



LibreOffice
The Document Foundation

Calc Guide

Chapter 12

Calc Macros

Automating repetitive tasks

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Note for Mac users

Some keystrokes and menu items are different on a Mac from those used in Windows and Linux. The table below gives some common substitutions for the instructions in this chapter. For a more detailed list, see the application Help.

<i>Windows or Linux</i>	<i>Mac equivalent</i>	<i>Effect</i>
Tools > Options menu selection	LibreOffice > Preferences	Access setup options
<i>Right-click</i>	<i>Control+click</i>	Opens a context menu
<i>Ctrl (Control)</i>	⌘ (<i>Command</i>)	Used with other keys
<i>F5</i>	<i>Shift+⌘+F5</i>	Opens the Navigator
<i>F11</i>	⌘+T	Opens the Styles and Formatting window

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Introduction

A macro is a saved sequence of commands or keystrokes that are stored for later use. An example of a simple macro is one that “types” your address. The LibreOffice macro language is very flexible, allowing automation of both simple and complex tasks. Macros are especially useful to repeat a task the same way over and over again. This chapter briefly discusses common problems related to macro programming using Calc.

Using the macro recorder

Chapter 13 of the *Getting Started* guide, *Getting Started with Macros*, provides a basis for understanding the general macro capabilities in LibreOffice using the macro recorder. An example is shown here without the explanations in the *Getting Started* guide. The following steps create a macro that performs paste special with multiply.

Tip

Use **Tools > Options > LibreOffice > Advanced** and select the **Enable macro recording** option to enable the macro recorder.

- 1) Open a new spreadsheet.
- 2) Enter numbers into a sheet.

	A	B	C
1	1	8	9
2	2	7	10
3	3	6	11

Figure 1: Enter numbers

- 3) Select cell A3, which contains the number 3, and copy the value to the clipboard.
- 4) Select the range A1:C3.
- 5) Use **Tools > Macros > Record Macro** to start the macro recorder. The Record Macro dialog is displayed with a stop recording button.

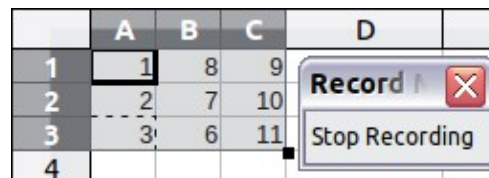


Figure 2: Stop recording button

- 6) Use **Edit > Paste Special** to open the Paste Special dialog (Figure 3).

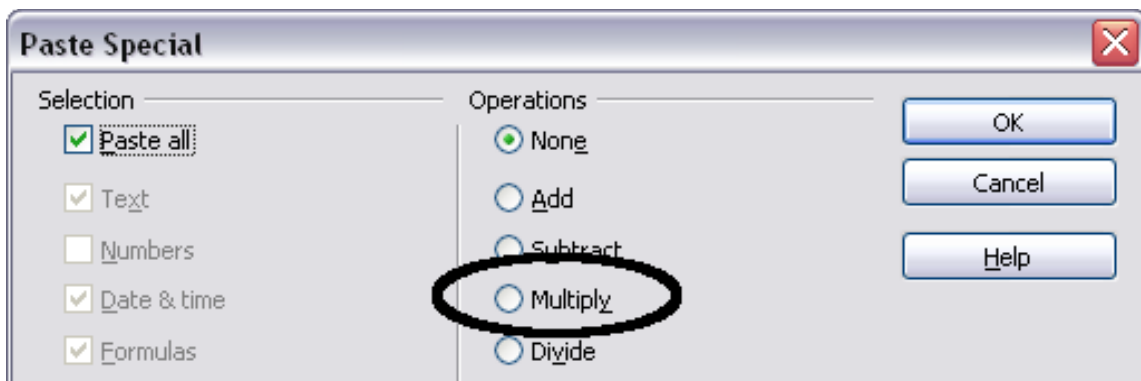


Figure 3: Paste Special dialog

7) Set the operation to **Multiply** and click **OK**. The cells are now multiplied by 3 (Figure 4).

