Flash Fill in Excel

Flash fill is a great Excel tool. Learn how to use flash fill to automatically extract data, combine data, and much more.

✦ Extract Numbers

Use flash fill in Excel to extract the numbers in column A below.

1. First, tell Excel what you want to do by entering the value 4645 into cell B1.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	WETJR/4645/CVKFRS	4645						
2	HPDHFH/9234/FGFHB							
3	BVCMIJ/51857/FALPG							
4	DFFLAZ/652/FWQP							
5	WMPDJFD/3/FSJQLX							
6	TRPMC/729/HJEIPNW							
7								

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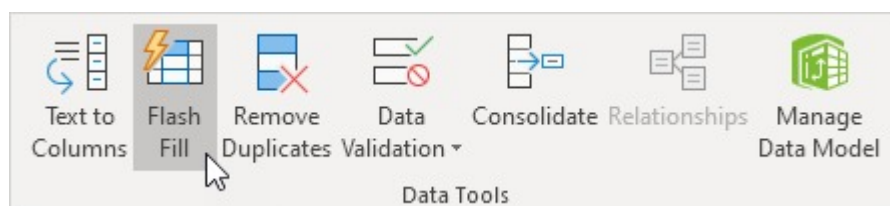
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2. On the Data tab, in the Data Tools group, click Flash Fill (or press CTRL + E).

Result:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H

|		
1	WETJR/4645/CVKFRS	4645
2	HPDHFH/9234/FGFHB	9234
3	BVCMIJ/51857/FALPG	51857
4	DFFLAZ/652/FWQP	652
5	WMPDJFD/3/FSJQLX	3
6	TRPMC/729/HJEIPNW	729
7		

✦ Combine Names

Use flash fill in Excel to combine the last names in column A below and the first names in column B below to create email addresses.

1. First, tell Excel what you want to do by entering a correct email address in cell C1.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Baker	John	john.baker@company.com				
2	Cooper	Sandra					
3	Jones	Miles					
4	Parker	Amy					
5	Smith	Peter					
6	Carter	Crissy					
7							

2. On the Data tab, in the Data Tools group, click Flash Fill (or press CTRL + E).
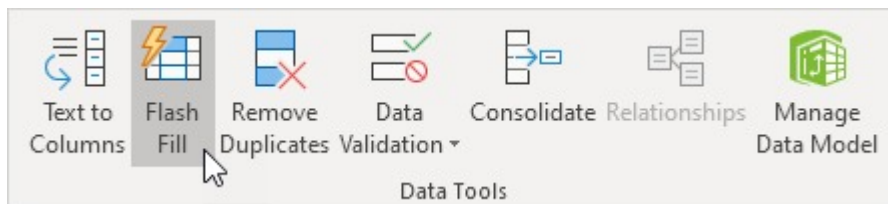
Result:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Baker	John	john.baker@company.com				
2	Cooper	Sandra	sandra.cooper@company.com				
3	Jones	Miles	miles.jones@company.com				
4	Parker	Amy	amy.parker@company.com				
5	Smith	Peter	peter.smith@company.com				
6	Carter	Crissy	crissy.carter@company.com				
7							

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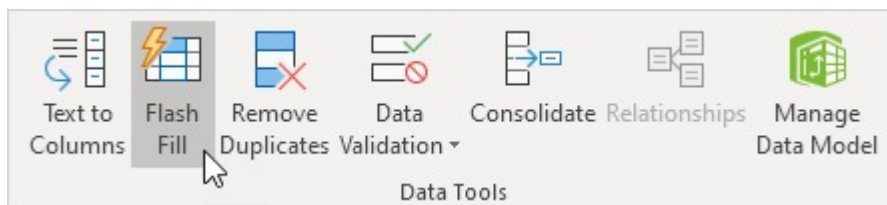⊕ Microsoft Office suite

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✦ Reformat Numbers

Use flash fill in Excel to reformat the numbers in column A below.

