Excel Text Formatting Tips

In addition to numbers and formulas, key data in Microsoft Excel often also includes text entries. In this helpful hints article, learn more about how you can format text cells to improve the appearance, and value of text.

Formatting Text Cells

If you are having problems sorting or filtering data lists, one of the reasons may be that some data in a column is formatted as text and some as numbers. In an ascending sort order, numbers and punctuation will sort before text. For instance, entries of 22, 1111, 333 would sort as 22, 333, 1111 if formatted as a number, and 1111, 22, 333 if formatted as text (left-to-right). You will get inconsistent results when a combination of formats exists. The Text format is also needed for data that includes a fixed number of places or leading zeros such as 0001234.

One plus in Excel is you can format cells prior to entering data. This is true for text as well as numbers. To format entire columns for text entry, highlight the column(s), then right-click on the column and choose Format Cells. Next, pick the Number tab from the dialog box, and then select the Text format, finish with OK. The Text alignment choice is also found on the Home tab (Alignment group) of the Ribbon. Apply the Text format to existing cells as well for better sorting and filtering results.

When Formatting Doesn't Work

To change a single entry to a text format, type an apostrophe (') in front of the data.

Contact Us:

Info Express Virtual Business Consultants is pleased to offer Excel data analysis services, Excel coaching, and Excel one-on-one or small group online training. Please contact us at sharon_daniel@att.net or (561) 289-9484 discuss your Excel training needs.
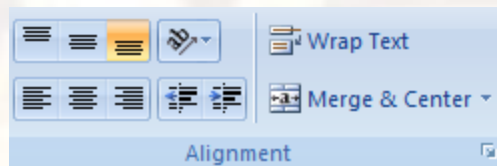
Excel Text Formatting Tips

Wrapping Text in Excel

For multiple line entries of labels, comments, notes, or descriptions in Microsoft Excel, select the cells (or an entire row or column), right-click on the selection and choose Format Cells, pick the Alignment Tab, and check the option for Wrap Text, finish with OK. Data in the cell wraps to fit the column width, so if you change the column width, data wrapping adjusts automatically.

Wrap Text is also found on the Home tab of the Ribbon in the Alignment section.

Changing Text Case

What if you have text in cell A1 (or all of column A) that has a mismatch of upper- and lower-case characters such as Jill Smith and you want all entries to be consistent?

In cell B1, type:

=PROPER(A1) to change the data to initial caps: Jill Smith

=UPPER(A1) to change to all upper case: JILL SMITH

=LOWER(A1) to change to all lower case: jill smith

Contact Us:

Info Express Virtual Business Consultants is pleased to offer Excel data analysis services, Excel coaching, and Excel one-on-one or small group online training. Please contact us at sharon_daniel@att.net or (561) 289-9484 discuss your Excel training needs.