

Cell Formatting

When it comes to the quality and clarity of a workbook, layout and appearance both play major roles. Excel features a number of formatting features at your disposal, letting you create practical worksheets with a professional look and feel. This lesson deals with some of the cell formatting tools that can help you present your data in a polished and meaningful way. In this lesson, we will cover conditional formatting and the Format Painter. We will also learn about cell merging, AutoFit, and Find and Replace Formatting.

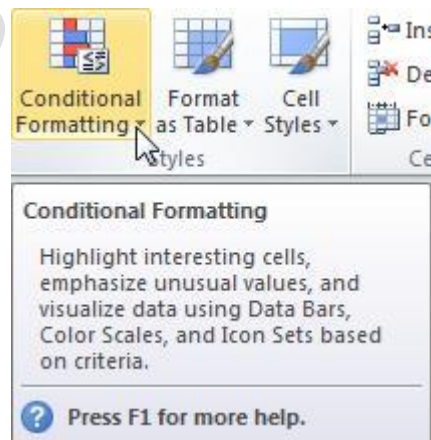
Conditional Formatting

Excel allows you to format data based on the values the data assumes at any given time. This is called **conditional formatting** and makes certain types of worksheets easier to read. It is useful for worksheets that show financial figures (black = positive, red = negative), test results (results change color based on their value), or any time you want to highlight the data that falls within a certain value.

To use conditional formatting, select a range of data that you want to format with conditional formatting:

	A	B
1	100	1
2	2300	4
3	20	567
4	3500	654
5	750	898

Now click Home → Conditional Formatting:



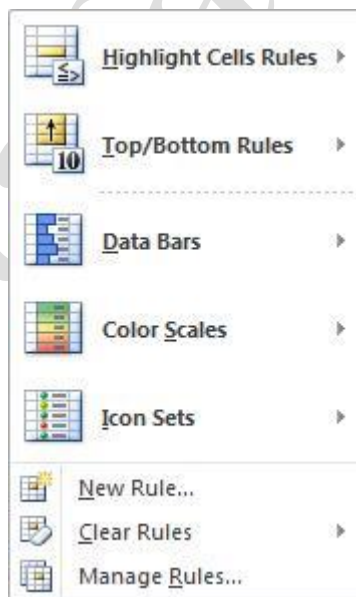
Here, we have added some data bars. These bars color the background of the cell based on the value of one cell compared to the others in the range:

	A	B
1	100	1
2	2300	4
3	20	567
4	3500	654
5	750	898

As you can see, the largest number is 3500 and the smallest is 1. Each number in between those values will be shaded accordingly. The amount of shading is maintained at a constant ratio, no matter how the cells are modified:

	A	B
1	100	1
2	2300	4
3	20	567
4	3500	654
5	750	898

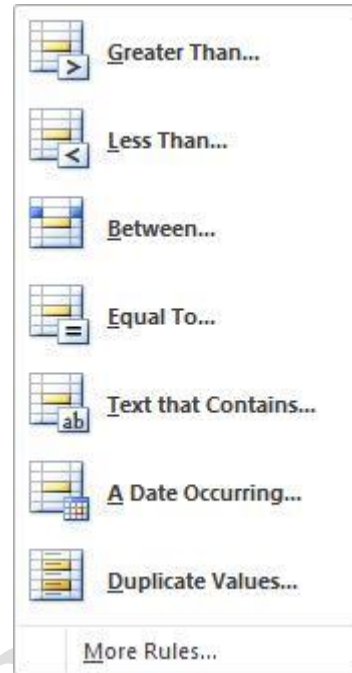
There are several options available via the Conditional Formatting command. Let's go over the basics of each option:



Conditional formatting works using logical rules. Notice the commands at the bottom of this menu where you can define your own rules for conditional formatting, clear the rules currently in use, and manage existing rules (edit/delete).

