

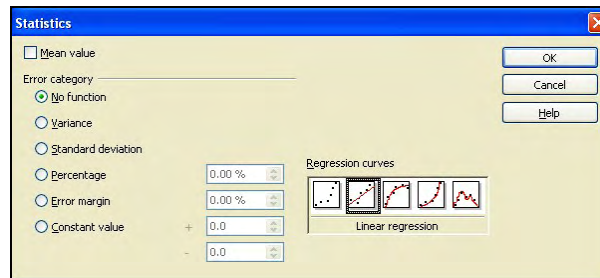
Office Sports

A few things to keep you occupied while waiting for OpenOffice.org 3.0

The release of OpenOffice.org 3.0 is right around the corner. Time sure flies, doesn't it?

It seems as if OpenOffice.org 2.3 just made it's own debut, with a slew of great new charting features, improved Calc functionality, Base upgrades and so on. Between last year's 2.3 rollout and this year's upcoming 3.0 debut, a number of additional improvements have been made to the OpenOffice suite. To keep you happy until you hit the upgrade button this fall, here is a review of some of the new features the developers of OpenOffice.org have added in the past six months.

Figure 1: *In Edit mode, select Insert > Statistics to define the type of regression curve you want. Click OK, then right click the regression line to add the equation.*

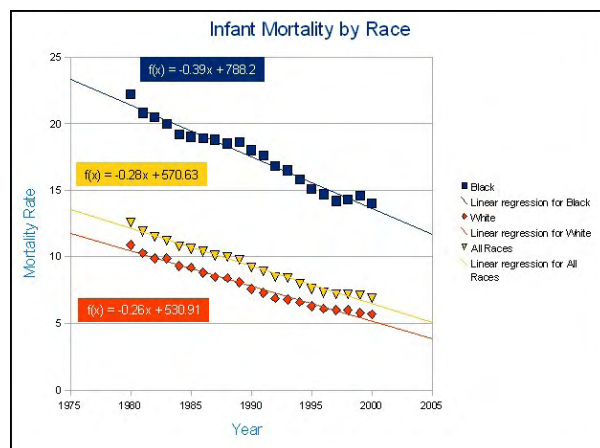


> Nine New Charting Features in Calc

OpenOffice.org's charting features continue to improve, both in functionality and in appearance. With the release of version 2.4, you can now perform the following tasks:

- Add the regression equation to a regression curve with the click of a button

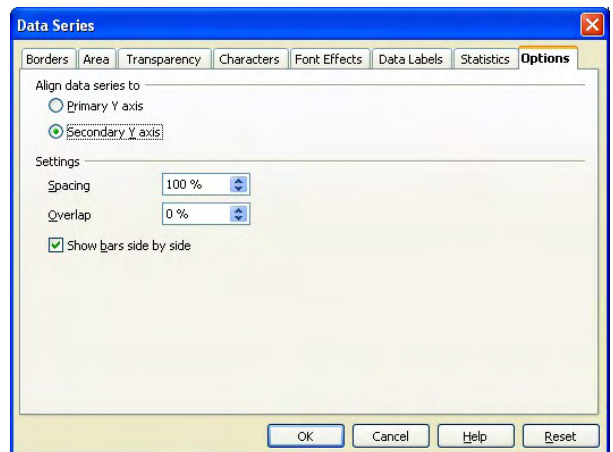
Figure 2: *The equation for each regression line in this chart was added by the click of a button. After adding the equation, it can be moved, formatted and styled to look nice in your chart.*



- Draw bars side-by-side (rather than stacked) in a double-axis bar chart
- Reverse the Y or X axis to display an “upside-down chart”
- Show values in a chart as both numbers and percentages
- Put each part of a data label on a separate line
- Choose your own number format for data labels (rather than having to choose formatting from the data source)
- Place data labels more efficiently and stylishly in bar charts
- Use best-fit technology to avoid overlapping of labels on pie charts
- Remove labels from individual data points on a chart.

Let's take quick look at a few of these features.

