

How to Use Power BI Paginated Reports: A Step-by-Step Guide

When you need to print a perfect invoice, export a complete financial statement, or share a pixel-perfect report with stakeholders, standard Power BI reports fall short. That's where **Power BI paginated reports** become essential.

This comprehensive guide walks you through everything you need to know about using paginated reports in Power BI—from understanding when to use them to creating, formatting, and automating your first report.

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What Are Power BI Paginated Reports?

Power BI paginated reports are highly formatted, print-ready documents designed to display data across multiple pages with precise control over layout and formatting. Unlike standard Power BI reports optimized for interactive exploration, paginated reports are "pixel-perfect"—meaning they look exactly the same whether viewed on screen, printed, or exported to PDF.

Key Characteristics

- **Multi-page capability:** Automatically generates as many pages as needed to display all data
- **Precise formatting:** Control every element down to fractions of an inch or centimeter
- **Export-optimized:** Designed specifically for printing and PDF generation
- **Report Definition Language (.rdl) files:** Based on SQL Server Reporting Services technology
- **Tabular focus:** Ideal for tables, invoices, statements, and operational reports

Think of paginated reports as the digital equivalent of a perfectly formatted document you'd print and hand to a client or executive—every page looks professional, consistent, and complete.

When to Use Paginated Reports vs Standard Power BI Reports

Choosing between Power BI paginated reports and standard interactive reports depends entirely on your use case. Here's a practical comparison:

Choose Paginated Reports When You Need:

Use Case	Why Paginated Reports Win
Complete data printing	Print all 1,000 rows of your table, not just what's visible on screen
Invoices and statements	Pixel-perfect formatting with repeating headers/footers per page
Financial reports	Formal documents requiring exact layout control
Compliance reports	Regulatory documents with specific formatting requirements
Large data exports	Handle millions of rows across multiple pages
Operational reports	Daily/weekly reports with consistent structure
Multi-format distribution	Export to PDF, Excel, Word, CSV, PowerPoint

Choose Standard Power BI Reports When You Need:

Use Case	Why Interactive Reports Win
Data exploration	Users need to slice, filter, and drill down interactively
Dashboards	Real-time visualizations and KPI monitoring
Self-service analytics	End users exploring data on their own
Cross-filtering	Clicking one visual automatically filters others
Mobile consumption	Responsive layouts that adapt to screen size

The Key Difference: Printing Behavior

Standard Power BI Report:

- Prints only what's visible on screen at the moment
- A table with 500 rows but showing only 10? You'll print just those 10 rows
- Interactive elements don't translate well to print

Paginated Report:

- Prints *all* data automatically across however many pages it takes
 - Headers and footers repeat on every page
 - Designed from the ground up for print/PDF output
- > **Pro Tip:** Many organizations use both types side-by-side—standard reports for exploration, paginated reports for distribution and record-keeping.

Prerequisites and Licensing Requirements

Before you start creating Power BI paginated reports, ensure you have the following:

Software Requirements

1. **Power BI Report Builder** (free download)
 - Download from [Microsoft Download Center](#)
 - Windows desktop application
 - No installation of Power BI Desktop required
2. **Power BI Service** access with appropriate licensing

Licensing Requirements

Power BI paginated reports have specific licensing requirements depending on what you want to do:

Activity	License Requirement
Download and install Report Builder	None (free)
Create and design reports locally	None (free)
Publish to My Workspace	Power BI Free license
Publish to shared workspaces	Power BI Pro or Premium Per User (PPU)
View published reports (non-Premium workspace)	Power BI Pro or PPU
View published reports (Premium/Fabric capacity workspace)	No license required for viewers

Important Notes:

- Publishing paginated reports requires the workspace to be on **Premium capacity (P1+)** or **Fabric capacity (F64+)** for full feature support
- Email subscriptions and automated distribution require Premium capacity
- For most enterprise scenarios, you'll need Premium capacity

Data Source Prerequisites

Paginated reports can connect to various data sources:

- Power BI datasets (semantic models)
- Azure SQL Database
- SQL Server (on-premises via gateway)

- Azure Synapse Analytics
- Oracle
- Azure Analysis Services
- ODBC sources
- Static data entry

How to Create Your First Paginated Report

Let's walk through creating a practical Power BI paginated report from start to finish. We'll build a sales report showing product performance.

Step 1: Launch Power BI Report Builder

1. Open **Power BI Report Builder** from your Windows Start menu
2. You'll see the **Getting Started** dialog with several options:
 - **New Report**: Start from scratch
 - **Table or Matrix Wizard**: Guided creation (recommended for beginners)
 - **Chart**: Start with a chart visual
 - **Map**: Geographic visualizations
 - **Blank Report**: Full control, no wizard

For this tutorial, select "Table or Matrix Wizard" to get guided assistance.

Step 2: Connect to Your Data Source

Option A: Connect to a Power BI Dataset

This is the recommended approach for most users since it leverages data already modeled in Power BI.