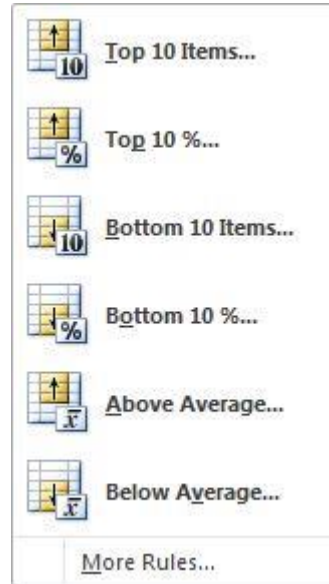
The formatting options are:

Highlight Cells Rules This will highlight cells that are greater than, less than, between, or equal to specified values:



Top/Bottom Rules

This option will allow you to highlight the top or bottom numbers or percentages in the selected cells:

**Data Bars**

Will display colored bars that are indicative of the value in the cell. The more the cell is filled in, the higher its value compared to the other cells in the range:



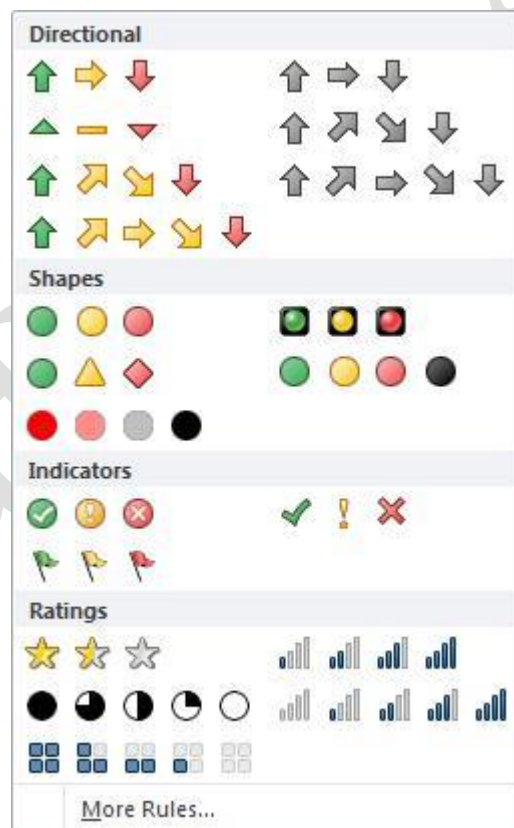
Color Scales

Will use different shades of color to represent different values, from low to high:



Icon Sets

Will use sets of similar icons that will visually indicate a cell's value:



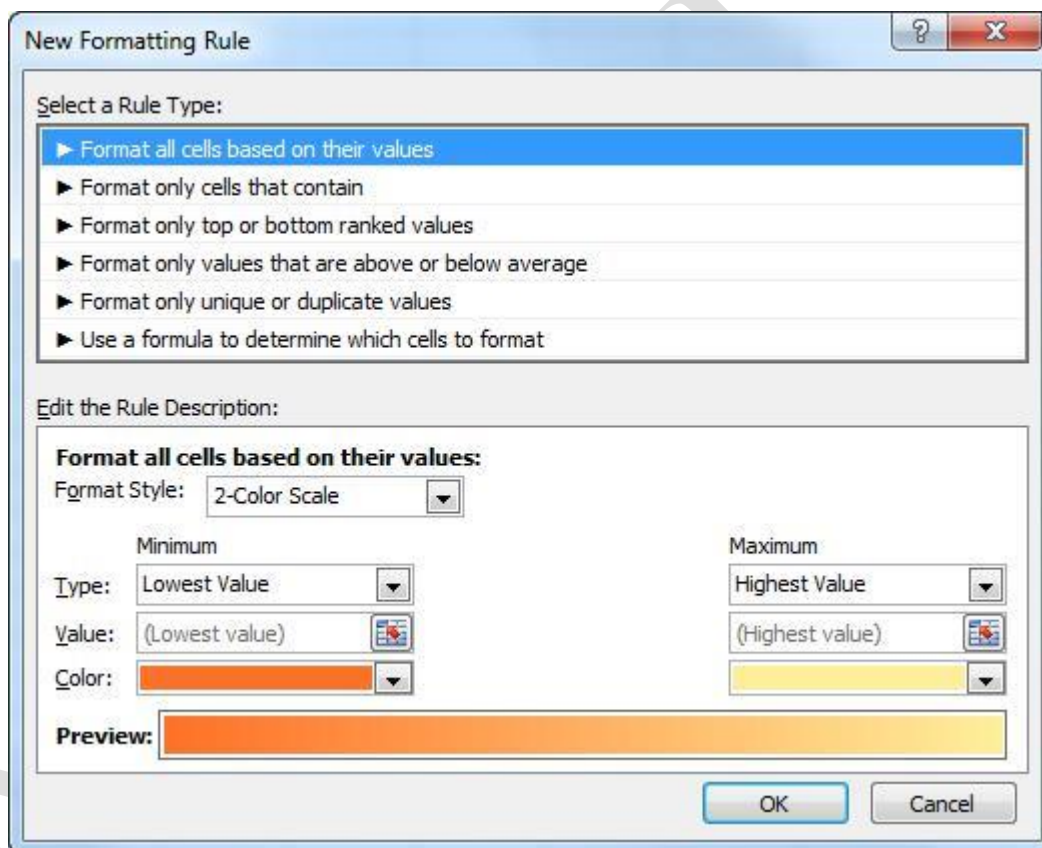
Notice that at the bottom of each submenu there is a command to choose additional rules in this category.

