Turn messy receipts into a checked expense tracker

The Other Few Academy | Moderate / Intermediate | 45-60 minutes

Build a reusable tracker from six differently formatted receipt extracts. AI drafts the rows. You check the evidence, make the approval decisions and let spreadsheet formulas calculate the total.

Your finished result

A six-row spending record with four approved purchases, one duplicate and one incomplete receipt. Keep the original extracts, your actual AI output, the reusable prompt and a correction log beside the spreadsheet.

Before you start

You need basic prompting and source-checking skills, a browser with eligible Gemini access, and LibreOffice Calc or a compatible spreadsheet editor. Use ordinary chat within the available free limits. A computer is easier for importing; the guide is readable on a phone. No coding or paid integration is needed.

Open these files

1. Read receipts.txt. All transactions and suppliers are fictional.

2. Open extraction-prompt.txt and Receipt-Expense-Tracker.xlsx. Begin on Practice.

3. Keep the Worked example tab and facilitator-answer-key.csv for comparison after your first attempt. Do not supply them to the AI.

What you are learning

Extract consistent fields from mixed layouts, distinguish an unknown amount from zero, recognise a second copy of the same purchase, and test whether a spreadsheet still behaves correctly after an edit.

Extract and check the facts

Ask for a consistent first draft

Paste extraction-prompt.txt into ordinary Gemini chat, followed by all of receipts.txt. Ask for six CSV columns: Source ID, Receipt ref, Date, Supplier, Currency, Amount. CSV is plain text with one record per line and fields separated by commas.

The prompt keeps one row for every extract, uses YYYY-MM-DD dates, preserves receipt references and leaves unreadable amounts empty. It asks for review observations separately from the CSV. Approval and arithmetic remain later tasks.

Check every row before importing

1. Match each row to R01-R06. Confirm the receipt reference, date and supplier against the original text.

2. Check the currency and receipt total. Do not add item prices to a total or treat a reprint as a new purchase.

3. Keep a missing amount empty. Never replace it with zero or a guessed price.

4. Save the unedited response. Record corrections in practice-log.txt so you can explain what changed.

Two useful distinctions

A source ID identifies an extract. A receipt reference identifies a purchase within its supplier. Two extracts can therefore belong to the same purchase. Preserve both extracts while counting that purchase only once.

An unreadable amount is unresolved. An actual amount of 0.00 would be a known zero. The supplied incomplete receipt does not state a zero total.

If access or the output causes trouble

If usage is unavailable, save your work and resume later without upgrading. If CSV is malformed, ask for the same six columns again and retain the failed attempt. Do not ask the model merely to reassure you that it is right: compare its values with the sources.

Import and approve the entries

Import without overwriting the workbook

1. Save only the CSV block as a plain text .csv file. Leave out code fences, review notes and surrounding prose.

2. Open the CSV separately in Calc. Choose comma as separator and double quote as text delimiter. Check that the preview has six columns.

3. Keep Source ID and Receipt ref as text. Import Date as YMD and Amount as a number using English (UK) decimal settings. Formatting a text amount as currency does not make it numeric.

4. Copy only the six data rows, without headers, into Practice A10:F15 using values-only paste. Do not overwrite G:I or the formulas at the top. If all values land in one column, undo and correct the import.

Make the human review decisions

Use G for Needs review, Approved, Duplicate or Incomplete. Add evidence or the next action in H. Approve only a complete, source-checked, unique purchase. Keep the duplicate row and its extracted amount; its status excludes it from spending. Leave the unreadable amount blank and record what must be confirmed.

Understand the calculation

Column I contributes an amount only for an Approved GBP row with the required fields and a numeric amount. Two Approved rows with the same supplier and receipt reference produce Duplicate approval. A missing field, non-GBP currency or nonnumeric amount produces Check entry. The total then says Check entries rather than showing a misleading number.

The duplicate guard compares exact supplier and reference text. You must still spot spelling or spacing variations. Dates must also be checked by you. The practice area supports 30 entries in rows 10-39; extending beyond that requires extending formulas and ranges.

Test the tracker and keep your work

Compare after your first attempt

The reference result has R01-R04 Approved, R05 Duplicate and R06 Incomplete. The four approved amounts are GBP 12.00, 18.00, 25.00 and 9.50. Their total is GBP 64.50. Compare the original sources and your row-level checks, not just the final total.

Run three challenges in a disposable copy

1. Temporarily mark R05 Approved. The total should say Check entries because R02 and R05 now approve the same purchase. Restore R05 to Duplicate.

2. Temporarily mark R06 Approved while its amount stays blank. Expect Check entries. Restore Incomplete.

3. Change R01 amount from 12 to 13. Expect GBP 65.50. Restore 12 and confirm GBP 64.50.

Record what you actually observed

Use practice-log.txt for actual answers, corrections and challenge results. The Worked example and CSV answer key are manually checked teaching references; they are not a recording of Gemini output. A convincing wrong example to reject is R06 amount 0.00.

Save and reopen

Save the master as .xlsx or .ods, then close and reopen it. Recheck the total, dates, dropdowns and formulas in your spreadsheet app. CSV alone does not retain the workbook features. Keep the sources, original AI output and correction log with the master file.

Explain your result

Before marking the task complete, explain why the duplicate is still visible but excluded, why the unknown amount stays blank, and what a human must check when using the process again. Repeat with non-sensitive documents you own or have permission to use.

Provider guidance and Academy links are in references.txt. This lesson creates a practice spending record; it does not decide business-expense categories or tax treatment.