

Making Excel Work for Your Tribal Community

Excel Basics:
Basic Skills



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MAKING EXCEL WORK FOR YOUR TRIBAL COMMUNITY

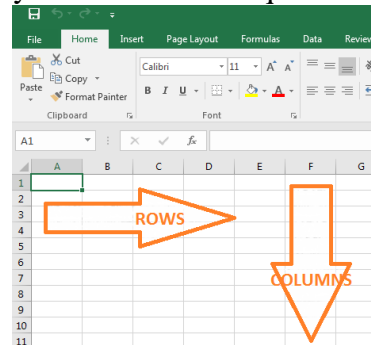
Excel Basics: Basic Skills

Excel is not always the most intuitive program, even for long-time users. For first-time or slightly rusty users, small things can seem like big stumbling blocks. This installment of our learning series offers a brief explanation of some basics for the Excel beginner, or anyone who wants a quick refresher.

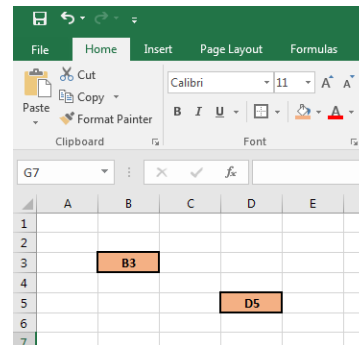
What's a spreadsheet, and what do I do with it?

An Excel spreadsheet is a table or grid with rows and columns:

- Rows go left to right horizontally. Usually we will record each individual report or case on a separate row. Each row has a gray header with a unique identifying number.
- Columns go up to down vertically. Usually we will use columns to record the characteristics or “data elements” of each case. Each column has a gray header with a unique identifying letter.



Cells are the spaces where rows and columns meet. Each cell has a name or “cell reference” made up of the row and column where that cell lives. For example, the cell where row 3 and column B intersect is cell B3. Cell D5 is where Row 5 meets Column D.



To enter text or numbers into a cell, click on the cell and start typing. When you're done, hit "Tab" to move to the next cell to the right, or hit "Enter" to move to the next cell down. If the cell contains a drop-down list, click on the arrow on the right side of the cell and select an option from the list.

Tip: Drop-down lists can make entering information faster and more consistent. We'll go over how to create drop-down lists later in this learning series.

Header Rows

The gray headers identify the rows and columns, but to make data easier to enter and read, you can also add a "header row" with labels showing what information goes in each column. In most spreadsheets, this will be in Row 1.

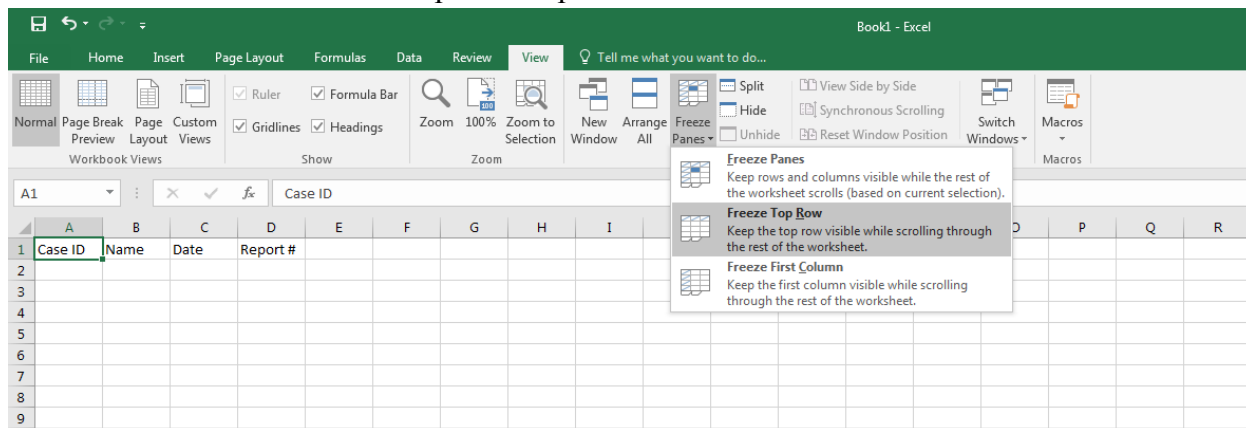
Tip: Header labels work best when they're brief but descriptive enough that anyone using the spreadsheet will know instantly what they mean.