	A	B	C	D
1	3	24	27	
2	6	21	30	
3	9	18	33	
4				

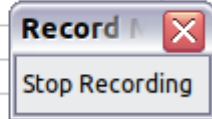
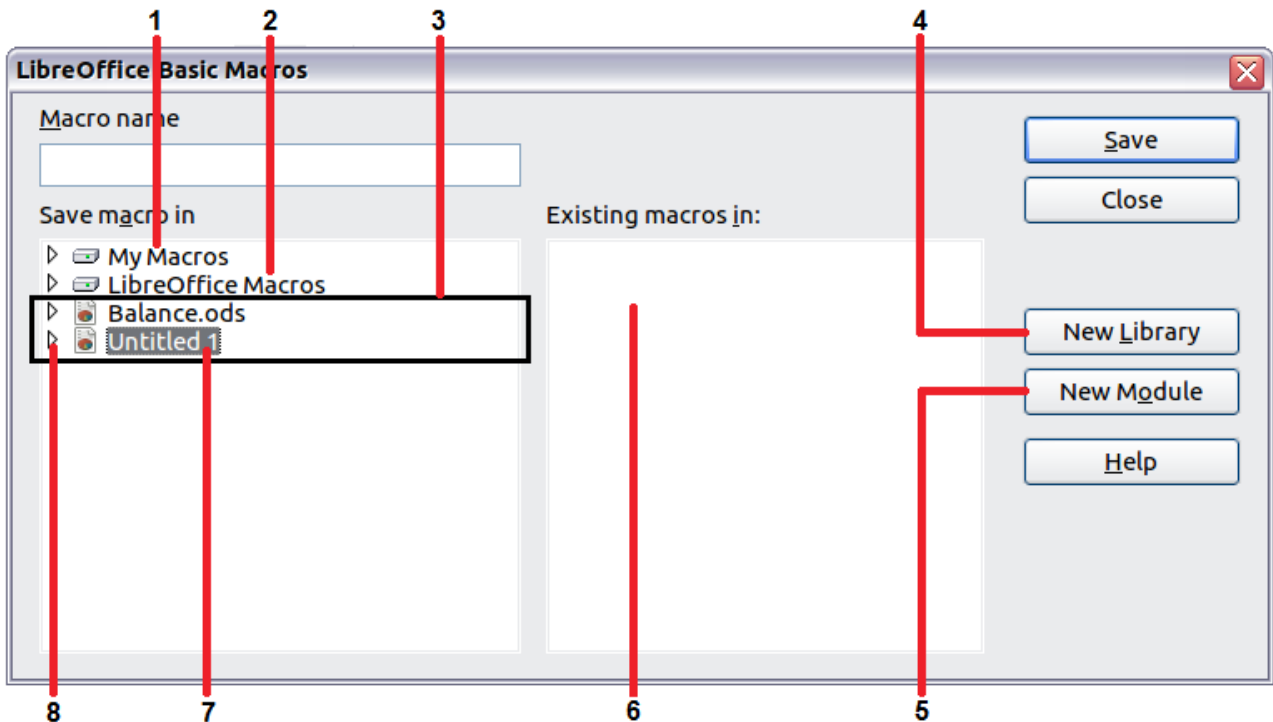


Figure 4: Cells multiplied by 3

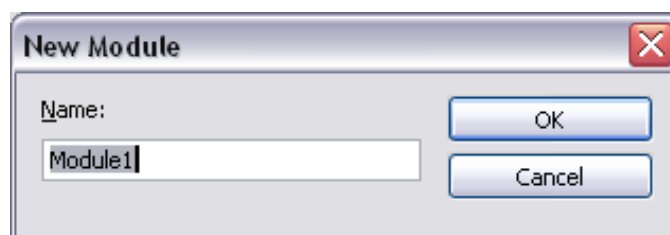
8) Click **Stop Recording** to stop the macro recorder. The LibreOffice Basic Macros dialog (Figure 5) opens.



- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 My Macros | 5 Create new module in library |
| 2 LibreOffice Macros | 6 Macros in selected library |
| 3 Open documents | 7 Current document |
| 4 Create new library | 8 Expand/collapse list |

Figure 5: Parts of the LibreOffice Basic Macros dialog

- 9) Select the current document. For this example, it is *Untitled 1*. Existing documents show a library named Standard. This library is not created until the document is saved or the library is needed, so at this point your new document does not contain a library. You can create a new library to contain the macro, but this is not necessary.
- 10) Click **New Module**. If no libraries exist, then the Standard library is automatically created and used. In the New Module dialog, type a name for the new module or leave the name as Module1.



Note

The libraries, modules and macro names must follow some strict rules. Following the main rules, the names must:

- Begin with a letter
- Not contain spaces
- Not contain special characters, accents included, except for _ (underscore)

- 11) Click **OK** to create a new module named Module1. Select the newly created Module1, type **PasteMultiply** in the *Macro name* box at the upper left, and click **Save**. (See Figure 6.)

