

--- Create multiple range names in one go! ---

Your workbooks contain many named ranges but you find that the process of setting up all these named ranges can be tedious; typically, you first select a range, then you click in the name box. Finally, you type the range name and press Enter.

You can create many named ranges at once with just a few keystrokes.

Suppose you want to create named ranges for each column in a table; e.g. January, February and so on.

- 1) Select the entire table including the headings.
- 2) Press Ctrl + Shift + F3; the Create Names dialog box appears (in Excel 2007, the dialog box is entitled Create Names from Selection).
- 3) Select the *Top row* checkbox; this tells Excel to use the text found in the top row of your table when it creates the range names.
- 4) Choose OK.

Each column in your table (excluding its heading) will now be a named range.

--- Use named styles to apply many formats at once ---

You always use an Arial size 8, blue-coloured font, formatted to two decimal places, for your input cells. Each time you set up an input area, you waste time setting the font size, colour and number formats for the range; it can take eleven mouse clicks to do that!

With named styles, you can apply all this formatting in three clicks at most. The following describes how to create a named style:

- 1) Choose Format | Style. (Excel 2007 users choose Home | Cell Styles | New Cell Style.); the Style dialog box appears.
- 2) Type a name for the style in the Style name: box.
- 3) Choose Modify (Excel 2007 users choose Format.); the Format Cells dialog box appears.
- 4) Set up the formats that apply (e.g. font colour, number format etc); choose OK to close the Format Cells dialog box.
- 5) Choose OK to close the Style dialog box.

Next time that you want to format a range as input cells:

- 1) Select the range.
- 2) Press Alt + ' (Excel 2007 users choose Home | Cell Styles).
- 3) Select the style you require from the Style name: box.

--- Hyperlink and use Alt + Left to go back ---

You can improve navigation within a workbook or among workbooks with hyperlinks. To set one up, create a range name at the destination and, at the source, create a hyperlink

with Insert | Hyperlink. Click a hyperlink to go to a destination. To return, either click the Back button or press **Alt + Left arrow**.

In Excel 2003 and before, the Back button is on the Web toolbar, but it would be best to copy it to the Standard toolbar. In Excel 2007, place the Back button on the Quick Access Toolbar. To do so, right-click the toolbar and choose Customize. You can also use the Forward button (or **Alt + Right arrow**) to go forward.

--- Use the AutoFilter to filter for more than two criteria ---

You have a worksheet to record costs by department. The departments include Business Services, Human Resources, IT, Finance, Building Maintenance and Essential Services, amongst others. You wish to apply an AutoFilter so that you see only the records for Business Services, Human Resources, and Building Maintenance.

If you are not an Excel 2007 user, you find that the AutoFilter allows a maximum of two criteria, but you can work around this. The trick is to notice that the departments you need to filter for have something in common: they all contain the letter 'u'.

- 1) Select the data to be filtered.
- 2) Choose Data | Filter | AutoFilter (or press Alt D F F).
- 3) Choose the filter drop-down arrow in the Department column.
- 4) Choose (Custom.); the Custom Autofilter dialog box appears.
- 5) Choose Contains from the *Show rows where:* box at the top left.
- 6) Type u into the box on the right.
- 7) Press OK.

--- This week's tip: Promptly get to the last entry in any column ---

You have a spreadsheet with many columns and thousands of rows of data, riddled with blank cells, and you need to get to the last non-blank cell of a column. You could press Ctrl + Down Arrow (this has the same effect as pressing the End key and then the down arrow), which takes you to the last occupied cell. Because blank cells could be anywhere in the spreadsheet, you might have to press Ctrl + Down Arrow many times to reach the very last non-blank cell.

When there are many empty cells in a column, this method takes a long time. The solution is to approach the column from the bottom up. Use the following steps to get to the last entry of any column promptly:

- (1) In the Name Box, type the letter of the column that you want to get to the bottom of, followed by 65536 (e.g. E65536). Excel 2007 users type the column letter followed by 1048576. The Name Box is located to the left of the formula bar; it has a drop-down arrow and is always visible.
- 2) Press Enter. The active cell moves to the last row of the spreadsheet.
- 3) Press Ctrl + Up Arrow to reach the last entry in the column.

Note that the numbers mentioned in step one represent the last row in a worksheet. You just need to type in a sufficiently large number to take you to a cell somewhere below the last row of your data.

--- This week's tip: Fill cells with weekday dates ---

You need to create a long list of weekday dates. One solution is to put in a start date and then fill that down (or across) the worksheet; you would then need to identify and delete the unwanted weekend dates.

A quick method for filling cells with weekday dates is as follows:

- 1) Input a start date.
- 2) Select the start date cell.
- 3) Position your mouse pointer over the fill handle (the little black square that appears at the bottom right-hand corner of the active cell); your mouse pointer becomes a crosshair.
- 4) Keep the right mouse button depressed and drag (down or across as needed) until you reach the desired row or column.
- 5) Release the mouse button; a menu appears.
- 6) Choose Fill Weekdays.

--- This week's tip: Make Excel recognise incorrectly-formatted dates ---

You have received a spreadsheet containing a column of dates that are in Month/Day/Year format (e.g. 12/30/2007). The problem is, if your Windows regional setting for date formats is set to Day/Month/Year, Excel does not recognise the data as dates and they are stored as text. Excel cannot do calculations with dates stored as text.

Changing the cell format to a date format does not fix this problem. To convert the incorrectly-formatted dates into data useable for calculations, proceed as follows:

- 1) Select the dates.
- 2) Choose Data | Text to Columns. (Excel 2007 users choose the Data ribbon, and then choose Text to Columns from the Data Tools group.). The Convert Text to Columns Wizard appears.
- 3) Choose Next > twice.
- 4) Select Date: from the Column data format box.
- 5) Choose MDY (the format that your dates are currently in) from the Date: box.
- 6) Choose Finish.

The dates now appear in the regional date format that is set on your computer, and Excel can use them in calculations.

--- This week's tip: Use a drop-down list to ensure consistent data entry ---

When your spreadsheet requires users to type in data, you have two major problems: (i)

people enter data inconsistently, and (ii) they make mistakes. This creates data manipulation problems, for example, with filters or conditional sums.

To ensure correct and consistent data input, create a predefined list from which users can select items, as follows:

- (1) Select the range where data is to be entered.
- (2) Choose Data | Validation. (In Excel 2007, select the Data ribbon menu, then choose Data Validation from the Data Tools group and choose Data Validation.). The Data Validation dialog box appears.
- (3) Choose List from the Allow: box.
- (4) Click in the Source: box.
- (5) Select the list to be used; it must be a single row or column of values.

If your list is in another worksheet, you must use a range name to refer to it.

--- Avoid inadvertent hyperlinking ---

Your spreadsheet contains a number of cells with hyperlinks. Whenever you click on a hyperlink, your web browser opens and attempts to find the link. Although this can be helpful, most of the time it's a drag: you have to wait for Explorer to find the link before you can resume your work, when all you wanted was to select the cell.

Here's the solution: when you need to select a cell that contains a link, instead of the usual quick click, keep the button depressed for about one second.

--- Do your Internet research in Excel ---

You are preparing a spreadsheet that requires some facts and figures that can be found on the Internet. When you use Excel 2003 or Excel 2007, you don't have to switch from Excel to Windows and launch your Internet browser. Suppose you need information on world population.

- 1) Enter the word 'population' into a cell.
- 2) Hold down the Alt key and click on 'population'; that displays the Research pane.
- 3) Choose a research site from the box below the *Search for:* box. The research site returns summaries of its search results to the Task pane.
- 4) When you find a result that looks promising, click on the hyperlink. That opens your Internet browser on the page where the information is.

--- Use a keyboard shortcut to insert or edit a comment ---

You need to insert comments into a number of cells. It becomes tedious when you have to mouse through the menus to put in each comment. Instead, you can use the following keyboard shortcut:

Press Shift + F2

If there is already a comment in the cell, this key combination puts the comment into Edit mode.

--- Import named styles from other workbooks ---

A number of you were very happy to discover tip #387 (Use named styles to apply many formats at once). But named styles are only available in the workbook in which they were created, and it would be a chore to have to recreate the same named styles for each workbook. Many of you asked how to make a named style that you create in one workbook, accessible in other workbooks.

Here's how to import named styles:

- 1) Open the workbook that contains the styles you want to use.
- 2) In the workbook that you want to import styles to, choose Format | Style. (the Style dialog box appears) then choose Merge.(Excel 2007 users choose Home | Cell Styles | Merge Styles. or press Alt H J M.
- 3) The Merge Styles dialog box appears.
- 4) Choose the workbook that contains your styles from the *Merge styles from:* list
- 5) Choose OK.

--- Know at a glance which Named Style has been applied to a cell ---

You use Named Styles to apply multiple formats at once (AbleOwl Excel Tips letter 387 (24-Nov-08). The problem is that you cannot tell, at a glance, which Named Style has been applied to a cell.

In Excel 2000/XP/2003, the solution is to use the Style box. The Style box resembles the Font box on the Formatting toolbar. If you do not have a Style box, here is what you should do:

- 1) Right-click anywhere over a menu or toolbar.
- 2) Choose Customize. to display the Customize dialog box.
- 3) Select the Commands tab and choose Format from the Categories: list.
- 4) In the Commands: list, select the Style: box.
- 5) Click and drag the box onto a menu or toolbar.
- 6) Choose Close.

The Style box will now identify the Style of whichever cell is active.

There is no Style: box in Excel 2007. To find out which style has been applied to a cell, select the cell and press ALT H J

--- Use Strikethrough as a visual clue ---

You maintain a list of contacts. When a contact is no longer available

(because he/she has left the organisation, for example), you may not want to delete the details from your list, as the historic information could be useful. You need a meaningful visual cue to indicate that the contact is 'dead.' You could use a colour highlight, but you already have too many of those.

Strikethrough is the ideal solution. The Strikethrough effect makes text look as if you had ruled a line through the middle of it ~~like this~~.

To apply the Strikethrough effect to a cell or range:

- 1) Select the cell or range.
- 2) Press **Ctrl+5**.

--- This week's tip: Make a chart appear in its own window ---

This tip applies to Excel 2000/2002(XP)/2003.

To better view a chart, you may decide to place it into a separate chart sheet. However, a chart in a chart sheet then takes on the proportions of a sheet of paper, which may be inappropriate for very skinny or very wide charts. Alternatively, when you view a chart in its own window, you can easily resize the window for your viewing pleasure.

To make a chart appear in its own window: right-click the chart and select Chart Window. This only works for charts that are objects in a worksheet, not charts on a chart sheet.

To resize the chart, drag the edges of the window. When you click back into your worksheet, the chart window closes.

--- This week's tip: Make the AVERAGE function ignore zeroes ---

The AVERAGE function lets you quickly calculate the average of a series or range of values. Its syntax is =AVERAGE(number1, [number2],...). But the AVERAGE function always includes zeroes in its calculation. You might want to ignore zero values, as they can distort the calculation. A good example is a list of survey scores in which some scores are zero simply because the survey has not yet been completed.

To make AVERAGE ignore the cells that contain zeroes, replace the zero values with text (e.g. type in the word zero), or delete the cell contents.

--- This week's tip: Select a cell's precedents ---

Do you need to select all of the cells whose values contribute towards that of one specific cell? There are several different methods to do so, but the easiest one is:

Select your cell or region. Press F5 to open the Go To dialog box. Choose Special... and the Go To Special dialog box appears. Select Precedents and choose OK.

