

The Data Tab

Data in a worksheet comes from one of two places: internally (typed by you or generated by a function) or externally (collected from a database or other data source, including other files on your computer.) The Data tab provides you with all the necessary commands to use and manage internal/external data connections.

Get External Data Commands

The Get External Data group offers commands to access data from outside Excel. These sources include Microsoft Office Access databases, Web pages, a variety of text-based data files, and external databases. You can also manage existing external data sources.



Connections Commands

When you use an external data source, Excel saves a snapshot of the data to use within your worksheet. However, external sources often change frequently. Therefore, Excel offers commands to use with an external data source in order to make sure you are working with the most up-to-date information.

The Connections group is used with external data sources. You have commands to refresh the worksheet information and commands to manage Excel's connection to the data source.



Sort and Filter Commands

The Sort and Filter group allows you to do just that – sort and filter your data in order to make it easier to read or focus upon. Sort a selection, range, group, or entire column/row of cells in ascending or descending order, and filter the data to view only the information you need.



Data Tools Commands

The Data Tools group gives you a number of handy commands to better control the data in your worksheet. Using these commands, you can turn well formatted text into columns, remove duplicate entries, check the validity of data, and group like data together.

This group also features the extremely useful **What-If Analysis** command. This command is designed to work with a group or groups of data and various formulae in order to determine the required values needed to reach an outcome. For example, you can give Excel the numerical answer to a question (“We want sales of \$XXXXX per quarter”) and Excel works backwards to determine the question for you (such as, “How much does each division need to sell?”).



Outline Commands

Back in the Formulas tab, we saw that groups of adjacent cells can be given a defined name. The commands in the Outline group allow you to do something similar by allowing you to group adjacent cells together and then collapse (hide) or expand (show) that block of data. This allows you to temporarily hide unimportant data from view, making the worksheet easier to read and print.

For example, if you had a large sales worksheet showing the figures from several divisions, you could group and collapse all the sales figures and show only the subtotals. All of the individual figures would still be available in the worksheet, but they would be hidden from view.



Click the option button to open the Settings dialog, which provides commands to create summary rows and/or columns (automatic subtotals) around the collapsed data. You can also apply styles to any subtotal rows/columns, making the important information stand out and easier to read.