Excel Advice: Ignore at your own peril

Keep raw data raw. Protect it. Don't touch it. Work only from a copy.

Back-up <u>each version</u> in multiple locations
- Every time you add new data, save as a new version!
- Or learn how to use Git version control (not best option for Excel files)

Don't have more than one table in an Excel spreadsheet

Don't use multiple Excel tabs

If you are entering dates in Excel, you are sabotaging yourself
- If you must, use "text format" as YYYY-MM-DD
- Better yet, separate column for YYYY, MM, and DD

Only ONE value per cell

NEVER merge cells!

Don't include summaries or figures in your raw data file

Every row is an observation, every column is a SINGLE variable

Highlighting cells to show information is horrible

Name variables and values CONSISTENTLY (Same spelling and capitalization)
- Better yet, use data validation feature
- Avoid spaces and special characters

Missing values? Don't leave them blank! Give them NA

Good data is rectangular. If yours isn't, there's probably a big problem.

Save the final data as a plain text file (csv, or tsv)

Consider making a data dictionary for each project that explains variables, etc.
- This should be rectangular and saved as plain text too!

Create a README.txt file for each project that explains what files are, how study was conducted, and anything else a stranger might need to know 3 years from now in order to analyze your data