All direct precedents of your cell are now selected. (Note that if any precedents are on another worksheet, those precedents are not selected with this method).

Press Tab to navigate among the selected cells without deselecting them.

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--- End of Tip ---

--- This week's tip: Reset input cell values to zero ---

How can input cell values be reset to zero? If your spreadsheet has a number of these, it could take a long time to select many ranges and enter zeroes as required. Try this approach instead:

- (1) To reset input number cells within a certain range, select that range. To reset a whole sheet, select either the entire sheet or a single cell.
- (2) Press F5 to open the Go To dialog box.
- (3) Choose Special... and the Go To Special dialog box appears.
- (4) Select Constants, and make sure there is a check only against the Numbers option under Formulas.
- (5) Choose OK. Excel selects all cells on the active sheet that contain numbers, but not cells containing numbers that are returned by formulae.
- (6) Type 0 and press Ctrl+Enter. Ctrl+Enter copies the entry into every selected cell.

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--- Make long text entries easier to read with Fill | Justify ---

You have a cell that contains several long sentences and you want all the cell's text to be readable at a glance. Widening the column pushes other important information out of view. Four column-widths is as much space as you have available. You decide to split the sentences into separate rows, with the text in each row spilling over into four column-widths.

You might think that would involve a number of separate cut and paste

operations, but you can do it in one hit as follows:

- 1) Select a range of cells four columns wide. Ensure that the cell that contains the text to be split is in the left-most column of the selected range.
- 2) Choose Home | Editing | Fill | Justify (Alt H FI J). In Excel 2000/XP/2003 choose Edit | Fill | Justify.

If, as a result of the split, some text will extend below the area you selected, Excel displays a warning message that reads "Text will extend below the selected range". The warning is important: the contents of any cells below the selected range will be overwritten.

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You can create many named ranges at once with just a few keystrokes. Suppose you want to create named ranges for each column in a table; e.g. January, February and so on.

- 1) Select the entire table including the headings.
- 2) Press Ctrl + Shift + F3; the Create Names dialog box appears (in Excel 2007, the dialog box is entitled Create Names from Selection).
- 3) Select the Top row checkbox; this tells Excel to use the text found in the top row of your table when it creates the range names.
- 4) Choose OK.

Each column in your table (excluding its heading) will now be a named range.

Find your Excel version number

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Not all versions of Microsoft Excel are created equal. When we conduct a training seminar at AbleOwl, our first question is often "What version of Excel are you running?". Many people respond with a shrug.

To discover your version: In Excel 2000/XP/2003, choose Help | About Microsoft Office Excel and the first line of the dialog box tells you the version. In Excel 2007, the procedure is Office Button | Excel Options | Resources | About (Alt+F1RT).

Apply range names

When we write formulae, the use of Range names instead of traditional cell references has many advantages. Primarily, a range name can make a formula easier to understand.

However, we may have already created formulae when we realise that the use of range names would be beneficial. To then edit multiple formulae to replace the cell references with ranges names would be time consuming.

Of course, Excel provides an easier way: (1) Give the required cells or ranges a range name. (2) Select a blank cell on the worksheet. (3) In Excel 2000/XP/2003, choose Inser^t | Name | Apply... In Excel 2007, choose Formulas | Defined Names | Define Name | Apply Names... (Alt+MMA). (4) In the Apply Names dialog box, select the name we wish to apply. (5) Choose OK.

In our formulae on the current worksheet, Excel then locates all cell references included in the corresponding range name, and replaces these references with the range name.

Change the default number of worksheets in a new workbook

When we create a new workbook, the default is to include 3 worksheets. However, many workbooks will require only one or two sheets. Alternatively, some of us may prefer to increase the number of blank sheets.

To change the default in Excel 2000/XP/2003, choose Tools | Options... and switch to the General tab. Change Sheets in new workbook to the desired value.

In Excel 2007, choose Office Button | Excel Options (Alt + FI) and change the value of *Include this many sheets*.

A change to this setting will not stop us from adding, or deleting, sheets to our workbooks.

Spell-check your workbook

To spell-check a selected range, simply press F7. When we only have a single cell selected, F7 will spell-check the entire worksheet.

To spell-check all the sheets in the workbook, first group the sheets. The fastest means to group all the worksheets is to right-click any worksheet and choose Select All Sheets. With all the worksheets selected, press F7.

Navigate to the desired worksheet

In a small workbook, we can simply click a sheet tab to navigate to the desired worksheet. As our workbooks grow, the arrows to the left of the sheet tabs allow us to scroll through our sheets. In workbooks of many sheets, though, scrolling with the sheet scroll buttons can become tedious.

Instead, right-click on a sheet scroll button (the arrows) and a list of up to 15 sheet names appears. Simply select a sheet name to navigate to that sheet.

In a workbook of more than 15 sheets, select the option *More Sheets...* to bring up a complete list.

Create a split quickly

We can employ a split to help compare two parts of a worksheet. There are options under the Windows menu in Excel 2000/XP/2003 to split a screen either vertically or horizontally. The same options reside on the View ribbon in Excel 2007. However, a quicker method also exists.

Directly above the vertical scroll bar resides an innocuous rectangle. Drag this down the screen to create a horizontal split in our workbook.

The rectangle to the right of the horizontal scroll bar will allow us to create a vertical split.

Double-click the line to remove the split.

Print comments

We can use comments to provide onscreen direction in our workbooks. The default option in Excel is not to print comments, but there are occasions when we want to change that default.

The first step is to open the Page Setup dialog box. In Excel 2000/XP/2003, choose File | Page Setup... In Excel 2007, select the dialog box launcher in the Page Setup group in the Page Layout tab.

Change to the Sheet tab. Set Comments to either *As displayed on sheet* or *At end of sheet*.

The *As displayed on sheet* option will not print comments that have been set to hide.

Convert numbers to Roman numerals

From time to time, we need to use Roman numerals. Unfortunately, since we left school, our knowledge of Roman numerals has probably become a little rusty.

Excel provides the solution with the function ROMAN. For instance, =ROMAN(1) returns I, =ROMAN(9) returns IX and =ROMAN(999) returns CMXCIX.

The numbers returned are text, so we cannot use Roman numerals in calculations... nor would we want to!

Use the keyboard to navigate the Menu Bar

Not all commands in Excel have a keyboard shortcut. For instance, there is no keyboard shortcut to go to the Sort dialog box.

If we work with data that regularly requires sorting, it's frustrating to have to constantly use the mouse to navigate to the Sort... option on the menu. An alternative is to employ the Alt key to access the menu option with the keyboard.

In Excel 2000/XP/2003, the menu option for Sort is Data | Sort... The underlined letters tell us what keys to use with Alt. In this example, we would press Alt to enable the menu, then D for the Data menu and S for the Sort... command.

In Excel 2007, the menu keys only appear when you press Alt. To find the Sort command, choose Data | Sort & Filter | Sort, or (Alt+SA).

Extract part of a code

Codes are a part of life in the 21st century. A good coding system is more than just randomly-assigned numbers.

In the product code AB-85742-XY, stored in cell A1, the first part of the code (AB) denotes the product group, the next part is a unique number for this product, and the final part is a product classification. In this instance, XY signifies the product is flammable.

So that we can sort or filter the products by product group or classification, we use formulae to extract the different parts of the code.

To extract product group, we use the LEFT function. LEFT has two arguments: (a) The text to extract characters from. (b) The number of characters to extract. In our formula of =LEFT(A1,2), A1 contains the text we wish to extract characters from, and the number 2 indicates that we want the two left-most characters.

To extract the product classification, the formula is =RIGHT(A1,2). RIGHT has the same syntax as LEFT, except that it subtracts characters from

Double-underline text

To double-underline text in the active cell, we could open the Format Cells dialog box with Ctrl+1, switch to the Font tab and set Underline to Double.

A faster means exists in Excel 2000/XP/2003: hold down Shift and click the Underline icon on the toolbar.

In Excel 2007, it is even easier. The underline button now includes a dropdown arrow, which allows us to switch easily between single and double underlines.

Count the number of items in a list

We have a list of data from A15:A98 and need to know how many records it contains.

One way is to calculate the number of rows, so 98-15+1 is equal to 84. The problem with this approach is that our data may include blank rows, which we need to exclude from our count.

Instead, use the following formula: =COUNTA(A15:A98). COUNTA will count all the text, numbers and errors in the range, but, importantly, will ignore blank cells.

Concatenate text and dates

A problem arises when we concatenate dates and text.

In C1 is the date 01/01/1900, and in D1 we create the formula = "Bill started work on "&C1, but the result is *Bill started work on 1*.

When we concatenate a numeric value, it loses all formatting. Since dates are just numbers, we get the result above.

The solution is to use the TEXT function to convert a number to text.

TEXT has two arguments: (i) The value we wish to convert to text. (ii) The format we wish to apply. The format codes must be in quotes and are the same as those used in Format Cells for custom number formats.

The formula we would use in D1 is = "Bill started work on "&TEXT(C1,"DD-MM-YY"), which gives the result *Bill started work on 01-01-00*.

Concatenate text and values

We can concatenate, or join, values to text using the &, or ampersand, character. In our spreadsheet, A1 contains the number of days an employee has worked for the company, which is 500.

In B1, we create the formula ="Bill has worked for us for "&A1&" days".

The result of the formula is the text *Bill has worked for us for 500 days*.

The important points to note are: (i) The text items are contained in double quotes, but the cell reference is not. (ii) To join items of text or cell references, we must use an ampersand for each item or reference. (iii) To ensure there are spaces before and after the value, include the spaces in the text that precedes and follows the value.

Customise the Data Validation message box

Last week's tip explained how to use Excel's Data Validation feature to control the values a user could put in a particular cell. When the user attempted to enter a value outside the limits, the Data Validation message box appeared with the message:

"The value you entered is not valid. A user has restricted values that can be entered into this cell".

A more helpful message would offer the acceptable values. To provide one:

(1) Open the Data Validation dialog box: In Excel 2000/XP/2003, choose Data | Validation... In Excel 2007, choose Data | Data Tools | Data Validation (Alt+AVV).

(2) Select the Error Alert tab.

(3) Enter a Title, for example, "The value is not correct".

(4) Enter an Error message, for example, "You must enter a number value between 50,000 and 90,000".

(5) Choose OK to close the Data Validation dialog box.

Ensure users enter a value between known limits

Has anyone else noticed that people who use our spreadsheets are incapable of following the simplest of instructions?

For instance, although an input cell may carry the label "Enter a salary between 50,000 and 90,000", you just know that someone will enter a value outside these limits. To restrict what users can enter into a cell, use Data Validation, as follows:

- (1) Select the cell or range that requires Data Validation.
- (2) In Excel 2000/XP/2003, choose Data | Validation... In Excel 2007, choose Data | Data Tools | Data Validation (Alt+AVV).
- (3) Set the Allow drop-down list to *Whole number*.
- (4) Set Minimum to 50000 and Maximum to 90000.
- (5) Choose OK to close the Data Validation dialog box.

Now, should a user enter a value outside these limits, a message box appears to indicate that the value entered is not valid.

Unhide just a single column in a range

Ever wondered how to unhide just one hidden column in a series? For instance, consider a workbook in which we've hidden columns E, F, and G and we wish to unhide only column F.

