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Importing Data in Power BI

TRANSFORM YOUR DATA INTO DECISIONS!



Contents

Power BI has emerged as one of the leading tools in the world of data analytics, empowering users to transform raw data into interactive insights. But here's the truth: Power BI is only as powerful as the data it connects to.

That's why understanding how to import data—and from where—is essential.

Here, we'll cover:

- Types of Data Sources in Power BI
- How to Import Data into Power BI
- Data Connectivity modes



Types of Data Sources

File-Based Sources

Power BI supports common file formats such as:

- Excel (.xlsx, .xls)
- CSV (.csv)
- XML & JSON
- PDF files
- Folders containing multiple files

Use Case: Best for local analysis, ad-hoc reporting, or when working with small-scale data stored on your device.

Database Sources

You can connect to various relational and enterprise databases like:

- SQL Server
- MySQL
- PostgreSQL
- Oracle
- IBM DB2
- Amazon Redshift, SAP, and Teradata

Use Case: Ideal for structured and large datasets, commonly used in enterprise-level reporting.



Cloud-Based Sources

With the rise of cloud computing, Power BI integrates seamlessly with:

- Azure SQL Database
- Azure Synapse Analytics
- Snowflake
- Google BigQuery
- Amazon Redshift
- Databricks

Use Case: Perfect for real-time analytics and scalable data warehousing.

Online Services

Power BI offers prebuilt connectors for popular SaaS platforms, including:

- Google Analytics
- Salesforce
- Microsoft Dynamics 365
- SharePoint
- Microsoft Exchange
- Adobe Analytics

Use Case: Great for pulling data from business apps and services you already use.



🌐 Web and API Sources

Advanced users can pull data from the web or custom APIs:

- Web pages with HTML tables
- JSON or CSV from URLs
- REST APIs using tokens or headers
- Custom connectors

Use Case: Enables integration of real-time or application-specific data.

📜 Scripts & Advanced Connectors

For technical users and data scientists, Power BI supports:

- R and Python scripts for data wrangling
- OData and ODBC connectors for legacy systems
- Power Platform connectors (Power Apps, Power Automate)

Use Case: Best for customized analytics workflows and complex transformations.



How to Import Data into Power BI

1. Accessing the "Get Data" Feature:

- Power BI Desktop: Navigate to the "Home" tab on the ribbon and click the "Get Data" button.
- Power BI Service: You'll typically find "Get Data" options within your workspace, under "New item" or similar.

2. Selecting Your Data Source.

3. Connecting and Previewing:

- Browse and Select: If you're connecting to a file, you'll need to browse your system or cloud storage to find the file.
- Provide Credentials: For databases, you'll need to provide server and database credentials, or authentication details if necessary.
- Preview the Data: After connecting, Power BI will often display a preview of the data, allowing you to see the structure and content.

4. Loading the Data:

- Choose "Load" or "Transform": Once you've made the necessary transformations, you'll either choose "Load" to import the data into Power BI or "Transform" to further refine the data in the Query Editor.



Data Connectivity Modes

When connecting to a data source, you must choose how Power BI handles the data:

Import Mode

- Data is fully loaded into Power BI's in-memory engine.
- Offers fast performance and enables complex transformations.
- Data refresh happens periodically (manual or scheduled).

DirectQuery

- Data stays at the source and queries run in real-time.
- Keeps dashboards up-to-date without full refreshes.
- Suitable for large or dynamic datasets, but may affect performance.

Live Connection

- Used for connecting to Analysis Services (SSAS, AAS) or a semantic model that already exists in Power BI service.
- No data is imported into Power BI Desktop.
- Ideal for centralized models and governed enterprise BI.

Choose the mode based on your priorities—speed, scalability, or real-time accuracy.



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