Figure 3: *New to version 2.4 is the option to place bars in a double-axis chart side-by-side. Simply select the secondary data set and right click to navigate to the Object Properties dialog. The option for making a side-by-side comparison is found under the Options tab.*



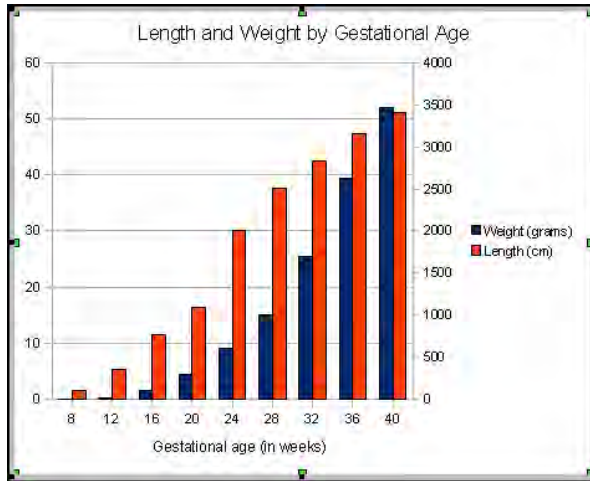
Regression Curves with Equations

Displaying the actual equation for a trend line in a regression curve would be a major, plus, right? Now, Calc allows you to do this, and it's as simple as clicking a button.

To add the equation:

1. Create an XY (Scatter) chart in Calc.
2. Double click the chart to open Edit mode.
3. Click **Insert > Statistics**.
4. Choose the regression curve you would like (here, I selected Linear regression) and click **OK**. (See Figure 1.)
5. Right click the regression line on your chart and select **Insert Regression Curve Equation**.

Figure 4: You can highlight data more effectively in a double-axis chart by displaying the data side-by-side rather than stacked.



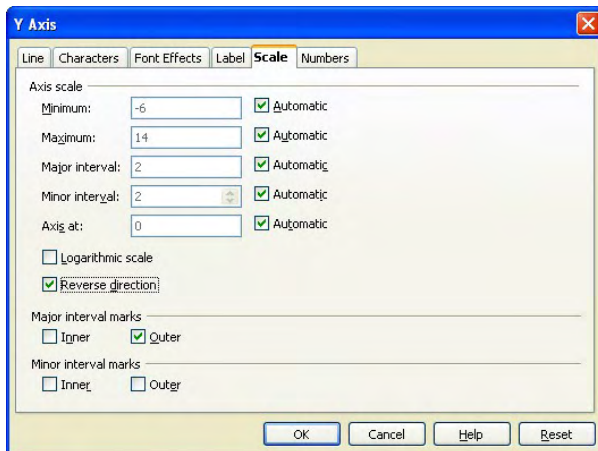
- Place the equation on the chart in an appropriate location, making any style changes as needed by right clicking the equation while in edit mode. (See Figure 2.)

Making Side-by-Side Comparisons in Double-Axis Bar Charts

Let's say you've created a chart with two Y axes in order to show the comparison between two sets of data. Before the release of OpenOffice.org 2.4, your data would be stacked, with some data likely hidden behind the other. Now, you can display both sets of data side by side. How?

- In Calc, create your column or bar chart with two data series.

Figure 5: With your chart in Edit mode, use the Format menu to select an axis in your chart. Under the Scale tab, simply check the Reverse direction box and click OK. The specified axis will be reversed to better emphasize a particular data set.



- Double click the chart to open Edit mode.
- Click the second data series to select it. You'll see one green dot in the center of each bar in that series.
- Right click any of the bars in the series and select **Object Properties**.
- Select the **Options** tab.
- In the **Align data to series to** section, choose the radio button for **Secondary Y axis**. (See Figure 3.)
- In the **Settings** section, check the box to **Show bars side by side**.
- Click **OK**.

Figure 4 shows an example of a double-axis bar chart. Obviously, the data here is much easier to read than it would be if one data series had overlapped the other. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 6: This is an example of a chart as it would normally appear after using the Chart Wizard.