The process most people use is as follows: (1) Start in column D. (2) Select from column D to column H, which will include all three hidden columns. (3) In Excel 2000/XP/2003, choose Format | Column | Unhide. In Excel 2007, choose Home | Cells | Format | Hide & Unhide | Unhide columns (Alt+HOUL). (4) Re-hide columns E and G.

Alternatively, we can navigate directly to column F and unhide using a shortcut key, as follows: (1) Type F1 into the Name Box and press Enter. Even though Excel has column F hidden, the Name Box still takes us to F1. (2) To unhide the column, use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+Shift+zero.

Sum multiple ranges

Few people realise that they can use the SUM function with multiple ranges.

For instance, say your spreadsheet contains monthly figures in columns B through to M. You need to sum the values in rows 10, 15 and 20.

A typical solution would be the formula =SUM(B10:M10)+ SUM(B15:M15)+ SUM(B20:M20). A shorter solution is to use SUM with multiple ranges: =SUM(B10:M10,B15:M15,B20:M20).

In Excel 2000/XP/2003, SUM can have up to 30 ranges. In Excel 2007, SUM can have a maximum of 255 ranges.

Use names for navigation

We soon get sick of scrolling up and down tables that contain many thousands of rows. For instance, we might have a list of transactions sorted by date, and each month may have 2000-3000 records. We need to be able to navigate to the start of each month.

(1) Select the first transaction in February. (2) Use the Name box, to the left of the Formula bar, to create the range name aFeb. 3) Repeat for the other months.

To navigate to a range name, select that name from the Name box drop-down list.

Hide worksheets

Too many worksheets can make navigating a workbook difficult. We can hide the sheets that contain the underlying data or calculations to make it easier for users to navigate workbooks.

To hide the selected sheet in Excel 2000/XP/2003, choose Format | Sheet | Hide. In Excel 2007, choose Home | Cells | Format | Hide & Unhide | Hide Sheet (Alt+HOUH).

To unhide a sheet in Excel 2000/XP/2003, choose Format | Sheet | Unhide... In Excel 2007, choose Home | Cells | Format | Hide & Unhide | Unhide Sheet... (Alt+HOUH).

The Unhide dialog box appears. Select the sheet you wish to unhide and choose OK.

In Excel 2007, we can also right-click a sheet tab to access the Hide and Unhide commands.

Drop-down options on the Paste button

From Excel 2002, the Paste button gained some additional features. In both this version and Excel 2003, click the drop-down arrow to the right, and the following options are available:

Formulas - Will paste formulae and constants, but not formats.

Values - Will paste the values returned by formulae.

No Borders - Does not paste borders.

Transpose - Changes columns into rows, and vice versa.

Paste Link - Will paste a link to the original data.

Paste Special... - Opens the Paste Special dialog box.

In Excel 2007, the drop-down arrow is below the Paste button, and includes a Paste As Picture option, as well as those mentioned above.

Insert Function

Excel provides over 300 functions, so we may find it difficult to remember what function we need.

The Insert Function dialog box allows us either to search for a

function, or to select a function from a category. From the Insert Function dialog box, we can view the Help file on the function, or choose OK to view the arguments for the function.

To open the Insert Function dialog box, click the *fx* button that appears to the left of the Formula Bar. The keyboard shortcut Shift+F3 offers an even faster technique to open the Insert Function dialog box.

Join two names together

We often work with databases that have first names in one column and surnames in another. How can we create full names from the information in these two columns?

Let's say we have *Sigourney* in A1 and *Weaver* in A2. The correct term for what we wish to do is *concatenate*, which is just a showy word for 'join'.

I know a few people will use the following method: =CONCATENATE(A1,A2). There is nothing wrong with this, but concatenate is not an easy word to remember.

Instead, we can use the &, or ampersand, character. The formula then becomes =A1&A2, which is much quicker to type, and easier to remember.

The results of both formulae give us SigourneyWeaver. To add the desired space between the names, use either =CONCATENATE(A1," ",A2) or =A1&" "&A2).

Change text case

Let's face it, Excel is not a word processor, and is very unlikely to be mistaken for one. However, there are times when we find ourselves using it in this capacity, so some word processing features come in handy.

The ability to change the case of text is one such feature, and yes, Excel can change the case of text. Excel doesn't have a menu option to change case, but instead we can create formulae to do the job.

Say we have the text *ace of clubs* in cell A1.

=UPPER(A1) will return ACE OF CLUBS

=PROPER(A1) will return Ace of Clubs

There is also the function LOWER, which (unsurprisingly!) converts text to lower case.

Function Tooltips/ScreenTips

Excel 2002(XP) introduced Function tooltips. When we type in a function name, a tooltip appears to show the arguments for the function.

For instance, type in =DATE(and the tooltip shows =DATE(year, month, day). The tooltip appears once we type the left bracket.

To ensure we have Function tooltips enabled: In Excel 2002(XP)/2003, choose Tools | Options... and on the General tab select Function tooltips. In Excel 2007, choose Office Button | Excel Options | Advanced and under Display select *Show function ScreenTips*.

Need more help on the function? Hover the mouse pointer over the function name in the tooltip and the name becomes a hyperlink. Click the mouse on the function name to open the Help file for that function.

Fixed decimal places

When working with dollars and cents, we may be faced with the problem of entering every number with two decimal places. To simplify currency inputting, set Excel to use a fixed number of decimal places.

To fix numbers to two decimal places, follow these steps:

In Excel 2000/XP/2003, choose Tools | Options... and go to the Edit tab. Select Fixed decimals and set Places to 2.

In Excel 2007, choose Office Button | Excel Options | Advanced (Alt+F1A). Under Editing Options, select *Automatically insert a decimal point* and set Places to 2.

Changing this setting will not affect numbers already in your workbook, nor will it change the formatting of these numbers. Instead, as you insert numbers, Excel automatically inserts the decimal point.

Type in 1234, for instance, and the number becomes 12.34, while 12 becomes 0.12.

A word of caution: The fixed decimal places setting affects all workbooks. Once you have finished entering values that require fixed decimal places, don't forget to disable it.

Convert numbers stored as text

Most of us will have struck numbers stored as text and the problems that they cause. For instance, sum a range of textual numbers and the answer returned is zero.

Once we have located these textual numbers, our first attempt to

convert them might be to open Format Cells and change the formatting to number. A commonsense solution, which unfortunately does not work!

A format change does not change the contents of the cell. To fix these textual numbers, follow these steps:

(1) Type zero into an empty cell. (2) Copy the cell. (3) Select the range you need to convert. It does not matter if the range includes both numbers and textual numbers. (4) In Excel 2000/XP/2003, choose Edit | Paste Special..., In Excel 2007 choose Home | Clipboard | Paste | Paste Special... (Alt+HVS). (5) Under *Operation*, select Add and choose OK.

When we add a value to a number stored as text, Excel converts the text to numbers. In this case we have added zero, so the values of the numbers do not change.

Locate numbers stored as text

Numbers stored as text, or *textual numbers*, cause problems in Excel. For example, when the SUM function adds a range that includes text cells, it does not produce an error message, but nor does it sum the textual numbers: it simply treats the text cells as zero.

Generally, text cells align to the left of the cell, and numbers to the right. We say *generally*, because this is not a sure-fire way to locate textual numbers.

One way to locate these number impostors is as follows: (1) Select the range of cells you wish to test. (2) Press F5 to open the Go To dialog box and choose Special... (3) Select Constants, and unselect Numbers, Logicals, and Errors. Leave Text selected. (4) Choose OK.

This selects all of the text cells in the range. Use either Enter or Tab to move between these cells.

Display phone numbers correctly with a custom number format

Users enter phone numbers into a database in a variety of ways. Take the phone number 07-5555-1234. It may be entered as 7 5555 1234, 0755551234, 07-55551234 and so on. While all formats contain the same number, some formats are harder to read, and a printed list of these numbers would lack consistency.

We can solve this problem with a custom number format. Create one as follows: (1) Highlight the cells that will contain phone numbers. (2) Use Ctrl+1 to open the Format Cells dialog box. (3) Choose Custom from

the Category list. (4) In the Type box, enter the custom format 00-0000-0000.

All numbers entered into the formatted cells will have the custom number formatting applied. For instance, type in 755551234 and it displays as 07-5555-1234.

A word of caution: the formatting will only apply to *numbers*. Type in 07-555-51234 (in other words, type the dashes as well as the numbers), and the entry will display as you have typed it, not as per the custom number format. This is because Excel will store this entry as text.

Wrap text for column headings

Sometimes a column heading is too wide to fit in the column. Take the heading, *Previous Qtrs Sales*. We could change the column width, but a wider column takes up valuable screen real estate. We could make the font smaller for just this column heading, but a document is easier to follow when all headings are the same size.

One approach would be to split the heading over two rows. However, using two rows for headings can cause problems with such Excel tools as DSUM and Advanced Filter.

The best solution is to wrap the text. When a cell is set to wrap, the text appears over two or more lines within the current cell. The row height automatically adjusts to display all the text.

To set a cell to wrap in Excel 2000/XP/2003: (1) Select the required cell. (2) Go to Format | Cells... and choose the Alignment tab. (3) Select Wrap text, then OK.

To set a cell to wrap in Excel 2007: (1) Select the required cell. (2) Choose Home | Alignment | Wrap Text (Alt+HW).

Use F2 to edit entries in dialog boxes

Many of Excel's dialog boxes have text boxes that require cell references. Examples include Conditional Formatting, Data Validation, and Page Setup.

When in a text box that requires a cell reference, we can select a range with either the mouse or the arrow keys. Being able to select the cell or range is often easier than having to type the reference.

However, the downside is when we want to edit an existing entry. For

most of us, our first approach is to use the arrow keys to move to the part of the reference we wish to change. The moment we push an arrow key, Excel inserts a new, unwanted cell reference.

We need to get the arrow keys to change from selection mode to edit mode. Do this by pressing F2. The shortcut key is a toggle, so pressing F2 again will allow us to select cells with the arrow keys.

Prohibit unwanted access to your workbook

You can give a workbook a password to restrict access to it.

In Excel 2000/XP/2003 choose File | Save As... and in Excel 2007 choose Office Button | Save As... (Alt+FA). Next, choose Tools | General Options... In the Save Options dialog box are options to either add a password that allows a user to open the workbook, but not modify it, or to add a password that allows a user to both open and modify the workbook. Enter your password in the chosen option field and click OK.

Now you have to remember the password!

A correction: Sum only visible cells ---

As more than a few letters pointed out, this tip was not correct.

When using a filter, the formula =SUBTOTAL(9,A1:A100) will sum only the visible records the range A1:A100. The tip incorrectly stated that the formula would include hidden cell.

However, =SUBTOTAL(9,A1:A100) will sum all cells, including hidden ones, if the rows have been hidden by a means other than a filter.

In Excel 2000/XP/2003, you can hide rows by choosing Format | Row | Hide. In Excel 2007, Home | Cells | Hide & Unhide | Hide Rows (Alt+HOUR).

An outline in Excel will also hide rows. As well as creating your own outlines, the Excel Subtotal and Consolidate tools will create an outline for you.

Excel 2003 and 2007 added extra functionality to the SUBTOTAL feature. To sum only visible rows, when you have hidden rows by a means other than a filter, use the formula =SUBTOTAL(109,A1:A100).

