

What is an XLSForm?

XLSForm is a form standard created to help simplify the authoring of forms in Excel. Authoring is done in a human readable format using a familiar tool that almost everyone knows - Excel. XLSForms provide a practical standard for sharing and collaborating on authoring forms. They are simple to get started with but allow for the authoring of complex forms by someone familiar with the syntax described below.

The XLSForm is then converted to an [ODK XForm](#), a popular open form standard, that allows you to author a form with complex functionality like skip logic in a consistent way across a number of web and mobile data collection platforms.

Basic format

Each Excel workbook usually has two worksheets: survey and choices. A third optional worksheet called settings can add additional specifications to your form and is described below.

The survey worksheet

This worksheet gives your form its overall structure and contains most of the content of the form. It contains the full list of questions and information about how they should appear in the form. Each row usually represents one question; however, there are certain other features described below that you can add to the form to improve the user experience.

The choices worksheet

This worksheet is used to specify the answer choices for multiple choice questions. Each row represents an answer choice. Answer choices with the same list name are considered part of a related set of choices and will appear together for a question. This also allows a set of choices to be reused for multiple questions (for example, yes/no questions).

Both of these worksheets have a set of mandatory columns that must be present for the form to work. Additionally, each worksheet has a set of optional columns that allow further control over the behavior of each entry in the form, but are not essential to have. Every entry must have values for each of the mandatory columns, but the optional columns may be left blank.

The survey worksheet has 3 mandatory columns: type, name, and label.

- The type column specifies the type of entry you are adding.
- The name column specifies the unique variable name for that entry. No two entries can have the same name. Names have to start with a letter or an underscore. Names can only contain letters, digits, hyphens, underscores, and periods. Names are case-sensitive.
- The label column contains the actual text you see in the form. Alternatively, label translation columns can be used.

Example of Survey Worksheet

type	name	label
today	today	
select_one gender	gender	Respondent's gender?
integer	age	Respondent's age?

The choices worksheet has 3 mandatory columns as well: list name, name, and label.

- The list name column lets you group together a set of related answer choices, i.e., answer choices that should appear together under a question.
- The name column specifies the unique variable name for that answer choice.
- The label column shows the answer choice exactly as you want it to appear on the form. Alternatively, label translation columns can be used.

Example of choices worksheet

list_name	name	label
gender	transgender	Transgender
gender	female	Female
gender	male	Male
gender	other	Other

The columns you add to your Excel workbook, whether they are mandatory or optional, may appear in any order. Optional columns may be left out completely. Any number of rows may be left blank. All .xls file formatting is ignored, so you can use dividing lines, shading, and other font formatting to make the form more readable.

One thing to keep in mind when authoring forms in Excel is that the syntax you use must be precise. For example, if you write Choices or choice instead of choices, the form won't work.

For referring to the syntax, format and correct usage of tags, visit [XLSForm](#)

Important points regarding XLSForms

- Whenever a repeating portion of form is started by using 'begin repeat', the responses for data will be stored in a separate sheet with the sheet name as the name provided for the 'begin repeat' tag in the name section.
- To segregate data for the forms in which questions vary according to a particular category selected, make sure to include each individual set of repeating questions in a separate repeat tag with the name of the tag in 'name' column corresponding to category name separated by '_' in place of spaces. This way all the data for different categories will be segregated in different sheets. If all the questions for all the categories

are included in the same repeat tag, then all the data for all the fields will be recorded in the same sheet in excel which will become difficult to process.