You can apply multiple conditional formatting rules to a group of cells by simply re-selecting the group and applying another condition. Here, we have added an icon set to the data that already contains data bars:

	A	B
1	100	1
2	2300	4
3	20	567
4	3500	654
5	750	898


Red arrows are low values, descending yellow means low range, ascending yellow means high range, and green arrows indicate high values.

If you click the New Rule option near the bottom of the Conditional Formatting submenu, the New Formatting Rule dialog box will appear:



In this dialog box you can configure more precise and specific conditional formatting rules. Select one of the six rule types at the top, and then modify the details of how the rule will work at the bottom. The details for each rule type are different.

Let's briefly go over each rule option:

Format all cells based on their values Apply formatting based on numerical values. Click the  icon to select a value or values directly from the spreadsheet.

Format all cells based on their values:

Format Style: 2-Color Scale

Minimum
 Type: Lowest Value
 Value: (Lowest value)
 Color:

Maximum
 Type: Highest Value
 Value: (Highest value)
 Color:

Preview:

Format only cells that contain Apply formatting to values between a high and low value. Click the Format button to define the cell formatting.

Format only cells with:

Cell Value between and

Preview: No Format Set

Format only ranked values Apply formatting to the top or bottom portion of the selected range. Click **top** or **bottom** the Format button to define the cell formatting.

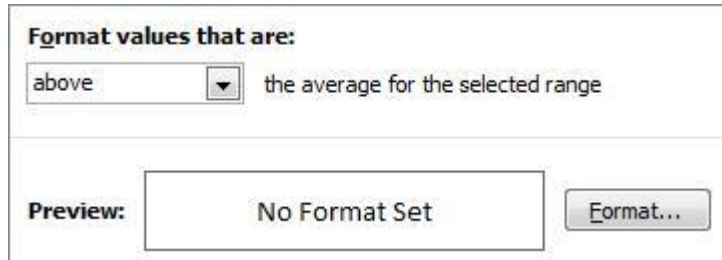
Format values that rank in the:

Top 10 % of the selected range

Preview: No Format Set

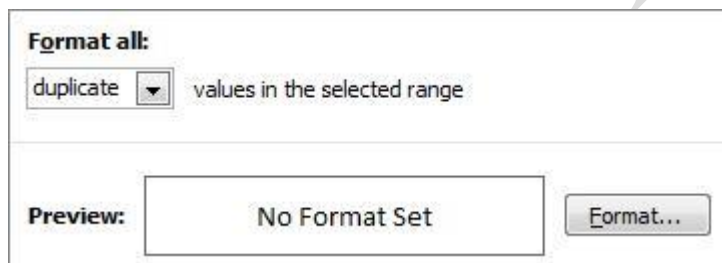
Format only values that are above or below average

Apply formatting to all values that are above or below the average for the selected range. Click the Format button to define the cell formatting.