Hopes that clears things up. Good to know how many subscribers were paying attention!

Copy only visible cells

When you copy a range that includes hidden rows or columns, you will also copy the hidden cells.

To copy only visible cells in a selected range, first open the Go To box (use F5) and choose Special... In the Go To Special box, select Visible cells only.

Excel will now select only the visible cells, and you can copy and paste as normal.

Alternatively, try the keyboard shortcut Alt+; instead of using the Go To box.

Add currency symbols quickly

There are many text characters not available on the keyboard. One way to access these characters in Excel 2000/XP/2003 is Insert | Symbol... In Excel 2007 we can use Insert | Text | Symbol Alt(NU).

While using the menu gets the job done, it can be frustratingly slow.

If you frequently need to insert symbols such as the Euro and Pound currency symbols, insert their ASCII character codes.

To insert a character you must be editing a cell. For the Euro symbol, hold Alt and on the number pad type the code 0128. The code for the Pound symbol is 0163. NB: You MUST use the number pad to type the code.

The following link includes a list of ASCII character codes:
<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/excel/HA011331361033.aspx?pid=CL100570551033>

Assign a macro to an object

In the previous two tips, we looked at how to assign macros to either a toolbar button or a button in our workbook. There are other, more creative means to run macros.

We can assign a macro to any object created from the drawing toolbar. Draw a shape, create Wordart, or insert a picture and then right-click on the object. From the menu, select Assign Macro... and select the required macro from the Assign Macro dialog box.

Text boxes can also run macros. Create the text box and then select its border. Assign a macro in the same way as outlined in the previous paragraph.

A word of caution about assigning macros to drawing objects; while we instinctively know to click a button, the same may not be the case for other objects.

Run macros from a button on your worksheet

Last week we looked at adding a button to the toolbar to run macros, but what about those macros we want to save in a particular workbook?

In this instance, a toolbar button would only work when the workbook was open. Also, when anyone opens the workbook on a different computer, the toolbar button would not be available.

A better solution is to create a button in the worksheet to run the macro.

In Excel 2000/XP/2003, right-click on any toolbar and select the Forms toolbar. On the Forms toolbar, select the Button command, then drag to create a button.

In Excel 2007, choose Developer | Controls | Insert | Form Controls | Button (Alt+LIB+Enter) then drag to create a button. Don't have the Developer tab on the Ribbon? Choose Office Button | Excel Options | Popular (Alt+FI) and select Show Developer tab in the Ribbon.

After you have created your button, the Assign Macro dialog box will appear. Select your Macro from the list, and then choose OK. Finally, while you still have the button selected, edit the text on the button to create a suitable label.

Create a toolbar button to run a macro

Running a macro via the menu can be frustrating, particularly when you use the macro on a regular basis. Assigning a keyboard shortcut to a macro is great, provided you can remember the shortcut! A toolbar button is a good solution for those frequently-used macros.

In Excel 2000/XP/2003, right-click on any toolbar and select Customize... In the *C*ategories list select Macros and drag the Custom Button command to the desired toolbar. Leave the Customize dialog box open, right-click on your new button and select Assign Macro... Select the required macro and choose OK. Finally, close the Customize dialog box.

In Excel 2007, right-click on the Ribbon and select Customize Quick Access Toolbar... Change Choose commands from to Macros. Select your macro and choose Add>>.

The great thing about Macros on the Quick Access Toolbar is that they will automatically be assigned an Alt key shortcut. Press Alt and a

number will appear beside the macro button. Press the corresponding number to run the macro.

Keep in mind that your macro will only work if the workbook it is saved in is open. You should save regularly-used macros into your PERSONAL.xls file. See our website link for how to do that:

http://www4.ableowl.com/AbleOwl/Publications.aspx?strProduct=pubs_ref#CopyMacroToPersonal

Excel 2007: Pin a file to the recently-used file list

Most of us have a selection of files that we use frequently. It would be nice if we could make these files stay permanently in the recently-used file list.

In Excel 2007, we can now *pin* a file to the recently-used file list. To open the recently-used file list, click on the Office Button (Alt+F). The files have a pushpin to the right that we can use to pin a file. Click the pushpin to "push" in the pin.

The pinned files will still move down the list when we open other files, but will not "fall" off the end of the list. To unpin a file, simply click the pushpin again.

Sorry folks, Excel 2003 and earlier versions do not have an equivalent feature.

Close all open workbooks

When you have a number of workbooks open, it can be tiresome to close them one at a time.

Under the File menu, we have the Close All command. This command is a little shy and hard to spot. To use the command, hold down Shift and select File | Close All. The Close All command only appears when you hold Shift.

You can then either select Yes or No to save each file individually, or simply select Yes to All.

In Excel 2007 the Close All command does not appear when holding Shift and choosing the Office Button.

Insert data with mouse

We have three columns of data and we need to place the third column in between the first and second. How can we use the mouse to do this?

First, highlight the column we need to move. By dragging the border of

the selected column, we can move the data. However, there is no blank column between the first two.

Instead, we hold Shift down and then drag the border of the selected range. As we drag, an *insertion I* appears. The insertion I will be horizontal if we wish to insert in an existing column, or vertical to insert between two columns. Position the vertical insertion I between columns 1 and 2.

Display contents quickly

Use Shift|F2 to open a zoom box that displays value box contents for viewing or editing. This helps whenever properties, formula or query criteria are too long for the value boxes used to display them.

Hold columns in the freezer

When you work with very wide datasheet views of tables or queries, you may find it useful to freeze columns so they remain in view when you scroll across the sheet. TO do this:

1. Right-click the field name to select the column and display a shortcut menu.
2. Select Freeze Columns.

The selected column will move to the left of the datasheet and will not be affected by left and right scroll movements. The same procedure can be used on more than one column.

To unfreeze the column(s), select Format|Unfreeze Columns.

A word of warning however:

If, when you leave the table, you save the changes to the layout of the table, the current field order will become the default order. If columns are still frozen when you save, they will also be saved with the layout. This may be confusing in future as columns will not move when you scroll.

Use a formula to return the version of Excel

At AbleOwl we often create Excel consultancy projects for our customers that they can use in all versions of Excel. A frustration we often have when providing support for the consultancy is that customers sometimes have no idea which version of Excel they are using. Information about the version of Excel appears as Excel opens and also under Help|About Microsoft Excel.

However, it is often more convenient to find out which Excel version a customer is using without

having to guide them to the Help menu, so we include the INFO function somewhere in the consultancy file. =INFO("release") in a cell will return the version of Excel the client is using. For example, =INFO("release") returns 8 in Excel 1997, 9 in Excel 2000, 10 in Excel 2002(XP) and 11 in Excel 2003. Excel 2007, due soon, will have a release number of 12.

Ensure that link fields have the same properties

If you want to link data tables, the two fields need to have the same properties. To ensure this is the case, copy the field from the first table to the second. To do this:

1. Display the table in design view.
2. Select the field that is to be copied by clicking the row selector.
3. Choose Edit|Copy.
4. On a blank row on the second table, choose Edit|Paste.
5. Overtyping the name with a new name.

The Field will now have identical properties to the one copied.

Turn off Paste and Auto Fill Option buttons in Excel 2002 onwards

When in Excel 2002 (XP) or Excel 2003, users can sometimes become very annoyed with the Option buttons that appear when they auto fill with the fill handle or copy and paste data. Option buttons can be useful though: for example, the Auto Fill Options button gives a user the following options: copy cells, fill formatting only or fill without formatting.

Though Option Buttons can be useful, they can also be annoying when they pop up all the time. Fortunately, they are easy to switch off: (1) Choose Tools|Options. then go to the Edit tab. (2) Untick Show Paste Options buttons and Show Insert Options buttons. (3) Choose OK.

Reset AutoFilter without removing it

Many users are fond of the Data|Filter|AutoFilter. command which allows them temporarily to filter out any rows in a database that they do not want to see. What many users do, though, is turn AutoFilter off altogether to cancel a filter. This is tedious when they immediately want to create another filter as they have to invoke the Data|Filter|AutoFilter. command all over again. There's a perfectly good command that re-shows all data without turning the AutoFilter off: Data|Filter|Show All.

Tall rows for more data

When you enter data directly into a table, it's sometimes difficult to see the data you're typing because the columns are not wide enough. The columns can of course be widened, but this does not always solve the problem and may prevent you from seeing related data.

Try adjusting the height of the rows. Place the cursor in the grey area at the start of the row and drag the bottom edge of the row down. It doesn't matter which row: any adjustment will be applied to all rows.

Group and ungroup sheets quickly

Group worksheets together to enter data simultaneously into all of them or to format them all the same way. It's like putting old-fashioned carbon paper between the worksheets! There are a number of ways to group all the worksheets in a workbook, but the quickest is probably to right-click on any sheet tab then choose Select All Sheets. Ungroup all sheets in a similar way: right-click on any tab, then choose Ungroup sheets.

Diagram your tables and relationships

Almost all databases will have several tables that are related. Put ALL of your tables in a relationship diagram in the relationships window even if some tables are not related to others (lookup tables etc.). This will help document the application.

Where relationships exist, use the diagram to create them. This will save time when you create queries later, and allow options that are not available when you add relationships through queries.

Remember that the tables can be dragged around the relationship window. It is worth taking some time over the placement, so that crossing of relationship lines is minimised. This will make the diagram and the database design easier to understand and amend later.

Make a quick copy of a worksheet

Hold down the Ctrl key, then click and drag on a sheet tab to make a copy of that sheet. Though this process usefully copies the formats of the original sheet, note that any Range Names you have on the original sheet will be duplicated too.

To make a copy of a worksheet's contents and formats without duplicating range names: (1) Ensure that you have a blank worksheet to paste to. (2) On the sheet to copy, click on the sheet selection square to the left of Column A's heading to select the whole sheet. (2) Copy the whole sheet. (3) Paste to the blank worksheet.

Preserve Excel formula data

You frequently import data from Excel to Access but lose formula data each time. The standard import creates formula data as blank values. To solve the problem, select the range in Excel that you want to import. Copy it and paste it to a new sheet with Edit|Paste Special|Values. Save the sheet and import it to Access.

The Access table will contain all the values.

Select a large range with the Name Box

You don't have to scroll down the screen for hours when you select large ranges of cells. If you know the range you want to select, say, B10:L12050 simply type this range into the Name Box then press Enter to select it. The Name Box is the box with the drop-down arrow to the left of Excel's formula bar.

Show and dock toolbars

Forget Tools|Customize. and View|Toolbars. The easiest way to open a toolbar that is not currently visible is: (1) Right-click on **any** toolbar to obtain a list of toolbars available. (2) With a left-click, select the toolbar you want from the list. That toolbar then appears on screen.

To dock the toolbar at the edge of the screen, rather than having it "float" aimlessly in the middle of things, don't bother dragging it there. Simply double-click on the toolbar's blue title bar and the toolbar will dock at the edge of the screen. Most toolbars will dock at the top of the screen, but some, such as the Drawing toolbar, automatically dock at the bottom.

Align Address fields on a report

Regardless of the format of a Report, you generally need to list any addresses in a Report with their separate lines one on top of the other.

When you create a Report with Report Wizard, the Wizard will sometimes place address fields side-by-side, rather than one below the other. This means that you later have to fiddle around to align the address fields correctly.

