

Twitter Thread by Blake Burge ■



Blake Burge ■

[@blakeaburge](#)



I built a monthly budget & expense tracker in Google Sheets this week.

Here's a breakdown of how it works and a free template you can use: ■

First things first:

There are about 1,000,000 different ways you can budget your money.

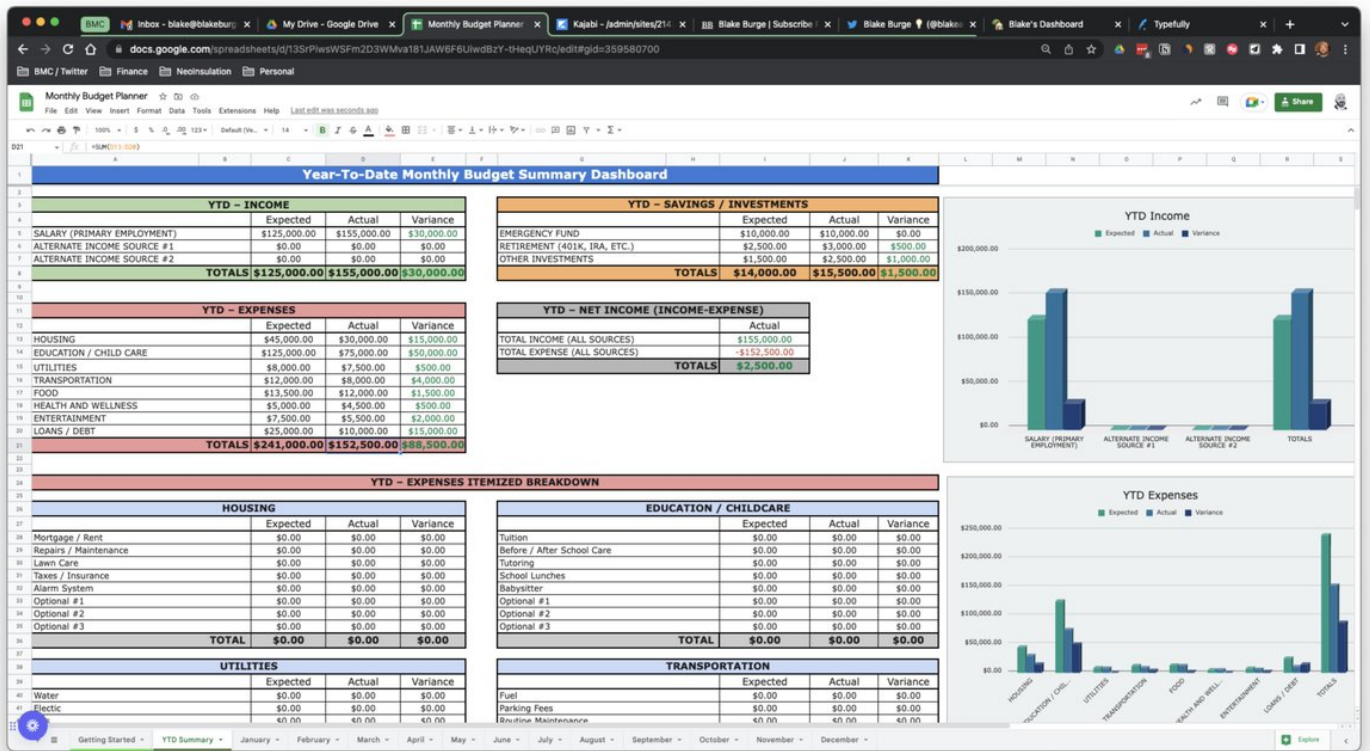
But if you're looking for a financial advisor, that ain't me.

I'm just sharing a simple template that anyone can use to get started.

(Link at the end)

Wanna know how it works?

Read on:■■■



Step 1: Setup

We'll start by creating our framework.

