Cell mate

Confusion over the contents of cells is calmed by Stephen Wells. Plus, how to give a button more buzz.

Every cell in a spreadsheet contains at least two elements: the contents and its formatting. This can be very confusing to new users. What goes in is often not what comes out. Here's a very simple little macro which points out the difference in Excel.

Start a new workbook to experiment with. Open the Visual Basic editor using Alt+F11. Choose Insert, Module. Enter the listing in Fig 1.

Click the Save button. Close the VBA windows. On the active worksheet enter a number. Format it as a number, or currency, to create an example. Press Alt+F8, then Enter. The macro will run and tell you the contents of the cell (what is stored there) and the format (how it is displayed). Fig 2 is a composite illustration of two examples. The dialogue box automatically sizes itself as required. This macro is in the Excel 97 file, Cell contents.xls, on this month's cover CD-ROM.

[FIG 1]

```
Sub Cellinfo()
 MsgBox "The contents is "_
 & ActiveCell.Value &vbCrLf_
 & "The format is " →
   &ActiveCell.Text
End Sub        [→ continues on next line]
```

■ **Better buttons**

This file also illustrates something else: a better-looking button, as in Fig 3. The fastest way in Excel to create a button (which can be used to launch a macro) is to choose View, Toolbars, Form. Click the button tool and draw a button on your worksheet. This automatically opens the "Assign a macro" dialogue box and you can choose the one you need. Then Excel sets you in position to edit the wording on the button. Click elsewhere on the sheet and the job's done. However, it is very difficult to change the properties of that button beyond choosing a font for the labelling text.

To put a bit more pizzazz into a button, I suggest a different route. Click the Drawing button on the Standard toolbar. This displays the Drawing

▶ **FIG 2 TWO EXAMPLES OF A SIMPLE LITTLE MACRO WHICH TELLS YOU THE CONTENTS AND FORMAT OF A CELL**

toolbar. Click on AutoShapes and make a selection. Draw it on your worksheet. Right-click and choose Assign macro, and select one. Right-click and choose Format AutoShape, and you have a lot more options, including colours for the face and outline of your "button". Right-click again and choose Add text, and enter the wording to appear on the button. Once you've created a few buttons this way, you'll be able to make them in a couple of ticks.

■ **Tab name on the sheet**

Two readers have come up with solutions for the problem of including the tab or worksheet name in a cell.

Kevin Tam emails: "A more elegant solution is to create this global function:

▼ **FIG 3 YOU GET A WIDER CHOICE OF BUTTONS FOR YOUR WORKSHEET BY USING AUTOSHAPES ON THE DRAWING TOOLBAR**

The dialogue box automatically sizes itself as required

```
Public Function →
MySheetName()As String
MySheetName =ActiveSheet. →
Name
End Function
```

"As before, open the Visual Basic editor using Alt+F11. Choose Insert, Module. Enter the listing. Save the file, then enter in any cell:

`=MySheetName()`
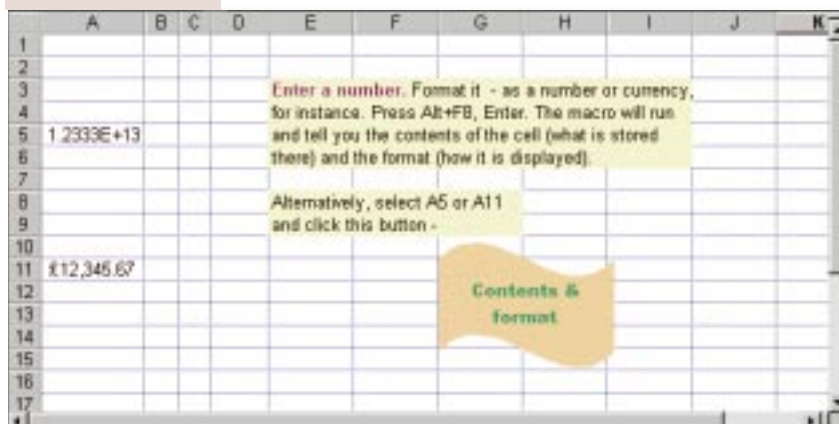
Questions & *answers*

Q How can I centre text across a number of rows (not columns) with Excel? I am able to centre text across one row by using the Format, Cells, Alignment option, but this expands the width of the row by the length of the text rather than spanning the cells I have highlighted.

