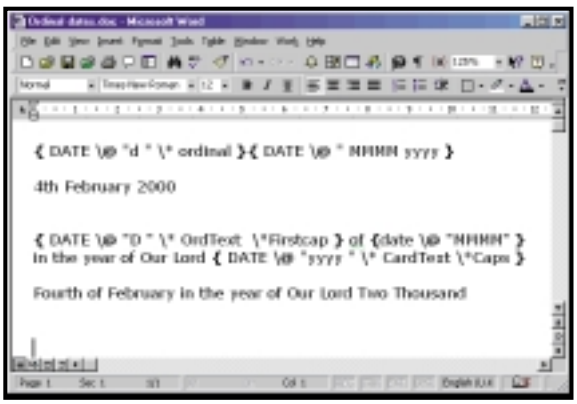
Cardinal rule for ordinals

Tim Nott reveals how you can get those tricky ordinal dates into a word-processing document.

A frequently-asked question among Word users is how to get an ordinal date into a document other than by typing it. Although the Insert, Date and Time command offers a variety of formats, ordinal dates (eg 3rd April) are not among them. Those who roll their own date fields with the appropriate date picture switch will also be disappointed, as ordinals don't figure in the options there, either. However, with a little ingenuity, it can be done.

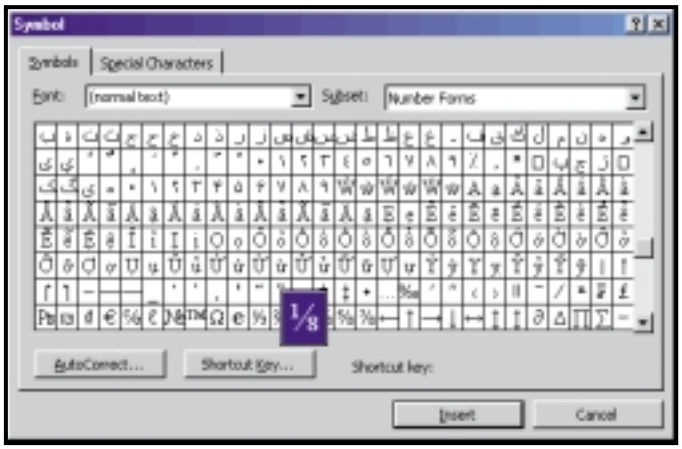
First you need to split the field into two – one for the day of the month, and one for the month and year. You'll then be able to format the number returned by the solitary 'd' in the date picture as an ordinal, using the *ordinal switch shown in the screenshot below. The second field just includes the month and year in its date picture. You can use this technique with other date functions, such as CreateDate, and carry out the usual date manipulations.



Field codes for ordinal dates, as well as their results

There may be occasions, for instance in legal documents, when you want to spell out an ordinal (or cardinal) number, such as 'sixteenth' or 'two thousand'. In this case, use the *OrdText or *CardText switches instead. For the finishing touch, these switches can be followed by the *FirstCap, *\Caps and *\Upper switches, which offer varieties on capitalisation. Finally, if you think that all this field work is more effort than typing in the date manually, then you have a point. But bear in mind that once the fields have been created, they can be re-used either in a template or as an autotext entry. One slight snag with this is that if you are using the AutoFormat-as-you-type option to set ordinals in superscript, this doesn't work on the fields. Curiously, if you AutoFormat a selection containing such a field, it does. Personally, I think superscripted ordinals look rather fussy, so I disabled this feature.

On a related AutoFormatting note, I do like having, for example, 1/4 changed to a proper typeset fraction. However, although all the standard Windows fonts, and most of the MS Office fonts contain eighth fractions (some also contain thirds), these don't jump into action like the half and quarter. Remedying this, in Word 97 onward, is simplicity itself. From the Insert, Symbol dialog, find the relevant fractions (they lurk in Normal Text, Number Forms), then highlight each in turn and hit the AutoCorrect button.



Adding the missing fractions to AutoCorrect

This takes you straight to the AutoCorrect dialog, with the proper fraction in place – all you need to do is type the appropriate number-slash-number to be replaced.

Switch glitch

Further to February's tip on opening Word and automatically loading the most recent document worked on, Peter Lloyd has an even easier method. Adding /mfile1 as a command-line switch when starting Word automatically opens the last document without needing a macro.

Thanks also to Bob Monroe, who points out that I was wrong about another switch – the /n switch does not stop Autoexec macros from running. More egg on face. Several readers wrote in to say there is an easier way of automatically inserting the current date into a letter, and protecting it from subsequent changes (January, p241). If the template contains a CreateDate field, then this will return the date that each new document based on that template is created. For several years I had been under the illusion that this returned the template's own creation date.

Finally, a quick tip. Whether you like Word 2000's single-document interface or not, it's a big improvement having the document names listed on the Taskbar. If, however, you like to keep your hands on the keyboard, Control & F6 switches through open documents in all versions of Word – add Shift to reverse the order.

CONTACTS

Tim Nott welcomes your feedback and suggestions on word processing topics. You can contact him via the *PCW* editorial office or email: **wp@pcw.co.uk**. Please do not send unsolicited file attachments.

