BUSINESS RESOURCE

Moving from Excel to Xero

A step-by-step guide for turning spreadsheet bookkeeping into a structured Xero file.

A practical Harrian Bookkeeping guide for small businesses across the UK.

How to use this guide
Work through the steps in order. Tick off or note anything that needs attention, and keep the guide with your bookkeeping records for reference.

Prepare your spreadsheet

1

Make one clean source file

Bring the records you intend to migrate into a controlled spreadsheet. Avoid having several versions called 'final', 'final2' and 'latest' because it becomes difficult to know which one is authoritative.

2

Standardise dates and amounts

Make sure dates use one consistent format and that income and expense amounts are numeric rather than mixed with symbols or notes.

3

Remove duplicates

Sort and review the spreadsheet for duplicated transactions, repeated invoices or entries imported more than once.

4

Separate transaction information

Use distinct columns for date, description, reference, amount and category. Do not place several pieces of information in one cell if they will need to be imported or analysed separately.

5

Reconcile to the bank

Before moving to Xero, confirm that the spreadsheet's closing bank position can be reconciled to the actual bank statement.

Build the Xero starting position

1

Choose a conversion date

Decide when the spreadsheet stops being the live record and Xero takes over.

2

Create a sensible chart of accounts

Use a clear, proportionate set of categories. Do not recreate every spreadsheet label as a separate Xero account unless it genuinely helps reporting.

3

Enter opening balances

Bring across the balances required at the conversion date and verify them against your spreadsheet and statements.

4

Set up contacts where useful

Create active customer and supplier records where they will make invoicing and reporting easier.

5

Connect the bank feed

Set the bank-feed start date so it follows the conversion point without duplicating transactions already accounted for.

Avoid running two sets of books

Once Xero becomes the live bookkeeping system, avoid continuing to maintain a separate spreadsheet with different figures. A supporting spreadsheet can still be useful for schedules, but there should be one clear source of truth for the bookkeeping records.

- Spreadsheet closing balances are understood.
- Duplicates have been removed.
- Xero conversion date is documented.
- Opening balances have been checked.
- First bank-feed transactions reconcile correctly.

Important

This guide is intended for bookkeeping migration planning. More complex spreadsheets may require a tailored conversion approach.

Official references

Xero Central - Import a chart of accounts: https://central.xero.com/s/article/Import-a-chart-of-accounts-UK

Xero Central - Enter opening bank account balances: https://central.xero.com/s/article/Add-your-opening-bank-balances-in-Xero

Need help keeping your bookkeeping organised?

Harrian Bookkeeping provides reliable bookkeeping support for small businesses across the UK. Email **hello@harrianbookkeeping.com** or call **07831 524703**.