Wildcards in Excel
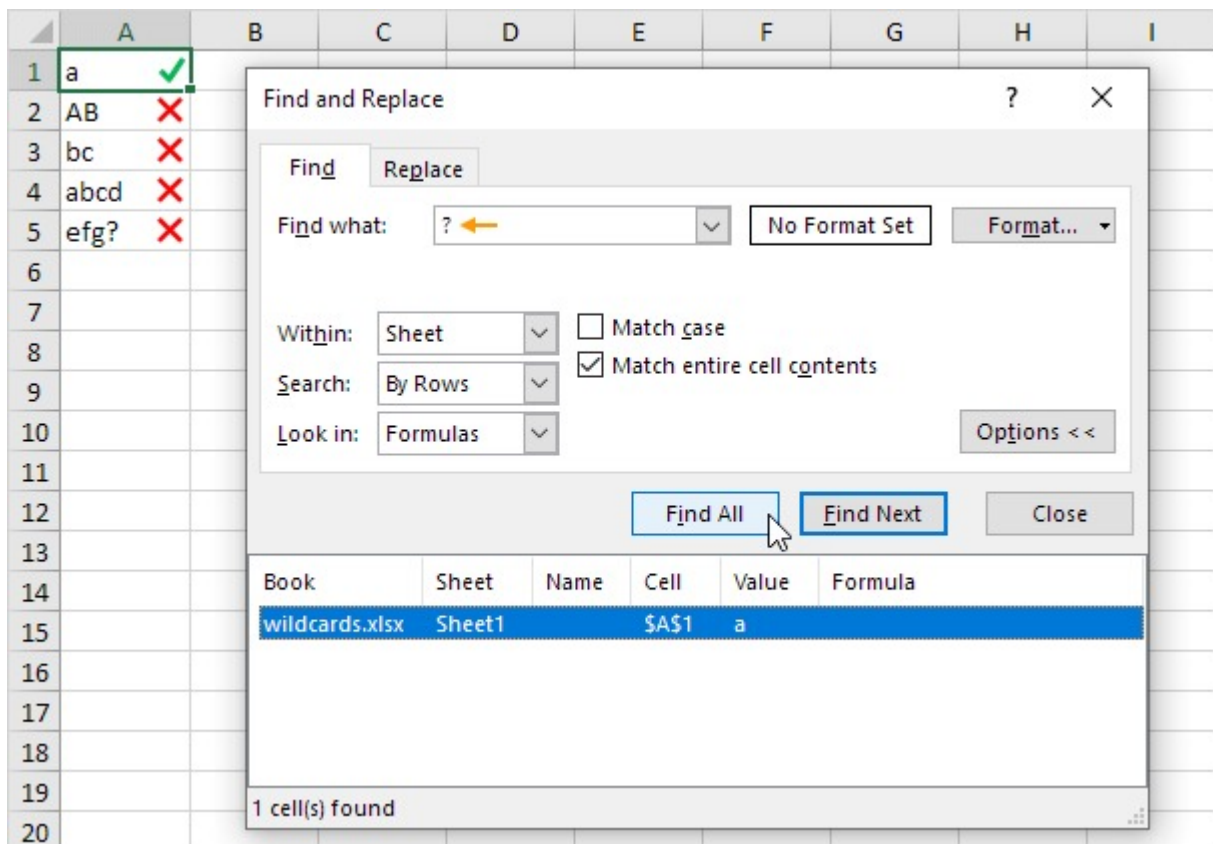
Excel has 3 wildcards. A question mark (?) matches exactly one character. An asterisk (*) matches zero or more characters. And a tilde (~).

Press CTRL + F to launch the Find and Replace dialog box.

✦ One Character

A single question mark (?) matches exactly one (any) character.

Note: check "Match entire cell contents" to exclude partial matches (we want to count cells).

Discover more

Excel   >

Microsoft Excel   >

✦ Two Characters

Use two question marks (??) to match any two characters.

