



# EXCEL CONDITIONAL FORMATTING TRICKS



Download in hi-res: <https://bit.ly/cond-format-tricks>

## 1 Highlight Cells Above a Value

Gives no insights

Country	Sales \$
Australia	15,000
China	20,000
Malaysia	12,000
US	17,000
Canada	9,000

Vs

Country	Sales \$
Australia	15,000
China	20,000
Malaysia	12,000
US	17,000
Canada	9,000

Automatically highlights sales above \$15,000

How To:

- Select Data > Home > Conditional Formatting > Highlight Cells > Greater Than
- You get several options to highlight cells, such as Lesser Than, Between, Equal To, Duplicate Values etc.

## 2 Show the Top/Bottom Performers

Gives no insights

Country	Sales \$
Australia	15,000
China	20,000
Malaysia	12,000
US	17,000
Canada	9,000

Vs

Country	Sales \$
Australia	15,000
China	20,000
Malaysia	12,000
US	17,000
Canada	9,000

Automatically highlights bottom 3 sales

How To:

- Select Data > Home > Conditional Formatting > Top/Bottom > Bottom 10 Items
- You can highlight any Top N or Bottom N values, not just 10 items as the name suggests

## 3 Dynamically Highlight Due Dates

Can lead to missed deadlines

Task	Asignee	Due Date
Submit Report	Alice	08-06-25
Pay Invoice	Bob	05-06-25
Client Call	Chloe	22-05-25
Review Plan	David	02-06-25

Vs

Task	Asignee	Due Date
Submit Report	Alice	08-06-25
Pay Invoice	Bob	05-06-25
Client Call	Chloe	22-05-25
Review Plan	David	02-06-25

Gives visual cues for overdue, due and not due tasks

How To:

- Select Data > Home > Conditional Formatting > Highlight Cells > A Date Occurring...
- Highlight dates occurring last week, last month, today, next week, next month, etc. relative to today's date

## 4 Mini Bars, Major Impact

Gives no insights

Country	Sales \$
Australia	15,000
China	20,000
Malaysia	12,000
US	17,000
Canada	9,000

Vs

Country	Sales \$	Comparison
Australia	15,000	
China	20,000	
Malaysia	12,000	
US	17,000	
Canada	9,000	

Creates in-cell visualization

How To:

- Step 1 – Insert Data Bars:** Select Data > Home > Conditional Formatting > Data Bars > Select Solid or Gradient Fill
- Step 2 – Show Bars Only:** Select Data > Home > Conditional Formatting > Manage Rules > Edit Data Bar Rule > Check Show Bars Only

Visualizing with Databars: <https://bit.ly/pt-databars>

## 5 Add Icons that Actually Make Sense

Employee	Target \$	Actual \$	Difference
Anna	10,000	12,000	2,000
Ben	10,000	8,000	-2,000
Cara	10,000	10,000	0
Dylan	10,000	9,500	-500

Incorrectly assigns bar icon to value below 0

Explanation:

- Default icon set setting is set to percent
- Top 67% get green up arrow, bottom 0% get red down arrow and mid 33% get yellow bar
- As -500 falls in the mid 33% it is wrongly assigned the yellow bar icon.

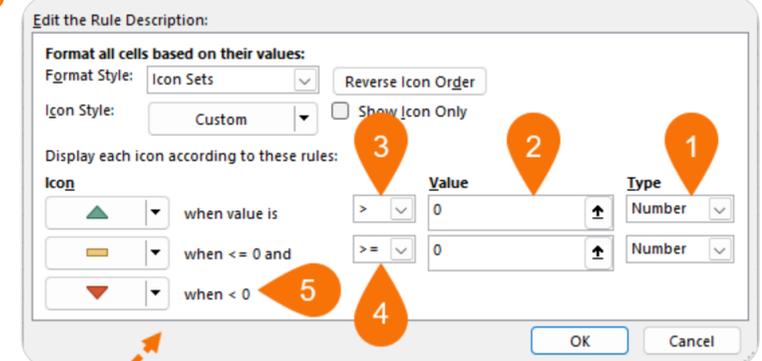
Vs

Employee	Target \$	Actual \$	Difference
Anna	10,000	12,000	2,000
Ben	10,000	8,000	-2,000
Cara	10,000	10,000	0
Dylan	10,000	9,500	-500

Correctly assigns down arrow icon to value below 0

Step by Step:

