ExcelFunctions.net

Convert Text to a Date in Excel

If your spreadsheet contains text representations of dates, rather than actual dates (stored internally as integers by Excel), this may produce errors when you try to use these dates in calculations. Therefore, this page describes three different methods that you can use to convert text to a date in Excel.

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Convert Text to a Date Using Excel Error Checking

Excel has an error checking option that can alert you to the presence of cells containing text representations of dates with two-digit years. This will be seen as a small colored triangle (the error indicator) in the top left corner of your cells (see below).

If your cells display this error indicator, you can use Excel error checking to convert text representations of dates into actual numeric dates.

	A	B
1	01/01/16	01/02/16
2	02/01/16	01/02/16
3	03/01/16	01/02/16

To do this:

1. Select the cell (or cells) containing the values that you want to convert.

   This will cause a warning symbol to pop up at the side of the cell(s). If you then hover over the warning symbol, a warning message is displayed (see below).

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	01/01/16	01/02/16	⬦ ▾					
2	02/01/16	01/02/16						
3	03/01/16	01/02/16	This cell contains a date string represented with only 2 digits for the year.					

2. Click on the warning symbol, to bring up the Error Checking menu (see right).
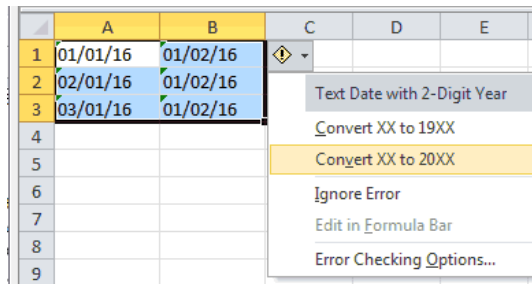
   Select one of the options

   Convert XX to 19XX

   or

   Convert XX to 20XX

to convert the cell values into dates.

Error Checking Option

In order for the above method to work, you need to ensure that you have the Excel Error Checking option for cells containing years represented as 2 digits enabled.

To access this option:

1. Click on the **File** tab (or the Microsoft Office Button in Excel 2007) on the Excel ribbon, and select **Options**.

2. Within the **Excel Options** window, select **Formulas**.

3. Within the **Error Checking** section, make sure the option **Enable background error checking** is checked.

4. Within the **Error checking rules** section, make sure the option **Cells containing years represented as 2 digits** is checked.

5. Click **OK**.

Convert Text to a Date Using Excel Text to Columns

The Excel Text to Columns command will also convert Excel text to dates. This method has the advantage that it can recognise several different date formats. However, the Text to Columns command will only work on one column at a time.

To use Excel Text to Columns to convert text to dates:

1. Select the range of cell(s) that you want to convert (this must not span more than one column).

2. From the **Data** tab on the Excel ribbon, select the **Text to Columns** option (see right).
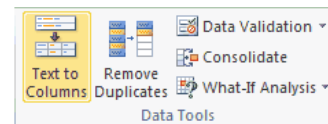

   This will cause the Convert Text to Columns wizard to pop up. Within this:

   - Make sure the **Delimited** option is selected and click **Next >**;

   - Make sure that <u>none</u> of the Delimiters are selected and then click **Next >** again;

   - You should now be offered a selection of Column Data Formats. Select **Date**.
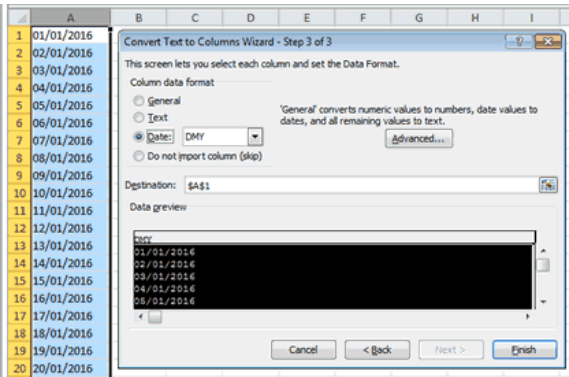
○ From the drop down menu alongside the **Date** option, select the format that applies to the dates in your spreadsheet (see right).

○ Click the **Finish** button.
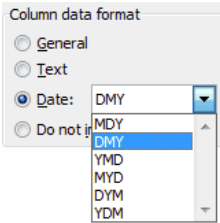
Convert Text to a Date Using the Excel Datevalue Function

The Excel Datevalue function converts a text representation of a date into an Excel date serial number.

Note that, after using the function to convert a text string into a date, you need to make sure that the cell containing the function is formatted as a date.

Datevalue Function Examples

Cells A1-A3 of the spreadsheets below contain three different text representations of the date 01 January 2016.

The Excel Datevalue function is used in column B of the spreadsheet, to convert these text values into date serial numbers.

Formulas:

	A	B
1	01/01/2016	=DATEVALUE(A1)
2	01/01/16	=DATEVALUE(A2)
3	01 Jan 2016	=DATEVALUE(A3)

Results:

	A	B
1	01/01/2016	42370
2	01/01/16	42370
3	01 Jan 2016	42370

In the above 'results' spreadsheet, column B is formatted with the 'General' format type. Therefore, the date serial number 42370 is displayed as an integer.

If you want to display the contents of column B as dates, you need to change the formatting of these cells to have a date format.

The easiest way to do this is to select the cell(s) to be formatted and then select the **Date** cell formatting option from the drop-down menu in the 'Number' group on the

Home tab of the Excel ribbon (see below):

The resulting spreadsheet, with the cells in column B formatted as dates, is shown below:

Results spreadsheet with date formatting applied to column B:

	A	B
1	01/01/2016	01/01/2016
2	01/01/16	01/01/2016
3	01 Jan 2016	01/01/2016

Further methods of formatting dates in Excel are discussed on the [Excel Date Format page](#).

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