1. In the **Choose a dataset** page, select **Create a dataset**
2. Click **Next**
3. On the **Choose a connection to a data source** page, click **New**
4. In the **Data Source Properties** dialog:
 - Name: Give your data source a descriptive name (e.g., "SalesDataset")
 - Select connection type: **Microsoft Power BI Dataset**
5. Click **Add Power BI Dataset Connection**
6. Sign in to Power BI service when prompted
7. Browse to find your published dataset
8. Select the dataset and click **Select**

Option B: Connect to Azure SQL Database

1. Click **New** on the data source page
2. Name your data source (e.g., "AzureSalesDB")
3. Select connection type: **Microsoft Azure SQL Database**
4. Click **Build** next to the connection string box
5. In Connection Properties:
 - **Server name:** Paste your Azure SQL server name (e.g., `myserver.database.windows.net`)
 - **Authentication:** Select "Use SQL Server Authentication"

- Enter your **username** and **password**
- Select your **database** from the dropdown
- 6. Click **Test Connection** to verify
- 7. Click **OK** when the test succeeds

Step 3: Design Your Query

After connecting to your data source, you'll use the Query Designer to specify which data to include.

For Power BI Dataset:

1. The Query Designer opens automatically
2. On the left, you'll see your dataset's tables
3. Expand tables to see available columns
4. **Drag and drop** the columns you want into the design area:
 - Product Name
 - Sales Amount
 - Quantity Sold
 - Region
 - Order Date
5. Click **Run Query** to preview the data
6. Click **OK** when satisfied

The Query Designer generates a DAX query behind the scenes that you can view in **Design Mode**.

For SQL Database:

1. In the Query Designer, expand your database schema (e.g., **SalesLT**)
2. Expand **Tables**
3. Select the tables you need (e.g., **Product** , **SalesOrderDetail** , **Customer**)
4. Report Builder auto-detects relationships if "**Detect Relationships**" is checked
5. Drag relevant columns to the design area
6. Click **Run Query** to check results
7. Click **Next**

Step 4: Arrange Your Report Fields

The wizard now asks how to organize your data.

1. **Available fields** box shows all columns from your query
2. Drag fields to organize them:
 - **Row groups**: Fields that create grouping/subtotals (e.g., Region, Product Category)
 - **Column groups**: Fields that create pivot columns (less common)
 - **Values**: Metrics you want to display (e.g., Sales Amount, Quantity)

For our example:

- **Row groups**: Leave empty for now (simple list)
 - **Values**: Drag all fields (Product Name, Sales Amount, Quantity Sold, Region, Order Date)
3. Click **Next**

Step 5: Choose Layout and Style

1. **Choose the layout** page:

- Select **Stepped** or **Block** layout
- Check "Show subtotals" if you added row groups
- Check "Expand/collapse groups" for interactive grouping

2. Click **Next**

3. **Choose a style:**

- Select a color theme (e.g., Ocean, Forest, Generic)
- This affects header colors and fonts

4. Click **Finish**

Your report now appears in the design canvas!

Step 6: Format Your Report

Now let's make it look professional.

Add a Title

1. From the **Insert** tab, click **Text Box**
2. Draw a text box at the top of your report
3. Type your title: "Product Sales Report"
4. Select the text and format it:
 - Font: **Arial Black** or **Calibri Bold**
 - Size: **18pt**
 - Color: Pick your brand color
5. Right-click the text box > **Text Box Properties** > **Alignment** > Center

Format Currency

1. Click on a cell in your **Sales Amount** column

2. In the **Properties** pane (View > Properties if not visible):

- Find **Format**

- Enter: **C2** (currency with 2 decimals)

- Or right-click > **Text Box Properties** > **Number** > select **Currency**

Format Numbers

1. Select the **Quantity Sold** column

2. Set Format to **N0** (number with no decimals)

Adjust Column Widths

1. Click anywhere in the table

2. Drag the column borders to resize

3. Remove excess whitespace for a cleaner look

Format Headers

1. Click the gray box to the left of your header row (selects entire row)

2. In the toolbar:

- Click **Bold** (B icon)

- Change background color if desired

- Change font color to white if using dark background

Step 7: Add Headers and Footers

Page Header

1. Go to **Insert > Header**

2. A header section appears above your report

3. Insert text boxes or images:

- Company logo (Insert > Image > browse to file)
- Report date: Insert > Expression > Built-in Fields > Execution Time

Page Footer

1. Go to **Insert > Footer**

2. Add page numbers:

- Insert > Page Number > Page N of M

3. Add execution time if desired

Make Headers Repeat on Every Page

This is crucial for multi-page reports:

1. Click anywhere in your table
2. Look at the **Grouping** pane at the bottom
3. In the far right, click the dropdown arrow > **Advanced Mode**
4. In the **Row Groups** section, select the top **Static** member
5. In the **Properties** pane:
 - Set **KeepWithGroup** = **After**
 - Set **RepeatOnNewPage** = **True**

Now your column headers will appear on every page!