Put simply:

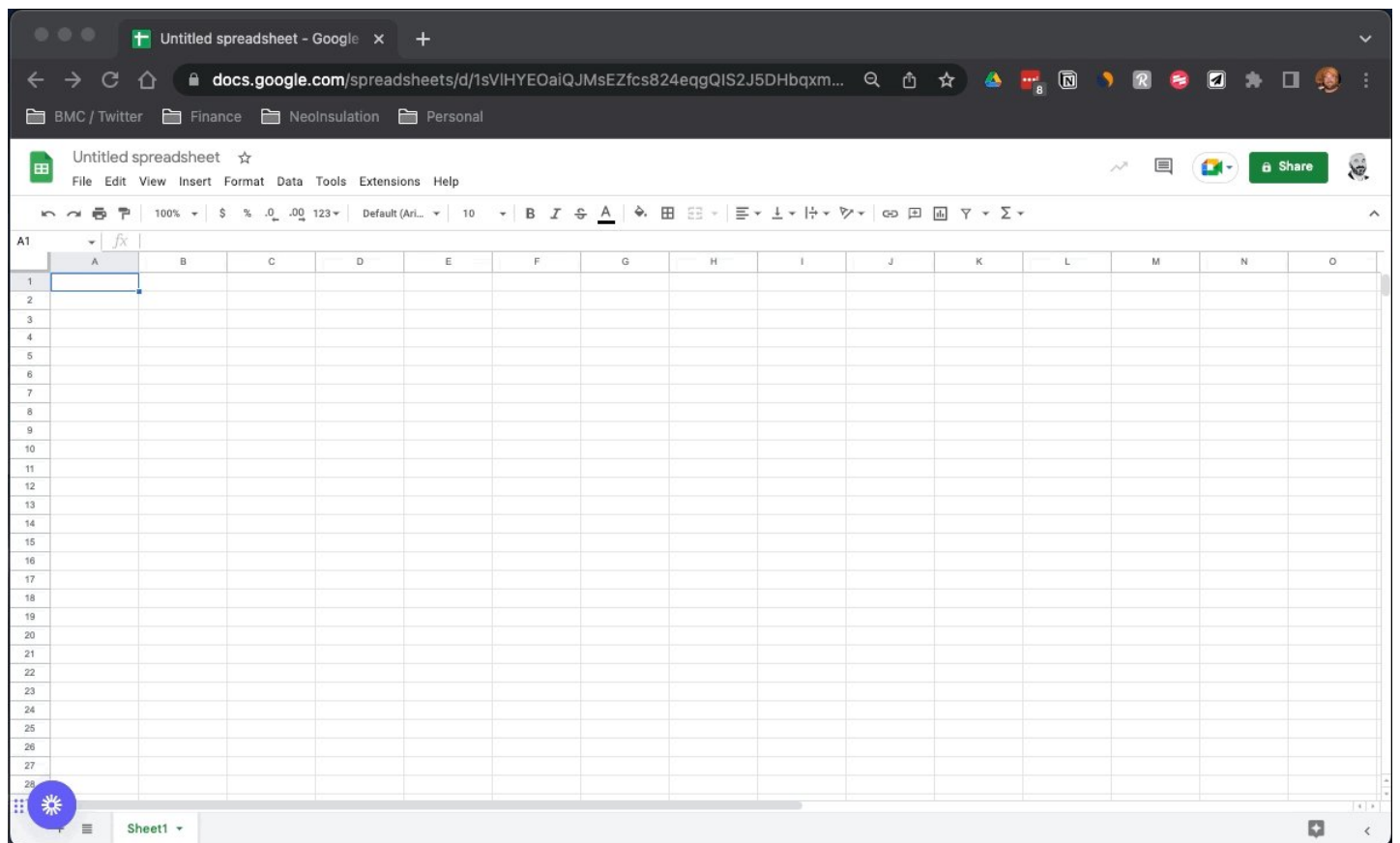
- What do we want to track?
- How often?

I prefer to track finances on a monthly basis.