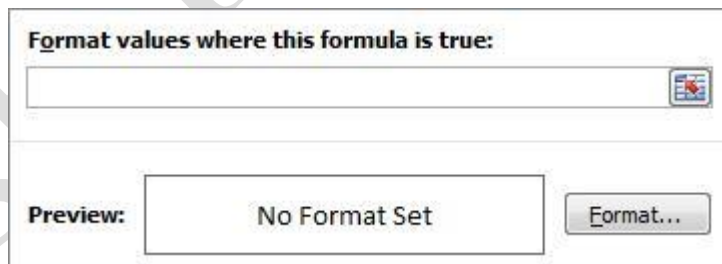
Format only unique or duplicate values

Apply formatting to all duplicate or unique values in the selected range. Click the Format button to define the cell formatting.

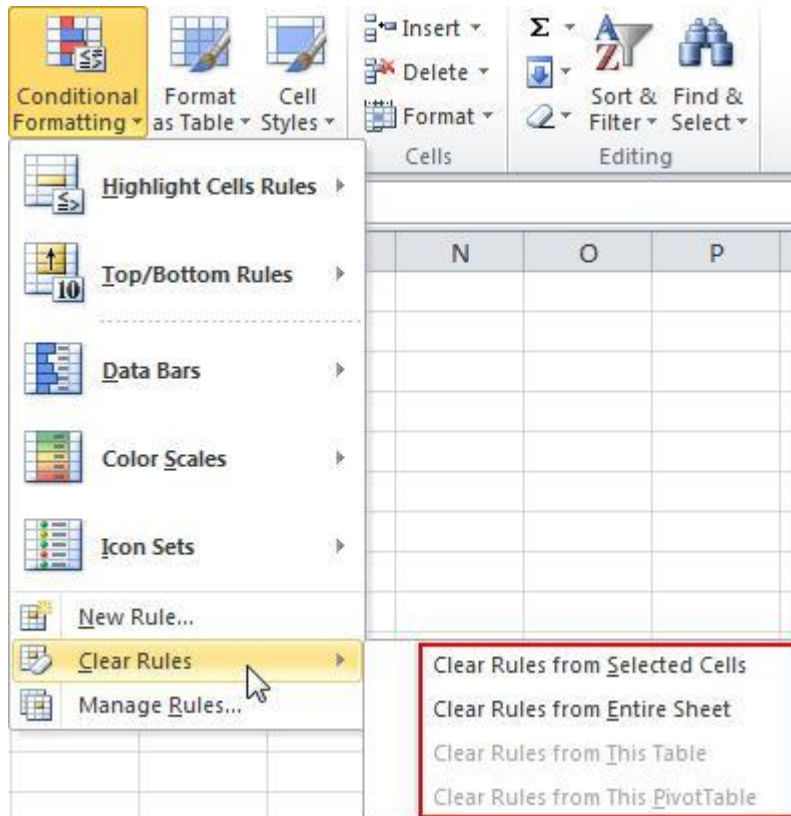


Use a formula to determine which cells to format

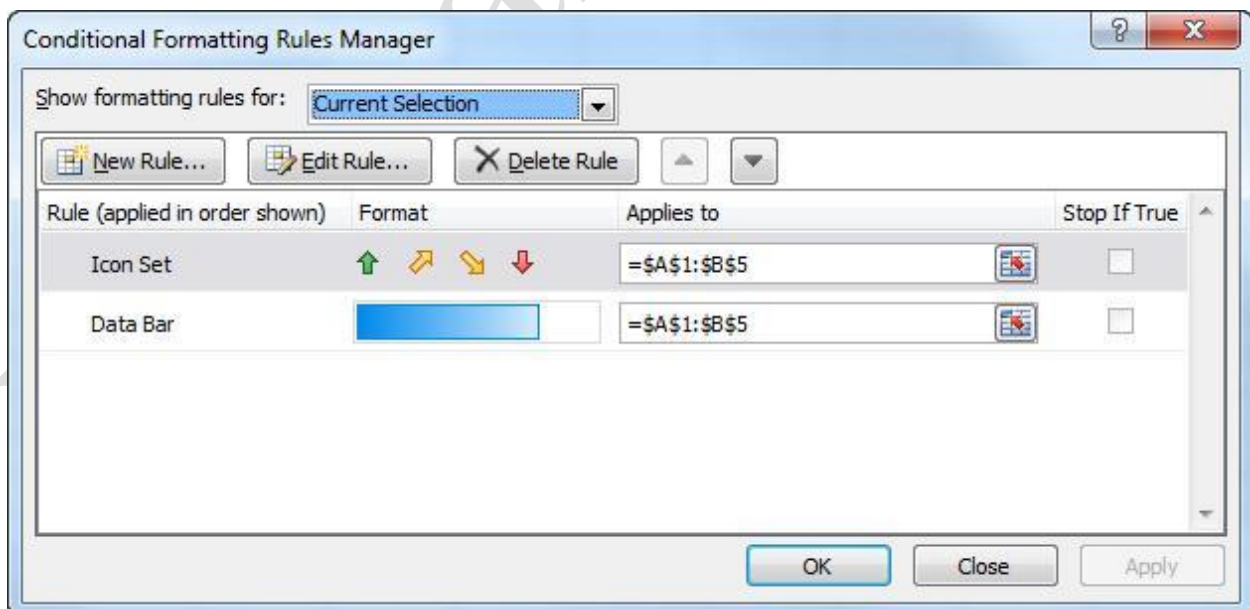
Apply formatting to all cells in the selected range that satisfy the equation. Click the Format button to define the cell formatting.



If you want to remove conditional formatting rules, click Conditional Formatting > Clear Rules and then select what to clear:.



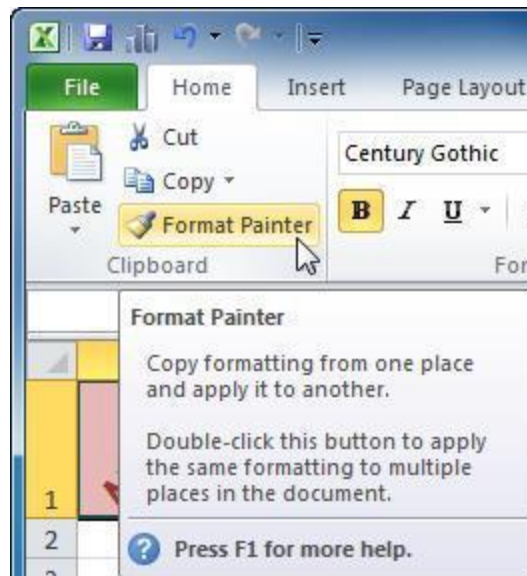
The Manage Rules option will allow you to delete, edit, or add new conditional formatting rules.



The Format Painter

The Format Painter is a very useful feature that helps you save time formatting. With the Format Painter, you can copy just the formatting from one cell and apply it to others in your worksheet. This is useful if you didn't create the worksheet and don't have the time to duplicate the formatting.

To use the Format Painter, select a cell and then click Home → Format Painter:



The cell that you selected will be enhanced with a flashing dark and light border and your mouse pointer will turn into a thick cross with a paint brush beside it. When this happens, any cell or range you select with the cross and paint brush pointer will assume the formatting of the cell that you selected. In other words, you “paint” your selection with the formatting from the original cell.