A useful way to avoid extra work is to leave any address fields out as you run the Wizard to create the Report. Select any address fields later from the Field List.

You can select several address fields at the same time: hold down the Ctrl key then click on the required fields. When dragged onto the report from the Field List, Access neatly aligns the selected address fields one below the other, just as you want the address to look.

Attach Excel files to e-mail

In Excel 2000 onwards, don't forget the E-mail button on the Standard toolbar to help you quickly attach the Excel file you currently have open to e-mail messages. With the toolbars in their default configuration, the E-mail button is the fourth button on the Standard toolbar in Excel 2000 and 2002 (XP). In Excel 2003, it is the fifth button on the Standard toolbar.

The E-mail button gives you two choices: send the whole file as an attachment, or send the contents of the active worksheet as the body of the message. Generally, you need Outlook or Outlook Express for this feature to work properly.

Label Line-up

When you create a label or add text to a label created by the system, it is often useful to have the text run to two or more lines. You can achieve the required effect by resizing the label.

A more controllable and reliable method is to press Ctrl+Enter to start a new line.

Compress all pictures in a file

Got lots of pictures in a file? You might cut down on your file size if you compress all those pictures. To do that, right-click on any picture then choose Format Picture. to open the Format Picture dialog box.

On the Picture tab, then press Compress. to open the Compress Pictures dialog box. Under Apply to, select All pictures in document then choose OK. With the File|Properties command, as described in last weeks tip, see what effect compression has had on the size of your file. The results can sometimes be startling. Files can reduce in size by 50%.

Create similar fields

When creating a series of similar fields, it can be easier to create the first and then copy it to create the rest:

- (1) Right-click the grey area at the start of the row containing the field to be copied, and select Copy from the displayed list.
- (2) Right-click the grey area at the start of another row and select Paste to paste the details in.
- (3) Change the field name to create the new field.

This technique can be used within a single table or among different tables. Be aware that the paste will overwrite any field already in a row highlighted.

It can be a good idea to use this method when creating fields for linking tables, as the two fields must be of the same type to create a relationship. However, this should not be done with an Auto number field, as the method copies exactly. It is unlikely that an Auto number field will be required in both the link fields of a table: Access will only allow one Auto Number field per table.

Double-click the Format Painter to keep it active

If you want to copy the formatting from a cell or range of cells elsewhere, the quickest way to do that is to use the Format Painter - the yellow paintbrush icon on the Standard toolbar.

First, select the cell or range that contains the formats you wish to copy. This is like the "formatting paint pot" that you dip your brush into. Click on the Format Painter icon. Now click and drag the mouse over the range you want to paint - Excel then applies the copied formats to the selected cells and automatically deactivates the painter.

When you want to copy formats to many different cells or ranges, keep the Format Painter active by double-clicking on it rather than single clicking. Press the Esc key to deactivate the painter once you have copied the formatting to where you want.

Choose your view

Objects in the database window are commonly viewed in list mode, as more objects can be seen at a time. You can also view in detail mode. This has the advantages of showing both creation date and last modification date.

Both of these columns can be sorted. Simply click the column titles. This sorts the most recently worked-on items to the top, so you can easily return to them.

To change view mode, select View from the menu, then select the mode required from the options displayed.

Turn off background error checking

Many Excel 2002 (XP) and Excel 2003 users get annoyed by the small green triangles, accompanied by comments, that turn up in cells to tell them, for example, that their formulae are inconsistent (the cheek of it). This is Excel's background error checking feature.

Though harmless and sometimes useful (the green triangles that identify text that should be numbers are especially handy) it's helpful to know how to switch background error checking off. To do that, choose Tools|Options. then head for the Error Checking tab. On that tab you can choose to turn off all error checks or just select the ones you want to keep. We recommend that you keep at least the *Number stored as text* option on.

Use shortcut keys to select rows or columns

Most users use the mouse to select rows or columns. It may be more convenient to use keyboard shortcuts to do that.

The shortcut key combination to select an entire row is Shift+Spacebar.

The shortcut key combination to select an entire column is Ctrl+Spacebar.

These are pretty easy to remember as the spacebar looks like a long row (or column if you're looking at it sideways). Remember that Ctrl, beginning with C, selects columns and Shift, by a process of elimination, the rows.

Can I or can't I delete that?

Sometimes it can be difficult to remember what an item is used for. Is a query or other object still needed, or can it be deleted?

Access can show a list of tables, queries, forms or reports that depend on an object:

Right-click any object and select Object dependencies from the list.

This will display the Dependencies window, which shows all objects that depend on the selected object.

Set default margins

When you create reports, if you find that the margins always need to be changed, set default margins as follows:

Tools | Options

Click the general tab and change the default print margins on this dialog box. The margins will then be used for all reports created.

Ctrl+d's double life

Suppose I have a formula in B1 that I wish to copy into B2:B10. I can select B1:B10 then press Ctrl+d to copy the formula down the selected range. Users generally ignore this shortcut in favour of double-clicking on the fill handle to copy down, but Ctrl+d is useful sometimes particularly when there is no data in surrounding columns to guide to how far the double-click method should copy formulae.

Ctrl+d has another use though. When I use the drawing toolbar to draw objects such as Text Boxes, Rectangles and Ovals onto a worksheet, Ctrl+d makes an instant duplicate of selected shapes. For example, I need five Text Boxes the same size. I draw one Text box and adjust it to the size I want, select it, then press Ctrl+d four times to get four identical copies.

Return to the active cell after scrolling

When I scroll a long way down the screen from a selected cell, I can return to that cell with the Ctrl+Back Space shortcut. The active cell now appears in roughly the middle of the screen.

Shift+Back Space does something similar. Scroll down from the active cell and Shift+Back Space returns me to it and puts the active cell at the top of the screen; scroll up from the active cell and Shift+Back Space returns me to it and puts the active cell at the bottom of the screen.

Note also, that while Ctrl+Back Space will return me back to a selected range, Shift+Back Space only ever returns me to the active cell, which is normally at the top left-hand corner of any selected range.

Move a field in a query

When you design queries, you may find that a field is in the wrong position. There are several ways to change the order:

- Delete the field from the field area and then drag it from the table area to the position immediately behind where the field is to go. One drawback of this method is that any criteria or other work are lost when you delete the field.
- A long-winded method is to right-click on the grey bar above the field and select Cut. Insert a column in the required position, then Paste the field into the new space.
- Click the grey bar above the field to highlight the column. Let go of the mouse button, then click back on the grey bar and drag to the required position.

Hide combo box codes

In combo boxes, the value held in the table is often a code. The code is necessary but usually meaningless to the user. Access displays the information the code refers to as an extra column when the drop-down arrow is pressed. A more user-friendly approach is to display meaningful information and hide the code.

To do this, change the width of the column to zero in the Format Tab|Column Widths property of the Properties dialog box. When the width of the normally-displayed column is zero, Access displays the next column.

Create and delete borders

To put a border around the outside of a selected range, press Ctrl+Shift+&. Use Ctrl+Shift+_ (underscore) to remove any borders from

a range.

Quickly copy a formula across sheets

Suppose you have a formula in cell Sheet1!B2, say =A1*5%, that you wish to copy to cell B2 on Sheet2, Sheet3 and Sheet4. Instead of using copy and paste, try this: (1) Select Sheet1!B2. (2) Group Sheet1 with the worksheets Sheet2, Sheet3 and Sheet4 by holding down Ctrl and clicking on the tabs of the sheets to group them. (3) Press the F2 key, then immediately press Enter to copy the formula in Sheet1!B2 across the grouped sheets.

Remember to ungroup the sheets afterwards! Right-click on any tab and choose Ungroup Sheets to do that.

The shortest distance between two points is a straight line.

Access users often highlight parts of forms and reports with lines. It's hard to get lines truly horizontal, though, and a slanted line looks unsightly.

To ensure that a line is truly horizontal, double-click it. In the resulting Properties dialog box, select the Format tab. Find the Height value and change it to 0 (zero). The line will now be horizontal.

This does not affect the thickness of the line: that's controlled by the Border Width value.

Enter values or formulae simultaneously into a range of cells

To copy formulae, most users employ copy and paste or the Fill Handle in the bottom right-hand corner of a cell. For example, suppose I have a formula in B1 that I want to copy into B2:B12. I would find B1's fill handle and drag down with the mouse to copy the formula into B2:B12.

However, an alternative way to enter several formulae simultaneously onto a sheet is to use Ctrl+Enter as follows:

(1) Select the formula cell and the range to copy the formula to. For example, I want to create a formula in B1 and copy it down to B2:B12, so I select B1:B12. (2) With B1:B12 still selected, and without using the mouse, I type the formula to copy, say =A1*5%. As I type, I see the formula being entered directly into B1 and also into the formula bar. B2:B12 remains selected. (3) I then press Ctrl+Enter. The formula

B2:B12 remains selected. (3) I then press Ctrl+Enter. The formula

immediately copies down into B2:B12, and the formula results appear in the entire range B1:B12.

I can use Ctrl+Enter with values too. For example, I may want to enter a dash into several cells simultaneously. To that, I would select the range of cells where I wanted the dash, type in a dash, then press Ctrl+Enter. Ctrl+Enter works for non-contiguous ranges too, that is, groups of selected cells that are not directly next door to each other, as discussed in last week's tip.

Reporting with Globals

The use of Global variables may be frowned upon by some, but they can be useful on occasion. If you use them at all, set up a module specifically for their use. Define each Global variable with the Public keyword and give each one the prefix GL so you are always aware that you are using a Global variable. Each Global variable definition should be accompanied by a comment that details what it is used for, when and how it is set, and which part of the system is expected to use it. Don't use Global variables for more than one purpose.

While each Global variable is available to any module in the application, they cannot be used directly in reports or forms. To get around this problem, create a function that returns the Global variable.

For example, to enable the use of the Global variable GLQTel, set up a function as follows:

```
Public Function fnTel()  
    fnTel = GLQTel  
End Function
```

You can then enter =fnTel directly into the Control source box of the data tab to use the value held in the Global variable.

Select non-contiguous ranges

A non-contiguous range of cells is one in which not all the cells selected are adjacent to each other. For example, when you select the cells A1:A6 and C1:C6 simultaneously, that is a non-contiguous range as there is a gap within it. Select non-contiguous ranges by holding down Ctrl as you select the different groups of cells.

An alternative method to select non-contiguous ranges is to press Shift+F8 before you begin selection. The word ADD will appear on the status bar at the bottom left of the screen. Now, click and drag on the cells you wish to select. There is no need to hold down Ctrl. Turn this ADD mode off by pressing Shift+F8 again.

Copy and paste quickly with the right mouse button

When you move or copy small ranges of data, do not waste your time with the copy and paste commands.

First select the range you want to move/copy. Then move your mouse pointer onto anywhere on the border of that range apart from over the fill handle in the bottom right-hand corner. Then click and drag with your right mouse button to the location where you want to paste. When you release the right mouse button, a shortcut menu appears, giving you a fantastic selection of pasting choices such as Move Here, Copy Here and Copy Values Only. Select the paste option you want with the left mouse button.

Print a selected range

It is possible to print off just a selected range in Excel. Highlight the range of data you want to print and choose File|Print. In the Print dialog under *Print what*, click on Selection. Before you press Print, you can use the Preview button at the bottom of the Print dialog to view what will actually print.