Begin by renaming one tab (or worksheet) within your doc & creating another.

Tab 1 - "YTD Dashboard"

Tab 2 - "January"



Step 2: What to track?

For the sake of time & simplicity, I've gone ahead & populated January with a few sample ideas:

- High-level categories: Income, Savings, & Expenses.
- Subitems below each:

Income → Salary

Housing → Lawn Care

Utilities → Electric

And so on...

JANUARY									
INCOME				SAVINGS / INVESTMENTS					
	Expected	Actual	Variance		Expected	Actual	Variance		
SALARY (PRIMARY EMPLOYMENT)			\$0.00	EMERGENCY FUND			\$0.00		
ALTERNATE INCOME SOURCE #1			\$0.00	RETIREMENT (401K, IRA, ETC.)			\$0.00		
ALTERNATE INCOME SOURCE #2			\$0.00	OTHER INVESTMENTS			\$0.00		
TOTALS	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	TOTALS	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		
EXPENSES									
HOUSING				EDUCATION / CHILDCARE					
	Expected	Actual	Variance		Expected	Actual	Variance		
Mortgage / Rent			\$0.00	Tuition			\$0.00		
Repairs / Maintenance			\$0.00	Before / After School Care			\$0.00		
Lawn Care			\$0.00	Tutoring			\$0.00		
Taxes / Insurance			\$0.00	School Lunches			\$0.00		
Alarm System			\$0.00	Babysitter			\$0.00		
Optional #1			\$0.00	Optional #1			\$0.00		
Optional #2			\$0.00	Optional #2			\$0.00		
Optional #3			\$0.00	Optional #3			\$0.00		
TOTAL	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	TOTAL	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		
UTILITIES				TRANSPORTATION					

Step 3: Basic Formatting

I like things to be formatted in a similar manner across sheets.

A few quick rules of thumb I've used here:

- Headings: Merge + Center, **Font**, **Bold**
- Sheet Gridlines: Turned off
- Subitems: Heavy borders
- Totals: **Font**, **Bold**

For example:

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INCOME					SAVINGS / INVESTMENTS						
	Expected	Actual	Variance		Expected	Actual	Variance		Expected	Actual	Variance
SALARY (PRIMARY EMPLOYMENT)			\$0.00	EMERGENCY FUND			\$0.00				\$0.00
ALTERNATE INCOME SOURCE #1			\$0.00	RETIREMENT (401K, IRA, ETC.)			\$0.00				\$0.00
ALTERNATE INCOME SOURCE #2			\$0.00	OTHER INVESTMENTS			\$0.00				\$0.00
TOTALS	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	TOTALS	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00				
EXPENSES											
HOUSING					EDUCATION / CHILDCARE						
	Expected	Actual	Variance		Expected	Actual	Variance		Expected	Actual	Variance
Mortgage / Rent			\$0.00	Tuition			\$0.00				\$0.00
Repairs / Maintenance			\$0.00	Before / After School Care			\$0.00				\$0.00
Lawn Care			\$0.00	Tutoring			\$0.00				\$0.00
Taxes / Insurance			\$0.00	School Lunches			\$0.00				\$0.00
Alarm System			\$0.00	Babysitter			\$0.00				\$0.00
Optional #1			\$0.00	Optional #1			\$0.00				\$0.00
Optional #2			\$0.00	Optional #2			\$0.00				\$0.00
Optional #3			\$0.00	Optional #3			\$0.00				\$0.00
TOTAL	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	TOTAL	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00				
UTILITIES					TRANSPORTATION						

YTD Dashboard January

Step 4: Simple Formulas #1

- To start each month, fill out the "Expected" cell for each category & subitem.
- Fill in the "Actual" cell for each item as transactions happen.
- The "Variance" shows the difference between the two using a simple +/- formula.