Freezing the Header Row

If you're going to be filling in a lot of rows in your spreadsheet, you may have to scroll down to see all of your entries. You can freeze the header row so that you can always see your header labels while scrolling through your data. To freeze the header row:

1. Go to the "View" tab on the ribbon.
2. Click on the "Freeze Pane" button.
3. Click on the "Freeze Top Row" option.

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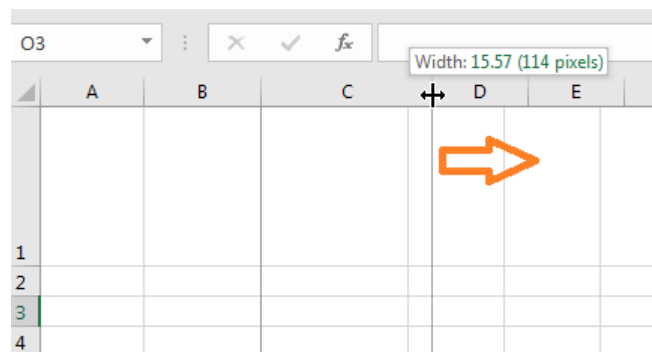


Making It Fit

When you start a new Excel sheet, the columns will be pretty narrow. You'll likely want at least some of them to be wider. To widen a column:

1. Move your mouse cursor to the gray area at the top of the column.
2. Hover the cursor over the right-hand edge of the column until the cursor changes shape (to a vertical bar with a two-headed arrow across it).
3. Left click and hold down your mouse button.

4. With the mouse button held down, drag the right edge of the column to the right to make it wider or to the left to make it narrower.



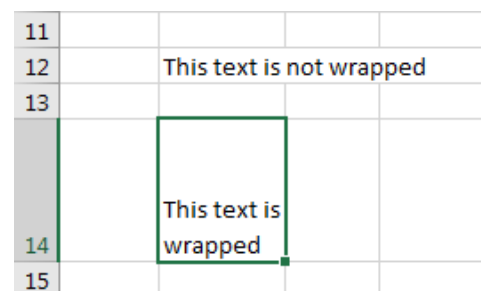
Formatting

Wrap Text

If you're putting a lot of data into a cell, you might not be able to widen the column enough to read everything. Excel will automatically put all cell content on a single line, but you can tell it to "wrap" your text. "Wrap text" will put your text onto multiple lines, matching the width of the column.

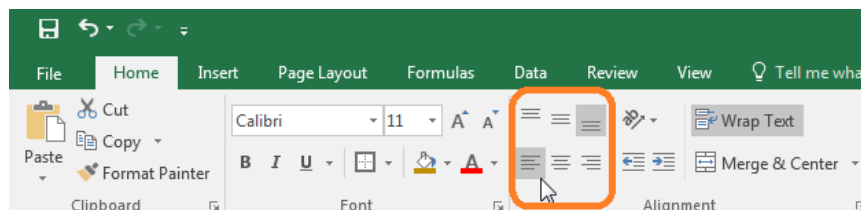
To wrap your text:

1. Click on the cell (or highlight an entire column)
2. On the Home tab of the ribbon, click the "Wrap Text" button

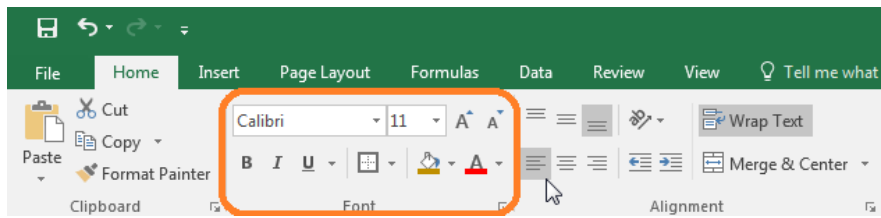


Alignment

You can align the text in each cell left, right, or centered just like in Microsoft Word. In Excel, you can also align text at the top, middle, or bottom of the cell. The alignment buttons are on the Home tab of the ribbon.



You can also adjust the font using the same buttons you would use in Microsoft Word.



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