How to use the VLOOKUP function in Microsoft Excel

This instruction is for intermediate users who are already familiar with Excel formulas.

# Overview

Microsoft excel is a powerful tool in managing large amount of data. It has many functions that can create multiple outputs that help you better understand this data. Some of these great functions includes math, financial, logical and lookup.

VLOOKUP is one of the popular functions that is widely use in business world. This function is located under the Formulas menu under lookup and reference. It is use to search a specific information in your located in your current spreadsheet or can search also in another spreadsheet file and return that information in your current working spreadsheet.

## The VLOOKUP syntax and arguments

The VLOOKUP syntax is very simple and it requires several arguments. These arguments are lookup\_value, table\_range, col\_index\_num, and range\_lookup (optional).

Syntax definition:

= VLOOKUP ( lookup\_value, table\_range, col\_index\_num, range\_lookup)

* Look\_value – is the value that you like to search in the first column of the table\_range
* Table\_range – is where you will search the lookup\_value. This can be in your current worksheet, another worksheet or in another file
* Col\_index\_num – this is the column number in your Table\_range which hold the specific information that you are searching
* Range\_lookup (optional) - this will specify if you like the search to be partial match (True) or exact match (False). The default value of this argument is set to True or partial match if not defined.

In the formula bar, you can directly this above syntax and supplying the required arguments or use the function arguments window.

### Warning/Tip

Note: The Col\_index\_num is the column number of the table\_range and not the column heading of the spreadsheet.

Warning: The first column in the Table\_range argument must contain the lookup\_value as this where excel do the search.

## Create the VLOOKUP formula

There are two ways to create and how to supply the required arguments of this function. The first method is by typing directly the function and arguments in the formula bar and following the stated syntax above. The 2nd method is using the formula arguments window and can be done by clicking the “fx” button in the formula bar, then type VLOOKUP and click ok and the formula arguments window will popup.

To demonstrate this function and better understand its capability, we will be using sample data and scenario where you can use this function.

For example, you have a data that contains the id number, name, program, city, etc. of all students in Seneca in all campuses. This is a huge amount of data to navigate when the information that you only want is to know what program does a student is currently enrolled using the id number.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 1 | id number | name | program | city |  |  |
| 2 | 123 | Jane Smith | CPD | Toronto |  |  |
| 3 | 234 | John Doe | CPA | Vancouver |  |  |
| 4 | 345 | Bill Gates | BSD | New York |  |  |
| 5 | 456 | Hilary Clinton | CTY | California |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |  |  | id number |  |
| 7 |  |  |  |  | program | =VLOOKUP (F6, A2:D5,3, FALSE) |
| 8 |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Based on the requirements above, we know that the arguments are as follows:

1. Lookup\_value = id number (F6 – where you will input the id number you are searching)
2. Table\_range = from A2:D5
3. Col\_index\_num = 3 (program’s column number)
4. Range\_lookup = exact match (False)
5. Type the formula including the arguments where you want the result will show, F7
6. Test your formula by typing the id number in F6

## For more information

To see more example in using VLOOKUP, visit our website at [www.exceltutorial.com] or send your questions to [info@exceltutorial.com].