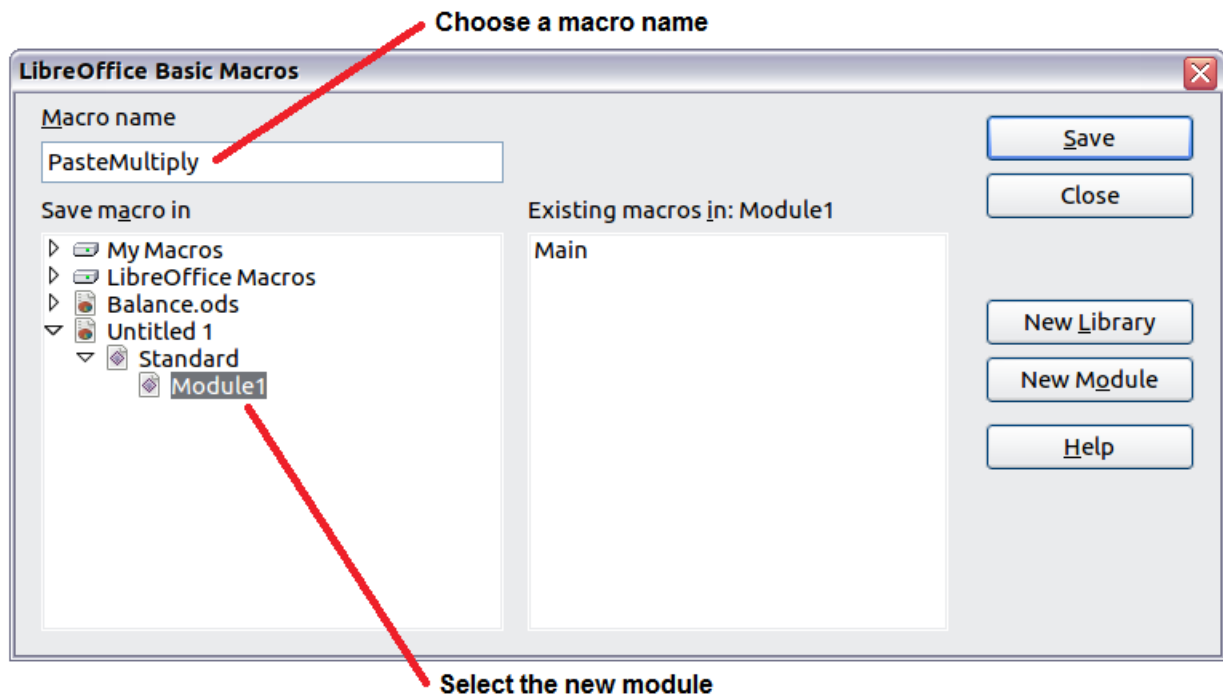


Figure 6: Select the module and name the macro

The created macro is saved in Module1 of the Standard library in the *Untitled 1* document. Listing 1 shows the contents of the macro.

Listing 1. Paste special with multiply.

```
sub PasteMultiply
    rem -----
    rem define variables
    dim document as object
    dim dispatcher as object
    rem -----
    rem get access to the document
    document = ThisComponent.CurrentController.Frame
    dispatcher = createUnoService("com.sun.star.frame.DispatchHelper")

    rem -----
    dim args1(5) as new com.sun.star.beans.PropertyValue
    args1(0).Name = "Flags"
    args1(0).Value = "A"
    args1(1).Name = "FormulaCommand"
    args1(1).Value = 3
    args1(2).Name = "SkipEmptyCells"
    args1(2).Value = false
    args1(3).Name = "Transpose"
```

```
args1(3).Value = false
args1(4).Name = "AsLink"
args1(4).Value = false
args1(5).Name = "MoveMode"
args1(5).Value = 4
```

```
dispatcher.executeDispatch(document, ".uno:InsertContents", "", 0, args1())
end sub
```

More detail on recording macros is provided in Chapter 13, Getting Started with Macros, in the *Getting Started* guide; we recommend you read it if you have not already done so. More detail is also provided in the following sections, but not as related to recording macros.

Write your own functions

Calc can call macros as Calc functions. Use the following steps to create a simple macro:

- 1) Create a new Calc document named `CalcTestMacros.ods`.
- 2) Use **Tools > Macros > Organize Macros > LibreOffice Basic** to open the LibreOffice Basic Macros dialog. The *Macro from* box lists available macro library containers including currently open LibreOffice documents. *My Macros* contains macros that you write or add to LibreOffice. *LibreOffice Macros* contains macros included with LibreOffice and should not be changed.

