# 9 FORMATTING MISTAKES CHEAT SHEET

👉 Video & Practice File: https://bit.ly/format-mistakes

## 1 Messed-Up Number Alignment: Unaligned ones, tens, hundreds, etc.

| Wrong | Right |
|---|---|
| 123456 | 123456 |
| 23456 | 23456 |
| 3456 | 3456 |
| 456 | 456 |

☑ Do: Right-align numbers makes it quick to interpret data.

☒ Don't: Center-align numbers increase cognitive load.

## 2 Missing Comma Separators: Makes numbers difficult to read

| Wrong | Right |
|---|---|
| 123456 | 123,456 |
| 23456 | 23,456 |
| 3456 | 3,456 |
| 456 | 456 |

☑ Do: Use comma separators for larger numbers

☒ Don't: Omit comma separators unless values are < 1000

## 3 Unrounded Numbers: Impedes information visibility

| Wrong | Right |
|---|---|
| 2,002,253.37 | 2,002,253 |
| 11,865,855.12 | 11,865,855 |
| 221,069.99 | 221,070 |
| 2,949,610.82 | 2,949,611 |

☑ Do: Eliminate unimportant decimals

☒ Don't: Display unnecessary decimals

👍 Best Practice: Round numbers greater than 1000

## 4 Excessive Currency Symbols: Leads to visual clutter

| Sales | Sales AU$ |
|---|---|
| $2,002,253 | 2,002,253 |
| $11,865,855 | 11,865,855 |
| $221,070 | 221,070 |
| $2,949,611 | 2,949,611 |

☑ Do: Label the column header with the currency symbol

☒ Don't: Repeat currency symbols in every cell

## 5 Merged Cells: Complicates data manipulation and range selection.

| 2020 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sales Rep | Units | Order Amount $ |
| Bromley | 232 | 24,757 |
| Coghill | 81 | 4,029 |
| Farnham | 170 | 14,056 |
| Rayleigh | 422 | 59,827 |

| 2021 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sales Rep | Units | Order Amount $ |
| Bromley | 58 | 7,554 |
| Coghill | 623 | 49,400 |
| Farnham | 885 | 120,626 |
| Rayleigh | 539 | 71,168 |

*Merged header cells force selection of all columns in the merged range.*

| 2020 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sales Rep | Units | Order Amount $ |
| Bromley | 232 | 24,757 |
| Coghill | 81 | 4,029 |
| Farnham | 170 | 14,056 |
| Rayleigh | 422 | 59,827 |

| 2021 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sales Rep | Units | Order Amount $ |
| Bromley | 58 | 7,554 |
| Coghill | 623 | 49,400 |
| Farnham | 885 | 120,626 |
| Rayleigh | 539 | 71,168 |

*Unmerged header cells allow selecting just the columns you want.*

☑ Do: Unmerge cells for proper range selection

☒ Don't: Use merged cells for alignment

👍 Best Practice: Use "Center Across Selection" CTRL+1 > Alignment > Horizontal > Center Across Selection.

## 6 Angled Text: Makes data difficult to read and interpret

| | Sales Rep | Units | Order Amount $ |
|---|---|---|---|
| USA | Bromley | 232 | 24,757 |
| | Coghill | 81 | 4,029 |
| | Farnham | 170 | 14,056 |
| | Rayleigh | 422 | 59,827 |

☑ Do: Keep text labels horizontal

☒ Don't: Angle text labels

| Sales Rep | Units | Order Amount $ |
|---|---|---|
| USA | | |
| Bromley | 232 | 24,757 |
| Coghill | 81 | 4,029 |
| Farnham | 170 | 14,056 |
| Rayleigh | 422 | 59,827 |

👍 Best Practices: Don't merge the cells in the label row

Remove inner borders to get the right visual effect

## 7 Excessive Color Use: Difficult to read and doesn't highlight important data

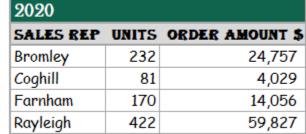| Sales Rep | Target Sales $ | Actual Sales $ | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bromley | 25,000 | 24,757 | -243 |
| Coghill | 5,000 | 4,029 | -971 |
| Farnham | 10,000 | 14,056 | 4056 |
| Rayleigh | 70,000 | 59,827 | -10173 |

☑ Do: Use colors as visual cues for the readers

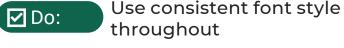☒ Don't: Use colors everywhere. When everything is highlighted, nothing stands out.

| Sales Rep | Target Sales $ | Actual Sales $ | Difference $ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bromley | 20,000 | 24,757 | 4,757 |
| Coghill | 5,000 | 4,029 | (971) |
| Farnham | 10,000 | 14,056 | 4,056 |
| Rayleigh | 70,000 | 59,827 | (10,173) |

👍 Best Practice:
- Use subtle colors
- Use colors to highlight or differentiate data points
- Consider accessibility when choosing colors

## 8 Too Many Fonts: Hinders a professional and cohesive look

| 2020 | | |
|---|---|---|
| SALES REP | UNITS | ORDER AMOUNT $ |
| Bromley | 232 | 24,757 |
| Coghill | 81 | 4,029 |
| Farnham | 170 | 14,056 |
| Rayleigh | 422 | 59,827 |

☑ Do: Use consistent font style throughout

☒ Don't: Mix multiple font styles

| 2020 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sales Rep | Units | Order Amount $ |
| Bromley | 232 | 24,757 |
| Coghill | 81 | 4,029 |
| Farnham | 170 | 14,056 |
| Rayleigh | 422 | 59,827 |

👍 Best Practice: Stick to no more than three complementary fonts

## 9 Borders Everywhere: Increases file size & clutters the appearance

| 2020 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sales Rep | Units | Order Amount $ |
| Bromley | 232 | 24,757 |
| Coghill | 81 | 4,029 |
| Farnham | 170 | 14,056 |
| Rayleigh | 422 | 59,827 |

| 2020 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sales Rep | Units | Order Amount $ |
| Bromley | 232 | 24,757 |
| Coghill | 81 | 4,029 |
| Farnham | 170 | 14,056 |
| Rayleigh | 422 | 59,827 |

| 2020 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sales Rep | Units | Order Amount $ |
| Bromley | 232 | 24,757 |
| Coghill | 81 | 4,029 |
| Farnham | 170 | 14,056 |
| Rayleigh | 422 | 59,827 |

☑ Do: Use minimal borders

☒ Don't: Add borders to every cell

👍 Best Practices:
- Rely on Excel's gridlines
- Or instead of white background fill, turn off gridlines on the View tab.

### Format Like a Pro!

☑ Right-align numbers
☑ Use comma separators
☑ Round off large numbers
☑ Use currency symbol in the column header.
☑ Use 'Center Across Selection'
☑ Don't angle text labels
☑ Limit font styles
☑ Use colors efficiently
☑ Use minimal borders