Step 8: Preview Your Report

1. Click **Run** in the top left toolbar
2. Your report renders with live data
3. Use the navigation arrows to move between pages

4. Click **Print Layout** to see how it looks when printed
5. If you need changes, click **Design** to return to edit mode

Step 9: Save Your Report

1. Click **File > Save As**
2. Choose a location:
 - **Power BI Service**: Save directly to your workspace (requires Pro/PPU license)
 - **This Computer**: Save locally as a `.rdl` file
3. Name your report (e.g., "ProductSalesReport.rdl")
4. Click **Save**

To Publish to Power BI Service:

1. After saving, click **File > Publish** (or click the **Publish** button in the ribbon)
2. Sign in to Power BI Service when prompted
3. Select the workspace where you want to publish
4. Click **Select**
5. The report uploads to the Power BI Service
6. Click the link to open it in your browser

Congratulations! You've created your first Power BI paginated report.

Paginated Reports Best Practices

Follow these best practices to create professional, efficient Power BI paginated reports:

1. Design for Print from the Start

- **Set page size early:** File > Page Setup > Paper > choose your target (Letter, A4, Legal)
- **Configure margins:** Keep at least 0.5" margins on all sides
- **Use portrait vs landscape** based on your data width
- **Test print early and often** using Print Layout view

2. Optimize Query Performance

- **Filter at the source:** Use query parameters to limit data retrieval
- **Avoid SELECT *:** Only retrieve columns you'll display
- **Use stored procedures** when connecting to SQL databases for better performance
- **Limit row counts** during development (use TOP in SQL or filters in DAX)

3. Format for Readability

- **Use consistent fonts:** Stick to 2-3 font families maximum
- **Size appropriately:**
 - Headers: 12-14pt
 - Body text: 10-11pt
 - Footers: 8-9pt
- **Alternate row colors** in tables for easier reading
- **Align numbers right**, text left in tables
- **Use conditional formatting** to highlight exceptions (VB.NET expressions)

4. Handle Long Data Gracefully

- **Enable row/column groups** to organize large datasets
- **Add grouping and subtotals** for better structure
- **Use page breaks** strategically (right-click row group > Group Properties > Page Breaks)
- **Create a table of contents** for reports over 10 pages

5. Parameterize Your Reports

Parameters make reports flexible and reusable:

- **Date range parameters:** Let users select reporting periods
- **Region/department filters:** Personalize data by user
- **Top N parameters:** "Show top 10/25 /50 products"
- **Multi-value parameters:** Allow selection of multiple items

6. Brand Your Reports

- **Add your company logo** in the header
- **Use brand colors** consistently
- **Include report metadata:** execution date, report name, period covered
- **Add disclaimers or notes** in the footer if required

7. Test Across Scenarios

- **Small datasets:** Does the report handle 5 rows without breaking?
- **Large datasets:** Can it process 100,000 rows without timing out?
- **No data:** Does it show a friendly message instead of errors?

- **Different export formats:** Test PDF, Excel, Word exports
- **Different users:** Does security filter data correctly?

8. Memory and Performance Considerations

- **Paginated reports have memory limits** based on license type
- For reports with millions of rows:
- Use server-side pagination/filtering
- Process in batches if possible
- Consider alternative export methods for extremely large datasets
- **Avoid complex expressions** in every cell (use variables when possible)

9. Document Your Work

- **Add comments** to expressions: `'This calculates YoY growth'`
- **Use descriptive names** for datasets, parameters, and fields
- **Create a data dictionary** for complex reports
- **Version control** your .rdl files

Power BI Report Builder Walkthrough

Let's dive deeper into the Power BI Report Builder interface and key features.

Understanding the Report Builder Interface

When you open Report Builder, you'll see four main areas:

1. Report Data Pane (Left)

This shows all elements available to your report:

- **Built-in Fields:** ExecutionTime, PageNumber, TotalPages, ReportFolder, etc.
- **Parameters:** User inputs that filter or control the report
- **Images:** Embedded images (logos, etc.)
- **Data Sources:** Connections to databases or datasets
- **Datasets:** Queries against your data sources

Common actions:

- Right-click > Add Data Source
- Right-click > Add Dataset
- Right-click Parameters > Add Parameter

2. Design Canvas (Center)

This is where you build your report layout:

- Drag and drop items from the Toolbox
- Edit text, tables, images directly
- See guidelines and rulers for precise placement
- Gray area outside the page boundary won't print

View modes:

- **Design:** Build and edit
- **Run:** Preview with live data
- **Print Layout:** Shows exact print formatting with page breaks

3. Properties Pane (Right)

Shows properties of the selected object:

- Text box properties: Font, Color, Format, Borders
- Table properties: Width, KeepTogether, RepeatOnNewPage
- Report properties: Page size, Orientation, Margins
- Expression-based properties marked with 

Tip: If you don't see the Properties pane, go to View > Properties.