Let's say you have formatted the Month cell a certain way, and we now want to copy that format to the Sales cell:

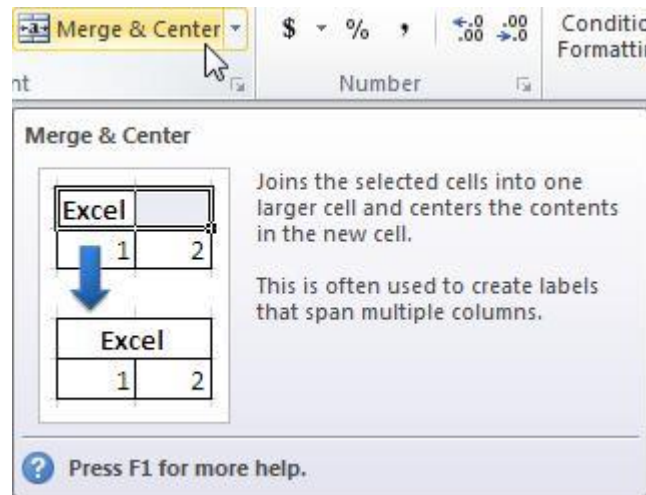


Click Format Painter **once** to apply the copied formatting **once**. **Double-click** Format Painter to apply the copied formatting **multiple times**. Once you have finished applying formatting multiple times, click Format Painter once more to deactivate the command.

Cell Merging and AutoFit

Cell Merging is a feature that helps you change the physical layout of a worksheet. Occasionally, you may need a long cell for a heading, or you may need to resize your columns or rows so that long items can be displayed. If you need to put some text or a value into a cell but don't have the available space to resize the row or column, you can use the merge command. This command allows you to select a group of cells, either across a row or down a column, and combine them to form one big cell.

To do this, select a group of adjacent cells and click the Merge & Center command in the Home tab:



Here, the title is entered into A1, but spills over into B1 and C1. If you select A1:D1 and click the Merge & Center command, you can turn this:

	A	B	C	D
1	Regional Sales Figures			
2	North	South	East	West

Into this:

	A	B	C	D
1	Regional Sales Figures			
2	North	South	East	West

A1:D1 has been merged into one big cell and is referenced as A1. Cells B1:D1 do technically still exist (you can reference them in a formula), but you can't easily access the data because it is behind A1. To avoid confusion, we recommend you assume that cells behind a merged cell are inaccessible.

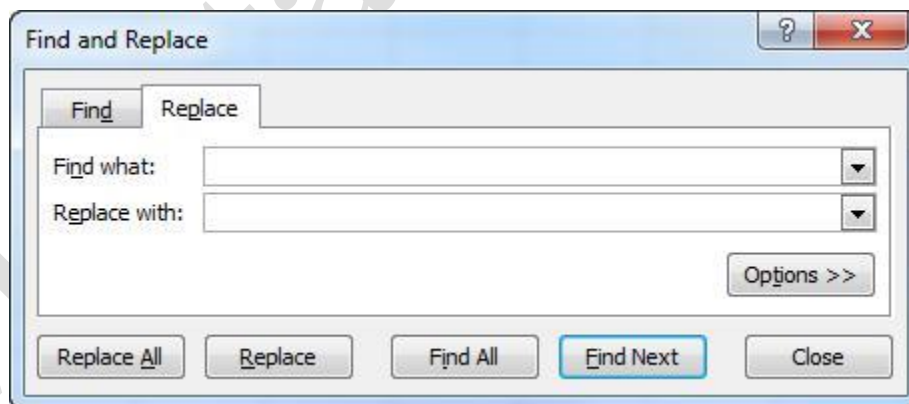
If numerical data in a cell is too large for the available space, you might see a string of number signs (#####). This means that the data is still there and usable, but is too wide to be displayed properly. If you have the room to expand the row or column size, use **AutoFit**.