Print the correct range

In Excel, never just press the File|Print... then OK. It's a recipe for disaster. Always tell Excel what specific range of data you wish to print with the command File|Print Area|Set Print Area. Then, use the View|Page Break Preview command to check where your page breaks are.

--- 2007's Filter shortcut ---

In Excel 2007, the AutoFilter is simply called the Filter. Most Excel users probably filter data many times in a typical workday.

In Excel 2007, you can now toggle the Filter on and off with the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+Shift+L. Select a cell within your data and Excel applies a filter to what is known as the current region, which essentially is the range comprising the contiguous block of data around the cell.

Should your data contain any blank rows or columns, Excel may not apply the filter to the correct range. To combat this, first select the range that contains all your data and then apply the shortcut.

While there is no equivalent keyboard shortcut in Excel 2000/XP/2003, you can press Alt D F F to access Data | Filter | AutoFilter.

Use a keyboard shortcut to insert a row or column

--- This week's tip: Use a keyboard shortcut to insert a row or column

To insert a row in Excel 2007, the ribbon command is Home | Cells | Insert | Insert Sheet Rows (Alt H I R).

In AbleOwl command notation, the keyboard shortcut required to execute a command always appears at the end. So, for the above command, press Alt and letters appear on the ribbon. Press H to activate the Home ribbon, then I for the Insert options and finally R for Insert Sheet Rows.

In Excel 2000/XP/2003, the menu command is Insert | Rows (Alt I R). Once you've pressed the Alt key, the underlined letters on the menu indicate which keys you need to press to execute a command.

Excel 2007 recognises the old menu command shortcuts, so you can still use Alt I R to insert a row and Alt I C to insert a column in Excel 2007. To insert multiple rows, use F4 to repeat the last action.

A shortcut to the Function Wizard

If you are new to a function, or have not used that function in a while, it can be difficult to know what to enter for the function's arguments. Never fear, the Function Wizard can help.

To open the Function Wizard:

- (1) Click the fx button to the left of the Formula bar. The Insert Function dialog box appears.
- (2) Locate the desired function and choose OK. The Function Arguments dialog box appears to guide you through the requirements for the function's arguments.

To avoid having to locate the required function in the Insert Function dialog box:

- (1) Type = and the function name; for instance, =SUMIF.
- (2) Press Ctrl+A to bypass the Insert Function dialog box and instead open the Function Arguments dialog box directly.

Quickly change the order of a chart series

Follow these steps to change the order of a particular series on a chart:

- (1) On the chart, select the series in question. In the Formula bar, Excel displays the SERIES formula for that series. The formula has 4 arguments: (a) Series name. (b) Labels range. (c) Data range. (d) Series order.
- (2) Change the last argument of the SERIES function to the desired series order. For instance, to display the selected series in the fourth position, type 4.

Create a workbook-specific Quick Access Toolbar

In Excel 2007, you can customise the Quick Access Toolbar (QAT) for a particular workbook. For example, you might want one workbook to display the Calculate Now button on the QAT,

while a different workbook displays buttons for the macros contained in that workbook.

Whenever anyone opens the workbook, the customised QAT buttons appear to the right of the standard QAT. The customised QAT only displays when the workbook that contains it is active.

Follow these steps:

(1) Right-click any button on the QAT and choose Customize Quick Access Toolbar.

The Excel Options dialog box appears.

(2) Change the Customize Quick Access Toolbar drop-down list to show the name of the workbook. (This won't work for older xls files.).

(3) In the list on the left, locate and select the command you wish to add to the QAT. NB: To locate the desired command, you may first need to change the option in the Choose commands from drop-down list.

(4) Choose the Add >> button to add the selected command to the list on the right.

(5) Choose OK.

Return all values as positives

When you work with variances, you are often more likely to be concerned with the magnitude of the variance, rather than whether it's positive or negative.

For instance, suppose you have a list of positive and negative variances and want to sort the list by variance size. However, sorting the list in descending order will cause the large positive variances to appear at the top, while the large negative variances will appear at the bottom.

The solution is the ABS function, which returns the absolute value of a number. Both =ABS(-123) and =ABS(123) return 123.

Force Excel to recalculate

Sometimes Excel's formulae don't recalculate correctly. This can occur, for example, when you have a SUM formula that totals across multiple sheets.

If you simply press F9, Excel will recalculate the workbook, but this will not necessarily fix the calculation error. Excel normally only recalculates formulae when the cells those formulae refer to have changed.

Instead, press Ctrl+Alt+F9 to force Excel to recalculate all formulae.

Zoom in on a selected range

After you zoom in on a worksheet, you are often then obliged to scroll the sheet to display the data you want to examine. Instead, first select the range you wish to zoom in on and then zoom. As you zoom, Excel ensures your selection remains visible.

How you perform the zoom is up to you, but one of the quicker methods is to hold down Ctrl and scroll the mouse wheel.

Move to the start or end of a row

To move the active cell to column A of the current row, press Home. When Freeze Panes is on, pressing Home takes the active cell to the first unfrozen column of the current row.

To move to the last used cell in a row, press End then press Enter.

To select a range as you navigate to the beginning or end of the row, hold down the Shift key.

Get to the end of a list quickly with the mouse

Need to go to the end of a long list? Hate scrolling laboriously down the sheet? Try this: position the mouse pointer at the bottom edge of the active cell (the mouse pointer should display as a four-headed arrow when you are in the right position), then double-click.

The double-click moves you down to the cell above the next blank cell. If you are in a blank cell, double-click takes you to the next cell that has an entry.

To move quickly in other directions, double-click the respective edge of the active cell.

To select a range, hold down the Shift key before you double-click.

Print row and column headings

Some of us prefer to review spreadsheets on paper. (To do so, it's helpful to be able to print to A3-sized paper!).

To print formulae instead of their values, press Ctrl+` before you print. The ` character is on the same key as ~. This keyboard shortcut displays the formulae on screen. Use the same shortcut to toggle back to display of formulae results.

Unfortunately, though, since spreadsheet printouts don't show row or column headings, you can't tell which cells the formulae refer to! Remedy that as follows:

(1) In Excel 2007, choose Page Layout | Page Setup | Print Titles (Alt P I). In earlier versions, choose File | Page Setup. (Alt F U).

The Page Setup dialog box appears.

(2) In all versions, choose the Sheet tab and then tick Row and column headings. (3) Choose OK.

(4) Print.

Display your number's unit of measure

If you type "145 mm" into a cell, Excel treats the entry as text. Excel cannot perform calculations with text values. Use a custom number format instead. An added bonus is that you then only need to type the number, not the 'mm'.

Follow these steps:

(1) Select a range of numbers you wish to display as millimetres.

(2) Press Ctrl+1 to open the Format Cells dialog box.

(3) Select the Number tab.

(4) Select Custom from the Category list.

(5) In the Type box, enter the custom format 0" mm"

(6) Choose OK.

You can type any unit of measure you wish between the double quotes.

Place the vertical axis to the right of a chart

By default, Excel line charts have the vertical axis positioned to the left. But most line charts show data over time, generally with the most recent data to the right. Placing the vertical axis on the right of the chart makes it easier to read the most recent data values.

In all versions of Excel:

- (1) Right-click the horizontal axis, not the vertical (as you might expect) and choose Format Axis...
- (2) In Excel 2007, select the Axis Options tab. In Excel 2000/XP/2003, select the Scale Tab.
- (3) In Excel 2007, choose At maximum category under Vertical axis crosses. In Excel 2000/XP/2003, choose Value (Y) axis crosses at maximum category.
- (4) Choose OK.

Rank values

Suppose you have a list of sales people and the amounts they have sold. A useful addition to the spreadsheet would be a column that ranks the sales values.

You could sort the list, but you might want to retain the list in alphabetical order by staff name.

The RANK function solves the problem with no sorting required.

RANK has three arguments: (a) The value you wish to rank. (b) The list of all values. (c) Order (Optional).

Use any non-zero number as the third argument to rank the values in ascending order. If you omit the third argument or set it to zero, Excel ranks the values in descending order.

Locate specific ordinal numbers

To find the largest value in a list of values, most people know to use the MAX function. The MIN function returns the smallest value in a range.

But how can you return the 2nd largest value, or the 4th smallest value?

Use the LARGE and SMALL functions. Both have the same two arguments: (a) Range. (b) Kth value to return.

=LARGE(A1:A100,2) would find the 2nd largest value in the range, while =SMALL(A1:A100,4) would return the 4th smallest.

Create a cross-check for error values

Formulae in Excel may return error values such as #REF!, #NAME? or #N/A. In a large worksheet, you might miss one or more of these errors unless you spend time searching for them. However, you can create a formula that alerts you to the presence of any such error, no matter where it occurs.

In a cell at the top of the worksheet, enter the following formula:
=IF(ISERROR(SUM(range),"Error found!",""))

The SUM range must include all the data in your worksheet, and should start one row below the cross-check cell.

The result of the SUM calculation is unimportant, as SUM adds any numbers and ignores any

text. However, SUM will not ignore error values, and a single error value in the SUM range causes SUM to return that same error value.

ISERROR returns TRUE if SUM returns an error. In such a case, IF returns the error message "Error found!". If there is no error, IF returns "", or blank text.

Find your file path

How can you determine the file path of an open file?

To do this in Excel 2007, you need to have the Document Location box on your Quick Access Toolbar (QAT). Add it, if necessary, as follows:

- (1) Right-click the QAT and choose Customize Quick Access Toolbar.
- (2) Change Choose commands from to Commands Not in the Ribbon.
- (3) Select the Document Location command in the list on the left.
- (4) Choose Add>> to add the command to the list on the right.
- (5) Choose OK.

The file path of the open file then automatically appears in the QAT.

In Excel 2000/XP/2003, the file path automatically appears in the Address box on the Web toolbar. If the Web toolbar is not displayed, then right-click any toolbar and choose Web from the displayed list.

Unhide the first column

The usual way to unhide a column is to first select the columns on either side of the hidden column. For instance, to unhide column B, first select columns A and C, then press Ctrl+Shift+0 (this is the zero on the main keyboard, not the number pad).

But what if column A is hidden?

The solution:

- (1) Press F5 to open the Go To dialog box.
- (2) Type A1 into Reference and press Enter or OK. This makes A1 the active cell, even though column A is not visible.
- (3) Unhide the column with the usual shortcut Ctrl+Shift+0

The same approach works to unhide row 1, but use Ctrl+Shift+9 instead.

Use keyboard shortcuts to hide/unhide columns and rows

To hide a row or column, select any cell in the column or row you wish to hide, then press Ctrl+9 to hide the row or Ctrl+0 to hide the column.

Select a range of cells to hide multiple rows or columns.

To unhide rows or columns, first select a range that includes the hidden rows or columns. For instance, to unhide column B, first select A1:C1. Press Ctrl+Shift+9 to unhide a row or Ctrl+Shift+0 to unhide a column.

NOTE: All the shortcuts in this tip use the numbers on the main keyboard, not those on the

number pad.

--- This week's tip: A shortcut to sheets ---

The keyboard shortcut Shift+F11 quickly adds a worksheet to your workbook. Excel inserts the sheet to the left of the active sheet, but you can drag the newcomer by its sheet tab to any position in the workbook; just hold down the left mouse button while you drag.

--- This week's tip: Fill down several columns at once with the Fill Handle ---

The Fill Handle is the small black box at the bottom right corner of the selection, and among its many features is the ability to fill data down a sheet.