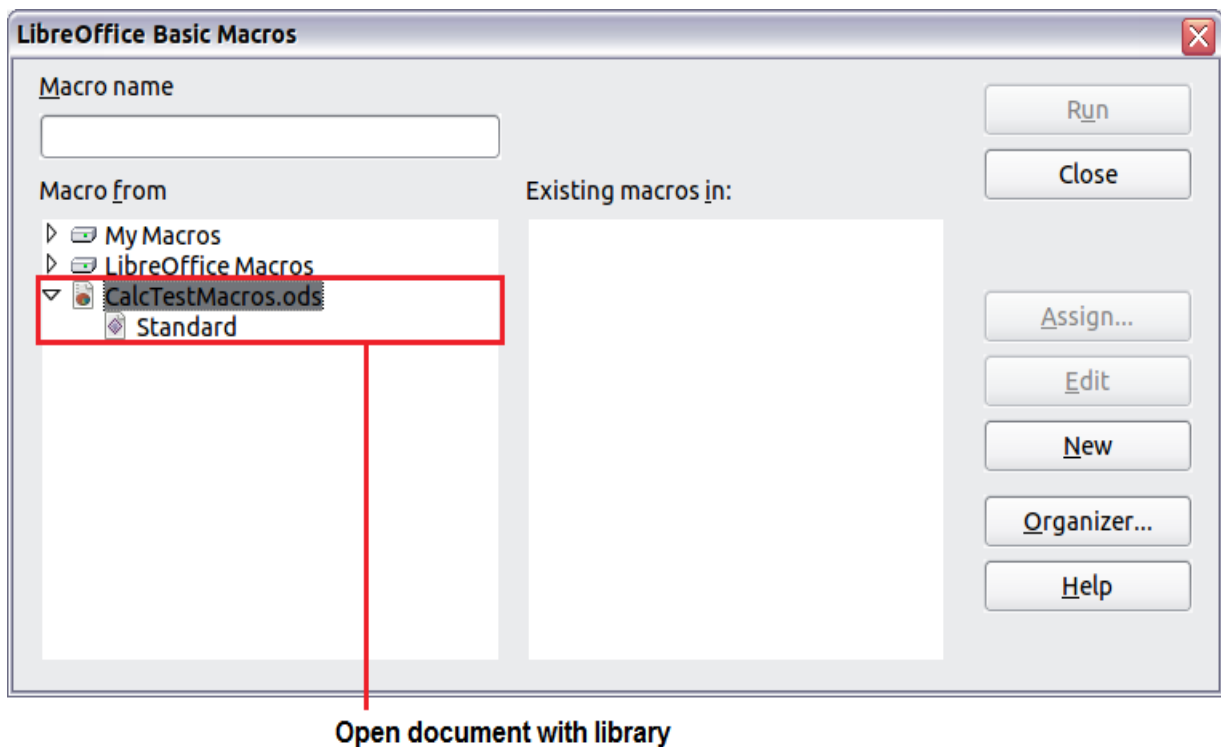


Figure 7: LibreOffice Basic Macros dialog

- 3) Click **Manage** to open the LibreOffice Basic Macro Organizer dialog (Figure 8). On the Libraries tab, select the document to contain the macro.

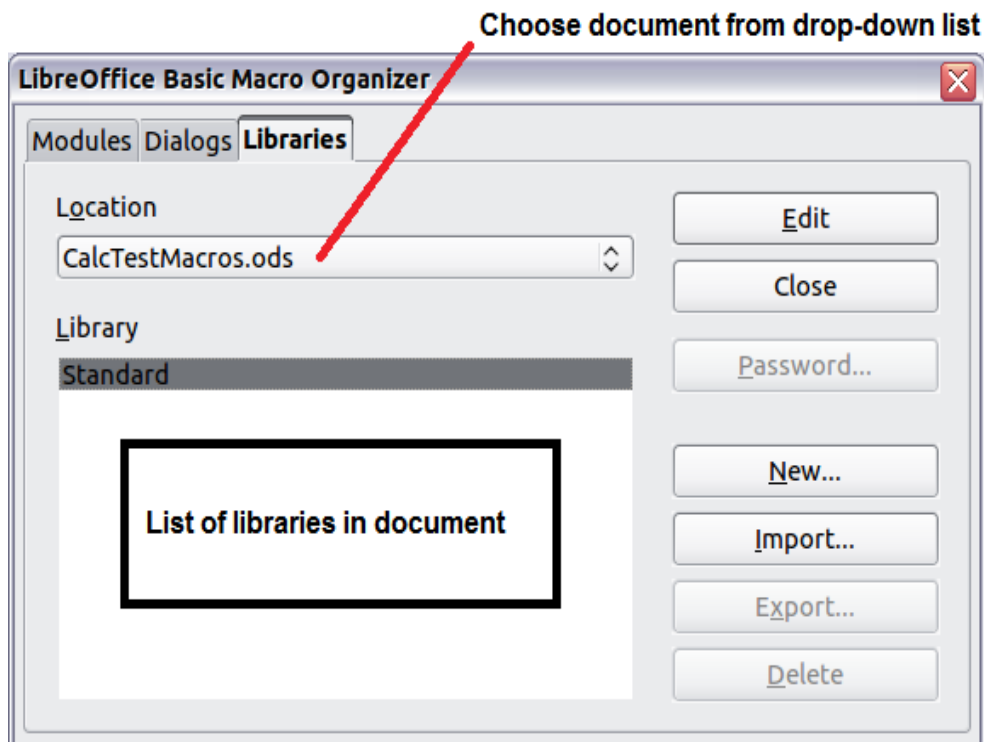


Figure 8: LibreOffice Basic Macro Organizer

- 4) Click **New** to open the New Library dialog.

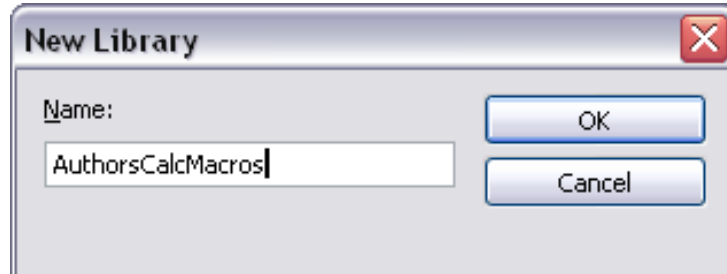


Figure 9: New Library dialog

- 5) Enter a descriptive library name (such as AuthorsCalcMacros) and click **OK** to create the library. The new library name is shown in the library list, but the dialog may show only a portion of the name.

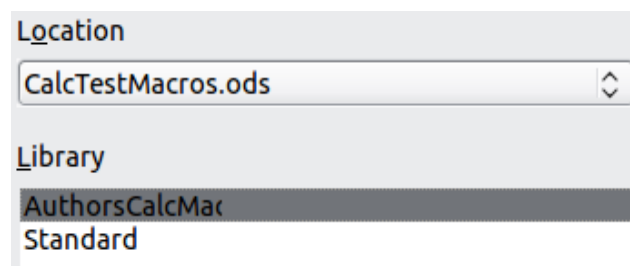


Figure 10: The library is shown in the organizer

- 6) Select AuthorsCalcMacros and click **Edit** to edit the library. Calc automatically creates a module named Module1 and a macro named Main.

