

Excel — Getting Started

There is a good chance that Excel will be available to you in your classroom, and it is a very useful and powerful tool. At the very least, it offers an easy way to organize data. The example we discussed in class was the solution to problem #6 on page 40, in which the goal is to determine the numbers of ways of obtaining 50 cents as a combination of quarters, nickels, and dimes. See the file Quarter.xls. We simply typed in the various solutions in columns A, B, and C. In cell D2 we typed “=”, clicked on cell A2, typed “*25+”, clicked on cell B2, typed “*10+”, clicked on cell C2, typed “*5”, and then pressed enter. This calculates the total worth of the coins in the first three columns. After that, clicking on cell D2, and then clicking on the lower right corner of the cell and dragging it downward, copies the formula into the lower rows. Finally, we saw how to do “Conditional Formatting” so that we could cause the color of the box to be green if the number equals 50, and red if it does not.

For lots of examples of the use of spreadsheets in teaching and learning math, go to <http://mathforum.org/mathtools/> and search the Catalog or the Discussions for “spreadsheet”.