Microsoft Excel

75 tips and tricks for your favourite spreadsheet.

1 Convert rows to columns

You can convert rows to columns (and columns to rows) by highlighting the cells you want to switch around, clicking on **Edit, Copy**, selecting a new cell and then going to **Edit, Paste Special**… Finally, place a tick in the **Transpose** box on the dialog box and click on **OK**.

2 Calculate time between dates

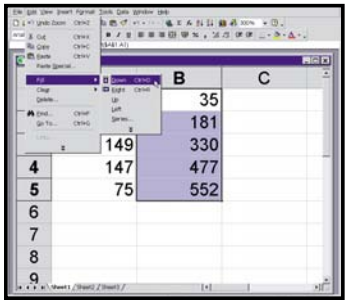
Enter in a cell the formula **=A2-A1**, where A1 is the earlier date, and A2 the later one. Don't forget to convert the target cell to number format – do this by highlighting the cell, clicking on **Format, Cells**…, picking on the **Number** tab and selecting **Number** from the **Category:** list.

3 Enter URLs as text, not hyperlinks

To prevent *Excel* from converting written Internet addresses into hyperlinks, add an apostrophe to the beginning of the address, for example **'www.futurenet.com**.

4 Calculate running totals

Enter the numbers to be added in column A, say A1 to A5, then enter **=SUM(A1:A1)** into column B. Highlight the cells beside the ones with numbers in (in our example, B1 to B5) and go to **Edit, Fill, Down**. This places the running total of the figures in A1 to A5 in the adjacent column.



Filling Down – the easy way to perform dynamic calculations.

5 Remove hyperlinks from your work

If *Excel* has already converted your written URL into a hyperlink, you can cancel it by right-clicking on the offending address and selecting **Hyperlink, Remove Hyperlink** from the menu that pops up.

6 Fit wide tables to the page width

To make your tables fit neatly on the page, click on **File, Page Setup**…, select the **Page** tab, click on the **Fit to:** radio button and pick **1 page wide**. Click on the tall box and press **[Delete]**, leaving the box empty.

7 Hide your data from prying eyes

If you want to hide from view any sensitive data, highlight the relevant cell and click on **Format, Cells**… Click on the **Numbers** tab, select **Custom** from the **Category:** list, double-click on the **Type:** input box and enter **;;;**. Undo the operation to make your data visible again.

8 Use template worksheets

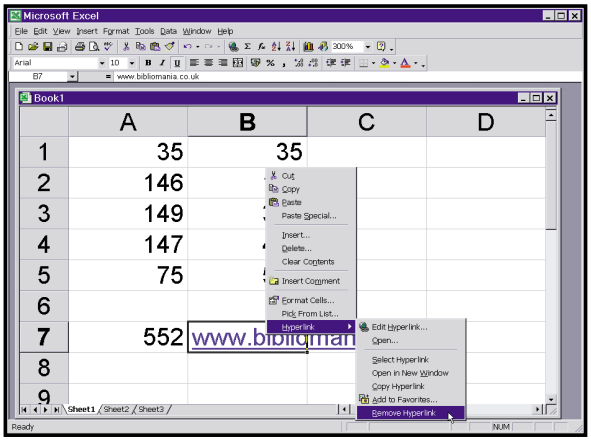
Templates can save you considerable time when you're setting up a new worksheet. Click on **File, New**…, select the **Spreadsheet Solutions** tab and choose a template from the list.

9 Access help for Lotus users

If you've converted from *Lotus 1-2-3* and find *Excel* confusing, you can access help specific to your situation by clicking on **Help, Lotus 1-2-3 Help**…

10 Use the formula browser

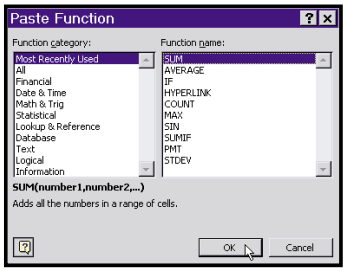
Select a cell and click on the **Paste Function** button on the main toolbar. Pick the function you require from the list box and click on **OK**. Now highlight the cells on which you want the target to perform the function and click on **OK**.



