

CHECKLIST OF DOS AND DON'TS FOR SPREADSHEETS

The following is a checklist of things to do, and not to do, when using the Data sheet(s) in spreadsheets for data. As such it does not necessarily apply to optional extra sheets that a user might create (e.g., for summarising data).

DO

- ✓ Ensure column names only contain alpha-numeric characters (not symbols)
- ✓ Start column names with a letter (not a digit / number)
- ✓ Put column names in a single row
- ✓ Have the same columns names as in the 'Terms' sheet
- ✓ Make column names unique
- ✓ Keep column names consistent (including consistent case) across years and similar trials
- ✓ Use freeze panes so header rows and treatment columns are always visible
- ✓ Put data of different types (text, numbers) in separate columns
- ✓ Format columns as dates before entering date data
- ✓ Format columns as text before entering text data (otherwise Excel may treat it as a date)
- ✓ Use data validation to select from a drop-down list for treatments to prevent spelling mistakes and inconsistencies
- ✓ Separate data columns from calculated data (preferably on a separate sheet)
- ✓ Code missing data explicitly (* or NA)
- ✓ Make a note of changes to the Data sheet after data entry
- ✓ When finished data entry and checking protect the Data sheet to prevent downstream changes
- ✓ Only use this protected sheet for all subsequent analyses

Please DON'T

- ✗ Merge cells
- ✗ Use colour to code data
- ✗ Embed data summaries within raw data
- ✗ Overuse in-cell comments (they won't be read by other software).
- ✗ Reorder the rows
- ✗ Modify the data once it has been finalised (i.e., protected) unless a genuine mistake is detected (then be sure to note the change as above)
- ✗ Make copies of the Data sheet