4. Ribbon Toolbar (Top)

Organized into tabs:

- **Home:** Run, Font formatting, Alignment, Number formatting
- **Insert:** Text box, Table, Matrix, List, Chart, Image, etc.
- **View:** Show/hide panes, Ruler, Grid Lines, Zoom
- **Format:** Detailed formatting options

Key Report Objects Explained

Tables

- **When to use:** Displaying rows of similar data (sales records, transactions)
- **Features:**
 - Column headers
 - Row grouping
 - Subtotals and totals
 - Sorting

- **Add:** Insert > Table > Drag to draw on canvas

Matrix

- **When to use:** Pivot tables, cross-tab reports
- **Features:**
 - Row and column groups
 - Dynamic columns
 - Grand totals both directions
- **Add:** Insert > Matrix

Lists

- **When to use:** Free-form layouts, invoices, forms
- **Features:**
 - Container for other objects
 - Repeats for each row in dataset
 - Flexible positioning
- **Add:** Insert > List

Charts

- **When to use:** Visualizing trends, comparisons
- **Types:** Column, Bar, Line, Pie, Area, Range, Scatter, etc.
- **Add:** Insert > Chart > Select type
- **Note:** Charts in paginated reports look different than Power BI visuals

Rectangles

- **When to use:** Grouping objects, creating sections
- **Features:**
 - Container like lists but doesn't repeat
 - Can have borders, background colors
 - Useful for report layout organization
- **Add:** Insert > Rectangle

Working with Expressions

Expressions add dynamic capability to paginated reports using **VB.NET syntax**.

Where to Use Expressions

- Text box values
- Colors (background, foreground)
- Visibility (show/hide based on conditions)
- Sorting, filtering, grouping
- Any property marked with 

Creating an Expression

1. Right-click a text box > **Expression**
2. The **Expression** dialog opens with:
 - **Category:** Constants, Parameters, Fields, Datasets, etc.
 - **Values:** Available values in that category
 - **Expression box:** Where you write your formula

Common Expression Examples

Display current date:

```
`` vb
```

```
|
```

```
=Today()
```

```
` Concatenate fields: ` vb
```

```
=Fields!FirstName.Value & " " & Fields!LastName.Value
```

```
` Conditional formatting (alternate row colors): ` vb
```

```
=IIF(RowNumber(Nothing) Mod 2 = 0, "LightGray", "White")
```

```
` Show "N/A" if field is null: ` vb
```

```
=IIF(IsNothing(Fields!SalesAmount.Value), "N/A", Fields!  
SalesAmount.Value)
```

```
` Calculate percentage: ` vb
```

```
=Fields!SalesAmount.Value / Fields!TotalSales.Value
```

```
` Format as percentage: ` vb
```

```
=FormatPercent(Fields!GrowthRate.Value, 1)
```

```
` Conditional text color (red if negative): ` vb
```

```
=IIF(Fields!Profit.Value < 0, "Red", "Black")
```

```
`
```

Creating Parameters

```
|
```

Parameters make reports interactive and reusable.

```
|
```

To Create a Parameter:

1. In the Report Data pane, right-click **Parameters** > **Add Parameter**

2. In the **Report Parameter Properties** dialog:

General tab:

- **Name:** Internal name (e.g., `StartDate` , `Region`)

- **Prompt:** What users see (e.g., "Start Date:", "Select Region:")

- **Data type:** Text, Integer, DateTime, Boolean, Float

- **Allow blank value:** Check if optional

- **Allow null value:** Check if NULL is valid

- **Allow multiple values:** Check for multi-select dropdown

Available Values tab:

- **None:** User types in value

- **Specify values:** Manually list options

- **Get values from a query:** Populate from a dataset

- Select dataset

- Choose Value field (stored value)

- Choose Label field (displayed text)

Default Values tab:

- **No default value:** Parameter is required

- **Specify values:** Set default manually

- **Get values from a query:** Set default from dataset

3. Click **OK**

Using Parameters in Queries

Power BI Dataset (DAX):

Modify your query to include a parameter filter:

```
` dax
```

```
EVALUATE
```

```
FILTER(
```

```
'Sales',
```

```
'Sales'[OrderDate] >= @StartDate &&
```

```
'Sales'[OrderDate] <= @EndDate
```

```
)
```

```
` SQL Query: ` sql
```

```
SELECT ProductName, SalesAmount, OrderDate
```

```
FROM Sales
```

```
WHERE OrderDate >= @StartDate
```

```
AND OrderDate <= @EndDate
```

```
AND Region = @Region
```

```
` The @ParameterName syntax references your parameter.
```

Cascading Parameters

Create dependent parameters (e.g., select Country, then see related states):

1. Create first parameter (e.g., Country)

2. Create second parameter (e.g., State)

3. In the

State parameter's Available Values dataset query, filter by @Country

Example SQL:

```
` sql
```

```
SELECT DISTINCT State
```

```
FROM Locations
```

```
WHERE Country = @Country
```

```
ORDER BY State
```

```
`
```

Subscription Automation for Paginated Reports

One of the most powerful features of Power BI paginated reports is **automated distribution** via subscriptions. Users receive reports automatically via email on a schedule you define.