Excel converts Web site addresses to hyperlinks automatically. Right-click on them to remove the link.

11 Customise your AutoFills

If you use the same list over and over in different worksheets, you might want to add it to your AutoFill list – this will save you heaps of time in future. Highlight your list, click on **Tools, Options**… and select the **Custom Lists** tab. Click on **Import**, then **OK**.



The Paste Function button enables you to browse formulas and is the easiest way to enter Functions.

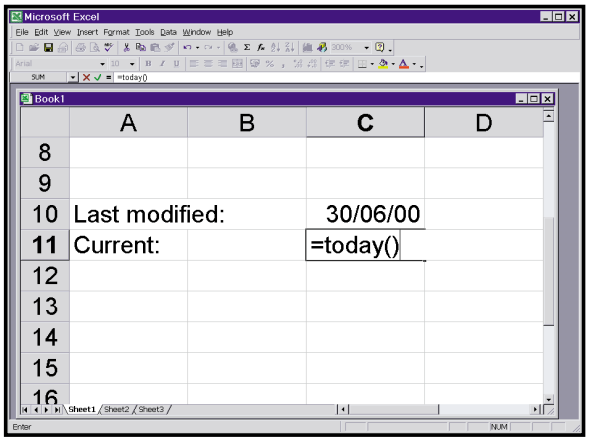
12 Use the AutoCalculator

If you need to calculate a sum based on a row or a column of figures and you can't be bothered typing in a function, just select your figures and glance down at the status bar – you'll find the sum of the selected cells there.

What's more, if you right-click on the sum a pop-up menu will appear offering additional quick calculation functions.

13 A quick way to enter the time

To enter the current date or time click on a cell and type **=today()** or **=now()**. *Excel* updates the result every time you open the sheet, so it's always current.



Excel has two distinct date calculators: one returns the current date, the other returns the creation date.

14 Enter a fixed time into Excel

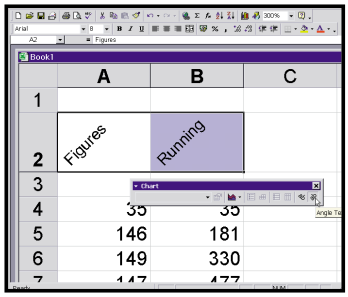
If you want *Excel* to enter the current date or time and fix it at that point – for example, to show the last date the sheet was modified – click on a cell and press **[Ctrl]** + **[;]** for the date and **[Ctrl]** + **[:]** for the time.

15 Find the currently active cell

If you've been scrolling around your spreadsheet and you lose your place, you can jump back to the currently active cell by pressing the **[Ctrl]** + **[Backspace]** keys.

16 See the big picture

If you're working on a large sheet you might want to switch to Full Screen mode: simply click on **View, Full Screen**. Click on it again to return to a normal window.



Use angled text to add visual interest to your lists and graphs.

17 Fit text automatically

Make your work look neater by selecting the relevant column, and clicking on **Format, Column, AutoFit Selection**.

18 Fast copy, no clipboard

Pressing **[Ctrl]** + **[']** is a speedy way to duplicate the formula or figure in the cell above the one you're in.

19 Fast and easy multiple entry

If you need to enter a formula in several cells at once, simply select all the target cells, type your formula as normal and press **[Ctrl]** + **[Enter]**.

20 Pick cells for AutoCalculator

You can select unconnected cells by holding down **[Ctrl]** while you click on the individual cells.

21 Hide comments to reduce clutter

You can hide notes and other comments by using the **Insert Comment** function. Highlight a cell, click on **Insert, Comment** and type your text. Click away from the input box when you've finished. The comment will appear whenever you pass your mouse over the relevant cell.

22 Re-colouring the grid lines

You can change the colour of the grid by clicking on **Tools, Options**..., selecting the **View** tab, clicking on the **Color:** list box and choosing a new colour from the palette. Choosing white effectively removes the grid completely.

23 Angle your entries...

To make *Excel* display the text in cells at an angle of 45 degrees, right-click on the toolbar, select **Chart**, and pick either of the **ab** icons on the new toolbar.

