

School's Almost Out: Teach Yourself Better Reporting

This being May, your children will be coming home with report cards soon.

It might be a good time to grade yourself, to get a close look at how your business is doing. And there's no better way to do that in QuickBooks than to run reports. You probably do that a lot already, but are you really making full use of the program's reporting tools?

Let's take a look. Reporting changed a lot between QuickBooks 2009 and 2010 in terms of interface, navigation, and access to reports. We'll look at version 2010 since the core reporting mechanisms are similar, and wrap up with a brief summary of the new features in 2010.

Extensive customization

Open the **Reports** menu. You can go directly to the **Report Center**, but since the interfaces are different (and very self-explanatory), we'll work from the menu.

Drop down to **Sales**, and in the pop-out menu, click **Sales by Customer Detail**. You'll see a window similar to **Figure 1**.

1:36 PM
04/07/10
Accrual Basis

Los Altos Day Spa
Sales by Customer Detail
All Transactions

Type	Date	Num	Memo	Name	Item	Qty
Amy Kennedy						
Invoice	09/21/2009	150		Amy Kennedy	Clean Gutters	5.00
Total Amy Kennedy						
Andrew Lynch						
Sales Receipt	05/13/2008	6		Andrew Lynch	Broom	1.50
Invoice	10/22/2008	60		Andrew Lynch	Broom	1.50
Invoice	05/13/2009	6	Gutter clean...	Andrew Lynch	Clean Gutters	1.50
Invoice	05/20/2009	8	Brooms	Andrew Lynch	Broom	7.36
Invoice	08/25/2009	50		Andrew Lynch	Clean Gutters	1.50
Total Andrew Lynch						

Figure 1: You may just be changing the date range when you run reports in QuickBooks. If so, you're missing out on a lot of customization and other features.

Don't like displaying the date/time/basis for each report? Click **Hide Header** and then **Show Header** if you want to bring it back.

Are some of your columns—usually **Name**, **Item**, and **Memo**—being truncated (such as **Gutter clean...** in the example above)? Grab the diamond to the right of the column name and drag it to the right with your mouse. It may take some adjusting to make every column header display properly.

Are you exporting a lot of reports to Excel workbooks but never clicking on the **Advanced** tab in the dialog box? If your reports always look different in Excel and you don't like them, it may be because you're skipping this step. Click the **Export** button, and the dialog box shown in **Figure 2** appears. Click **Advanced** to see this view.