Prerequisites for Subscriptions

- Your workspace must be on **Premium capacity** or **Fabric capacity**
- You must have a **Premium Per User (PPU)** or **Pro license** to create subscriptions
- The report must be **published** to the Power BI Service
- You must have at least **Contributor** permissions on the workspace

Setting Up a Basic Subscription

1. **Open your report** in the Power BI Service
2. Click **Subscribe** (top right corner, next to Export)
3. In the subscription pane, click **New subscription**
4. Choose **Static** (basic subscription) or **Dynamic per recipient** (personalized - covered next)
5. **Configure subscription settings:**

Email Details

- **Subject:** Enter your email subject or click "Get from data" to use dynamic content

- **Recipients:**

- Enter email addresses (separate with semicolons)

- Must be in your organization (no external emails for paginated reports)

- **Message** (optional): Add custom text that appears in the email body

- **Link to report in Power BI:** Toggle ON to include a link to open the report in Power BI Service

Report Format

- **Attach:** Choose format

- **PDF** (most common for paginated reports)

- **PowerPoint** (PPTX)

- **Excel**



- **Word** (DOCX)



- **CSV** (data only)



- **MHTML** (web archive)



- **XML**



- **Maximum file size:** 25 MB per attachment

Note: Sensitivity labels are automatically applied to attachments.

Report Page



- **Include:** Select which page to include (or "All pages")



- Preview shows the selected page



Include My Changes



- Toggle **ON** to include any filters, bookmarks, or selections you've applied



- Toggle **OFF** to always use the default report view

Schedule

- **Frequency:**

- **Daily:** Choose time (e.g., 7:00 AM)

- **Weekly:** Select days of the week + time

- **Monthly:** Select day of month + time

- **After data refresh:** Triggered after dataset refresh (not available for all data sources)

- **Timezone:** Select appropriate timezone

- **Start date:** When subscriptions begin

- **End date (optional):** When subscriptions stop automatically

6. Click **Save and close**

Your subscription is now active! Recipients will receive the report according to the schedule.

Advanced: Dynamic Subscriptions

Dynamic subscriptions (also called "data-driven subscriptions") personalize each email based on recipient data. For example, regional managers receive only their region's data.

Requirements

- Premium capacity workspace
- A **recipient semantic model** (Power BI dataset) containing:
 - Email addresses of recipients
 - Filter values per recipient (e.g., Region, Department)
 - Optionally: custom subject lines, attachment formats

Example Recipient Table Structure

ManagerEmail	Region	Department
john@company.com	East	Sales
sarah@company.com	West	Sales
mike@company.com	Central	Sales

Setting Up a Dynamic Subscription

1. Prepare your recipient dataset:

- Create a table in Excel or your database
- Publish to Power BI as a dataset
- Ensure the report uses Row-Level Security (RLS) based on email or another field

2. Create the subscription:

- In your paginated report, click **Subscribe**
- Click **New subscription > Dynamic per recipient**
- Select your **recipient semantic model**

3. Map recipient data:

- **Recipients:** Get from data > Select email column from recipient table
- **Subject:** Optionally get from data for custom subjects per recipient

- **Message:** Type a message or get from data

4. Add dynamic filters:

- Click **Map your data**

- Select a **report field** (e.g., `Region`)

- Map to **recipient field** (e.g., `RecipientTable[Region]`)

- This ensures each recipient sees only their data

5. Configure schedule and save

Now, when the subscription runs:

- Each recipient gets an email with a PDF

- The PDF shows only data relevant to that recipient (based on your filters)

- Subjects can be personalized per recipient

Use Cases for Dynamic Subscriptions

- **Sales reports:** Each sales manager receives their team's performance

- **Financial statements:** Each department head receives their budget vs actual

- **Compliance reports:** Each facility manager receives their location's audit results

- **HR reports:** Each manager receives their direct reports' metrics

Managing Subscriptions

View All Subscriptions

1. Go to the **workspace** where your report is published

2. Click the **three dots (...)** next to your report

3. Select **Manage subscriptions**

4. You'll see all subscriptions for that report:

- Who created it

- Schedule

- Status (Active, Failed, Disabled)

Edit a Subscription

1. In Manage subscriptions, click the **subscription name**

2. Make your changes

3. Click **Save**

Disable/Enable a Subscription

1. In Manage subscriptions, toggle the **Status** switch

2. Disabled subscriptions don't send emails but are preserved

Delete a Subscription

1. In Manage subscriptions, click **Delete** (trash icon)

2. Confirm deletion

3. This action cannot be undone

Subscription Limits and Considerations

- **Maximum 24 subscriptions** per report

- **Recipient limit:** Varies by capacity size

- **File size limit:** 25 MB per attachment

- **Attachment timeout:** Long reports may timeout; consider splitting

- **Data refresh dependency:** "After data refresh" subscriptions only trigger if the refresh succeeds