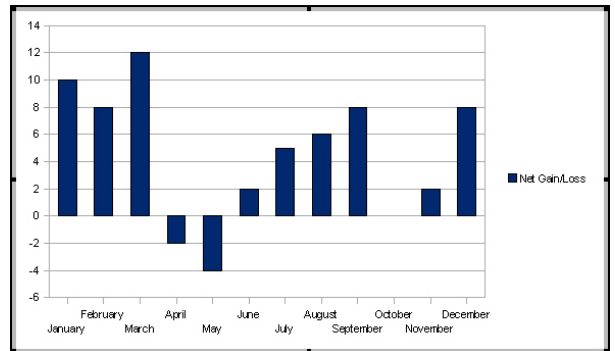
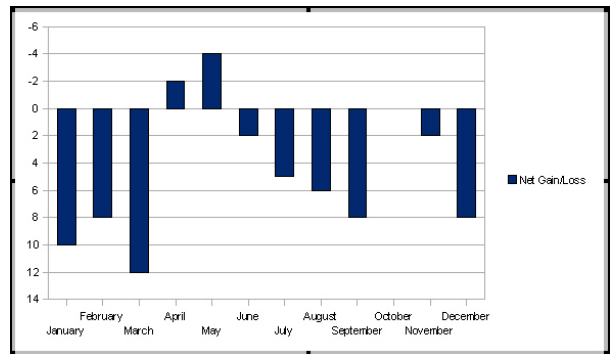


Figure 7: This is the same data as shown in Figure 6, but the Y axis has been reversed to emphasize the data for the months this company experience a net loss.



Reversing the X or Y Axis in Charts

Want to emphasize different elements of your data by displaying that data along a reverse axis? Now you can in Calc 2.4.

- Double click the chart to open Edit mode.
- Select **Format > Axis** and then choose either **X Axis** or **Y Axis**.

3. Select the **Scale** tab and check the box next to **Reverse direction**. (See Figure 5.)
4. Click **OK**.

Figure 6 provides an example of a chart as it would appear when first created. Figure 7 shows what happens when the Y axis is reversed, thus emphasizing the months in which a company faced net losses.

Each of the six additional new charting features involve data labels and let you make your charts look more professional and display your data more effectively. To access the new features, double click your chart to open Edit mode, then select **Insert > Data Labels** from the menu.

> New Selection Capabilities in Writer

One of my favorite new features in Writer is the ability to make a block selection of text. Let's say that you have a document in which you've listed employee names and phone numbers. When you created the list, you simply typed the person's full name, pressed the Tab key, then entered the phone extension. Your list looks something like this:

```
Robert Adams 419
Jeff Alexander 420
Suzanne Arnold 421
Chris Brown 422
Sarah Buckley 423
```

Now, let's say you need to make another quick list that includes only the names of the employees. In the past, you couldn't select only the column of names because it wasn't a table. But now, you can select just the name column. This feature is particularly handy when you want to copy something from an OCR scan or log file. To make a block selection:

1. Open the document from which you want to copy.
2. In the status bar at the bottom of the screen, click **STD** until it reads **BLK**.
3. Highlight the area you'd like to select. As you can see from Figure 8, you are able to select just the names in the list.
4. Copy and paste the list as desired.

> Converting Text to Columns in Calc

Another useful feature is the ability to take delimited data in Calc and place it into columns. You may, for example, have a table that displays the last names, a comma, then the first names of all of your employees in one column. (See Figure 9.) To make this information more useful for any number of reasons, it would be nice to have the first and last names appear in separate columns. (See Figure 10.) Here's how to make the change:

1. Make sure the column to the right of the column at issue is clear. In this example, column B must be empty so that the first names can be moved there.
2. Highlight the complete range of cells.

Figure 8: *New to 2.4 is the ability to select only one column in a regular text document, OCR scan or log file. Here, the BLK feature is turned on and only the portion of the text needed is selected.*

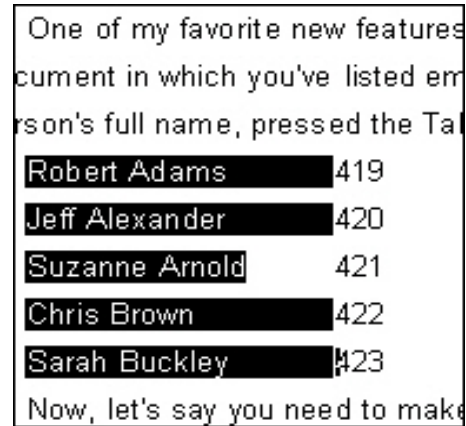


Figure 9: *Tables, such as this, that include both first and last names in the same column aren't nearly as effective as tables that include an individual column for each piece of data.*