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Step 5: Simple Formulas #2

The "Totals" cells inside each category also contain a couple of simple formulas:

- Total "Expected/Actual" — An easy "SUM" formula to total all subitems.
- Total "Variance" — An easy +/- formula to calculate our total category variance.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
4			Expected	Actual	Variance				Expected	Actual	Variance	
5	SALARY (PRIMARY EMPLOYMENT)				\$0.00		EMERGENCY FUND				\$0.00	
6	ALTERNATE INCOME SOURCE #1				\$0.00		RETIREMENT (401K, IRA, ETC.)				\$0.00	
7	ALTERNATE INCOME SOURCE #2				\$0.00		OTHER INVESTMENTS				\$0.00	
8	TOTALS		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		TOTALS		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
10	EXPENSES											
12	HOUSING					EDUCATION / CHILDCARE						
13			Expected	Actual	Variance				Expected	Actual	Variance	
14	Mortgage / Rent				\$0.00		Tuition				\$0.00	
15	Repairs / Maintenance				\$0.00		Before / After School Care				\$0.00	
16	Lawn Care				\$0.00		Tutoring				\$0.00	
17	Taxes / Insurance				\$0.00		School Lunches				\$0.00	
18	Alarm System				\$0.00		Babysitter				\$0.00	
19	Optional #1				\$0.00		Optional #1				\$0.00	
20	Optional #2				\$0.00		Optional #2				\$0.00	
21	Optional #3				\$0.00		Optional #3				\$0.00	
22	TOTAL											
24	UTILITIES					TRANSPORTATION						
25			Expected	Actual	Variance				Expected	Actual	Variance	
26	Water				\$0.00		Fuel				\$0.00	
27	Electric				\$0.00		Parking Fees				\$0.00	

Step 6: Conditional Formatting

As values are populated throughout the month, I've applied conditional formatting to ALL "Variance" cells.

This provides a visual reference to quickly identify if you're "Actual" values are ahead or behind the values you "Expected."

Here's how:

Untitled spreadsheet - Google

Step 7: Duplicate Sheets

At this point, your "January" tab is ready to use.

But last I checked there are 11 more months in a year.

Don't worry, with a few clicks & updates you'll be ready to go:

- Add 11 sheets
- Copy & Paste January
- Rename tabs/headings accordingly

JANUARY											
INCOME											
	Expected	Actual	Variance					SAVINGS / INVESTMENTS			
SALARY (PRIMARY EMPLOYMENT)			\$0.00	EMERGENCY FUND				Expected	Actual	Variance	
ALTERNATE INCOME SOURCE #1			\$0.00	RETIREMENT (401K, IRA, ETC.)							\$0.00
ALTERNATE INCOME SOURCE #2			\$0.00	OTHER INVESTMENTS							\$0.00
TOTALS	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	TOTALS				\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
EXPENSES											
HOUSING				EDUCATION / CHILDCARE							
	Expected	Actual	Variance		Expected	Actual	Variance				
Mortgage / Rent			\$0.00	Tuition			\$0.00				
Repairs / Maintenance			\$0.00	Before / After School Care			\$0.00				
Lawn Care			\$0.00	Tutoring			\$0.00				
Taxes / Insurance			\$0.00	School Lunches			\$0.00				
Alarm System			\$0.00	Babysitter			\$0.00				
Optional #1			\$0.00	Optional #1			\$0.00				
Optional #2			\$0.00	Optional #2			\$0.00				
Optional #3			\$0.00	Optional #3			\$0.00				
TOTAL	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	TOTAL	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00				
UTILITIES				TRANSPORTATION							

Step 8: Dashboard

Now that you have all of your monthly tabs created, it's time to build out the "YTD Dashboard"

- Copy the "January" tab & paste it to "YTD"
- Rename headers accordingly
- Add YTD Expenses & Net Income Section

Like this:

Untitled spreadsheet - Google

Step 9: Reference Formulas #1

Now let's tie our dashboard to all of our individual monthly sheets.

We'll use the "YTD Income" category as an example.

- Select "Expected" or "Actual" Cell
- Type "=" to begin the formula
- Select the corresponding cell on each monthly sheet.