1. First, tell Excel what you want to do by entering a correct social security number in cell B1.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	270369181	270-36-9181							
2	269302254								
3	277128907								
4	269225794								
5	285012389								
6	407240207								
7									

2. On the Data tab, in the Data Tools group, click Flash Fill (or press CTRL + E).

Text to Columns | Flash Fill | Remove Duplicates | Data Validation ▾ | Consolidate | Relationships | Manage Data Model

Data Tools

Result:

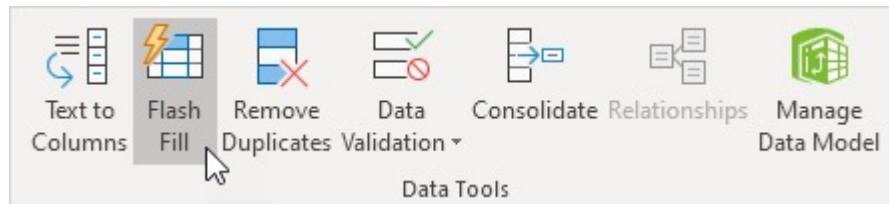|	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	270369181	270-36-9181							
2	269302254	269-30-2254							
3	277128907	277-12-8907							
4	269225794	269-22-5794							
5	285012389	285-01-2389							
6	407240207	407-24-0207							
7									

✦ Rearrange Numbers

Use flash fill in Excel to rearrange the numbers in column A below.

1. First, tell Excel what you want to do by entering a new credit card number in cell B1 (for example, swap the first 4 numbers with the last 4 numbers).

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	1479 9783 9806 9820	9820 9783 9806 1479					
2	2921 8713 9802 3835						
3	9233 7786 5871 2075						
4	4926 3733 2418 5172						
5	8694 7274 5278 3779						
6	4171 8744 8847 2430						

2. On the Data tab, in the Data Tools group, click Flash Fill (or press CTRL + E).

Result:

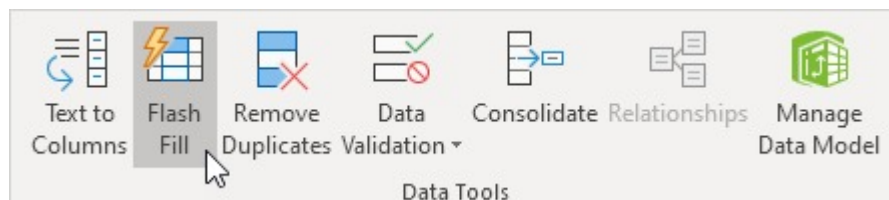|	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	1479 9783 9806 9820	9820 9783 9806 1479					
2	2921 8713 9802 3835	3835 8713 9802 2921					
3	9233 7786 5871 2075	2075 7786 5871 9233					
4	4926 3733 2418 5172	5172 3733 2418 4926					
5	8694 7274 5278 3779	3779 7274 5278 8694					
6	4171 8744 8847 2430	2430 8744 8847 4171					
7							

✦ Extract Letters

Use flash fill in Excel to extract letters from text strings.

1. First, tell Excel what you want to do by entering the letters from the first text string in cell B1.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	B5P8E9	BPE							
2	4K76ZG								
3	WN8C4								
4	65892M								
5	LFDR9H								
6	XV41								
7									

2. On the Data tab, in the Data Tools group, click Flash Fill (or press CTRL + E).

Result:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	B5P8E9	BPE							
2	4K76ZG	KZG							
3	WN8C4	WNC							
4	65892M	M							
5	LFDR9H	LFDRH							
6	XV41	XV							

✦ Flash Fill Limitations

Flash fill in Excel only works when it recognizes a pattern, and sometimes needs a little help. For example, use flash fill in Excel to extract the numbers in column A below.

1. First, tell Excel what you want to do by entering the value 130 into cell B1.

2. On the Data tab, in the Data Tools group, click Flash Fill (or press CTRL + E).
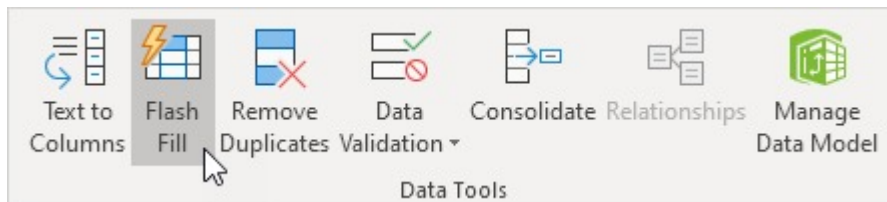
Result:

Note: flash fill did not correctly extract the decimal numbers (only the digits after the decimal point).

3. Immediately after executing step 2, change the value in cell B3 to 26.2 and Excel will correctly extract all the other decimal numbers for you.

Finally, flash fill does not automatically update your results when your source data changes.

4. For example, if you change the number in cell A1 to 200, Excel will not update the number in cell B1.

Chapter

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⤓ Download Excel File

- flash-fill.xlsx

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