24 ...to any degree you like

If you want custom angles right-click on the cell and select **Format Cells**... From the pop-up menu, click on the **Alignment** tab, and then drag the Text pointer in the Orientation window.

25 Zoom in to your selection

You can have *Excel* display just the area you're working in by highlighting the relevant cells, clicking on the arrow on the Zoom box on the toolbar and selecting **Selection** from the list.

26 Another default entry direction

When editing cells the cursor moves down when you press **[Return]**. To change the direction click on **Tools, Options**... and select **Edit**. Click on the **Move selection after Enter** list box and choose another direction from the list.

27 Launch Excel, open your file

Launch *Excel*, open the file you use most often, and click on **File, Save As**... In the **Save As** dialog, navigate to the **Xlstart** folder in your **Office** folder and click **Save**. Now the file will open automatically when you launch *Excel*.

28 Set decimal points

Click on **Tools, Options**... and select the **Edit** tab. Place a tick in the **Fixed decimal** tick box and use the arrows in the **Places:** input box to set the number of decimal places.

29 Calculate the median value

To calculate the median value of a number of figures, say A1 to A10, enter **=median(A1:A10)** into the target cell.

30 #NAME! and #NUM! errors

Excel returns a #NAME! or #NUM! error whenever a formula refers to non-existent names or numbers. To sort it out, re-enter the formula correctly.

31 Quick sort your columns

The quickest way to sort a column into a hierarchy is to select it and click on the **Sort Ascending** or **Sort Descending** buttons (the ones with the AZ arrows).

32 Quickly change cell dimensions

The quickest way to change a column's

width or a row's height is to place your mouse pointer close to the join between two columns or rows, then click and hold down the mouse button, and drag the column or row to the desired size.

33 Erasing entries while typing

If you mistype your formula, press **[Esc]** to erase the cell's content.

34 Enter number sequences

Enter the first number in a cell, press the **[Ctrl]** key, and then click, hold and drag the cell's handle until you've reached the desired number of cells. Release the mouse button first, and then the **[Ctrl]** key.

35 See formulas at a glance

You can view all of your formulas at once by clicking on **Tools, Options**..., selecting the **View** tab, and placing a tick in the **Formulas** tick box.

36 Highlight cells of a kind

You can select all the cells of a certain type by using the Special functions. Click on **Edit, Go To**..., click on the **Special**... button, choose the cell type from the dialog box and click on **OK**.

37 Switch off the zeroes

You can prevent zeroes from cluttering your sheets by clicking on **Tools, Options**..., selecting the **View** tab, and unticking the **Zero values** tick box.

38 Protect your work

Open the sheet you wish to protect and click on **File, Save As**... Click on the **General Options**... item in the **Tools** menu (in the top right corner of the Save As dialog) and enter a password in the **Password to open:** input box. Finally, click on the **Save** button. You might want to make a note of the password before continuing.

39 Customise your dates

You can customise the format of a date in a cell using the Custom cell formatter. To do this, enter a date in a cell, click on **Format, Cells**..., click on **Custom** in the **Category:** pane, click on the **Type:** input box and press **[M]** repeatedly until the desired format is displayed in the Sample area above.

40 Quick column copy

You can fill out the cells in a column by double-clicking on a cell's handle. *Excel* will place copies of the clicked cell in each cell below, stopping when it reaches a cell with blanks either side. (Confused? Try this: enter a figure in cell A1, then enter figures in cells B1 to B5, then double-click on A1's handle.)

41 Merge cell contents

To merge the contents of cells A1 and B1, click on cell C1 and enter **=A1&B1**. The result is not a sum but a text string, so merging 10 and 7 will return 107, rather than 17.

42 Use dynamic formatting

You can set *Excel* to alert you to critical figures in cells by setting it up so the colour or size of text in a given cell changes whenever a certain condition is reached. Select a cell (say, the cell containing the total of your bank balance) and click on **Format, Conditional Formatting**... Choose the conditions in the pop-up dialog (say 'Cell value is less than 0') and click on the **Format**... button. Now choose a new colour in the **Color:** list box and click on **OK**. Click on **OK** again to finish. From now on *Excel* will display your chosen figure in the new colour whenever the figure falls below zero.