	A	B
1	Adams, Robert	
2	Alexander, Jeff	
3	Arnold, Suzanne	
4	Brown, Chris	
5	Buckley, Sarah	

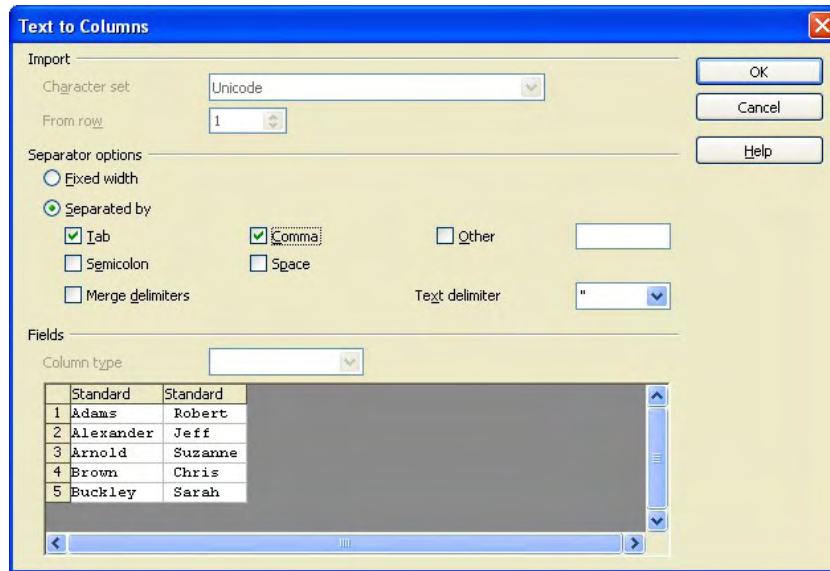
Figure 10: *Using OpenOffice.org's new conversion features allows you to take text and split it across several columns in a table. This allows you to create tables such as this from the one shown in Figure 9.*

	A	B
1	Adams	Robert
2	Alexander	Jeff
3	Arnold	Suzanne
4	Brown	Chris
5	Buckley	Sarah

3. Click **Data > Text to Columns**.
4. Check the box next to **Comma**. You'll see how the data after a comma is moved to a new field in the bottom of the dialog box. (See Figure 11.)
5. Click **OK**.

This feature is invaluable in many scenarios, involving different types of delimiters and even in some nondelimited data. Here are some of the scenarios you might run into and be able to quickly fix by converting text to columns:

Figure 11: In the *Text to Columns* dialog, you can choose to separate text in one column across several columns by *Fixed Width* or by a number of separation delimiters, such as *tabs, commas, spaces, and so on.*



probably a few headaches along the way. But perhaps most important, the improvements will make your end product look much better. Believe it or not, there are a slew of other new features that aren't explained in this article. These features include:

- More powerful use of regular expressions. You can, for example, use back references in the Replace field of a Search and Replace effort. This means you can change YYYY-MM-DD dates to MM/DD/YYYY dates, for example.
- Extensions for 3D slide transitions in Impress
- Enhancements to the suite's PDF export capabilities
- Three new ways to switch languages during a spell check
- Splitting cities and states (Boston, Massachusetts)
- Splitting full names separated by only a space (Mr. Edward Stephens II)
- Splitting fixed-width data (20080715) in one cell to data that spreads across three cells (2008 07 15)
- Copying some tables from a PDF file
- The ability to right click in Impress and set the background picture for a slide in Impress
- Enhanced formula input in Calc that allows for formulas that begin with the + symbol
- Better data input in Calc. This one is a really nice little feature; now when you enter data horizontally and press Enter, the cursor is returned to the column where you started entering data.

> **Additional New Features**

If you haven't upgraded since OpenOffice.org 2.3 rolled out last fall, you should definitely take the time to upgrade now, even though version 3.0 should be out before the end of the year. (Version 3.0 is currently in beta.) Some of the features detailed above will save you a lot of time and

So take the plunge and spend the next few weeks learning everything that's new in OpenOffice.org 2.4. By the time you're finished, OpenOffice.org 3.0 just might be released—just in time for you to review another list of exciting, new OpenOffice features! **N**