AutoFit is the easiest way to change row or column dimensions in order to fit the contents. Just double-click the divider between adjacent columns or rows. Excel will automatically size the columns to fit the widest thing in a column or the highest thing in a row. Here, the text in B1 is too wide to be seen at once. Double-click the line between the B and C column headers and Excel will automatically widen column B to fit the contents:

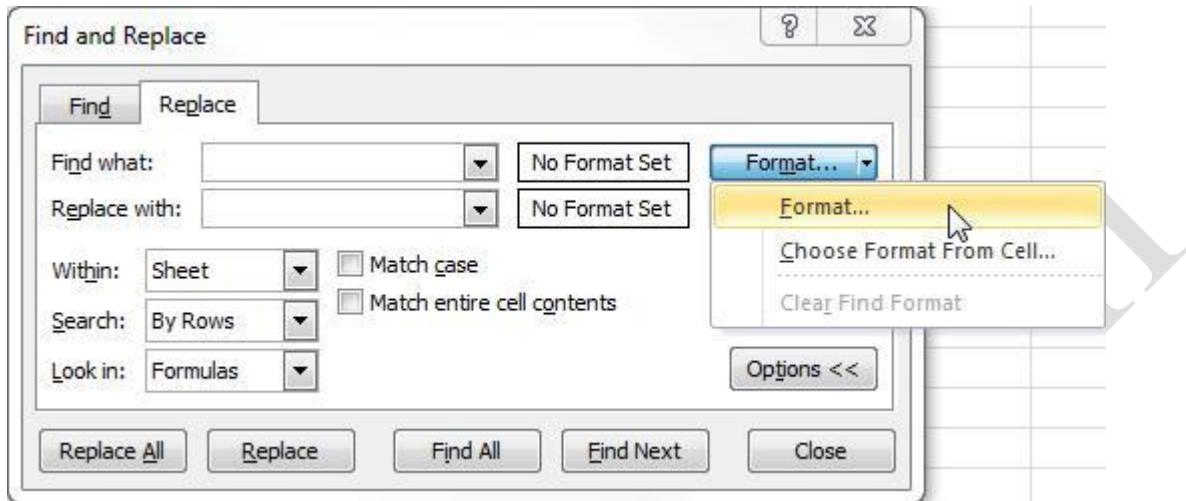


Find and Replace Formatting

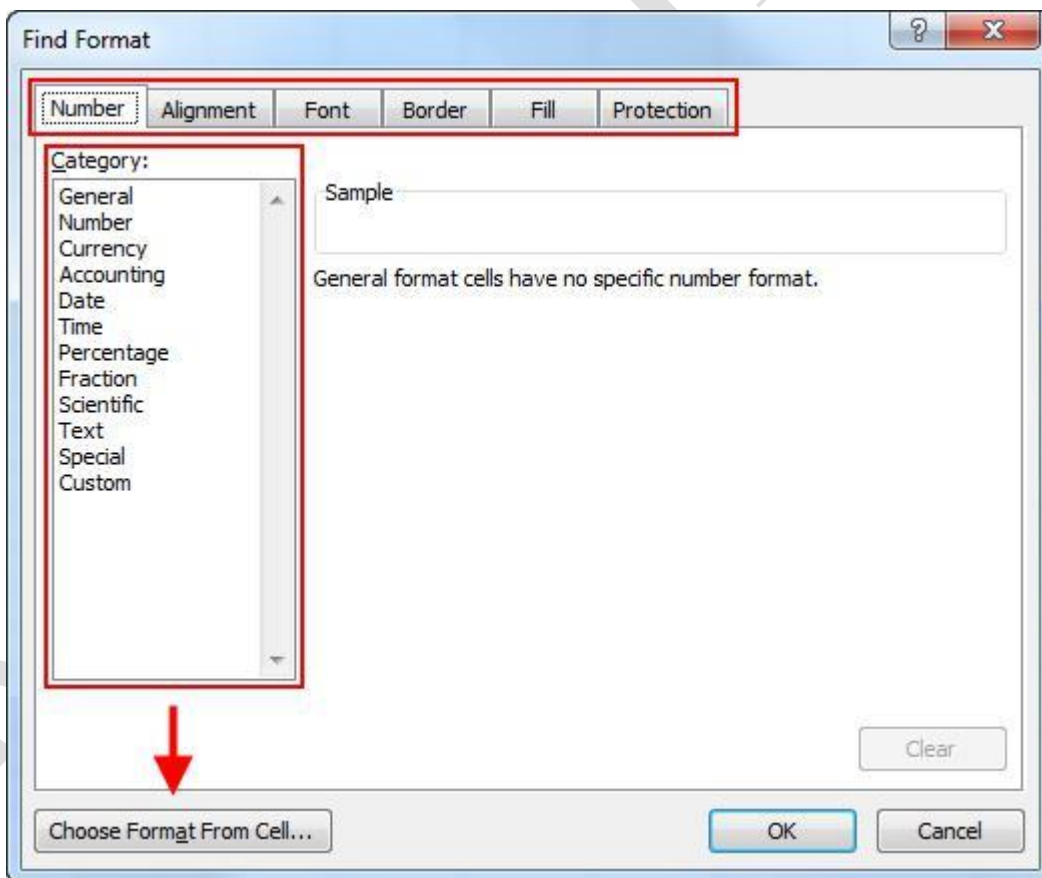
You can use the Find and Replace command to search your workbook for a specific term and replace it with something else. Find and Replace also lets you search for and replace certain types of formatting. This feature is ideal for replacing a formatting style that is scattered throughout a spreadsheet. To use Find and Replace with formatting, click Home → Find & Select. When the Find and Replace dialog box appears, click the Replace tab.