43 Border connected cells

You can place a border around a group of related cells – all the totals, for example – by selecting them and clicking on **Format, Cells**..., then selecting the **Border** tab and clicking on the **Outline** button.

44 Shrink entries to fit their cells

You can force *Excel* to display the full text of a cell by using the **Shrink to fit** option. Click on **Format, Cells**..., click on the **Alignment** tab and place a tick in the **Shrink to fit** tick box. Obviously, the more text you have, the smaller it'll be, so this isn't practical for small cells with lots of content.

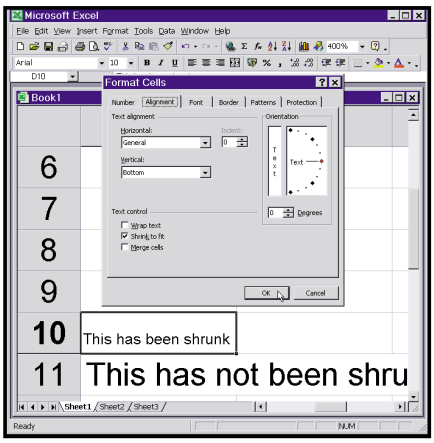
Handy keyboard tips

30 shortcuts to speed up your calculations.

Select the current column	[Ctrl] + [Space]
Select the current row	[Shift] + [Space]
Edit the active cell	[F2]
Move to the beginning of the worksheet	[Ctrl] + [Home]
Move to the last cell on the worksheet	[Ctrl] + [End]
Paste a name into a formula	[F3]
Paste a function into a formula	[Shift] + [F3]
Alternate value/formula view	[Ctrl] + [`] (on key [1])
Calculate all sheets in all open workbooks	[F9]
Display the Go To dialog box	[F5]
Display the Find dialog box	[Shift] + [F5]
Display the Format Cells dialog box	[Ctrl] + [1]
Create a chart	[F11]
Insert a new sheet	[Alt] + [Shift] + [F1]
Repeat the last action	[F4]
Repeat Find	[Shift] + [F4]
Open	[Ctrl] + [F12]
Exit	[Ctrl] + [F4]
Check spelling of current cell	[F7]
Activate the menu bar	[F10]
Display the Macro dialog box	[Alt] + [F8]
Apply outline to active cell	[Ctrl] + [Shift] + [&]
Convert to a percentage	[Ctrl] + [Shift] + [%]
Select all filled cells around active cell	[Ctrl] + [Shift] + [*]
Move to next sheet	[Ctrl] + [Page Down]
Move to previous sheet	[Ctrl] + [Page Up]
Complete a cell entry and move up	[Shift] + [Enter]
Complete a cell entry and move right	[Tab]
Complete a cell entry and move left	[Shift] + [Tab]
Edit a cell comment	[Shift] + [F2]

45 Create hyperlinks to support files

To place links in cells that enable you to load other documents with one click, enter a name for the link in a cell and press **[Ctrl]** + **[K]**. Click on the **File**... button. Navigate to the file you wish to link to. Double-click on it and click **OK**. From now on, whenever you click in that cell, *Excel* will jump to the file.



Prevent cell content from overlapping neighbouring cells by shrinking it to fit.

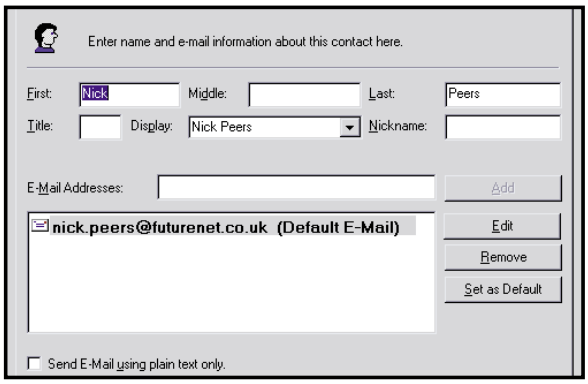
Outlook, PowerPoint,

Bringing up the rear are Microsoft's email client, presentation, and DTP software. Here are the hottest 15 tips and 35 shortcuts...

