

Formatting Excel Worksheets for Professional Presentation

A well-formatted spreadsheet communicates information clearly and reflects professional standards. This chapter explores Excel's formatting tools, including ribbon groups, button functions, and keyboard shortcuts that speed up your work. You'll also learn why what appears on screen doesn't always match what prints or gets shared, an important consideration when presenting financial data to clients or colleagues. Mastering these techniques helps ensure your spreadsheets look polished and are easy to read.

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LEARNING ASSIGNMENTS AND OBJECTIVES

Assignment

- Study the full course materials included here.
- Complete the review questions after each chapter.
- Answer 10 final exam questions.
- Final exam is scored immediately, 70% or better passes.
- Certificate of completion is available in your account.
- Failed exams can be retaken free of charge.

Course Objectives

- Identify how to format cell ranges.

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Chapter 1: FORMATTING WORKSHEETS

Chapter Objective

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Identify how to format cell ranges.

When it comes to populating a worksheet with data, Excel doesn't put a lot of hurdles in your path. Most of the time, you click the cell you want to use, type your label or data, press Enter, and — voilà! — you've got yourself a cell entry. Repeat as needed and soon enough your worksheet is done.

Or is it? The problem with Excel's data entry process is that it tends to produce *worksheets* that are, well, unattractive: All the text is the same size and the same color; some longer cell entries appear truncated; columns of data and labels are misaligned. It's a mess! So, sure, Excel makes it easy to add data, but to make that data look presentable requires more work.

Why should you care about how your worksheets look? After all, most of the time you're the only person who'll see them, right? Perhaps. But even if your eyeballs are the only ones that will grace your worksheets, there are lots of advantages to taking a bit of extra time to make things look nice. Formatting a worksheet — the process of adding fonts and colors, adjusting column widths and row heights, aligning data, adding borders, and much more — makes the worksheet easier to read, helps you find errors, and gives you a hand spotting trends and performing other types of data analysis. And all those advantages are doubled if you plan to share your workbooks with colleagues and co-workers.

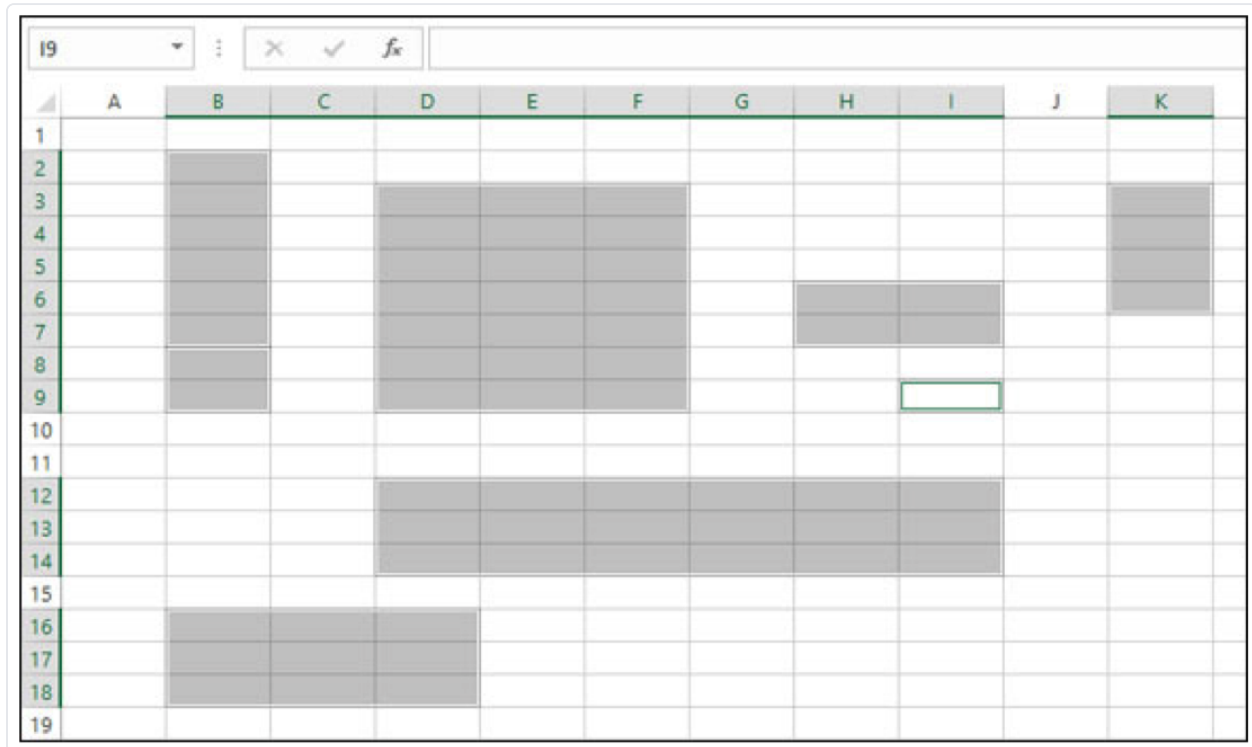
In this chapter, you explore Excel's extensive worksheet formatting options. After a brief foray into selecting cells, you dive into the deep end of formatting cells, rows, columns, ranges, tables, and more. Your worksheets are going to look so good by the time you're done with this chapter.

