical and lookup tasks in Google Sheets:

Official documentation for the **INDEX** function.

Detailed guides on array formulas and their application.

Documentation outlining how to handle statistical distributions in large datasets.