Outlook

1 Find the contact you're after quickly

To locate a contact from just a fragment use the **Find a Contact** input box on the main toolbar. Just click on the box and enter what you remember of the contact's name. *Outlook* will find the contact and open his or her details in a dialog box.



Find a Contact brings up the Contact Properties. Here you can add, edit or remove the contact from your address book.

2 Shred your waste, don't bin it

Outlook doesn't really delete messages, it places them in the **Deleted items** folder. To delete them click on **Tools, Options...**, select the **Other** tab, and place a tick in the **Empty the Deleted Items folder upon Exiting** tick box.

3 Spell check your outgoing mail

To spellcheck your email before you send it, click on **Tools, Options**... and then on the **Spelling** tab. There are five separate spell-checking options – tick each box for the optimal spelling system. If you want to switch the whole thing off, you should untick the second box in the list.

4 Automatically addressed email

Click on **Folder, Contacts**, select the contact you want to email and click on **Actions, New Message to Contact**. A new message pane will open with the contact's address details already entered for you.

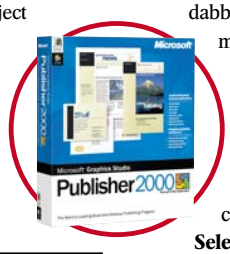
5 Track your mail

You can find out when your mail is read by sending a receipt request with your messages. Click on **Tools, Options**... and select the **Preferences** tab. Click on the **E-mail options**... and **Tracking Options**... buttons on the following dialog. Finally, place a tick in the **Request a read receipt for all messages I send** tick box.

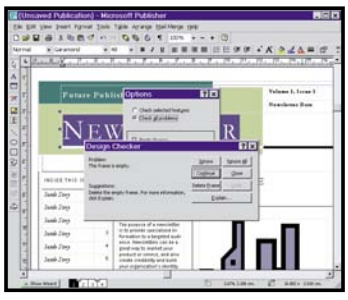
Publisher

6 Resize objects using central origin

To keep the centre of an object in the same place while you resize it, hold down **[Ctrl]** while you are dragging the object's handles.

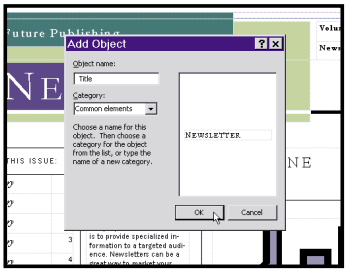


Let Publisher *solve your layout problems for you with the Design Checker.*



7 Quickly adjust font sizes, no mouse!

Getting the font sizes right is paramount to a well-designed layout, and if you're constantly shifting and resizing frames, it can become a bit of a headache. However, there is a speedy method for switching font sizes without any mouse operations: highlight the text you wish to change and press **[Ctrl]** + [right square bracket] to increase the font size by a point, and **[Ctrl]** + [left square bracket] to decrease it by one point.



You can use the design gallery to store your own page elements.

8 Build your own Design Gallery

The Design Gallery is *Publisher's* library of professionally-designed elements and objects that help to bring consistent design to your projects. It's handy for dabblers but pretty useless for more committed users. To get the best from the Design Gallery, you should use it to store your own objects. To add an object to the Gallery, select it and click on **Insert, Add Selection to Design Gallery**... Enter a name and category in the input boxes and click **OK**.

9 Check your design for problems

Once you've finished your project it pays to run it through its paces in the Design Checker and check it for flaws: select **Tools, Design Checker**... and click on **Options**... Select the **Check**

Outlook shortcuts

Five email shortcuts no one should be without,.

Display Inbox	[Ctrl] + [Shift] + [I]
Check for new mail	[F5]
Reply to selected mail	[Ctrl] + [R]
Create new mail	[Ctrl] + [N]
Send mail	[Ctrl] + [Enter]

and Publisher

all problems radio button and then both **OK** buttons. *Publisher* now checks the integrity of your frames, bringing attention to any potential problems, and suggesting remedies by way of a pop-up dialog box.

