DATA QUALITY CHECKLIST

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Boost the credibility and utility of your organization's data by following these key action items. Check off each step as you complete it to ensure the information you collect remains accurate, timely, and consistent.

1   Acknowledge the Importance of High-Quality Data

☐ Recognize Data's Impact
Understand that flawed information can derail analyses and decisions, hurting outcomes and progress

☐ Identify Potential Points of Failure
Pinpoint the spreadsheets, databases, and systems where poor data health can appear.

☐ Adapt for Various Tools
While this checklist highlights practices for spreadsheet validation, bear in mind that every application or platform will have its own features for upholding data standards.

2   Decide Where Validation is Most Beneficial

☐ Categorize Critical Data Fields
Determine which data types (e.g., numbers, text, dates, categories) will benefit most from validation rules.

☐ Set Proper Conditions
For each category—whether numeric ranges, date constraints, or dropdown lists—establish clear parameters on what is valid.

3   Maintain Core Data Quality Dimensions

☐ Timeliness
Confirm whether the data's freshness meets the demands of your tasks or analyses.

☐ Accuracy
Ensure the data accurately reflects real-life conditions or events.

☐ Completeness
Check how much information is missing or partially filled, and correct gaps where possible.

☐ Uniqueness
Eliminate duplicate records that can distort analytical outcomes.

☐ Consistency
Validate that all fields in your datasets use standard formatting, labeling, and potential information types.

4   Create and Implement Validation Schemes

☐ Outline Validation Methods
Decide if you need constraints on data types, permissible ranges, fixed lists, or regular expressions for patterns.

☐ Conduct Small-Scale Testing
Before rolling out to everyone, test validations with designated participants or teams to spot potential pitfalls.

☐ Collect Feedback and Iterate
Gather input from users and refine your validation processes to account for real-world data scenarios.

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5 Spot Typical Data Quality Concerns

☐ Incomplete Entries
Keep an eye on blank cells or partial inputs that could skew insights.

☐ Incorrect Values
Track down data that doesn't match expected formats or ranges (e.g., misplaced decimals or typo errors).

☐ Redundant Records
Identify any repeated entries that can compromise analyses and proper resource allocation.

☐ Inconsistent Formatting
Ensure that standards for dates, addresses, and units of measure are upheld across all fields.

☐ Biased Samples
Monitor for systemic bias, such as underrepresentation of certain groups or areas.

☐ Out-of-Date Information
Regularly purge or update records that no longer mirror the current reality.

6 Perform Routine Checks and Adopt Best Practices

☐ Schedule Regular Reviews
Decide how frequently data audits need to occur based on how critical and rapidly-changing your information is.

☐ Establish Concrete Metrics
Define measurable benchmarks (e.g., acceptable error margin, completeness threshold) to gauge progress.

☐ Assign Responsibility
Make it clear who is in charge of verifying data validity, fixing issues, and leading process improvements.

☐ Educate Your Team
Train staff on data entry standards, common pitfalls, and how to properly use validation features.

☐ Cleanse and Standardize
Regularly run processes to remove duplicates, rectify errors, and unify varied data formats.

☐ Evolve Your Approach
Periodically review what works and what doesn't, then refine your validation system for optimal results.

7 Plan the Next Steps

☐ Prioritize Changes
Identify which enhancements to validation or cleaning will deliver the biggest gains in data quality.

☐ Update Tools and Systems
Incorporate improvements into every platform where data is stored, from spreadsheets to enterprise databases.

☐ Consider Specialized Roles
If data management is becoming more complex, evaluate creating or hiring roles focused on data operations and analytics.

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