✦ Zero or More Characters

An asterisk (*) matches a series of zero or more characters.

| | 19 | | 5 cell(s) found |
| | 20 | | |

✦ Start With

Use a* to find all cells that start with the letter a.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	a ✓								
2	AB ✓		Find and Replace					? ✕	
3	bc ✕								
4	abcd ✓		Find Replace						
5	efg? ✕		Find what: a* ←			∨ No Format Set		Format... ▾	
6									
7			Within: Sheet ∨		☐ Match case				
8					☑ Match entire cell contents				
9			Search: By Rows ∨						
10			Look in: Formulas ∨					Options <<	
11									
12					Find All	Find Next		Close	
13									
14			Book	Sheet	Name	Cell	Value	Formula	
15			wildcards.xlsx	Sheet1		A1	a		
16			wildcards.xlsx	Sheet1		A2	AB		
17			wildcards.xlsx	Sheet1		A4	abcd		
18									
19									
20			3 cell(s) found						

Note: if we check "Match case", a* will not find "AB" in cell A2.

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Spreadsheet software   >

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✦ End With

Use *cd to find all cells that end with the text "cd".

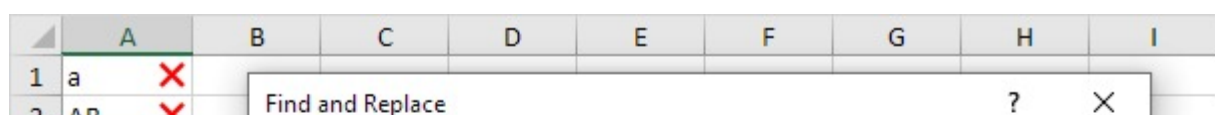|	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	a ✕		Find and Replace					? ✕	
2	AB ✕								
3	bc ✕		Find Replace						
4	abcd ✓								
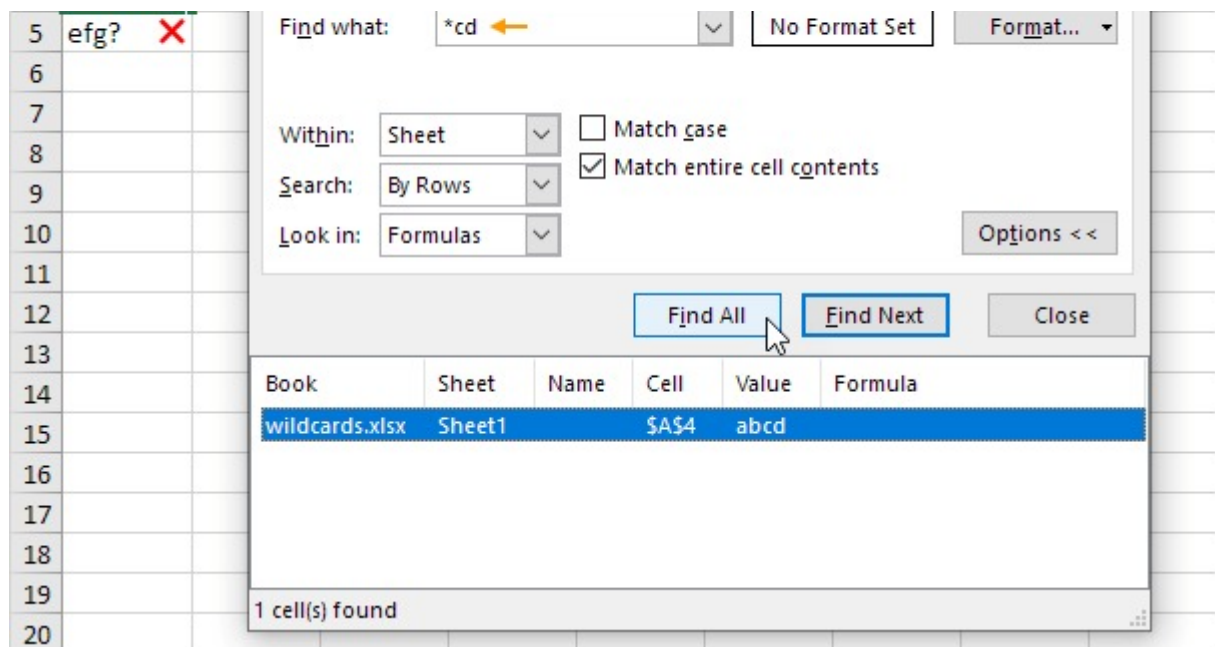
✦ Tilde