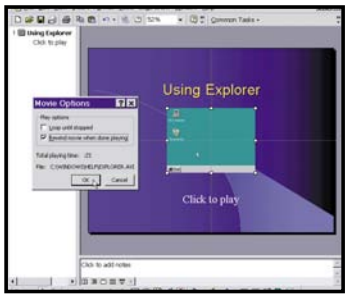
10 No need to cut and paste

To copy an object simply select it, press **[Ctrl]** and drag it to a new location. The copy is left behind in the original position.

PowerPoint

11 Get the most from your videos

If you're using a video clip in your presentation, make sure it's in the same folder as the presentation, otherwise it will display a Find Files dialog when run. Once you've loaded your film you can access its properties by right clicking on it and selecting **Edit Movie Object**… from the pop-up menu. The dialog displays the clip's total playing time and playing options.



Add impact to your presentation with a movie object.

12 Add buttons to your slides

Buttons make your presentation look and feel professional. Activate the **Action Buttons** sub-menu on the **Slide Show** menu and hover your mouse pointer over each of the available buttons to view their descriptions. To use one. click on the button and draw a square on your slide. A dialog that enables you to link sounds, programs and slides to the new button will appear once you've released the mouse button.

Adding buttons is a simple two-step process.

13 Just pack and go

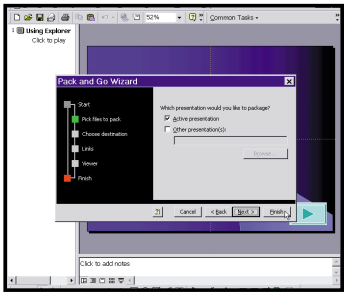
If you want others to be able to watch your presentations and you're not sure whether they have *PowerPoint*, use the **File, Pack and Go**… command. This Pack and Go Wizard enables you to collate all of the presentation elements into one standalone, portable program.

14 Make your text stand out

To add instant pizzazz to your headings go to **WordArt** on the **Drawing Tools** menu. You can configure WordArt text to run in a line, around a circle or in any other shape. It can be multi-coloured, 3D or textured. Used sparingly, WordArt can be an eye-opener.

15 Use Guides to place frames

Guidelines are non-printing lines that enable you to align frames with ease. When you drop a frame close to a Guideline it automatically snaps into the same place as the line. This means you can align all the pieces of your document with very little effort. Once your elements are in position you can drag the Guides to new locations or you can disable them. The frames are unaffected. To activate the Guidelines click on **View, Guides**.



Share your presentations more easily with Pack and Go.

Publisher shortcuts

Five essential DTP shortcuts.

Toggle frame opacity	**[Ctrl] + [T]**
Nudge frame	**[Alt] + [Arrow]** (any of the four directions)
Format copy	**[Ctrl] + [Shift] + [C]**
Format paste	**[Ctrl] + [Shift] + [V]**
Toggle current/actual page view	**[F9]**

PowerPoint shortcuts

Five shortcuts to increase your speed.

Insert slide	**[Ctrl] + [M]**
Move to the next pane	**[F6]**
Move to the previous pane	**[Shift] + [F6]**
Insert a hyperlink	**[Ctrl] + [K]**
Start slide show	**[F5]**

Generic shortcuts

These shortcuts work in all Office *applications, as well as some third-party software.*

Open	**[Ctrl] + [O]**
Exit	**[Alt] + [F4]**
Save	**[Ctrl] + [S]**
Print	**[Ctrl] + [P]**
Select All	**[Ctrl] + [A]**
Cut	**[Ctrl] + [X]**
Copy	**[Ctrl] + [C]**
Paste	**[Ctrl] + [V]**
Undo	**[Ctrl] + [Z]**
Redo	**[Ctrl] + [Y]**
Help	**[F1]**
Open pop-up menu	**[Shift] + [F10]**
Open window control menu	**[Alt] + [Space]**
Scroll one page length down	**[Page Down]**
Scroll one page length up	**[Page Up]**
Delete	**[Delete]**
Switch applications	**[Alt] + [Tab]**
Activate menus	**[F10]**
Close menu	**[Alt]**
Select first/last menu item	**[Home]/[End]**