SELECTING CELLS AND RANGES

Before you can modify the appearance of anything in a worksheet, you must first select the cells you want to work with.

In Excel, you can select a single cell, a block of cells (known as a cell range), or various discontinuous cell ranges (also known as a nonadjacent selection). Figure 4-1 shows a nonadjacent selection that consists of several different cell ranges (the smallest range is the single cell I9).

FIGURE 4-1: WORKSHEET WITH A NONADJACENT CELL SELECTION MADE UP OF SEVERAL DIFFERENT SIZED RANGES.



Remember

Note that a simple cell selection consisting of a single cell range is denoted in the worksheet both by highlighting the selected cells in a light gray color as well as by extending the border of the cell cursor so that it encompasses all the highlighted cells. In a nonadjacent cell selection, however, all selected cells are highlighted but only the active cell (the one whose address is displayed in the Name Box on the Formula bar) contains the cell cursor (whose borders are quite thin when compared to the regular cell cursor).

Remember

Cell ranges are always noted in formulas by the upper-left and lower-right cells that you select, separated by a colon (:); therefore, if you select cell A1 as the first cell and cell H10 as the last cell and then use the range in a formula, the cell range appears as A1:H10.

Selecting cells with the mouse

Excel offers several methods for selecting cells with the mouse. With each method, you start by selecting one of the cells that occupies the corner of the range that you want to select. The first corner cell that you click becomes the active cell (indicated by its cell reference in the Formula bar's Name box), and the cell range that you then select becomes anchored on this cell.

After you select the active cell in the range, drag the pointer to extend the selection until you have highlighted all the cells that you want to include. Here are some tips:

- To extend a range in a block that spans several columns, drag right or left from the active cell.
- To extend a range in a block that spans several rows, drag down or up from the active cell.
- To extend a range in a block that spans several columns and rows, drag diagonally from the active cell in the most logical directions (up and to the right, down and to the right, up and to the left, or down and to the left).

If you ever extend the range too far in one direction, you can always reduce it by dragging in the other direction. If you've already released the mouse button and you find that the range is incorrect, click the active cell again. (Clicking any cell in the worksheet deselects a selected range and activates the cell that you click.) Then select the range of cells again.

Tip

You can always tell the active cell that forms the anchor point of a range because it's the only cell within the range that you've selected that isn't highlighted and is the only cell reference listed in the Formula bar's Name box. As you extend the range by dragging the thick white-cross mouse pointer, Excel indicates the current size of the range in columns and rows in the Name box (as in 5R x 2C when you've highlighted a range of five rows long and two columns wide). However, as soon as you release the mouse button, Excel replaces this row and column notation with the address of the active cell.

You can also use the following shortcuts when selecting cells with the mouse:

- To select a single-cell range, click the cell.
- To select all cells in an entire column, position the mouse pointer on the column letter in the column header and then click. To select several adjacent columns, drag through their column letters in the column header.
- To select all cells in an entire row, position the mouse pointer on the row number in the row header and then click. To select several adjacent rows, drag through the row numbers in the row header.

- To select all the cells in the worksheet, click the box in the upper-left corner of the worksheet at the intersection of row and column headers with the triangle in the lower-right corner that makes it look like the corner of a dog-eared or folded down book page. (You can also do this from the keyboard by pressing Ctrl+A.)
- To select a cell range composed of partial columns and rows without dragging, click the cell where you want to anchor the range, hold down the Shift key, and then click the last cell in the range and release the Shift key. (Excel selects all the cells in between the first and the last cell that you click.) If the range that you want to mark is a block that spans several columns and rows, the last cell is the one diagonally opposite the active cell. When using this Shift+click technique to mark a range that extends beyond the screen, use the scroll bars to display the last cell in the range. (Just make sure that you don't release the Shift key until after you've clicked this last cell.)
- To select a nonadjacent selection consisting of several discontinuous cell ranges, drag through the first cell range and then hold down the Ctrl key as you drag through the other ranges. After you have marked all the cell ranges to be included in the nonadjacent selection, you can release the Ctrl key.