- **Timezone awareness:** Subscriptions respect daylight saving time changes

- **Failed subscriptions:** Check the Activity Log for errors; common issues include:

- Report exceeds memory limits

- Report takes too long to render

- Recipient email addresses are invalid

- Data source connection issues

Common Use Cases and Real-World Examples

Power BI paginated reports excel in specific scenarios. Here are practical examples from various industries:

1. Finance: Monthly Financial Statements

Scenario: Your finance team needs to distribute P&L statements, balance sheets, and cash flow reports to executives every month. **Why paginated reports:**

- Exact formatting required for accounting standards

- Multi-page statements with consistent structure

- PDF export for archival and board presentations

- Signature lines and approval sections

Implementation:

- Connect to financial database or Power BI dataset
- Create separate pages for P&L, balance sheet, cash flow
- Add parameters for fiscal period
- Format numbers as currency with proper negatives (parentheses)
- Include comparison to prior period and budget
- Add company letterhead and footer disclaimers
- Set up monthly subscription for distribution

2. Sales: Invoice Generation

Scenario: Generate customer invoices showing line items, taxes, and payment terms. **Why paginated reports:**

- Professional, printable invoices
- Handles variable line item counts (some invoices have 5 items, others have 50)
- Repeating headers on multi-page invoices
- Precise placement of customer address, invoice number, dates

Implementation:

- Create a List container for invoice layout
- Add parameters for invoice number or date range
- Include company logo in header
- Build table of invoice line items with product, quantity, price, total
- Calculate subtotals, tax, discounts dynamically
- Add payment terms and "Thank You" message in footer
- Format as PDF for email or printing

3. Healthcare: Patient Reports

Scenario: Doctors need comprehensive patient visit summaries with lab results, medications, and vital signs. **Why paginated reports:**

- HIPAA compliance requires specific formatting
- Multi-page reports with consistent structure
- Print copies for patient charts

- Include multiple data sections (demographics, vitals, labs, medications)

Implementation:

- Connect to electronic health record (EHR) system

- Parameter for patient ID and date range

- Sections for demographics, visit notes, lab results (table), medications (list)

- Include barcodes for patient identification

- Format for legal-size paper (8.5x14)

- Sensitive data labeling and security

4. Manufacturing: Daily Production Reports

Scenario: Plant managers need daily production summaries showing output, downtime, and quality metrics. **Why paginated reports:**

- Daily automated email delivery

- Consistent format for archival

- Print copies for shift handoffs

- Show all production lines even if report spans multiple pages

Implementation:

- Connect to manufacturing execution system (MES)
- Parameters for date and shift
- Group by production line
- Table showing planned vs actual output, downtime reasons, quality defects
- Highlight exceptions (missed targets in red)
- Chart showing hourly production trend
- Automated daily subscription at 6 AM

5. Education: Student Transcripts

Scenario: Registrar's office generates official transcripts for students upon request. **Why paginated reports:**

- Official document requiring precise formatting
- Variable length based on courses taken
- Includes official seal and signature line

- Must be print-ready for mailing

Implementation:

- Connect to student information system
- Parameter for student ID
- Header with student details and photo
- Table of courses with grades, credits, GPA calculations
- Cumulative GPA calculation
- Add digital signature and official seal image
- Watermark for official vs unofficial copies

6. Retail: Inventory Reports

Scenario: Store managers receive weekly inventory reports showing stock levels, reorder needs, and slow-moving items. **Why paginated reports:**

- Large product lists requiring multiple pages
- Grouped by category or aisle
- Print for physical inventory counts

- Highlight low stock and overstock items

Implementation:

- Connect to inventory database

- Parameters for store location and date

- Group by product category with subtotals

- Conditional formatting (red for below reorder point, yellow for slow-moving)

- Sort by stock level or product ID

- Include last received date and supplier

- Weekly automated distribution

7. Real Estate: Property Listings

Scenario: Real estate agents need printable property comparison reports for clients. **Why paginated reports:**

- Professional presentation for client meetings

- Multiple properties with photos

- Print for open houses and showings

- Consistent formatting across all listings

Implementation:

- Connect to MLS database or property dataset

- Parameters for location, price range, property type

- Use List object to create one property per page or section

- Include property photos (Insert > Image > Database)

- Details table (beds, baths, sq ft, price, etc.)