When you double-click the Fill Handle, Excel copies the value in the selected cell down, using the column to the left as a guide as to when to stop copying: when there is a blank cell in the column immediately to the left, the last entry copied is in the row above that blank cell.

The Fill Handle can also fill down several adjacent columns at once. Select the cells you wish to copy down and double-click the Fill Handle. Excel uses the leftmost cell in your selection as its guide, and stops copying, as usual, on the row above the first blank cell to the left of that leftmost cell.

--- This week's tip: Get some super script ---

When you have text entries such as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. they'd probably look better as 1st, 2nd and 3rd; this effect is called superscript. Microsoft Word makes the letters superscript automatically, but you need to do it manually in Excel.

To make letters superscript:

- (1) In the Formula bar, select those letters you wish to change (for example 'st' in 1st).
- (2) Right-click on the selected text and choose Format Cells...
- (3) Place a tick in the check box next to Superscript and choose OK

--- This week's tip: Today's date in a flash ---

To enter today's date into a cell, simply press Ctrl+; and then Enter. Ctrl+; also enters the date while you are editing a cell.

To enter the current time instead, press Ctrl+Shift+;.

Note that these commands enter the date/time as of when they are used; they do not continually update to display the current date/time.

--- This week's tip: Select large ranges quickly ---

To select a range, you can click and drag with the mouse, or hold down Shift and use the arrow and PgUp/PgDn keys. For large ranges, though, both of these methods are slow, and you're liable to overshoot.

If you know the cell addresses for the corners of your range (for example, K395:AA677), use Excel's Go To feature to select the range quickly:

- (1) Press F5. The Go To dialog box appears.
- (2) Type the cell addresses of the corners of the range. Remember to separate the cell addresses

with a colon (:).

(3) Press Enter. Excel selects the range.

--- --- **This week's tip: Full screen ahead** ---

Do you have a big worksheet but a small screen to view it on? Maximise your viewing area with the Full Screen feature.

In Excel 2007/2010, choose View | Full Screen (Alt W E). This hides the Ribbon, the Title bar of the Excel window, the Status bar and the Formula bar. Press Esc to end Full Screen mode.

In Excel XP/2003, choose View | Full Screen (Alt V U). This hides all toolbars, the Title bar of the Excel window, the Status bar and the Formula bar. You still have access to menus, though. To end Full Screen mode, choose View | Full Screen (Alt V U) again.

--- --- **This week's tip: Access macros easily** ---

You can run many macros with a keyboard shortcut or the click of a button. However, buttons get deleted and keyboard shortcuts can be forgotten – and some macros have neither!

To bring up the Macro dialog box, which lists available macros, press Alt+F8. Select a macro from the list and choose Run (or double-click a macro name) to run it.

--- --- **This week's tip: Fill to the right** ---

The Fill Handle makes it easy to copy formulae down adjacent to data – a double-click and the job is done. However, to copy formulae to the right, you can't double-click the Fill Handle, you need to drag it – and dragging with the mouse in this way can be slow and inaccurate for large ranges.

A more accurate way to fill to the right is to select the formula, and the cells to its right that you wish to copy it to, with the keyboard, then press Ctrl+R. This copies the formula to the selected cells.

--- --- **This week's tip: Quickly copy an entire worksheet** ---

You want to make a copy of a worksheet, so you can keep the layout and/or formulae of the original sheet but enter different data. The quickest way is to hold down Ctrl, click on the sheet tab of the worksheet you wish to copy, and drag to the desired location.

A black arrow indicates where the new sheet will appear when you release the mouse button. The new sheet has the same name as the original, but suffixed with a number in brackets: sheets within the same Excel workbook can't have identical names.

--- --- **This week's tip: Close all open workbooks with a single command** ---

When you have a lot of workbooks open, it can be a hassle to close them individually. There is a Close All command in Excel, but it is well hidden.

To Close All in Excel XP/2003, hold down Shift and choose File | Close All. (Close All only appears when you hold down Shift).

In Excel 2007/2010, to use Close All, you must first add it to the Quick Access Toolbar (QAT). To do this:

1) Right-click on the QAT and choose Customize Quick Access Toolbar...

- 2) Select Commands Not in the Ribbon from the Choose commands from drop-down list.
- 3) Select Close All from the list and choose Add > >.
- 4) Choose OK.

The Close All button now appears on the QAT – simply click it to close all open workbooks.

--- This week's tip: Space out with TRIM ---

Imported data, especially if it has fixed-width fields, is often padded with undesirable spaces. The TRIM function removes all spaces from the beginning and end of a text string, and also reduces consecutive spaces within the string to single spaces.

If A1 is (a b c), for example, =TRIM(A1) returns a b c.

--- This week's tip: Two ways to Paste with the keyboard ---

When you copy a range (with Ctrl+C, for example), you can use one of two shortcut key combinations to paste it.

If you paste with Ctrl+V, the data remains on the Clipboard, and you can paste it again to other locations. If you paste with Enter, the data is cleared from the Clipboard.

So if you only need to paste once, Enter is quicker; if you want to paste multiple times, use Ctrl+V.

--- This week's tip: Add error-free range names to formulae quickly ---

When a formula requires a range name, you can just type one in. However, it's easy to make typing mistakes – and of course you first have to remember the range name!

Excel's Paste Name feature offers a better method. Just press F3 – a list of range names appears; select one from the list and choose OK to paste it into your formula.

--- This week's tip: The quickest way to rename a worksheet ---

There are several different ways to rename a worksheet, but the quickest is:

- 1) Double-click on the sheet tab of the worksheet you wish to rename.
- 2) Type the new name.
- 3) Press Enter.

--- This week's tip: Quickly remove (or add) borders ---

If your range has borders around (or within) it that you want to clear:

- 1) Select the range.
- 2) In Excel 2007/2010, choose Home | Font | Borders | No Border (Alt H B N); in Excel XP/2003, choose the borderless (No Border) option from the Borders drop-down list on the Formatting toolbar.

This removes all borders from the selected range.

An even quicker way is to select the range and press Ctrl+Shift+.

To add a single border around the selected range, press Ctrl+Shift+&.

--- This week's tip: Discover a power-ful operator ---

Most Excel users know the common operators used in formulae: addition, subtraction, multiplication and division can be performed with the operators +, -, * and /, respectively.

Another less common (but still very useful) operation is exponentiation. To raise one number to the power of another, use the exponentiation operator ^, the caret.

To raise 1.05 to the power of 12, for example, type =1.05^12.

--- This week's tip: Avoid merged-cell issues with Center Across Selection ---

When you want to centre text across several columns, the Merge and Center option is tempting. (In Excel 2007/2010, choose Home | Alignment | Merge & Center (Alt H M C), or in Excel XP/2003, use the Merge and Center button on the Formatting toolbar). This merges the cells and centres text across the merged range.

However, today's convenience can lead to tomorrow's aggravation! You can't select a single column if a cell in that column is merged across multiple columns. You can't use merge at all in a PivotTable, and merged cells also cause sorting issues.

Fortunately, Center Across Selection is an alternative:

- 1) Select the cells to centre across.
- 2) In Excel 2007/2010, choose Home | Cells | Format | Format Cells... (Alt H O E), or in Excel XP/2003, choose Format | Cells... (Alt O E). The Format Cells dialog box appears.
- 3) On the Alignment tab, select Center Across Selection from the Horizontal drop-down options.
- 4) Choose OK.

Excel centres the text across the selected cells, but does not merge them.

--- This week's tip: Secure your workbook with a password ---

To secure a workbook that contains sensitive information, you can require a password to open it, modify it, or both.

To require a password either to open (but not modify), or to both open and modify a workbook:

- 1) Open the file, and press F12 to Save As (alternatively, choose Save As from the File menu or under the Office Button in Excel 2007).
- 2) Next, within the Save As dialog box, choose Tools | General Options... (The Tools drop-down list appears in the lower-left of the Save As dialog box in Excel 2007/2010, and in the upper-right of the Save As dialog box in Excel XP/2003).
- 3) In the Save Options dialog box that appears, you can either set a password that allows a user to open (but not modify) the workbook, or one that allows a user to both open and modify the workbook. Enter your password in the appropriate field and choose OK.

Alternatively, should you use a newer version of Excel, you can also use these quick alternative methods to require a password to open a workbook:

- In Excel 2010, choose File | Info | Protect Workbook | Encrypt with Password (Alt F I P E).
- I

· In Excel 2007, choose Office Button | Prepare | Encrypt Document (Alt F E E).
In either case, enter your password and choose OK.

--- This week's tip: What's your calculation mode? ---

If, when you update data, your formulae do not recalculate as you would expect them to, you may be in Manual calculation mode. To check whether this is the case:

In Excel 2007/2010, choose Formulas | Calculation | Calculation Options (Alt M X). The drop-down list displays a tick next to the current calculation mode. If Manual is ticked, you can change it to Automatic.

In Excel XP/2003, choose Tools | Options (Alt T O). In the Options dialog box, the current calculation mode appears on the Calculation tab. Again, if it is Manual, you can change it to Automatic.

Sometimes (generally in large workbooks with formulae that take a long time to calculate), calculation mode may be set to Manual deliberately, so as to avoid recalculation delays after each worksheet modification. To invoke a recalculation in such circumstances, use F9.

--- This week's tip: Recapture that old Print Preview feeling in Excel 2010 ---

In Excel 2010, you have a preview of your printout as soon as you choose File | Print. Print options are displayed to the left and the preview is displayed to the right. This is useful, but only if your screen is wide enough – otherwise, the preview can become cramped.

You have the option to access the Print Preview format in previous Excel versions via the Quick Access Toolbar, or QAT. To do this: 1) Right-click on the QAT and choose Customize Quick Access Toolbar... 2) Set the Choose commands from drop-down to Commands Not in the Ribbon. 3) Scroll down the list to find the Print Preview Full Screen option, double-click it and choose OK.

The option now appears as a new button on the QAT, and you can click it to view the 'old' Print Preview.

--- This week's tip: Travel swiftly to the Ends of your worksheet ---

Most keyboard shortcuts require you to hold one key and press another. Not so with End mode. To produce the same effect as Ctrl+Down arrow, press and release End, then press Down arrow. In fact, if you press End and then any arrow key, the effect is the same as if you hold down Ctrl and press that arrow key.

Further, if you press End and then Home, Excel moves the active cell to the bottom right of the used range – the same effect as Ctrl+End.

End mode also has one trick all of its own. To move to the rightmost used cell in a row, press End and then Enter.

NOTE: There was an error in last week's tip: The final phrase should have been: just change SUBTOTAL's first argument to 109, instead of just change SUBTOTAL's first argument to 10. Apologies for any inconvenience caused.

--- This week's tip: Total filtered data with an AutoSum ---

A filter is a useful tool when you need to show only certain portions of your data. However, a SUM formula will add rows even when you have filtered them out. Use SUBTOTAL to avoid this.

The SUBTOTAL function has two arguments: (a) A function code (eg. code 1 for Average, 2 for Count, 9 for Sum, etc). (b) One or more ranges. If SUBTOTAL's first argument is 9, the function calculates a sum of the specified range or ranges, excluding any rows that you have filtered out.