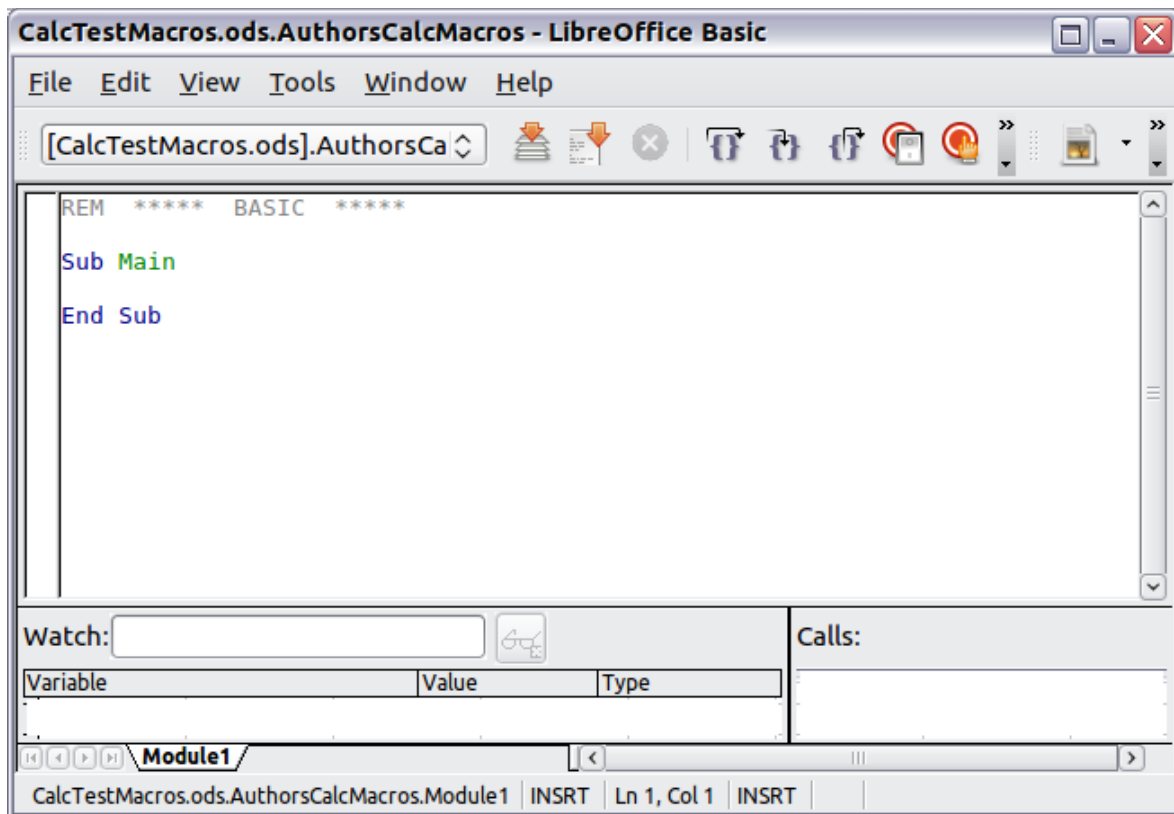


Figure 11: Basic Integrated Development Environment (IDE)

- 7) Modify the code so that it is the same as that shown in Listing 2. The important addition is the creation of the NumberFive function, which returns the number five. The Option Explicit statement forces all variables to be declared before they are used. If Option Explicit is omitted, variables are automatically defined at first use as type Variant.
- 8) Save the modified Module1.

Listing 2. Function that returns five.

```
REM ***** BASIC *****  
Option Explicit  
  
Sub Main  
  
End Sub  
  
Function NumberFive()  
    NumberFive = 5  
End Function
```

Using a macro as a function

Using the newly created Calc document CalcTestMacros.ods, enter the formula =NumberFive() (see Figure 12). Calc finds the macro and calls it.

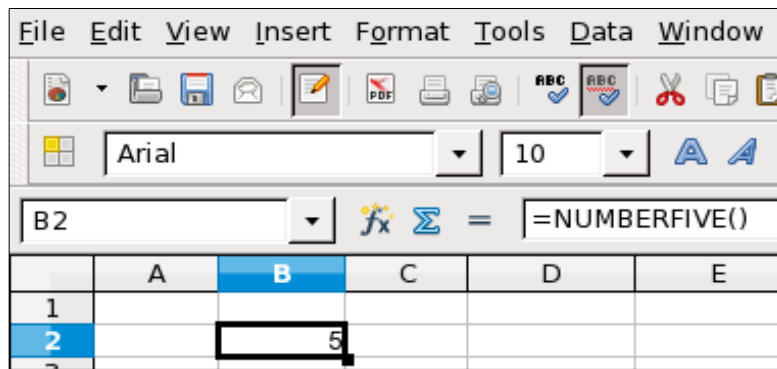


Figure 12: Use the NumberFive() Macro as a Calc function

Tip

Function names are not case sensitive. In Figure 12, you can enter =NumberFive() and Calc clearly shows =NUMBERFIVE().