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Step 10: Reference Formulas #2

Skip the "YTD Expenses & "YTD Net Income" sections for now.

Complete the same steps outlined in Step 9 for the "Housing" category.

Once done, you can copy & paste the expected + actual fields to the other expenses.

Formulas will carry over.

EXPENSES				
HOUSING				
	Expected	Actual	Variance	
Mortgage / Rent	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Repairs / Maintenance	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Lawn Care	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Taxes / Insurance	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Alarm System	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Optional #1	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Optional #2	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Optional #3	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
TOTAL	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
UTILITIES				
	Expected	Actual	Variance	
Water			\$0.00	
Electric			\$0.00	
Gas			\$0.00	
Trash			\$0.00	
Internet			\$0.00	
Cable			\$0.00	
EDUCATION / CHILDCARE				
	Expected	Actual	Variance	
Tuition	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Before / After School Care	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Tutoring	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
School Lunches	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Babysitter	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Optional #1	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Optional #2	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Optional #3	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
TOTAL	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
TRANSPORTATION				
	Expected	Actual	Variance	
Fuel			\$0.00	
Parking Fees			\$0.00	
Routine Maintenance			\$0.00	
Insurance			\$0.00	
Toll Payments			\$0.00	
Public Transportation (Subway, Bus, etc.)			\$0.00	

Step 11: YTD Expense + Net Income

As mentioned above, on the "YTD Dashboard" tab I have also added a summary section for the following:

- YTD Expenses: High-level summary totals for all Expense Categories
- YTD: Net Income: Total Income - Total Expense

See here:

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docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1sVIHYEOaiQJMsEZfcs824eqgQIS2J5DHbqxm...

BMC / Twitter Finance Neolnsulation Personal

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C13

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
5	SALARY (PRIMARY EMPLOYMENT)		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	EMERGENCY FUND			\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
6	ALTERNATE INCOME SOURCE #1		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	RETIREMENT (401K, IRA, ETC.)			\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
7	ALTERNATE INCOME SOURCE #2		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	OTHER INVESTMENTS			\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
8	TOTALS		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	TOTALS			\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
9											
10											
11	YTD - EXPENSES					YTD - NET INCOME (INCOME-EXPENSE)					
12			Expected	Actual	Variance			Actual			
13	HOUSING				\$0.00	TOTAL INCOME (ALL SOURCES)		\$0.00			
14	EDUCATION / CHILD CARE				\$0.00	TOTAL EXPENSE (ALL SOURCES)		\$0.00			
15	UTILITIES				\$0.00	TOTALS		\$0.00			
16	TRANSPORTATION				\$0.00						
17	FOOD				\$0.00						
18	HEALTH AND WELLNESS				\$0.00						
19	ENTERTAINMENT				\$0.00						
20	LOANS / DEBT				\$0.00						
21	TOTALS		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00						
22											
23											
24	EXPENSES										
25											
26	HOUSING					EDUCATION / CHILDCARE					
27			Expected	Actual	Variance			Expected	Actual	Variance	
28	Mortgage / Rent		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Tuition		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	