Tip

The Ctrl key can work with the mouse like an add or *subtract* key in Excel. As an add key, you use it to include non-neighboring objects in the current worksheet. See the section “**Selecting cells with the keyboard**,” later in this chapter. By using the Ctrl key, you can add to the selection of cells in a worksheet without having to deselect those already selected. To use the Ctrl key to deselect a range of cells within the current cell selection, hold down Ctrl and drag through the range that you want to deselect (subtract from the selected range) before releasing the mouse button and Ctrl key.

Selecting cells by touch

Tip: If you're running Excel on a touchscreen device without the benefit of a mouse or physical keyboard, you can use your finger or stylus to make your cell selections:

- Tap the first cell in the selection (the equivalent of clicking with a mouse). Selection handles (with the circle icons) appear in the upper-left and lower-right corner of the selected cell. Drag or swipe one of the selection handles through the rest of the adjacent cells to extend the cell selection and select the entire range.
- Tap the first cell and then drag the white-cross pointer to the last cell in the selection.

Selecting cells with the keyboard

Excel also makes it easy for you to select cell ranges with a physical or Touch keyboard by using a technique known as *extending a selection*. To use this technique, you move the cell cursor to the active cell of the range; then press F8 to turn on Extend Selection mode (indicated by Extend Selection on the Status bar) and use the direction keys to move the pointer to the last cell in the range. Excel selects all the cells that the cell cursor moves through until you turn off Extend Selection mode (by pressing F8 again).

You can use the mouse as well as the keyboard to extend a selection when Excel is in Extend Selection mode: Click the active cell, press F8, and then click the last cell to mark the range.

You can also select a cell range with the keyboard without turning on Extend Selection mode. Here, you use a variation of the Shift+click method by moving the cell pointer to the active cell in the range, holding down the Shift key, and then using the direction keys to extend the range. After you've highlighted all the cells that you want to include, release the Shift key.

To mark a nonadjacent selection of cells with the keyboard, you need to combine the use of Extend Selection mode with that of Add to Selection mode. To turn on Add to Selection mode (indicated by Add to Selection on the status bar), you press Shift+F8. To mark a nonadjacent selection by using Extend Selection and Add to Selection modes, follow these steps:

1. Move the cell cursor to the first cell of the first range you want to select.
2. Press F8 to turn on Extend Selection mode.
3. Use the arrow keys to extend the cell range until you've highlighted all its cells.
4. Press Shift+F8 to turn off Extend Selection mode and turn on Add to Selection mode instead.
5. Move the cell cursor to the first cell of the next cell range you want to add to the selection.
6. Press F8 to turn off Add to Selection mode and turn Extend Selection mode back on.
7. Use the arrow keys to extend the range until all cells are highlighted.
8. Repeat Steps 4 through 7 until you've selected all the ranges that you want included in the nonadjacent selection.
9. Press F8 to turn off Extend Selection mode.

Selecting cells with AutoSelect

Excel's AutoSelect feature provides a particularly efficient way to select all or part of the cells in a large table of data. AutoSelect automatically extends a selection in a single direction from the active cell to the first nonblank cell that Excel encounters in that direction.

You can use the AutoSelect feature with the mouse and a physical keyboard. The general steps for using AutoSelect to select a table of data with the mouse are as follows:

1. Click the first cell to which you want to anchor the range that you are about to select.

In a typical table, this cell may be the blank cell at the intersection of the row of column headings and the column of row headings.

2. **Position the mouse pointer on the edge of the cell in the direction you want to extend the range.**

To extend the range up to the first blank cell to the right, position the mouse or Touch pointer on the right edge of the cell. To extend the range left to the first blank cell, position the pointer on the left edge of the cell. To extend the range down to the first blank cell, position the pointer on the bottom edge of the cell. And to extend the range up to the first blank cell, position the pointer on the top edge of the cell.

3. **When the pointer changes shape from a cross to a four-headed arrow, hold down the Shift key and then double-click the mouse.**

As soon as you double-click the mouse or Touch pointer, Excel extends the selection to the first occupied cell that is adjacent to a blank cell in the direction of the edge that you double-clicked.

