

# 18 EXCEL MISTAKES TO AVOID!



- Formulas
- Data Entry
- Productivity
- Data Analysis
- Data Loss



Download in hi-res: <https://bit.ly/18excel-mistakes>

## 1 Relying too much on VLOOKUP

`=VLOOKUP(B8,B4:C6,-1,FALSE)`

ID	Name
101	Amy
102	Betsy
103	Clara

Result: #N/A

⚠️ VLOOKUP can't lookup columns to the left

`=XLOOKUP(B8,C4:C6,B4:B6)`

ID	Name
101	Amy
102	Betsy
103	Clara

Result: 101

😊 Use INDEX+MATCH or XLOOKUP that lookup in any direction

## 2 Nesting IF instead of using IFS

`=IF(C4>=90, "A", IF(C4>=70, "B", IF(C4>=50, "C", "D")))`

Student	Score	Grade
Harry	75	B
Ron	65	C
Hermione	95	A

⚠️ Complex nested IF  
⚠️ More error-prone

😊 Better readability  
😊 Easier to write

🎓 IFS masterclass <https://bit.ly/fn-ifs>

`=IFS(C4>=90, "A", C4>=70, "B", C4>=50, "C", C4<50, "D")`

Student	Score	Grade
Harry	75	B
Ron	65	C
Hermione	95	A

## 3 Forgetting to use F4 for Absolute References

`=SUMIF(F5:F7,B5,G5:G7)`

Country	Total Sales \$	Product	Country	Sales \$
UK	5,000	Laptop	US	8,000
US	0	Tablet	UK	3,000
Grand Total	5,000	Keyboard	UK	2,000
		Grand Total		13,000

⚠️ Incomplete range selection while dragging the formula down  
⚠️ Incorrect calculations

Pro Tip: you can also use mixed references, such as A\$1 or \$A1, if required

`=SUMIF($F$4:$F$6,B5,$G$4:$G$6)`

Country	Total Sales \$	Product	Country	Sales \$
UK	5,000	Laptop	US	8,000
US	8,000	Tablet	UK	3,000
Grand Total	13,000	Keyboard	UK	2,000
		Grand Total		13,000

## 4 Forgetting to Freeze Panes

Product	Cost Price	Sales Price
SSD	1,501	2,390
Headset	1,743	1,665
Earphone	1,098	2,505
Earbuds	784	1,972

⚠️ User loses track of headers while scrolling down.

😊 How to: Select row below headings > View tab > Freeze Pane dropdown > Select Freeze Panes

Pro Tip: Use Excel Tables to enable auto-freeze

Freeze panes line

Product	Cost Price	Sales Price
SSD	1,501	2,390
Headset	1,743	1,665
Earphone	1,098	2,505
Earbuds	784	1,972

## 5 Not using Conditional Formatting

Product	Actual Sales \$	Target Sales \$	Hit or Miss %
Laptop	1,140	1,000	14%
Controller	930	1,030	-10%
SSD	1,200	1,000	20%
Camera	840	1,000	-16%

⚠️ Lacks insights!  
⚠️ Slow to interpret

😊 How to: Home > Conditional Formatting > Set your rules

Product	Actual Sales \$	Target Sales \$	Hit or Miss %
Laptop	1,140	1,000	14%
Controller	930	1,030	-10%
SSD	1,200	1,000	20%
Camera	840	1,000	-16%

## 6 Not using Data Validation

Date	Sales Rep	Sales \$
1/15/2024	Amy	1,140
2/10/2024	Amy	930
4/20/2024	Emy	840

⚠️ Inconsistent or incorrect data entry

😊 Alerts users of incorrect input

😊 How to: Data tab > Data Validation > Set your rules

Date	Sales Rep	Sales \$
1/15/2024	Amy	1,140
2/10/2024	Amy	930
4/20/2024	Betsy Clara Dan	840

## 7 Ignoring Remove Duplicates

Order ID	Sales \$
ABC-1001	8,000
ABC-1002	3,000
ABC-1001	8,000
Total Orders	3

⚠️ Overlooking duplicates  
⚠️ Getting incorrect aggregates

Order ID	Sales \$
ABC-1001	8,000
ABC-1002	3,000
Total Orders	2

😊 Quick & easy duplicate removal  
😊 Correct aggregates  
😊 How to: Data tab > Remove Duplicates

## 11 Overcomplicating formulas

`=(C3-C3/(1+C4)-(C5*C3))*(1-C6)`

Particulars	Value
Sales \$	2,500
Markup	25%
Discount%	5%
Tax Rate	10%
Profit After Tax \$	337.5