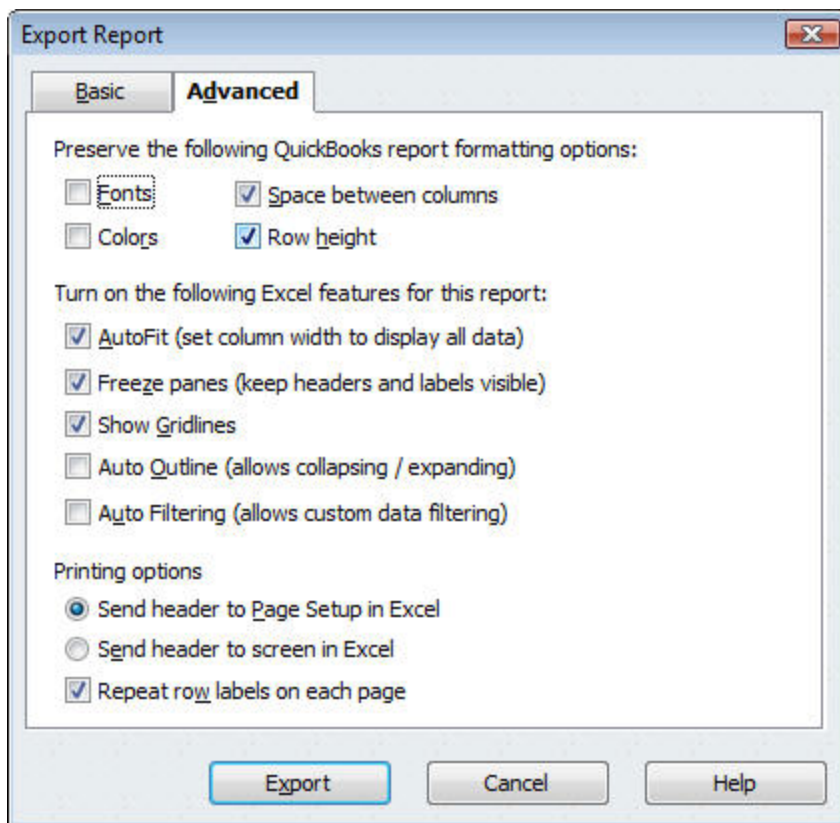


Figure 2: Before you export a report to an Excel worksheet, click the Advanced tab in the Export Report dialog box. You'll be able to select options that will preserve or ignore the original QuickBooks formatting.

Sophisticated modifications

To get to the real meat of your modifications, click the **Modify Report** button. You'll be able to tinker with a number of report elements here, including (and shown in **Figure 3**):

- **Display.** What dates should the report cover? Which columns should display (you'll have plenty to choose from)? Cash or accrual? How do you want to total and sort data? Click **Advanced** to show all accounts or those in use during the report period, and to display a customer's current balance or the balance as of the report's ending date.
- **Filters.** QuickBooks builds in powerful filtering capabilities, allowing you to corral a subset of data that contains exactly what you want, down to the words included in the **Memo** field. Take some time here and read the accompanying help files. A box on the right displays the current filters; you can easily remove any of them or revert to the original configuration.
- **Header/footer.** Easy stuff. How should the report look? QuickBooks gives you a lot of control over that. You'll simply check or uncheck boxes, and enter information.

- **Fonts & Numbers.** Easy here, too. You can make choices about the fonts and colors you want your report to contain, and how you want numbers to be displayed.