YTD Dashboard

January February March April May June July August September October

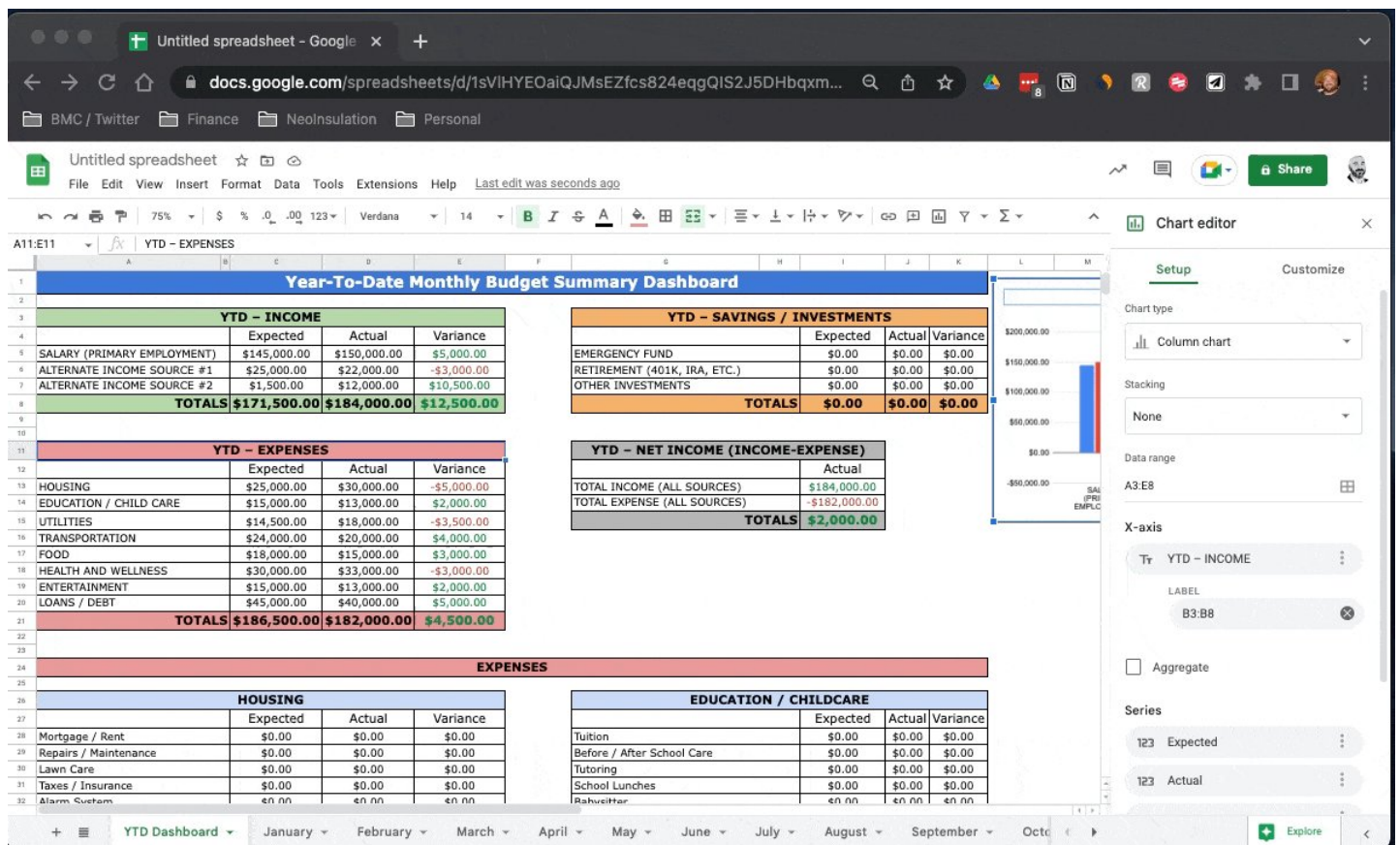
Explore

Step 12: Custom Graphs

As a final step, we'll go ahead & add a couple of charts to the dashboard to visualize our data:

- YTD Income: A comparison of expected vs actual income for the year
- YTD Expenses: A comparison of expected vs actual expenses for the year

Like this:



Step 13: Free Template

As promised, I've shared a link to the free template below for you to use.

My only ask?

- Follow me [@blakeaburge](#) for more spreadsheet & productivity tips.
- Check out my newsletter below. You'll get more cool things, I promise.
<https://t.co/1J6wGcgrev>

That's all for today!

If you like free stuff (and who doesn't) sign up for my newsletter:

Nerd Alert ■

A weekly serving of software tips, free templates, & video tutorials.

Over 20,000 people read it, you should too.

<https://t.co/8gpnSIBhyx>