- Map showing property location

- Agent contact info and branding

8. HR: Org Charts and Headcount Reports

Scenario: HR distributes quarterly headcount reports showing employee counts by department, location, and job level. **Why paginated reports:**

- Sensitive data requiring controlled distribution

- Export to PDF for executive presentations

- Historical archival for compliance

- Multi-page org charts for large organizations

Implementation:

- Connect to HR system

- Parameters for date (as of date for historical reports)

- Table showing headcount by department with year-over-year comparison

- Grouping by division, department, location

- Use Matrix for cross-tab (locations in rows, departments in columns)

- Include basic demographics (not PII) like avg tenure, avg age

- Automated quarterly subscription to executive team

Troubleshooting and FAQs

Common Issues and Solutions

Issue: "The report could not be processed"

Possible causes and fixes:

1. Data source connection failed

- Verify credentials (Edit > Data Source > Edit Credentials)
- For on-premises sources, ensure gateway is running
- Check firewall rules

2. Query timeout

- Optimize your query (add filters, select specific columns)
- Increase timeout in data source properties
- Break report into smaller pieces

3. Memory limit exceeded

- Reduce dataset size with parameters

- Avoid complex calculations in every cell

- Consider server-side aggregation

Issue: Report looks different in Print Layout than in Run mode

Solution:

- Print Layout shows the actual printable area based on your page size and margins

- Adjust your design canvas to fit within the page boundaries (shown in gray)

- Check File > Page Setup to verify page size and orientation

Issue: Headers not repeating on every page

Solution:

1. Click your table

2. Open Grouping pane (bottom)

3. Click dropdown arrow > Advanced Mode

4. Select the (Static) row in Row Groups

5. In Properties pane:

┆

- Set KeepWithGroup = After

┆

- Set RepeatOnNewPage = True

┆

Issue: Parameters not filtering data

Solution:

1. Verify parameter is correctly created (check Report Data pane)

┆

2. Check dataset query includes parameter reference

(@ParameterName)

┆

3. Ensure parameter name matches exactly in query (case-sensitive in some data sources)

┆

4. Run the query in Query Designer with a test value

┆

5. For Power BI datasets, ensure proper DAX filter syntax:

┆ `dax`

`FILTER('Table', 'Table'[Column] = @ParameterName)`

┆ ┆

Issue: Images not displaying

Possible causes:

1. **Image too large:** Resize image file before importing

2. **Path issue:** For external images, use full URL path

3. **Embedded image:** Use Insert > Image > Import to embed in report

4. **Permission issue:** For images from database, check read permissions

Issue: Report exports but email subscription fails

Check:

1. Subscription settings (Manage Subscriptions)

2. Recipient email addresses are valid and within your organization

3. Report file size under 25 MB

4. Check the Activity Log for specific errors

5. Verify workspace is on Premium capacity

Issue: Expressions showing #Error

Common expression mistakes:

1. **Syntax error:** Check for missing parentheses, quotes

2. **Field name typo:** Use Expression Builder to select fields (avoids typos)

3. **Type mismatch:** Can't do math on text fields, use `CDBl()` or `CInt()` to convert

4. **Division by zero:** Wrap in `IIF(Fields!Denominator.Value = 0, 0, Fields!Numerator.Value / Fields!Denominator.Value)`

5. **Null values:** Use `IsNothing()` function to check for nulls first

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can I schedule a paginated report to refresh daily without sending emails?

A: No, subscriptions in Power BI are email-based. However, you can:

- Use Power Automate to trigger report generation and save to SharePoint
- Set up an SSRS-style data-driven subscription via Premium capacity
- Use Power BI REST API to programmatically export reports

Q: What's the difference between Power BI Report Builder and SQL Server Report Builder?

A: Power BI Report Builder is based on SQL Server Reporting Services technology but tailored for Power BI Service:

- **Similarities:** Same .rdl file format, similar interface, VB.NET expressions

- **Differences:**

- Power BI Report Builder publishes to Power BI Service (cloud)

- SSRS/Report Builder publishes to Report Server (on-premises)

- Power BI Report Builder can connect to Power BI datasets natively

- Some SSRS features aren't supported in Power BI (shared data sources, linked reports)

Q: Can I use DAX in Power BI paginated reports?

A: Yes, when connecting to a Power BI dataset, the Query Designer generates DAX queries. You can:

- Use the visual Query Designer (drag and drop)

- Switch to Design Mode to see/edit the DAX query directly

- Write custom DAX for calculated columns and measures in your query

However, you cannot use DAX for *expressions within the report itself* (like text box values, conditional formatting). Those use VB.NET syntax.

Q: How do I export a paginated report programmatically?

A: Use the Power BI REST API:

1. **Get report info:** GET <https://api.powerbi.com/v1.0/myorg/groups/{groupId}/reports/{reportId}>

2. **Export to file:** POST <https://api.powerbi.com/v1.0/myorg/groups/{groupId}/reports/{reportId}/ExportTo>

3. Poll for status

4. Download file

This requires Pro or PPU license and appropriate permissions.

Q: Can I embed Power BI paginated reports in my website or app?

A: Yes, using the Power BI Embedded analytics platform:

- Premium capacity required
- Use the Power BI JavaScript library
- Generate an embed token
- Embed in an iframe

See: [Embed paginated reports in your app](#)

Q: What's the maximum size for a paginated report?