Save the Calc document, close it, and open it again. Depending on your settings in **Tools > Options > LibreOffice > Security > Macro Security**, Calc will display the warning shown in Figure 13 or the one shown in Figure 14. You will need to click **Enable Macros**, or Calc will not allow any macros to be run inside the document. If you do not expect a document to contain a macro, it is safer to click **Disable Macros** in case the macro is a virus.

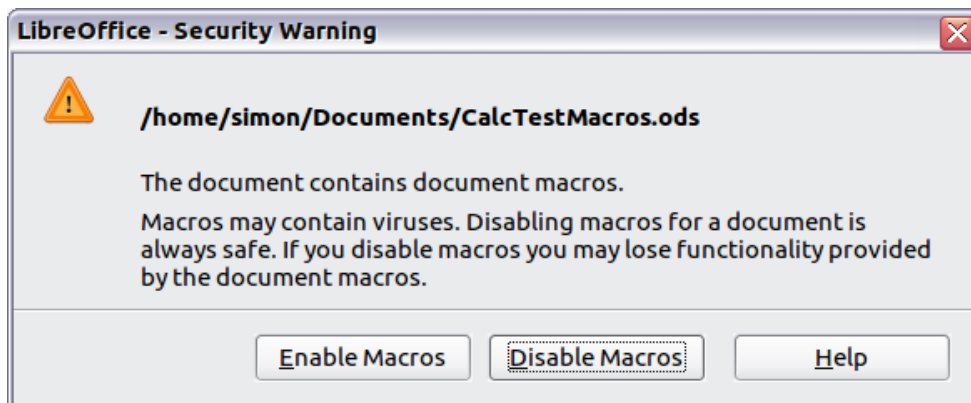


Figure 13: LibreOffice warns you that a document contains macros

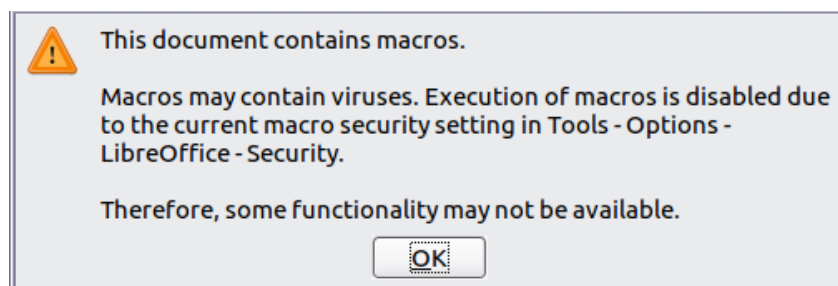


Figure 14: Warning if macros are disabled

If you choose to disable macros, then when the document loads, Calc can no longer find the function.

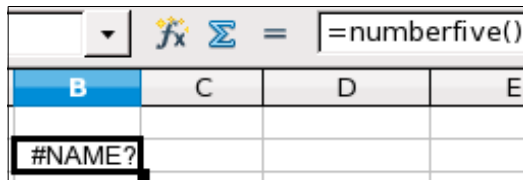


Figure 15: The function is gone

When a document is created and saved, it automatically contains a library named Standard. The Standard library is automatically loaded when the document is opened. No other library is automatically loaded.

Calc does not contain a function named NumberFive(), so it checks all opened and visible macro libraries for the function. Libraries in *LibreOffice Macros*, *My Macros*, and the Calc document are checked for an appropriately named function (see Figure 7). The NumberFive() function is stored in the AuthorsCalcMacros library, which is not automatically loaded when the document is opened.

Use **Tools > Macros > Organize Macros > LibreOffice Basic** to open the LibreOffice Basic Macros dialog (see Figure 16). Expand CalcTestMacros and find AuthorsCalcMacros. The icon for a loaded library is a different color from the icon for a library that is not loaded.

Click the expansion symbol (usually a plus or a triangle) next to AuthorsCalcMacros to load the library. The icon changes color to indicate that the library is now loaded. Click **Close** to close the dialog.

Unfortunately, the cells containing =NumberFive() are in error. Calc does not recalculate cells in error unless you edit them or somehow change them. The usual solution is to store macros used as functions in the Standard library. If the macro is large or if there are many macros, a stub with the desired name is stored in the Standard library. The stub macro loads the library containing the implementation and then calls the implementation.

- 1) Use **Tools > Macros > Organize Macros > LibreOffice Basic** to open the LibreOffice Basic Macros dialog. Select the NumberFive macro and click **Edit** to open the macro for editing.

