

Excel Basics—Tips & Tricks

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This handout & sample files are posted at:
<http://ljhs.sandi.net/faculty/SGrant/SharedProf.html>

Labels, values, formulas, functions

Labels, values, formulas...

To **enter a formula**, start by typing **equals sign (=)**; enter into cell with <Enter> key.

Examples: =2+2 =C10-B8 =C10*.0775 =(B5-B3)/8 =F12

To **enter a value**, start by (and continue) typing **digit** (or decimal, hyphen/minus, or \$ sign).

Examples: 107 268.12 .46 -524.12 94273 (←don't type commas) \$582

☞ Starting with \$ automatically formats that cell to “currency” format

To **enter a label**, start by typing **just about anything else**. If you start with a digit but type non-numeric characters after that, Excel will make it a label.

Examples: **Date Item Cost 2005 Average**

☞ To **force a number (or anything else) to be a label**, start by typing an **apostrophe**.

Example: To enter **012345** as a *label* (so the zero displays), enter **'012345**

Syntax for a **range** of cells: **(C10:C25)**

☞ <Enter>/<Return> enters what you've typed and moves **down**; <Tab> enters and moves **right**.

“Point-to-cell” shortcut...

When typing a formula, can **point to cell with mouse instead of typing** its coordinates.

Example: You want to enter the formula “=C10+D10”. After typing the equals sign, instead of typing “C10”, **click on** cell C10, then type “+”, then **click on** cell D10, then hit <Enter> key.

☞ **Point to cell in another worksheet** same way; formula will show name of that worksheet followed by exclamation point and cell coordinates. Example: =**Wilma!E7**

☞ **Point to a contiguous range** by dragging from first to last cell in the range... or by holding down <Shift> while using arrow key.

To **display label—or value or calculated results—of another (“target”) cell**, type **equals sign**, then **click on the target cell**.

Functions...

SUM(range) Example: =SUM(C10:C25)

AVERAGE(range) Example: =AVERAGE(C10:C25)

To **enter a function**, start with **equals sign**, then **name of function**, then **parentheses** around what the function operates on.

Example: =SUM(C10:C25)

Copy-Pasting, Selecting

Copy-Paste...

Copy and Cut commands same as in Word (under Edit menu, or keyboard:

Copy... <Control>/<Command>-**C**

Cut... <Control>/<Command>-**X**—think of scissors)

Paste... <Control>/<Command>-**V**—make a V with your index fingers and say “stuff it in *here*”

☞ Excel-only alternative **Paste...** after Copy or Cut, **hit <Enter> key**.

Can **copy formula in one cell** and **paste to multiple other cells**: Select source cell, Copy, select target cell/cells, hit <Enter>.

Cell references in formula adjust automatically to reflect new position when Pasted.

Usually you want this, but you can **prevent by making source cell references “absolute” w/ dollar signs** before Copying. Example: **\$C\$10**

☞ **Cutting-Pasting** a cell referred to by formula in another cell will produce “#REF!” error!

☞ <Control>/<Command>-<Z> (Undo command) is your friend here!

Selecting...

Select multiple cells (contiguous, i.e. a range)—3 ways:

☞ Favorite... **Select first cell**, scroll if necessary to see last, **<Shift>-click on last cell**.

☞ 2nd favorite... **Select first cell**, hold down **<Shift> while use <Arrowkey>**.

Good for short ranges... **Drag** from first cell to last cell.

Select entire row(s) or column(s) by clicking gray “button” with row/column name.

Select multiple non-contiguous cells: Hold down <Control> while clicking each cell.

Formatting

Format | Cells... or **right-click** and select “**Format Cells...**”

Number formats...

General: If contains number, may display as scientific notation (“1.23E +08”) or pound-signs (“#####”) if column too narrow.

Solution: Change to Number format (prevents scientific notation display); widen column.

Currency: Displays “\$”. If you select 0 decimal places, will round display to nearest dollar.

Alignment...

Left/center/right: Use toolbar buttons as in Word.