Click the Options button to display the options for formatting. Then, click the Format button and click Format:

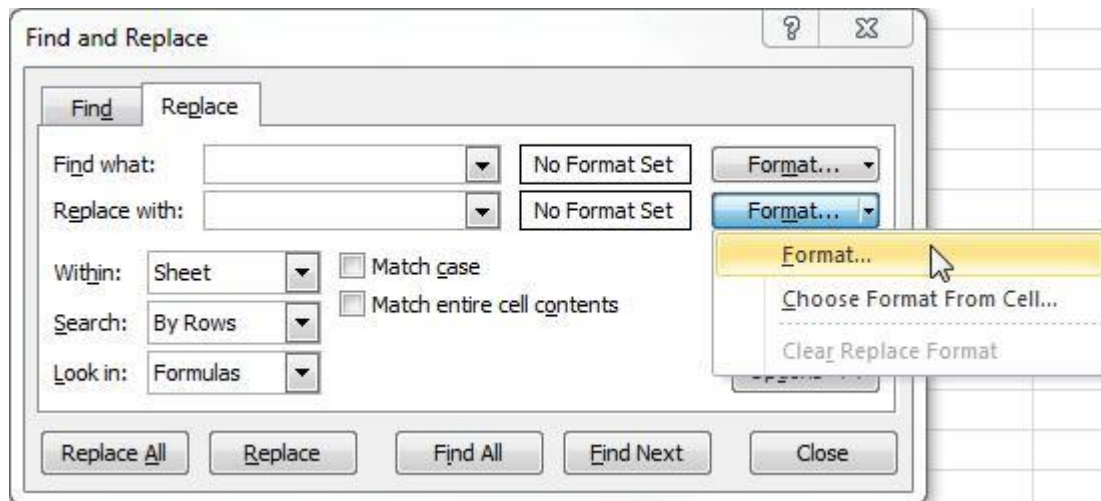


Here you can select a Number format from the category list and then specify the details of the format using the other tabs across the top of the dialog. Click OK to proceed:



You can also choose a format from a cell by clicking the Choose Format From Cell button.

If you click Choose Format From Cell, you will see a thick cross mouse pointer with an eye dropper beside it. Click a cell with formatting that contains formatting want to find, and the Find and Replace dialog box will be displayed again. Next, make sure that the Replace tab on the dialog box is selected to show the options for choosing a replacement format. You can choose a replacement format in the same way that you chose a format to find:



In the second half of the dialog, there are options in the list boxes to search worksheets, workbooks, and formulas. Once your options are set, click Replace to replace the unwanted format one cell at a time, or click Replace All to perform all of the replacements at once.