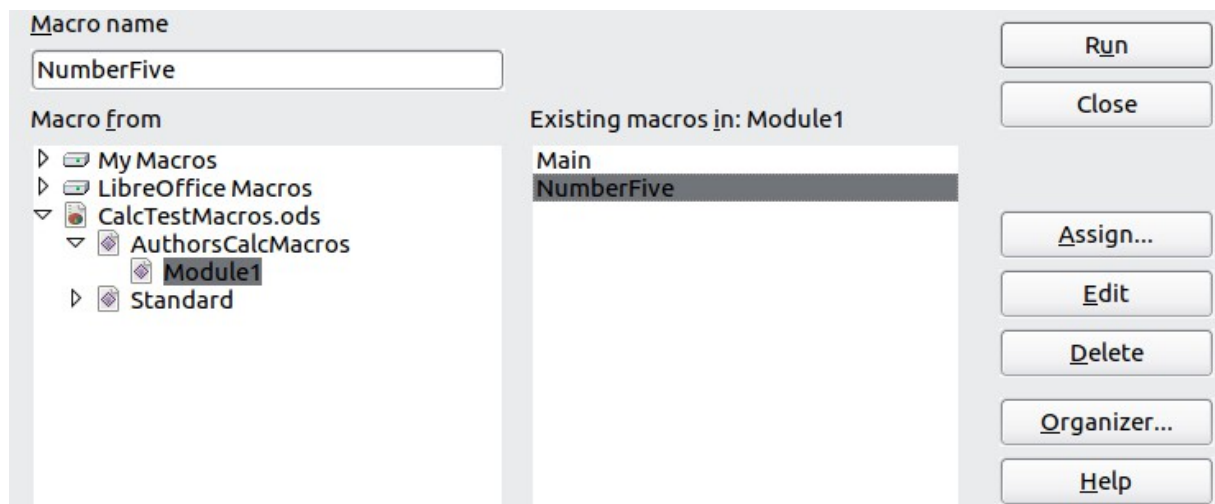


Figure 16: Select a macro and click Edit

- 2) Change the name of NumberFive to NumberFive_Implementation (Listing 3).

Listing 3. Change the name of NumberFive to NumberFive_Implementation

```
Function NumberFive_Implementation()
    NumberFive_Implementation() = 5
End Function
```

- 3) In the Basic IDE (see Figure 11), hover the mouse cursor over the toolbar buttons to display the tool tips. Click the **Select Macro** button to open the LibreOffice Basic Macros dialog (see Figure 16).
- 4) Select the Standard library in the CalcTestMacros document and click **New** to create a new module. Enter a meaningful name such as CalcFunctions and click **OK**. LibreOffice automatically creates a macro named Main and opens the module for editing.
- 5) Create a macro in the Standard library that calls the implementation function (see Listing 4). The new macro loads the AuthorsCalcMacros library if it is not already loaded, and then calls the implementation function.
- 6) Save, close, and reopen the Calc document. This time, the NumberFive() function works.

Listing 4. Change the name of NumberFive to NumberFive_Implementation.

```
Function NumberFive()
    If NOT BasicLibraries.IsLibraryLoaded("AuthorsCalcMacros") Then
        BasicLibraries.LoadLibrary("AuthorsCalcMacros")
    End If
    NumberFive = NumberFive_Implementation()
End Function
```

Passing arguments to a macro

To illustrate a function that accepts arguments, we will write a macro that calculates the sum of its arguments that are positive—it will ignore arguments that are less than zero (see Listing 5).

Listing 5. PositiveSum calculates the sum of the positive arguments.

```
Function PositiveSum(Optional x)
    Dim TheSum As Double
    Dim iRow As Integer
    Dim iCol As Integer

    TheSum = 0.0
    If NOT IsMissing(x) Then
        If NOT IsArray(x) Then
            If x > 0 Then TheSum = x
        Else
            For iRow = LBound(x, 1) To UBound(x, 1)
                For iCol = LBound(x, 2) To UBound(x, 2)
                    If x(iRow, iCol) > 0 Then TheSum = TheSum + x(iRow, iCol)
                Next
            Next
        End If
    End If
    PositiveSum = TheSum
End Function
```

The macro in Listing 5 demonstrates some important techniques:

- 1) The argument *x* is optional. When an argument is not optional and the function is called without it, LibreOffice prints a warning message every time the macro is called. If Calc calls the function many times, then the error is displayed many times.
- 2) `IsMissing` checks that an argument was passed before the argument is used.
- 3) `IsArray` checks to see if the argument is a single value, or an array. For example, `=PositiveSum(7)` or `=PositiveSum(A4)`. In the first case, the number 7 is passed as an argument, and in the second case, the value of cell A4 is passed to the function.
- 4) If a range is passed to the function, it is passed as a two-dimensional array of values; for example, `=PositiveSum(A2:B5)`. `LBound` and `UBound` are used to determine the

array bounds that are used. Although the lower bound is one, it is considered safer to use LBound in case it changes in the future.

Tip

The macro in Listing 5 is careful and checks to see if the argument is an array or a single argument. The macro does not verify that each value is numeric. You may be as careful as you like. The more things you check, the more robust the macro is, and the slower it runs.

Passing one argument is as easy as passing two: add another argument to the function definition (see Listing 6). When calling a function with two arguments, separate the arguments with a semicolon; for example, =TestMax(3; -4).

Listing 6. TestMax accepts two arguments and returns the larger of the two.

```
Function TestMax(x, y)
  If x >= y Then
    TestMax = x
  Else
    TestMax = y
  End If
End Function
```

Arguments are passed as values

Arguments passed to a macro from Calc are always values. It is not possible to know what cells, if any, are used. For example, =PositiveSum(A3) passes the value of cell A3, and PositiveSum has no way of knowing that cell A3 was used. If you must know which cells are referenced rather than the values in the cells, pass the range as a string, parse the string, and obtain the values in the referenced cells.