- Step 1 – Insert Icons:** Select Data > Home > Conditional Formatting > Icon Sets > Select the icon set of your choice
- Step 2 – Edit Rule:** Select Data > Home > Conditional Formatting > Manage Rules > Edit Icon Set Rule
- Step 3 – Update Icon Settings:**
  - Change Percent to Number for both green and yellow icons
  - Change the Value to 0 for both green and yellow icons
  - Change the operator to > for green icon
  - Change the operator to >= for yellow icon (as the only value that matches both the criteria <=0 and >=0 is 0, only 0 will be assigned the yellow icon)
  - Leave the red arrow at its default setting



Use Symbols Instead of Icons: <https://bit.ly/symbols-not-icons>

## 6 Use Highlighting Checkboxes

Task	Asignee	Status
Submit Report	Alice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pay Invoice	Bob	<input type="checkbox"/>
Client Call	Chloe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Review Plan	David	<input type="checkbox"/>

Only shows checkboxes

Highlights entire row green if checkbox is checked & orange if not checked

Task	Asignee	Status
Submit Report	Alice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pay Invoice	Bob	<input type="checkbox"/>
Client Call	Chloe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Review Plan	David	<input type="checkbox"/>

How To:

- Step 1 – Select the Conditional Formatting Option:** Select entire rows of data > Home > Conditional Formatting > New Rule > Use a formula
- Step 2 – Insert the Formula:** Add formula =D3 in the formula cell
- Step 3 – Select the Format:** Click on Format > Fill Tab > Select Fill > Font Tab > Select Font
- Notes:**
  - Above steps work for the checked checkboxes because the Boolean value of a checked checkbox is TRUE.
  - To apply the formatting to unchecked checkboxes, repeat the same steps, but update the formula to =NOT(D3) to pick cells with Boolean value as FALSE

Conditional Formatting with Formulas: <https://bit.ly/fn-cond-format>

## 7 Instantly Sport Weekday-Weekend Sales Patterns

Product	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Grand Total
A	3.30%	3.02%	3.18%	3.06%	3.37%	7.52%	14.77%	38.23%
B	3.26%	3.10%	3.26%	3.10%	3.33%	7.60%	7.29%	30.94%
C	3.18%	2.95%	3.22%	3.14%	3.33%	7.56%	7.44%	30.83%
Grand Total	9.73%	9.07%	9.65%	9.31%	10.04%	22.68%	29.51%	100.00%

Gives no insight into which day performs the best and worst

Product	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Grand Total
A	3.30%	3.02%	3.18%	3.06%	3.37%	7.52%	14.77%	38.23%
B	3.26%	3.10%	3.26%	3.10%	3.33%	7.60%	7.29%	30.94%
C	3.18%	2.95%	3.22%	3.14%	3.33%	7.56%	7.44%	30.83%
Grand Total	9.73%	9.07%	9.65%	9.31%	10.04%	22.68%	29.51%	100.00%

Clearly indicates weekends perform better than weekdays

How To:

- Select Data > Home > Conditional Formatting > Color Scales > Select Green-Yellow-Red Color Scale
- It clearly highlights the maximum and minimum values in darkest shades of green and red, while coloring the rest in lighter shades

## 8 Create a Dynamic Search System

Customer	Amount \$	Refund Status
Alice Johnson	500	Pending
Brian Thomas	600	Processing
Jonathan Lee	2,000	Refunded
Alicia Keys	100	Rejected
Thomas Blake	50	Pending
Lena Smith	700	Processing

How To:

- Step 1 – Select the Conditional Formatting Option:** Select entire rows of data > Home > Conditional Formatting > New Rule > Use a formula
- Step 2 – Insert the Formula:** Add formula =SEARCH(\$C\$2,\$B5) in the formula cell
- Step 3 – Select the Highlight Format:** Click on Format > Select fill & font formats
- Step 4 – Type in the Search Term:** Type 'Thomas' in cell C2 > All cells containing 'Thomas' will get highlighted

Formula Explanation:

- SEARCH(\$C\$2, \$B5) finds partial matches for the search term from C2 in the text of B5.
  - \$C\$2 ensures all rows use the same search term.
  - \$B5 lets formatting apply per row, adjusting automatically.
  - If a match is found, SEARCH returns a number > Conditional Formatting treats this as TRUE and applies the format.
  - If FALSE or blank, SEARCH returns an error > Conditional formatting ignores the error and no formatting is applied.

Excel Conditional Formatting to Highlight Matches: <https://bit.ly/highlight-matches>