Wrap text: Stacks multiple-word label vertically in a column heading (or any other cell)

Shrink to fit: “Fudges” font size for you if label almost (but not quite) fits in cell

Merge cells: Makes single larger cell out of two/more existing ones. Must select all cells you want merged before giving this command. Uncheck to “unmerge” back again.

Fonts & colors...

Typeface, font settings (including color): Use toolbar buttons.

Cell background color (highlighting): Use toolbar button that looks like a highlighter.

Cell borders...

Basic borders: Use toolbar button. More option with “Borders” tab in Format Cells dialog box.
☞ To make **all cell borders print**: **File | Page Setup...** “Sheet” tab, “Print” area—check “Gridlines”.

Text box...

Use **toolbar’s “Drawing” button** to open Drawing toolbar, then **click Text Box button there**.

☞ Handy option: Add Text Box button to a main toolbar...

Tools | Customize... “Commands” tab, select “Autoshapes”. **Drag “Text Box” icon** into toolbar where you want it, then **click “Close” button**.

Adjust column width...

Drag gray column button’s border at top.

Automatically size column to largest cell: **Select entire column** (click gray column button at top). Then **Format | Column | Autofit**.

☞ Shortcut: **Double-click right border** of gray column button.

Adjust row height...

Drag gray row button’s border at left.

Automatically size row to largest cell: **Select entire row** (click gray row button at left). Then **Format | Row | Autofit**.

☞ Shortcut: **Double-click bottom border** of gray row button.

Inserting / Deleting Rows or Columns

Insert... **Select entire row/s** (click row’s gray button at far left). Then **Insert | Rows**. Row is inserted *above* selected row.

Delete... **Select entire row/s**. Then **Edit | Delete**. ☞ *No confirmation dialog...* It just does it!

☞ If you delete a row with a “running total” formula, all other running-total formulas below it will display error “#REF!” To fix, Copy running-total formula from last cell in which it’s still working to all cells below it displaying “#REF!”

Inserting & deleting columns works same way.

Printing

See what you’ll get before committing to paper... **File | Print Preview**.

☞ Handy option: Add Print Preview button to a main toolbar...

Tools | Customize... “Commands” tab, select “File”. **Drag “Print Preview” icon** into toolbar where you want it, then **click “Close” button**.

Change to Landscape...

File | Print Preview, “Setup” button, “Sheet” tab... click “Landscape” radio button.

Compress ENTIRE WORKSHEET to fit on ONE page...

File | Page Setup, “Page” tab... “Scaling”—select “Fit to”, leave at “1 pages wide by 1 pages tall”, “OK”.

Compress so ALL COLUMNS fit on EACH page...

File | Page Setup, “Page” tab... “Scaling”—select “**Fit to**”, change to “1 pages wide by [leave blank] pages tall”, “OK”.

Repeating column headings...

1. **File | Page Setup, “Sheet” tab.** In “Print titles” area, **click icon to right** of “**Rows to repeat at top**” field. Now you’re back in worksheet with “Page Setup – Rows to repeat at top:” floating box.
2. **Click on row button** you wish repeated (or drag across several for more than one) to select that row/those rows. Row coordinates you select appears inside floating box’s field; if you selected row 7, you’ll see “\$7:\$7”.
3. **Click icon at right** of floating box’s field. Now you’re back in Page Setup dialog. Click “OK”.
4. **File | Print Preview** and page ahead to see results.

Adding a header or footer...

File | Page Setup, “Header/Footer” tab. Select from limited choices in dropdowns

...or...

Click “**Custom Header**”/“**Custom Footer**”, then **type your own text** in left/center/right sections, optionally using icons to intersperse:



...**Font controls** (select already-typed text then click this button)



...**Automatic page number** (whatever page number it is in the printed document)



...**Fixed page number** (same on every page)



...**Automatic date** (current at time of printing)



...**Automatic time** (current at time of printing)



...**Complete pathname of file** (includes filename)



...**Filename** (only—no path)



...“**Tab**” (worksheet) **name**



...**Image** you can browse to (not too big!)