You can add a subtotal quickly with Excel's AutoSum feature. For this to work, the range to be summed must have an AutoFilter applied, and at least one column must be filtered. To use AutoSum to insert SUBTOTAL, select the cell at the bottom of the column of values to be totalled and, in Excel 2007/2010, choose Home | Editing | AutoSum (Alt H U S), or in Excel XP/2003, choose the Σ button on the Standard toolbar.

NB: Rows that have been hidden with Excel's Hide feature are still included in the total. In Excel 2003 and later, you can exclude hidden rows from the total as well as filtered ones: just change SUBTOTAL's first argument to 10.

--- This week's tip: AutoFill values with a custom list ---

You can use the Fill Handle to fill some Excel default values down quickly and easily – for example, a series of months (January, February, etc.) or days of the week. But you can also create custom lists of values that you can then fill down with AutoFill.

To do this, select the range that contains the values you want in your custom list. Then, in Excel 2010, choose File | Options | Advanced (Alt F T A) and choose Edit Custom Lists... under General options. In Excel 2007, choose Office button | Options (Alt F I) and choose Edit Custom Lists... In Excel XP/2003, choose Tools | Options (Alt T O) and then choose the Custom Lists tab of the Options dialog box.

In all versions, the range you have selected appears in the Import list from cells field. Choose Import, then choose OK (and OK again in versions 2007/10).

Now when you enter the first item in your custom list in a cell and drag the Fill Handle from that cell, Excel AutoFills with your custom list.

--- This week's tip: Copy column widths to make worksheets match ---

Related worksheets should often have identical formatting (eg. a worksheet for each month of the year). If you make a format change, such as to column widths, you should group the sheets first, but it's easy to forget!

You can copy column widths from one worksheet to another. This won't affect any data.

- (1) Select the columns that you want to copy the widths from and copy them (Ctrl+C).
- (2) Select the columns that you want to copy the widths to.
- (3) In Excel 2007/2010, choose Home | Clipboard | Paste | Paste Special... (Alt H V S), select Column widths and choose OK. In Excel XP(2002)/2003, choose Edit | Paste Special... (Alt E S), select Column widths and choose OK.

--- This week's tip: Hide a multitude of zero values ---

In some worksheets, only a few values are important, and all the others are zero. To accentuate the important values, you can make all the zero values appear blank.

In Excel 2010, choose File | Options | Advanced (Alt F T A) and remove the check next to Show a zero in cells that have zero value.

In Excel 2007, choose Office button | Options | Advanced (Alt F I A) and in the Display options, remove the check next to Show a zero in cells that have zero value.

In Excel XP (2002)/2003, choose Tools | Options... (Alt T O). On the View tab, in the Window options section, remove the check next to Zero values.

--- This week's tip: Hide your objects with a shortcut key combination ---

Worksheets can get very 'busy' with objects such as charts, text boxes, buttons and pictures. To get a clear view of your worksheet, you can hide these objects with the shortcut key combination Ctrl+6. However, this key combination behaves differently in different Excel versions.

In Excel 2007/2010, Ctrl+6 toggles between hidden objects and visible objects.

In Excel XP/2003, Ctrl+6 switches between hidden objects, greyed-out placeholders displayed for some objects (such as charts) and visible objects, in that order.

Note that hidden objects will not print.

--- This week's tip: Insert multiple columns simultaneously ---

Say you need to insert several columns: you have columns for actuals, but each column needs an adjacent one for budget figures. There's a quick way to insert several columns at once. Note that Excel will insert a new column to the left of each of the columns you select.

- 1) Select a cell in the first column that you wish to insert a column to the left of.
- 2) Hold down Ctrl and select a cell in each of the other columns that you wish to insert a column to the left of. The exact cells you select don't matter, as long as they are in the correct columns.
- 3) In Excel 2007/2010, choose Home | Cells | Insert | Insert Sheet Columns (Alt H I C). In Excel XP/2003, choose Insert | Column (Alt I C).

--- This week's tip: Zoom out to view named ranges ---

You may need to locate the named ranges and their locations on a particular worksheet.

If you use the Zoom feature with a zoom level of 39% or lower, borders appear around any named ranges that cover more than one cell, and their names appear as well. (Note that when you have zoomed this far out, it may be difficult to make out the names of small ranges!).

To zoom:

In Excel XP/2003, use the zoom box on the Standard toolbar. Type a zoom value in this box or use the drop-down to access preset zoom values.

In Excel 2007/2010, choose View | Zoom | Zoom (Alt W Q) to bring up the Zoom dialog box, in which you can select a preset zoom value or enter a custom one.

In all versions, you can also hold Ctrl and move the mousewheel up and down to zoom.

--- This week's tip: Set a column width to best-fit, but ignore titles ---

You might already know that to set a column (eg, column K) to be just wide enough to fit the data within it, you can double-click on the right-hand edge of the column label (for column K, on the boundary between K and L), where the mouse pointer becomes a double-headed arrow.

But if this column contains some wide entries outside of the data (for example, a long title at the top of the worksheet that happens to be in column K), you may find that the best-fit method results in a column that is far too wide for the data it contains.

Fortunately, you can best-fit a column to match the widest entry in a particular range within that column. To do this, first select the range, then:

In Excel XP/2003, choose Format | Column | AutoFit Selection (Alt O C A).

In Excel 2007/2010, choose Home | Cells | Format | AutoFit Column Width (Alt H O I).

--- This week's tip: Email workbooks directly from Excel ---

When you want to email workbooks to others, you don't have to leave Excel to do so. Try this: In Excel 2010, choose File | Save & Send | Send Using E-mail | Send as Attachment (Alt F D E A).

In Excel 2007, choose Office Button | Send | E-mail (Alt F D E).

In Excel XP/2003, choose File | Send To | Mail Recipient (as Attachment)... (Alt F D A).

In all Excel versions, the default email client (application eg.Outlook) brings up a new email window with the currently-active Excel workbook attached and the workbook's name as the message subject. Just fill in the recipient's email address and a message, and click Send. (Note: This tip assumes you have a default email client! But then, most Excel users do...).

--- This week's tip: Even faster AutoSum ---

You may have used AutoSum (the Σ button, found in Excel 2007/2010 in the Editing group of the Home Ribbon and in Excel XP/2003 on the Standard toolbar) to quickly add SUM formulae to your worksheet. To access this handy feature more quickly in all these versions, simply press Alt+=.

--- This week's tip: Paste values fast with click and drag ---

Suppose you want to copy the results of formulae to a different location in your worksheet. Instead of the results you want, a simple copy-and-paste produces formulae that refer to new locations. The solution is to paste just the values. A quick way to copy and paste cell values (rather than formulae) is to select the range and position the mouse pointer on the edge of the selection. The mouse pointer should display as a four-headed arrow. Hold down the right mouse button and drag the selection to the desired location. When you release the right mouse button, a

menu appears. Choose Copy Here as Values Only.

--- This week's tip: Adjust column width from Print Preview ---

It's always the way - you go to print your worksheet but in Print Preview, it's just a little bit too wide for the page. Conveniently, you can adjust worksheet column widths from Print Preview. The small black bars at the top of the page correspond to column boundaries. Simply click on the black bars and drag them left or right to alter the column widths in your worksheet.

Note: if the margins are not visible, the black bars will not be visible either. In Excel 2010, the Show Margins button is in the bottom right of the Print Preview window. In Excel 2007, the Show Margins check box is on the Ribbon. In Excel XP/2003, the Margins button is at the top of the Print Preview window.

--- This week's tip: Avoid copy steps for mathematical operations ---

If you have a range of cells whose values need to be multiplied by a number (maybe you need to convert from one currency to another or apply a sales tax) you could perform the operation in a neighbouring range, and then copy the result over the top of the original values - or you could use Paste Special to convert the existing range.

Enter the value you wish to multiply by in a cell separate to your range of values, and then copy that cell. Select the range you want to multiply, and choose Paste Special. In Excel 2007/2010, this is Home | Clipboard | Paste | Paste Special (Alt H V S), or alternatively use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+Alt+V. In Excel XP/2003, it's Edit | Paste Special (Alt E S). In either case, under Operation, select Multiply and choose OK. Every value in a cell in the selected range will be replaced with its value multiplied by the copied cell.

Excel can perform the other basic operations (add, subtract and divide) with a similar process - just change the Operation selected.

--- This week's tip: Align objects easily ---

Let's say you're constructing a flowchart in Excel, and you want all the shapes in the chart to align neatly along the left edge of the sheet. You could click and drag the shapes, but it's a real pain to get them pixel-perfect.

Excel has an Align feature that can save you time and effort. First, select the objects you want to align (to select multiple objects, hold down Ctrl as you select them). Then, in Excel 2007/2010, choose Page Layout | Arrange | Align | Align Left (Alt P AA L), or in Excel XP/2003, choose Draw from the Drawing toolbar and then Align or Distribute | Align Left (Alt R A L). (NB: If the Drawing toolbar is not visible in Excel XP/2003, choose View | Toolbars (Alt V T) and then choose Drawing). The leftmost edge of each of the selected objects is moved to align with the leftmost point among those objects.

You can also align to the right, top, bottom or middle.

--- This week's tip: Move and resize windows in Windows 7 ---

Many of us are lucky enough to possess a widescreen monitor, or maybe even multiple monitors. Windows 7 makes it easy to reposition your windows and maximise the potential of your screen real estate.

Press the Windows key and the Up arrow to maximise the active window, or to restore a minimised window. The Windows key and the Down arrow combination does the opposite. The Windows key plus Left arrow/Right arrow resizes the active window to fill the left/right half of the screen. This is great for comparing two windows side by side.

On multiple monitors, depending on your configuration, the same Windows key and Left

arrow/Right arrow keyboard combination moves the active window onto the next monitor.

--- This week's tip: Use shortcuts to open recently-used files ---

Get to recently-used files faster with Excel's shortcuts:

- 1) Press and release Alt to activate the menu or ribbon.
- 2) Press F. In Excel 2010, this selects the File tab. In Excel 2007, this selects the Office button. In Excel XP/2003, this selects the File menu.

Excel 2010 uses tooltips to display a number for each file in the recently-used list. The first 9 files have numbers for shortcuts, while the rest use letter combinations.

In Excel XP/2003/2007, the recently-used file number appears to the left of the filename. (While the recently-used file list in Excel 2007 can contain more files than the lists in earlier versions, only the first 9 files will have numbers).

- 3) Type the number or letter combination of the file you require.

In Excel 2010, you may wish to access the list of recently-used files/folders/drives that is part of Excel 2010's Backstage View, since this list contains more files. Follow these steps to do so:

- 1) Press and release Alt to activate the menu or ribbon.
- 2) Press F.
- 3) Press R.
- 4) Type the number or letter combination of the file you require.

--- This week's tip: Return a unique list of items ---

Follow these steps to return a list of unique items from a column:

- 1) In Excel 2007/2010, choose Data | Sort & Filter | Advanced (Alt A Q). In Excel 2002/2003, choose Data | Filter | Advanced Filter... (Alt D F A).
- 2) Select Copy to another location.
- 3) Set the List range to the column you wish to find the unique items in. The first cell in this range should be a heading, for example Branches or Product codes.
- 4) Set Copy to to the cell where you wish the list of unique items to begin.
- 5) Tick Unique records only.
- 6) Choose OK.

The Advanced Filter requires the first cell in the List range to be a heading, which then appears at the top of the unique list. If the entry in the first cell appears multiple times in the List range, the unique list will include this entry twice: once as a heading and once as a unique item.