PHILIP WHITING

a *Here's an example. Enter several words in cell A14. Then highlight A4:A14. Choose Format, Cells, and the Alignment tab. Under Orientation, select 90 degrees. Under Text alignment, choose Centre for Horizontal and Vertical. Under text control, check the*

Merge cells box. The number of cells you need to highlight will depend on the length of your text. The width of the rows won't expand if you pick enough rows.

Q I have compiled a spreadsheet that records my time at work and automatically records any overtime I do. As I am a contractor, this is quite important. However, I cannot get the cells to recognise that the numbers relate to times, and if I format a cell for this, it won't do the necessary calculations. Are there any ways to ensure that the figure in the cell is a time, and that allows any calculations to recognise that there are only 60 minutes to an hour?

GRAEME KING-SANDERS

a *Format cells A1 and B1 with the built-in Date, 3/4/97 1:30PM. Format C1 Time, 13:30. Format D1 and E1 Number, 0 decimals. In A1 enter your start time as 2/2/99 7:30. It will display as 2/2/99 7:30 AM. In B1 enter your end time as 2/2/99 17:15. It will display as 2/2/99 5:15 PM. In C1, enter B1-A1. This will display your hours and minutes worked as 9:45. In D1, enter =HOUR(C1)-8. This will display as 1. In E1, enter =MINUTE(C1). This will display as 45. So reading these two cells together, you've worked 1 hour and 45 minutes overtime.*

Q Can I display, in Excel 5, cell colours to represent values, by a change of variable in a formula and not by manually formatting each cell? The variables representing the percentages are a,b,c,d. An "a" should turn the cell red, a "b", yellow, and so on.

FRANK MAIDSTONE

a *Not in Excel 5, Frank, but you can in Excel 97 (Excel 8) using a wonderful feature called Conditional Formatting. The choices of formatting dependent on cell values are extensive. You could create a formula using your a's and b's or work straight from the value, eliminating that step. Obviously, so many other Excel users want to do what you want to do, Frank, that the innovation was introduced.*

Q How can I copy selected rows of an Excel spreadsheet to a Word table? When I click on rows 1,3,5 and 7, holding the control key, the rows are highlighted. I can paste just these rows into a blank sheet. When I do the same operation to a Word table, I get rows 1 - 7 inclusive! How do I restrict the paste to the selected rows?

KEITH RUNDLE

a *It only takes a second to paste the selected rows into a blank temporary worksheet, copy again and paste into Word. Alternatively, copy the selected rows and then, in Word, choose Edit, Paste Special, Unformatted text, and make your selection.*

Q Is it possible to change the colour on the workbook tabs in Excel? I know it can be done in Lotus 1-2-3, but I can't find a way to do it in Excel.

DENZYL PEREIRA

a *You're right. I hadn't thought of it before, but upon checking I see that in Corel Quattro Pro 8 and Lotus 1-2-3 97 it is easy to change tab colours. In Excel 97, you can change the gridline colours easily but there is no offered option for titillating tab tints.*

The VBA for Excel Tab object does offer colour properties: BackColour defines the colour of the tab, and ForeColour defines the colour of the text. But it's just for tabs in a dialogue box, not worksheet tabs.
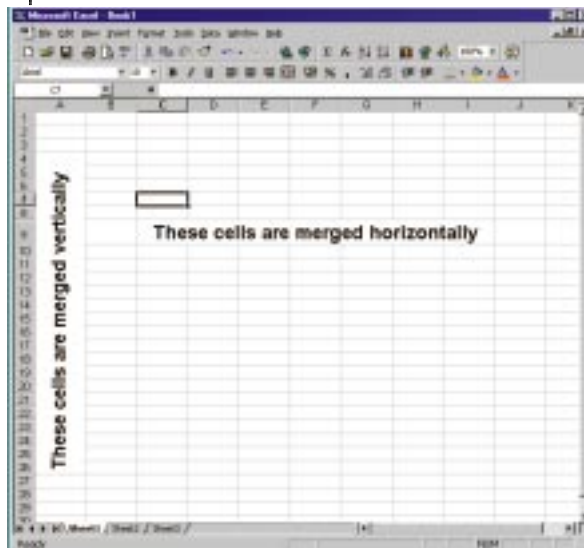
The VBA for Excel Tab object does offer colour properties

"You can also select the new function by clicking the equals sign in the Formula bar, then the down arrow on the function box, and selecting it from the User Defined functions."

Meanwhile, long-term reader of this column, Shane Devenshire, in California, suggests the formula:

```
=MID(CELL("filename"),FIND →
("]",CELL("filename"))+1,31)
```

I've tried both solutions and they work easily. They can be found in the Excel 97 file, SheetNaming.xls, on this month's cover CD-ROM.

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