A: There's no hard limit on report size, but practical constraints:

- **Memory limits:** Vary by license type (contact Microsoft for specifics)

- **Export timeout:** Reports must complete rendering within a timeout period (default 600 seconds for exports)

- **File size for subscriptions:** 25 MB email attachment limit

For very large reports, consider:

- Breaking into multiple reports

- Using parameters to reduce dataset size

- Server-side pagination

Q: Can I use custom fonts in paginated reports?

A: Partially supported:

- **Standard fonts** (Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman, etc.) work fine

- **Custom fonts** must be installed on the Power BI service rendering server, which you cannot control

- **Best practice:** Stick to base fonts for consistency across environments

- **Alternative:** Use images for custom typography (headers, logos)

Q: How do I add barcodes or QR codes to paginated reports?

A: Three approaches:

1. **Generate as image in data source:** Create barcode image in your database or API, return as image URL

2. **Use expression with barcode font:** Install barcode font, format text box with that font (limited support)

3. **Third-party custom render extension:** Not available in Power BI Service (only on-premises SSRS)

Most reliable: Generate barcodes/QR codes in your data pipeline, store as images, display in report.

Q: Can I use row-level security (RLS) with paginated reports?

A: Yes:

- When connecting to a **Power BI dataset**, RLS defined on that dataset automatically applies

- The report shows only data the current user is permitted to see

- Useful for shared reports where different users see different subsets

Q: What's the difference between Premium capacity and Fabric capacity for paginated reports?

A: Both support paginated reports, but Fabric capacity is the newer offering:

- **Premium capacity:** Traditional Power BI Premium (P SKUs)

- **Fabric capacity:** Microsoft Fabric (F SKUs), includes additional services beyond Power BI

- **For paginated reports:** Functionality is the same; choose based on your broader platform needs

Minimum for paginated reports:

- Premium: P1 or higher

- Fabric: F64 or higher

Q: Can I create drill-through or subreports?

A: Limited:

- **Subreports:** Yes, insert a Subreport object (Insert > Subreport) and link to another .rdl file

- **Drill-through:** Limited interactivity in Power BI Service; better for on-premises SSRS

- **Alternative:** Use action links to navigate to other reports in Power BI Service

Q: How do I handle null or missing data?

A: Use expressions to substitute default values:

```
=IIF(IsNothing(Fields!SalesAmount.Value), "N/A", Fields!  
SalesAmount.Value)
```

```
``
```

Or set dataset property to replace NULL with zero:

1. Right-click dataset > Dataset Properties
2. Options tab
3. Check "Interpret blanks as zeros"

Q: Can I use Power Automate with paginated reports?

A: Yes:

- Trigger: "When a Power BI refresh completes"
- Action: "Export Power BI paginated report"
- Then save to SharePoint, send via Outlook, etc.

This gives more flexibility than built-in subscriptions (e.g., external email recipients, custom logic).

Conclusion

Power BI paginated reports fill a critical gap for organizations needing print-ready, pixel-perfect documents. Whether you're generating invoices, financial statements, compliance reports, or operational dashboards, paginated reports provide the precision and control traditional Power BI reports can't match.

Key Takeaways

1. **Use paginated reports for printing and exporting**, regular Power BI reports for interactive exploration
2. **Power BI Report Builder** is free and easy to learn, especially if you have SSRS experience
3. **Premium capacity** unlocks the full power including subscriptions and automation
4. **Parameters** make reports flexible and reusable
5. **Subscriptions automate distribution**, and dynamic subscriptions personalize content per recipient
6. **Best practices** like designing for print from the start and testing across scenarios ensure professional results

Getting Started Checklist

- ☐ Download Power BI Report Builder
- ☐ Understand your licensing needs (Pro/PPU vs Premium capacity)
- ☐ Connect to a data source (Power BI dataset, Azure SQL, etc.)
- ☐ Create your first simple table report
- ☐ Add formatting (currency, headers, footers)
- ☐ Test in Print Layout mode
- ☐ Publish to Power BI Service
- ☐ Set up a subscription for automated delivery
- ☐ Gather feedback and iterate

Next Steps

Ready to take your paginated reporting skills to the next level?

1. **Explore advanced expressions:** VB.NET expressions unlock powerful customization

2. **Learn about parameters:** Build flexible, reusable reports

3. **Master grouping and subtotals:** Organize complex data hierarchies

4. **Try dynamic subscriptions:** Personalize reports for each recipient

5. **Integrate with Power Automate:** Create custom workflows

Need help implementing Power BI paginated reports for your organization?

Aptocoiner Analytics specializes in Microsoft Fabric, Power BI, and data engineering solutions. [Contact us](#) to discuss your reporting needs.

Additional Resources

- [Official Microsoft Documentation: Paginated Reports in Power BI](#)

- [Download Power BI Report Builder](#)

- [Power BI Paginated Reports in a Day Course \(Free\)](#)

- [Power BI Community Forums](#)

- [Aptocoiner Analytics Blog](#)

Did you find this guide helpful? Share it with your team or bookmark it for future reference. Have questions about implementing paginated reports? Leave a comment below or [contact our experts](#) at Aptocoiner Analytics. *Last updated: July 2026*