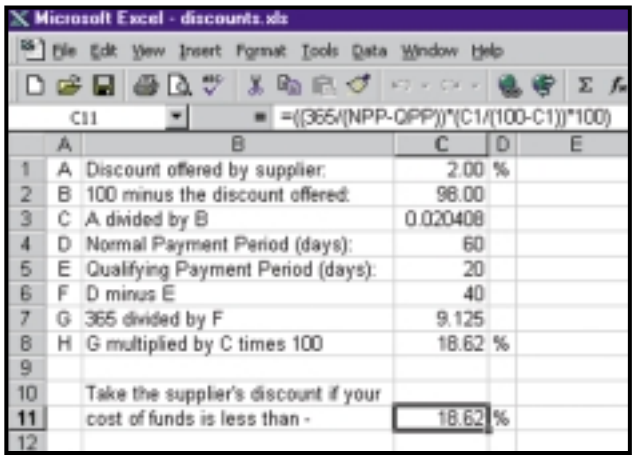
Gaining your interest

Stephen Wells programmes his spreadsheets to find out if it's worth paying the bills on time.

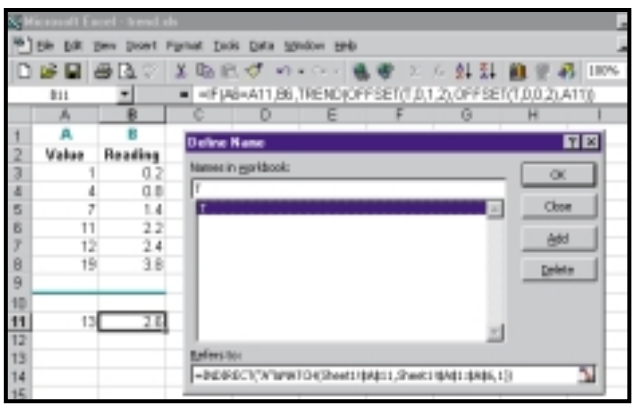
Since the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act was introduced, many companies billing other firms have legally added interest to any invoices that have remained unpaid after 30 days. This is one way to deter large companies from squeezing free credit out of smaller ones. Perhaps a more psychologically-attractive method to get the money in is to offer a discount for early payment. It is this approach that has prompted several readers to ask variations of the question: 'As the cost of borrowing has fallen lately, is it worth taking advantage of a two per cent discount if I pay within 20 days, when I normally wait until invoices are 60 days old?'

To understand the answer you have to realise that, if you normally pay this supplier after 60 days, you are in effect borrowing the money at an interest rate that is the annual equivalent of the company's discount. So you need to calculate the annual cost of the discount and compare it to the cost of your overdraft – or the money you would earn from interest, if the money was in your bank account instead of the supplier's. Either way, time is money.

In any spreadsheet, enter in cell C1 (see screenshot 1) the percentage discount offered (in this example it is two). In C2 enter 100-C1. (Here the answer is 98). In C3 enter C1/C2 (0.020408). In C4 enter your normal payment-period in days (60). In C5 enter the qualifying payment period in days (20). In C6 enter C4-C5 (40). In C7 enter 365/C6 (9.125). In C8 enter C7*C3*100 (18.62). Meaning that if 18.62 per cent is greater than your cost of funds (which it probably is at the moment) then in this instance it's well worth it to pay the invoice and take the discount.



Screenshot 1: How to calculate the comparable value of an offered discount



Screenshot 2: How to calculate expected results in a linear list of equivalent values

If you would rather express all this in one formula then it's: =((365/(NPP-QSP))*(C1/(100-C1))*100) when NPP is the Normal Payment Period and QSP is the Qualifying Settlement Period.

Linear interpolation

If you keep records where a value in column A has an equivalent value in column B – they might be instrument readings, for instance – it can be useful to be able to project what a logical answer in column B would be for an unlisted value in column A. Long-time contributor to the spreadsheets column, Shane Devenshire, has provided a formula to do this. The process is termed linear interpolation – or an expected point on a line when following a trend.

Enter your values in column A (see screenshot 2) and what we will call 'readings' in column B. The list needs to be sorted in descending order based on column A.

To simplify the formula, part of it has been given a Name. So choose Insert, Name, Define and enter this formula in the Refers To dialog box: =INDIRECT("A"&MATCH(Sheet1!$A$11,Sheet1!$A$1:$A$6,1))

In the Names in Workbook dialog box enter the Name, T and choose Add, then click OK. Save the workbook to register the Name.

In cell A11 you can enter the new value for which you wish to find the equivalent reading. In B11 enter: =IF(A6=A11,B6,TREND(OFFSET(T,0,1,2),OFFSET(T,0,0,2),A11))

Cell B11 will then display the answer. The formula won't provide answers to entered values below the first value in the table, but it will provide them for values higher than the largest value in the table.

If you just want to increase the series, you don't need a formula. Copy the range A3:B8 to a clear part of the worksheet, then drag the fill handle (at the bottom right-hand corner of the range) down the sheet. Alternatively, copy the range to say, G3:H8 then select G3:H15 and choose Edit, Fill, Series and check the Trend box.

CONTACTS

Stephen Wells can be contacted via the *PCW* editorial office (see page 10 for address) or email **spreadsheets@pcw.co.uk**. Please don't send attached files until requested.