



Edition 1 - Oct-2013

# EXCEL TIPS & TRICKS



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MP4



WMV

If MP4 video format does not work for you, try WMV.

## Test your knowledge

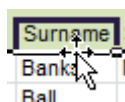
- (1) Double-click what to copy an entry down? (a) Wee square (b) Drag handle (c) Fill Handle (d) Doofer
- (2) From the top of a column of entries, Ctrl+Down arrow stops at: (a) First blank cell (b) Cell before blank (c) Last row of sheet (d) Nothing
- (3) Text in a formula needs to be encased in: (a) Brackets (b) Double-quotes (c) Chocolate (d) Nothing
- (4) What does LEFT("abcde",3) return? (a) abc (b) c (c) cde (d) red
- (5) Which of the following are true about VLOOKUP? (a) 4<sup>th</sup> argument of TRUE means exact match (b) Omitted 4<sup>th</sup> argument is the same as TRUE (c) It searches the first column of the range from top to bottom (d) The V stands for very difficult
- (6) What's the repeat key? (a) Ctrl+R (b) F14 (c) F4 (d) Alt+R

[Go to answers](#)

## Quickly get to the bottom

In the sheet shown right, if the active cell is on M14, how do you quickly get to the bottom of the column of entries? Suppose the example has hundreds of rows. Here are two ways:

- Press **Ctrl+Down arrow**, that is, hold down the Ctrl key and then press the Down arrow key. The active cell goes down until it finds a blank cell, then stops just before it. In this case, that is M33.
- Position the mouse at the bottom edge (but not at the bottom right corner) of the active cell and then double-click. The active cell goes to M33.



	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
11	Navigate, copy, select						
12							
13							
14	Title	First name	Surname	Sex	Initial		
15	Mr	Robin	Banks	M	R		
16	Ms	Crystal	Ball				
17	Mr	Max	Power				
18	Mr	Noah	Peel				
19	Mrs	Constance	Paine				
20	Mr	Doug	Graves				
21	Ms	Dusty	Rhodes				
22	Mr	Benny	Factor				
23	Ms	Iva	Payne				
24	Mr	Joe	King				
25	Mr	Juana	Beer				
26	Mr	Midas	Well				
27	Mr	Lee	King				
28	Mrs	Jean	Poole				
29	Mr	Orson	Cart				
30	Mr	Rick	Shaw				
31	Mr	Stu	Pitt				
32	Mr	Will	Power				
33	Mr	Ho	Hum				
34							

File: NavigateCopyDownSelect.xlsm

Press **Ctrl+Up arrow** or double-click the top edge of the active cell to go back up.

## Copy down to match adjacent column

N15, shown above, has a formula to be copied down as far as the last name, that is, to N33. What's the quickest way to do that? Many would drag the wee square, If the list is long, that method is slow and hit and miss as you bounce up and down trying to stop at the last cell. The quick way is to double-click the wee square, the correct name for which is *Fill Handle*.



## Copy down when there is a blank column

P15 also needs to be copied down to the last name, but if you select the cell and double-click the Fill Handle, nothing happens. What you need to do first is select O15:P15, so that the selection touches the column of entries.



## Select to the bottom

What's the quickest way to select the entries in the first three columns? Again, imagine that the list is hundreds of rows long. A keyboard method is: Select K15, hold down **Shift** and **Ctrl**, press the **Down arrow** key and press the **Right arrow** key twice. Another method with the mouse is: select K15:M15, hold down **Shift** and double-click the bottom edge of K15. Shift is needed to extend a range.

File: [NavigateCopyDownSelect.xlsm](#)

	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
11	<b>IF and LEFT functions</b>						
12				=IF(K15="Mr","M","F")		=LEFT(L15,1)	
13							
14	Title	First name	Surname	Sex	Initial		
15	Mr	Robin	Banks	M	R		
16	Ms	Crystal	Ball	F	C		
17	Mr	Max	Power	M	M		
18	Mr	Noah	Peel	M	N		
19	Mrs	Constance	Paine	F	C		
20	Mr	Doug	Graves	M	D		
21	Ms	Dusty	Rhodes	F	D		
22	Mr	Benny	Factor	M	B		
23	Ms	Iva	Payne	F	I		
24	Mr	Joe	King	M	J		
25	Mr	Juana	Beer	M	J		
26	Mr	Midas	Well	M	M		
27	Mr	Lee	King	M	L		
28	Mrs	Jean	Poole	F	J		
29	Mr	Orson	Cart	M	O		
30	Mr	Rick	Shaw	M	R		
31	Mr	Stu	Pitt	M	S		
32	Mr	Will	Power	M	W		
33	Mr	Ho	Hum	M	H		
34							

## Use IF formula to return M or F

N15:N33 needs to have M or F placed in each row. The IF function shown above does that. IF has three parts: (a) A test. In this case, it tests whether K15 contains Mr. As Mr is text, that is, not a number, you must enclose text in double quotes. (b) The result if the test is true. (c) The result if the test is false. The formula assumes that if the person is not a Mr, the person is female.

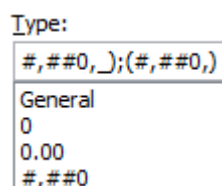
## Use LEFT formula to return a person's initial

P15 has a formula that returns the first letter of the first name. The function LEFT has two parts: (a) Text. (b) Number of characters to return. For example, LEFT("abcde",2) returns ab.

## Format to thousands

Column L shown right has numbers in units and you want to display them in thousands as in column M. You could divide all the entries by 1000, but that might cause problems with formula calculations. The solution is to format in thousands as follows:

- (1) Select the range and press **Ctrl+1** to display the Format Cells dialog box.
- (2) Select the Number tab.
- (3) Select Custom from the Category box.
- (4) Into the Type box, enter `#,##0,;(#,##0,)`
- (5) Choose OK.