To find question marks or asterisks, precede the question mark or asterisk with a tilde (~).

For example, use *~? to find all cells that end with a question mark.
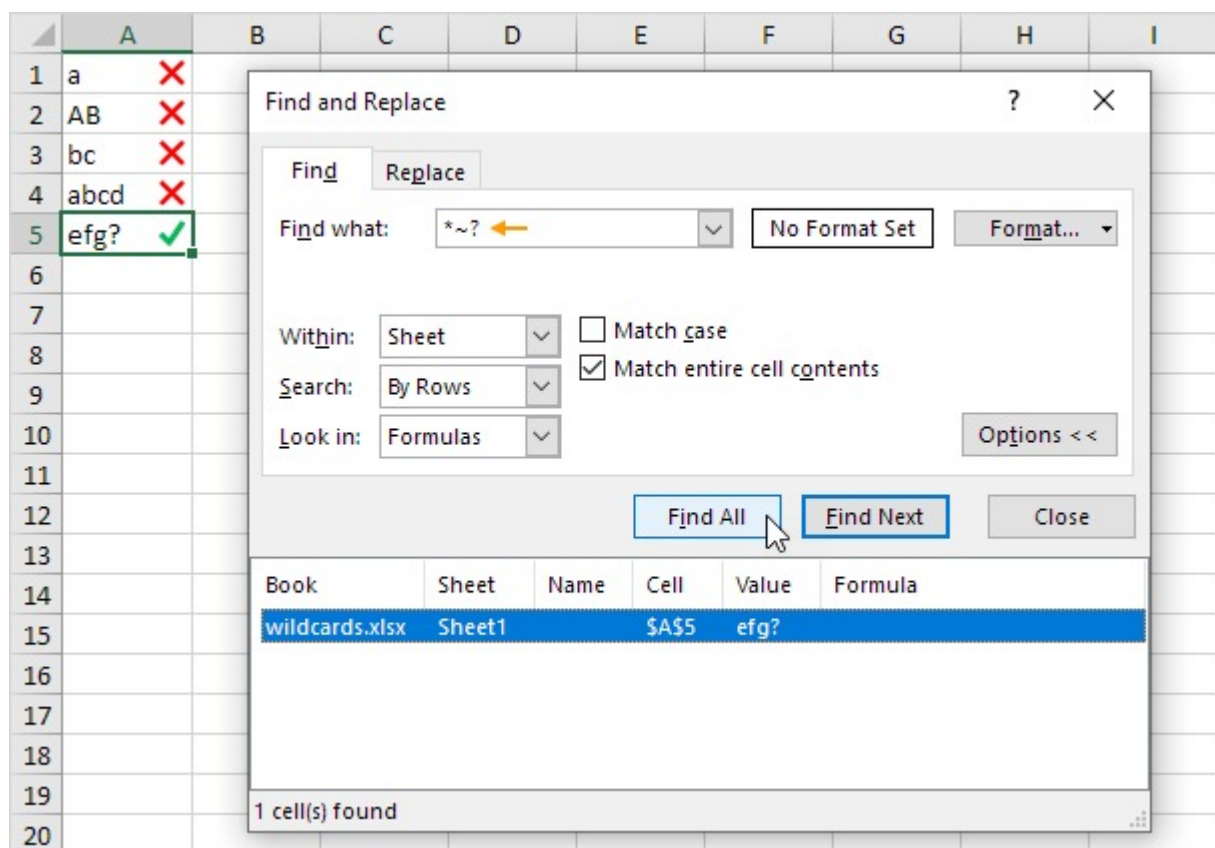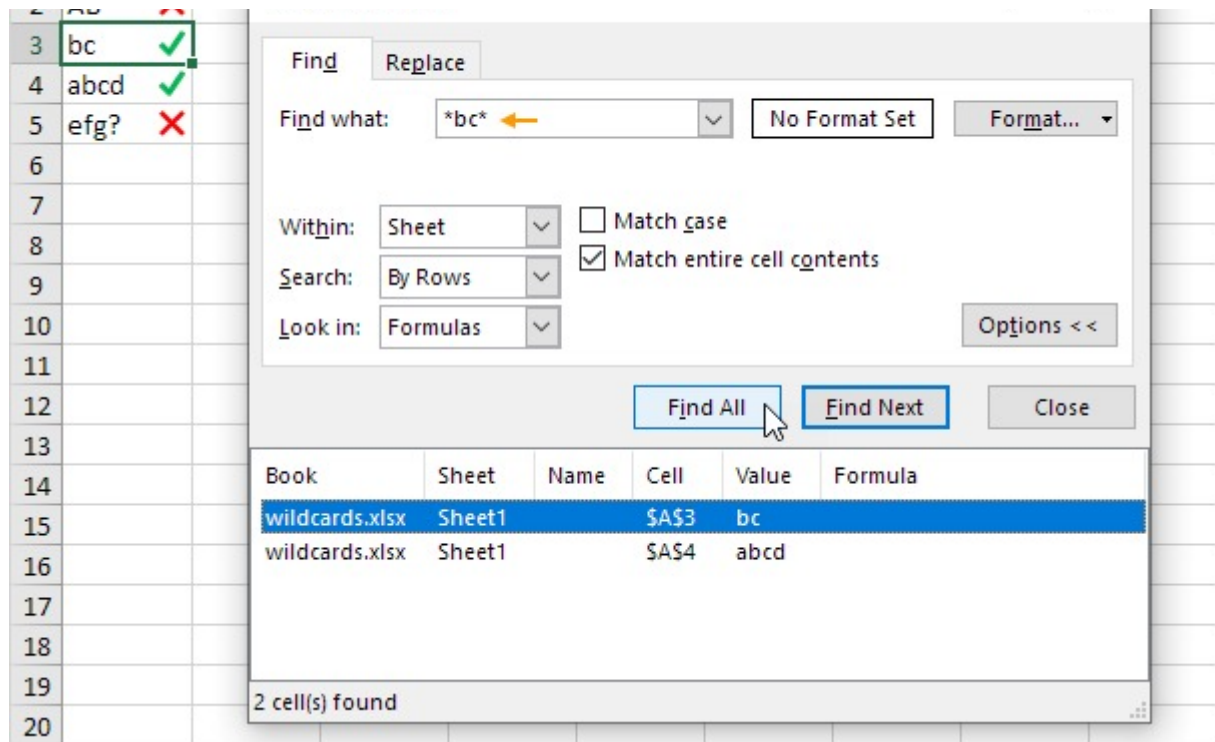

Note: ~? finds a literal question mark. ~* finds a literal asterisk. ~~ finds a literal tilde.

✦ Contain

Use *bc* to find all cells that contain "bc".

Note: download the Excel file and give it a try. Practice makes perfect. Also learn how to use wildcards in formulas and how to use wildcards in filters.

Go

Chapter

- Find & Select

Learn more, it's easy

- Find Features

- Wildcards

- Delete Blank Rows

- Row Differences

- Copy Visible Cells Only

- Search Box

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- wildcards.xlsx

Next Chapter

- Templates

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[f] [X] [P] [in]

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- Find Duplicates

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Start with Excel in 2026: Range • Formulas and Functions • Ribbon • Cell References • Sort • Filter