⚠️ Error-prone  
⚠️ Difficult to follow

😊 Break formula into helper cells/ columns  
😊 Reduce errors  
😊 Pro Tip: Use LET function to define intermediary steps

`=F5-F6`

Step	Value
Cost \$	2,000
Discount \$	125
Profit Before Tax \$	375
Tax \$	37.5
Profit After Tax \$	337.5

## 8 Skipping Named Ranges

`=(C9-D9)/D9`

Product	Sales	Cost	Profit %
Laptop	1,140	1,000	14%
SSD	1,200	1,000	20%
Camera	840	1,000	-16%

⚠️ Formulas lack readability  
⚠️ Complex formulas become confusing

😊 Enhances formula readability  
😊 Multi-sheet formulas become easier to understand  
😊 How to: Select data > Formulas tab > Define Name

`=(Nr_Sales-Nr_Cost)/Nr_Cost`

Product	Sales	Cost	Profit %
Laptop	1,140	1,000	14%
SSD	1,200	1,000	20%
Camera	840	1,000	-16%

😊 Pro Tip: Use Excel Tables with structured references

## 9 Not customizing the Quick Access Toolbar



⚠️ Users waste time searching for frequently-used functions



😊 How to: Right-click any ribbon option > choose 'Add to Quick Access Toolbar'  
😊 Easily access your most-used tools from the QAT  
😊 Use ALT + # keyboard shortcut

🎓 Check out these [Top 9 QAT Icons](#) Recommended by Excel Community

## 10 Not using Paste Special

Product	Sales	Cost	Profit %
Laptop	1,140	1,000	14%
SSD	1,200	1,000	20%
Camera	840	1,000	-16%

February - 2024

Product	Sales	Cost	Profit %
Laptop	1,140	1,000	14%
SSD	1,200	1,000	20%
Camera	840	1,000	-16%

⚠️ Inconsistent Formatting  
⚠️ Unintended formula or formatting copy over

⚠️ DO NOT reformat, Use CTRL + ALT + V & Select Formats

😊 Choose what to paste (values, formats, formulas, etc.)  
😊 Consistent formatting  
😊 Prevent errors

😊 Pro Tip: Paste Special is not just for pasting as values, check out [Top 10 paste special tricks](#).

## 12 Ignoring PivotTables for data analysis

`=SUMIF($C$4:$C$7,B10,$D$4:$D$7)`

Product	Country	Sales \$
Laptop	US	8,000
Tablet	UK	3,000
Smartphone	US	5,000
Keyboard	France	2,000
Country	Total Sales \$	
US	13,000	
UK	3,000	
France	2,000	
Grand Total	18,000	

Country	Total Sales \$
France	2,000
UK	3,000
US	13,000
Grand Total	18,000

😊 Plug & Play – Manual calculation not required  
😊 Less error-prone  
😊 Easily refreshes for new data



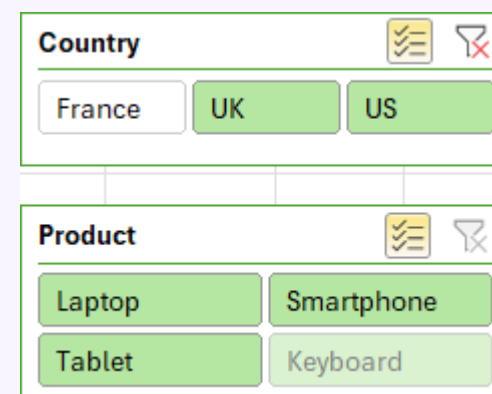
⚠️ Manual data summarization  
⚠️ Error-prone  
⚠️ Doesn't update for new data

## 13 Not using Slicers with PivotTables

Product	Total Sales \$
UK	3,000
US	13,000
Grand Total	16,000

⚠️ Less intuitive filtering  
⚠️ 'All' under products filter is misleading i.e. 'Keyboard' in Slicer is showing no data at this filter level.

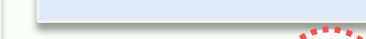
😊 Slicers are more interactive & intuitive  
😊 Slicers grey out items with no data giving better insights



## 14 Not knowing these 239 keyboard shortcuts – wasting time using the mouse.



## 15 Not using AutoSave – losing data due to unexpected file crashes.



## 16 Manually sorting & filtering data – Fix – use CTRL+SHIFT+L to add filters to data.



## 17 Not Protecting Your Sheets allowing unrestricted data edits. – Fix – Review tab > Protect Sheet.



## 18 Skipping AutoSum – Fix – Home tab > AutoSum to quickly add, average, or count data.