The comma after 0 is the first thousands separator, but as there is nothing to the right, the last three digits do not display and neither does the comma. Note that cells in column M still contain units and formulas that refer to those cells are not affected.

	K	L	M
14		Original	000s
15	Revenue	1,030,437	1,030
16			
17	Direct costs	86,514	87
18	Salaries	522,901	523
19	Overheads	450,487	450
20			
21	Profit	(29,465)	(29)
22		<code>#,##0,;(#,##0,)</code>	<code>#,##0,;(#,##0,)</code>

Note that to the left of ; is the format of positives and to the right is the negatives format. The \_ in the positive part leaves the same space as ) uses. In that way, positive and negative numbers align.

# Don't copy multiple times; use VLOOKUP

There are new NZ\$ prices for the Product list in K11:P30 below. The new prices are in the list placed at R11:U34. The problem is how to get the prices from the list on the right to the one on the left. You cannot simply copy and paste because the items are not in the same order. In fact, the list on the right has more items than that on the left.

You don't want to have to copy and paste cells one by one. That would take an age, even with a very small example like this one. Imagine if the lists were hundreds of rows long. There are plenty of people out there who do that because they know no better way.

The solution is the VLOOKUP function. Enter it into N15, copy it down and then remove the formulas and leave just the values. Hey presto! With VLOOKUP, you can complete similar tasks to this in minutes rather than hours.

N15		fx		=VLOOKUP(\$K15,\$R\$14:\$U\$34,3,FALSE)								
	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	
11	Product list		Wally Wood			NZ price list						Wally Wood
12			5-Jun-2013			As of 1-Jan-2012						5-Jun-2013
13			Pricing			1 2 3						
14	Product code	Description	Inventory	NZ\$	AU\$			Prod code	Description	NZ\$		
15	1015	Furniture - chair	32	189.00	169.00			1001	Rocking horse	149.00		
16	1025	Furniture - couch	5	619.00	550.00			1002	Dollhouse	299.00		
17	1045	Furniture - stove	2	479.00	429.00			1003	Doll - girl	24.95		
18	1055	Furniture - table	6	389.00	349.00			1004	Doll - boy	24.95		
19	2001	Swing set	4	50.00	45.00			5260	Computer desk	329.00		
20	3504	Kitchen benchtop	2	275.00	249.00			5265	Computer chair	249.00		
21	3508	Kitchen table	3	675.00	599.00			1015	Furniture - chair	189.00		
22	3620	Kitchen chair - plain	22	39.00	35.00			1025	Furniture - couch	619.00		
23	3640	Kitchen chair - carved	14	149.00	134.00			1045	Furniture - stove	479.00		
24	3330	Cheeseboard	0	20.00	18.00			1055	Furniture - table	389.00		
25	3332	Cutting board	22	25.00	22.00			2001	Swing set	50.00		
26	5260	Computer desk	9	329.00	296.00			3330	Cheeseboard	20.00		
27	5265	Computer chair	7	249.00	224.00			3332	Cutting board	25.00		
28	6348	Paperweight - polished	11	19.00	17.00			3504	Kitchen benchtop	275.00		
29	6389	Paperweight - rustic	9	19.00	17.00			3508	Kitchen table	675.00		
30								3620	Kitchen chair - plain	39.00		
31								3640	Kitchen chair - carved	149.00		
32								6348	Paperweight - polished	19.00		
33								6389	Paperweight - rustic	19.00		
34												

File: [FormulasLOOKUP.xls](#)

How does VLOOKUP work? There are four parts (arguments is the correct name) to it:

- What to look for (K15 above, which contains 1015).
- A range of the lookup list.
- The column of the list to return the result from. The column is the column number within the list. The first column (R above) is number one.
- The type of lookup. There are two types: an exact match search, and an inexact match search. You definitely want an exact match search, as you don't want to return the price of a different product. Enter FALSE for exact match and TRUE (or omitted) otherwise.

So, the VLOOKUP in N15 searches for 1015 down the left-hand column of the range. It searches from the top, looking for an exact match. It finds a match in R21 and returns the entry from that row and the range's 3rd column.

**IMPORTANT:** A common error is to omit the fourth argument, as in VLOOKUP(\$K15,\$R\$14:\$U\$34,3). Then, the function does an inexact lookup, which this article does not explain, but some of the results would be wrong.

To remove the formulas and leave only values, select the range, copy it, right-click and choose Paste Special | Values | OK.

# Repeat

You might insert one row and then decide to insert a few more. The quick way to repeat the last action is to press **F4**. So, to insert a few more rows, press F4 a few times.

Most actions can be repeated, but a few cannot. For example, Save, Open or typing an entry cannot be repeated.

F4 is also useful for formatting. For example, in the example shown right, you might select K25, press **Ctrl+1** to display the Format Cells dialog box and change the font, size and colour. Then to apply the same formats to K30, select the cell and press **F4**.

	K	L	M	N
11	<b>Staff list</b>			
12	<b>Southland office</b>			
13				
14	Title	First name	Surname	Job title
25	<b>Support</b>			
26	Ms	Anita	Neuman	Marriage Counsellor
27	Ms	Moe	Lester	Caregiver
28	Mr	Al	Gee	Pool Manager
29	Ms	May	Day	Lifeboat Captain
30	Other			
31	Mr	Justin	Case	Underwriter
32	Ms	Bess	Sellers	Publisher
33	Mr	Joe	Kerr	Comedian
34	Ms	Dee	Vine	Model

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