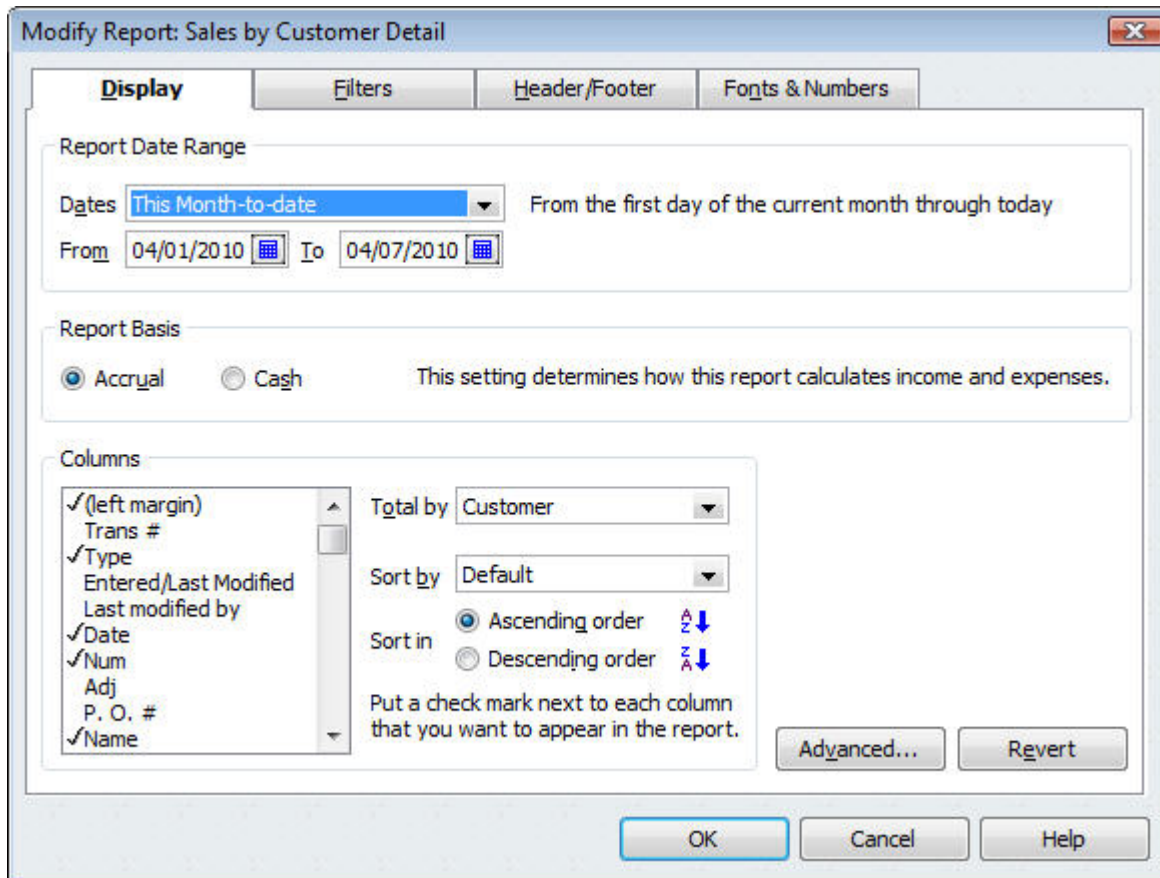


Figure 3: QuickBooks gives you an enormous amount of control over the format and content of your reports.

Memorization and more

Once you've gone through all the trouble of formatting a report, you'll probably want to save it so you can use it again (the settings are memorized, not the data). QuickBooks makes this easy. With the report open, click **Memorize**. In the window that opens, type a name for your report (if you want to specify a new one), and check the box next to **Save in Memorized Report Group** if you want it categorized. To access a memorized report, open the **Reports** menu and put your mouse on **Memorized Reports**. From the pop-out menu, select the report you want. You'll still be able to modify it.

The new Report Center in QuickBooks 2010, shown in **Figure 4**, makes it easier to locate the desired reports quickly. It features a scrolling 3-D representation of sample reports in each financial category (list and grid views are also available); you can click on icons in a toolbar to see your own version of the report, change the dates, learn

more about it, and tag it as a favorite. Other links let you toggle the view among standard, memorized, favorite, and recently accessed reports.

Unbilled Costs by Job
What job-related expenses haven't been charged to customers?

Type	Date	Source Name	Memo	Account	Billing Status	Amount
Abercrombie, Kristy						
Kitchen						
Check	12/15	Vu Contracting		Subcon...	Unbilled	1,000.00
Total Kitchen						1,000.00
Total Abercrombie, Kristy						1,000.00
Rahn, Jennifer						
Remodel						
Bill	06/07	Zeng Building...	Exterior doo...	Inven...	Unbilled	11,807.80
Bill	06/07	Zeng Building...	Exterior doo...	Inven...	Unbilled	-4,368.51
Bill	06/07	Zeng Building...	Exterior doo...	COGS	Unbilled	4,368.51
Total Remodel						11,807.80
Total Rahn, Jennifer						11,807.80
Yoo, Young-Kyu						
Repairs						
Bill	01/02	A Cheung Ltd		Job M...	Unbilled	1,500.00
Total Repairs						1,500.00
Total Yoo, Young-Kyu						1,500.00
TOTAL						14,307.80

Figure 4: This “carousel” view of sample reports in QuickBooks 2010 especially helps beginners find the correct report. Grid and list views are also available, as are other tools for locating the right screen.

When you’re just running reports for your own edification, you may not do more than select a report and change the date range. But there will likely be many occasions when you’re presenting reports to an audience, like bankers or potential customers. QuickBooks’ report tools can help you slice and dice your data in myriad ways and make your financials look polished and professional. The ability to export to Excel opens up even more possibilities.