Writing macros that act like built-in functions

Although Calc finds and calls macros as normal functions, they do not really behave as built-in functions. For example, macros do not appear in the function lists. It is possible to write functions that behave as regular functions by writing an Add-In. However, this is an advanced topic that is not covered here.

Accessing cells directly

You can access the LibreOffice internal objects directly to manipulate a Calc document. For example, the macro in Listing 7 adds the values in cell A2 from every sheet in the current document. ThisComponent is set by StarBasic when the macro starts to reference the current document. A Calc document contains sheets: ThisComponent.getSheets(). Use getCellByPosition(col, row) to return a cell at a specific row and column.

Listing 7. Add cell A2 in every sheet.

```
Function SumCellsAllSheets()
  Dim TheSum As Double
  Dim i As Integer
  Dim oSheets
  Dim oSheet
  Dim oCell
```

```

oSheets = ThisComponent.getSheets()
For i = 0 To oSheets.getCount() - 1
    oSheet = oSheets.getByIndex(i)
    oCell = oSheet.getCellByPosition(0, 1) ' GetCell A2
    TheSum = TheSum + oCell.getValue()
Next
SumCellsAllSheets = TheSum
End Function

```

Tip

A cell object supports the methods `getValue()`, `getString()`, and `getFormula()` to get the numerical value, the string value, or the formula used in a cell. Use the corresponding set functions to set appropriate values.

Use `oSheet.getCellRangeByName("A2")` to return a range of cells by name. If a single cell is referenced, then a cell object is returned. If a cell range is given, then an entire range of cells is returned (see Listing 8). Notice that a cell range returns data as an array of arrays, which is more cumbersome than treating it as an array with two dimensions as is done in Listing 5.

Listing 8. Add cell A2:C5 in every sheet

```

Function SumCellsAllSheets()
    Dim TheSum As Double
    Dim iRow As Integer, iCol As Integer, i As Integer
    Dim oSheets, oSheet, oCells
    Dim oRow(), oRows()

    oSheets = ThisComponent.getSheets()
    For i = 0 To oSheets.getCount() - 1
        oSheet = oSheets.getByIndex(i)
        oCells = oSheet.getCellRangeByName("A2:C5")
        REM getDataArray() returns the data as variant so strings
        REM are also returned.
        REM getData() returns data data as type Double, so only
        REM numbers are returned.
        oRows() = oCells.getData()
        For iRow = LBound(oRows()) To UBound(oRows())
            oRow() = oRows(iRow)
            For iCol = LBound(oRow()) To UBound(oRow())
                TheSum = TheSum + oRow(iCol)
            Next
        Next
    Next
    SumCellsAllSheets = TheSum
End Function

```

Tip

When a macro is called as a Calc function, the macro cannot modify any value in the sheet from which the macro was called, except the value of the cell that contains the function.

Sorting

Consider sorting the data in Figure 17. First, sort on column B descending and then column A ascending.

	A	B	C
1	1	5	One
2	4	1	Two
3	3	1	Three
4	7	8	Four
5	4	2	Five

Becomes

	A	B	C
1	7	8	Four
2	1	5	One
3	4	2	Five
4	3	1	Three
5	4	1	Two

Figure 17: Sort column B descending and column A ascending

The example in Listing 9, however, demonstrates how to sort on two columns.

Listing 9. Sort cells A1:C5 on Sheet 1.

```
Sub SortRange
    Dim oSheet          ' Calc sheet containing data to sort.
    Dim oCellRange     ' Data range to sort.

    REM An array of sort fields determines the columns that are
    REM sorted. This is an array with two elements, 0 and 1.
    REM To sort on only one column, use:
    REM Dim oSortFields(0) As New com.sun.star.util.SortField
    Dim oSortFields(1) As New com.sun.star.util.SortField

    REM The sort descriptor is an array of properties.
    REM The primary property contains the sort fields.
    Dim oSortDesc(0) As New com.sun.star.beans.PropertyValue

    REM Get the sheet named "Sheet1"
    oSheet = ThisComponent.Sheets.getByNamed("Sheet1")

    REM Get the cell range to sort
    oCellRange = oSheet.getCellRangeByName("A1:C5")

    REM Select the range to sort.
    REM The only purpose would be to emphasize the sorted data.
    'ThisComponent.getCurrentController().select(oCellRange)

    REM The columns are numbered starting with 0, so
    REM column A is 0, column B is 1, etc.
    REM Sort column B (column 1) descending.
    oSortFields(0).Field = 1
    oSortFields(0).SortAscending = FALSE

    REM If column B has two cells with the same value,
    REM then use column A ascending to decide the order.
    oSortFields(1).Field = 0
    oSortFields(1).SortAscending = True

    REM Setup the sort descriptor.
    oSortDesc(0).Name = "SortFields"
    oSortDesc(0).Value = oSortFields()

    REM Sort the range.
    oCellRange.Sort(oSortDesc())
End Sub
```

Conclusion

This chapter provides a brief overview on how to create libraries and modules, using the macro recorder, using macros as Calc functions, and writing your own macros without the macro recorder. Each topic deserves at least one chapter, and writing your own macros for Calc could easily fill an entire book. In other words, this is just the beginning of what you can learn!