- It is always a good practice to include all the related questions in groups by using 'begin group' tag e.g.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	type	name	label	hint	required	relevant	required_message						
2	text	reporting_mem	Reporting Member:		yes		This field is required						
3	text	designation	Designation:		yes		This field is required						
4													
5	begin repeat	rep											
6	select_one S_T_PST_TeR	type_w	Type of Workshop:										
7													
8	begin repeat	student_workshop											
9	begin group	students	Student Workshop										
10	text	title_s	Title of the Workshop:	eg: Learnir	yes		This field is required						
11	integer	number_s	No. of student participants:		yes		This field is required						
12	integer	number_t	No. of teacher participants (if any):										
13	text	coord_s	Workshop Coordinator from HBCSE:		yes		This field is required						
14	integer	nuberres_s	No. of HBCSE Resource Persons who conducted sessions:		yes		This field is required						
15	integer	numbertonres_s	No. of external (non-HBCSE) Resource Persons who conducted sessions (if any):										
16	date	start_date	Starting Date of the Workshop:		yes		This field is required						
17	date	ending_date	Ending Date of the Workshop:		yes		This field is required						
18	text	workshop_collab	Workshop Collaborators (if any):	eg: in collaboration with Nehru Science Centre									
19	text	venue_s	Venue of the Workshop:	eg: HBCSE, yes			This field is required						
20	end group												
21	end repeat												
22													
23	begin repeat	Teacher_workshop											
24	begin group	teacher_w	Teacher Workshop										
25	text	title_s	Title of the Workshop:	eg: Pedag	yes		This field is required						
26	integer	number_s	No. of teacher participants:		yes		This field is required						
27	integer	number_t	No. of student participants (if any):										
28	text	coord_s	Workshop Coordinator from HBCSE:		yes		This field is required						
29	integer	nuberres_s	No. of HBCSE Resource Persons who conducted sessions:		yes		This field is required						
30	integer	numbertonres_s	No. of external (non-HBCSE) Resource Persons who conducted sessions (if any):										
31	date	start_date_1	Starting Date of the Workshop:		yes		This field is required						
32	date	ending_date_1	Ending Date of the Workshop:		yes		This field is required						
33	text	workshop_collab	Workshop Collaborators (if any):	eg: in collaboration with Nehru Science Centre									
34	text	venue_s	Venue of the Workshop:	eg: HBCSE, yes			This field is required						
35	end group												
36	end repeat												
37													
38	begin repeat	pre_service_teachers_workshop											
39	begin group	pre_service	Pre-service Teachers Workshop										
40	text	title_s	Title of the Workshop:	eg: Pedag	yes		This field is required						
41	integer	number_s	No. of pre-service teacher participants:		yes		This field is required						
42	integer	number_t	No. of student participants (if any):										
43	text	coord_s	Workshop Coordinator from HBCSE:		yes		This field is required						
44	integer	nuberres_s	No. of HBCSE Resource Persons who conducted sessions:		yes		This field is required						
45	integer	numbertonres_s	No. of external (non-HBCSE) Resource Persons who conducted sessions (if any):										
46	date	start_date_1	Starting Date of the Workshop:		yes		This field is required						
47	date	ending_date_1	Ending Date of the Workshop:		yes		This field is required						
48	text	workshop_collab	Workshop Collaborators (if any):	eg: in collaboration with Nehru Science Centre									
49	text	venue_s	Venue of the Workshop:	eg: HBCSE, yes			This field is required						
50	end group												

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
22													
23	begin repeat	Teacher_workshop											
24	begin group	teacher_w	Teacher Workshop										
25	text	title_s	Title of the Workshop:	eg: Pedag	yes		This field is required						
26	integer	number_s	No. of teacher participants:		yes		This field is required						
27	integer	number_t	No. of student participants (if any):										
28	text	coord_s	Workshop Coordinator from HBCSE:		yes		This field is required						
29	integer	nuberres_s	No. of HBCSE Resource Persons who conducted sessions:		yes		This field is required						
30	integer	numbertonres_s	No. of external (non-HBCSE) Resource Persons who conducted sessions (if any):										
31	date	start_date_1	Starting Date of the Workshop:		yes		This field is required						
32	date	ending_date_1	Ending Date of the Workshop:		yes		This field is required						
33	text	workshop_collab	Workshop Collaborators (if any):	eg: in collaboration with Nehru Science Centre									
34	text	venue_s	Venue of the Workshop:	eg: HBCSE, yes			This field is required						
35	end group												
36	end repeat												
37													
38	begin repeat	pre_service_teachers_workshop											
39	begin group	pre_service	Pre-service Teachers Workshop										
40	text	title_s	Title of the Workshop:	eg: Pedag	yes		This field is required						
41	integer	number_s	No. of pre-service teacher participants:		yes		This field is required						
42	integer	number_t	No. of student participants (if any):										
43	text	coord_s	Workshop Coordinator from HBCSE:		yes		This field is required						
44	integer	nuberres_s	No. of HBCSE Resource Persons who conducted sessions:		yes		This field is required						
45	integer	numbertonres_s	No. of external (non-HBCSE) Resource Persons who conducted sessions (if any):										
46	date	start_date_1	Starting Date of the Workshop:		yes		This field is required						
47	date	ending_date_1	Ending Date of the Workshop:		yes		This field is required						
48	text	workshop_collab	Workshop Collaborators (if any):	eg: in collaboration with Nehru Science Centre									
49	text	venue_s	Venue of the Workshop:	eg: HBCSE, yes			This field is required						
50	end group												

- Take a look at the xls form for workshops. As you can see that for different categories, different repeat sections are made and in those, all the questions are included in a group for better organisation of the data within a sheet.
- Always try to fill the 'name' column relevant to the 'label' column for that particular row.
- All the XLSforms that have been made on Kobo are uploaded in this github repo and can be looked upon for reference.