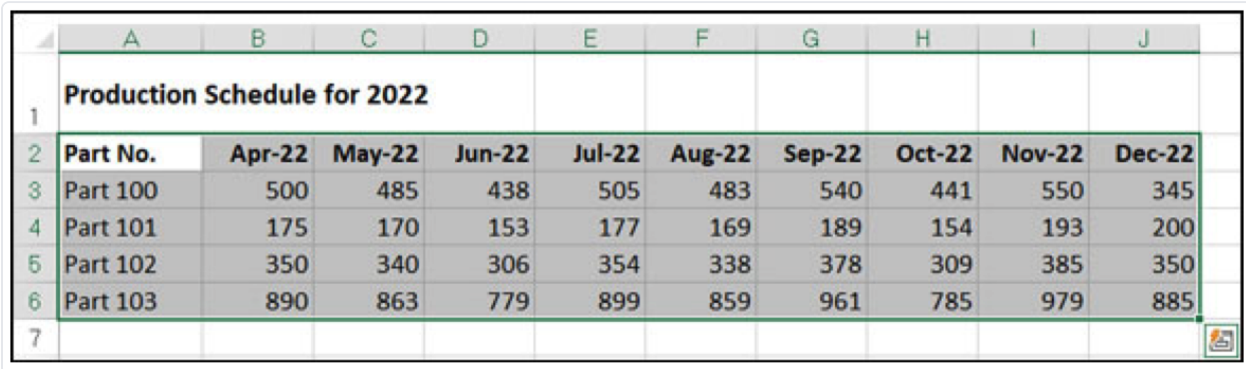
To get an idea of how AutoSelect works, consider how you use it to select all the data in the table (cell range A3:J8) shown in Figures 4-2 and 4-3 (sample workbook: Production Schedule 2022.xlsx for both). You can use the AutoSelect feature to select all the cells in the table in two operations:

- In the first operation, select cell A2, hold down the Shift key, and then double-click the bottom edge of cell A2 to highlight the cells down to A6, selecting the range A2:A6. (See Figure 4-2.)
- In the second operation, hold down the Shift key and then double-click the right edge of cell range A2:A6 to extend the selection to the last column in the table (selecting the entire table with the cell range A2:J6, as shown in Figure 4-3).

FIGURE 4-2: SELECTING THE CELLS IN THE FIRST COLUMN OF THE TABLE WITH AUTOSELECT. (SAMPLE WORKBOOK: PRODUCTION SCHEDULE 2022.XLSX)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	Production Schedule for 2022									
2	Part No.	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
3	Part 100	500	485	438	505	483	540	441	550	345
4	Part 101	175	170	153	177	169	189	154	193	200
5	Part 102	350	340	306	354	338	378	309	385	350
6	Part 103	890	863	779	899	859	961	785	979	885
7										

FIGURE 4-3: SELECTING ALL THE REMAINING COLUMNS OF THE TABLE WITH AUTOSELECT.
(SAMPLE WORKBOOK: PRODUCTION SCHEDULE 2022.XLSX)



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	Production Schedule for 2022									
2	Part No.	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
3	Part 100	500	485	438	505	483	540	441	550	345
4	Part 101	175	170	153	177	169	189	154	193	200
5	Part 102	350	340	306	354	338	378	309	385	350
6	Part 103	890	863	779	899	859	961	785	979	885
7										

If you select the cells in the first row of the table (range A2:J2) in the first operation, you can then extend this range down the remaining rows of the table by double-clicking the bottom edge of one of the selected cells. (It doesn't matter which one.)

To use the AutoSelect feature with the keyboard, press the End key and one of the four arrow keys as you hold down the Shift key. When you hold down Shift and press End and an arrow key, Excel extends the selection in the direction of the arrow key to the first cell containing a value that is bordered by a blank cell.

In terms of selecting the table of data shown in Figures 4-2 and 4-3, this means that you would have to complete the following steps to select all of its cells:

1. With A2 as the active cell, hold down Shift and press End+↓ to select the range A2:A6.

Excel stops at A6 because this is the last occupied cell in that column. At this point, the cell range A2:A6 is selected.

2. Hold down Shift and then press End+ →.

Excel extends the range all the way to column J (because the cells in column J contain entries bordered by blank cells). Now all the cells in the table (the cell range A2:J6) are selected.

Selecting cells with Go To

Although you usually use the Go To feature to move the cell cursor to a new cell in the worksheet, you can also use this feature to select a range of cells. On the Ribbon's Home tab, click the Find & Select button's drop-down menu and then click Go To (or press Ctrl+G or F5). Excel displays a Go To dialog box similar to the one shown in Figure 4-4. To move the cell cursor to a particular cell, enter the cell address in the Reference text box and click OK. (Excel automatically lists the addresses of the last four cells or cell ranges that you specified in the Go To list box.)