

TIPS & TRICKS

DADE COUNTY TECHNOLOGY

Week of May 5, 2014

A Special Merge in Microsoft Excel

This tip is for a specific need that sometimes arises in Microsoft Excel.

If you have two columns that contain numbers and you need to combine them into another cell that is a pretty simple task. In the third cell you just type a formula that would add the first two cells together (ie. =A1+B1). If you place that formula in cell C1, it would calculate the total of A1 and B1 and place it there.

But what if you have text in those boxes? Let's say cells in column A contain first names and cells in column B contain last names (see image below).

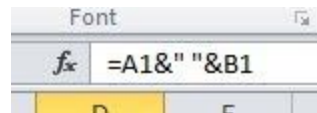
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Peggy	Banks					
2	Polly	Ester					
3	Sid	Downe					
4	Herb	Avore					
5	Justin	Case					
6	Tommy	Hawk					
7	Rosie	Cheeks					
8	Miles	Away					
9	Drew	Blood					
10	Penny	Pincher					
11	Bill	Fold					
12	Clay	Potts					
13	Lou	Zerr					
14	Hans	Zupp					
15	Arty	Choke					

If you use the same formula we mentioned above (=A1+B1), cell C1 would display an error about the resulting value of the formula.

Instead, a special formula can be used that will add the two names together in a third cell. After this formula is used, there are still some steps to complete before the original cells can be deleted without affecting the final results. Keep reading for the step-by-step tutorial...

Again... let's say you have the listing above of first and last names in columns A and B.

1. In cell D1, type the following formula...



A1 represents the contents of cell A1 and B1 represents the contents of cell B1.

The " " represents a space.

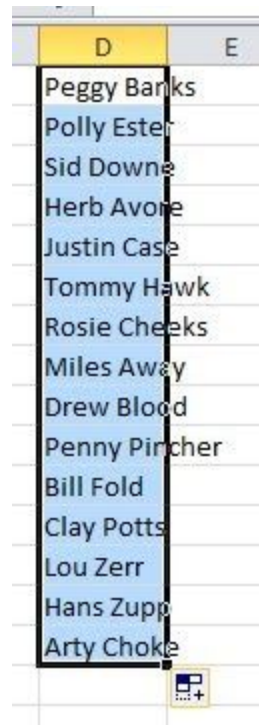
The & (ampersand) tells Excel to attach the items together.

So... what we want is the contents of cell A1 followed by a space (" ") followed by the contents of cell B1.

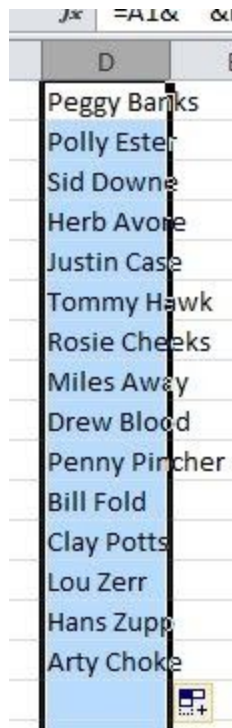
2. Once we have the formula in cell D1, we can take hold of the "handlebar" of D1 when the cell is selected (see image below)...



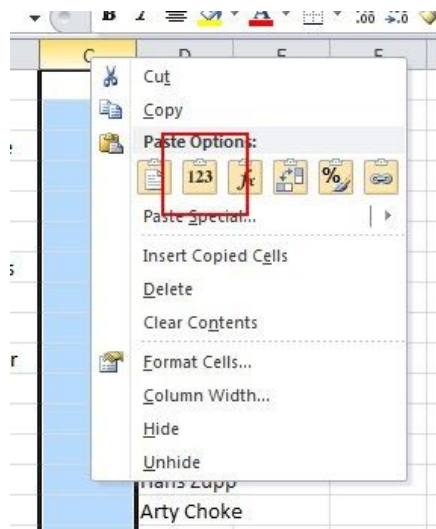
and drag down to the bottom of the list of names (see image below)...



3. Click on the heading for column D (see image below) to select the entire column.



4. Select Copy from the menu or icon bar (or press [CTRL]+[C]).
5. Select column C.
6. Right-click and in the menu that appears, choose the Paste Values item under the Paste Options section (see image below).



(NOTE: The images used in this tutorial are from MS Excel 2010. 2007 will look differently but still function basically the same by choosing Edit, Paste Special..., then selecting Values in the window that comes up (see image below).



7. Now, with column C containing the first and last names as values (or text) instead of formulas relying on the contents of columns A, B, or D, the unwanted cells can be deleted from the spreadsheet... leaving just the desired content (see image below).

	A	B
1	Peggy Banks	
2	Polly Ester	
3	Sid Downe	
4	Herb Avore	
5	Justin Case	
6	Tommy Hawk	
7	Rosie Cheeks	
8	Miles Away	
9	Drew Blood	
10	Penny Pincher	
11	Bill Fold	
12	Clay Potts	
13	Lou Zerr	
14	Hans Zupp	
15	Arty Choke	
16		
17		
18		

BONUS TIP:

Let's say that in addition to combining the names as we did above that you want to also alphabetize the list by first or last name. If you want to sort by first name, you can do so before or after you combine the names. But if you want to sort by last name, you will need to do so before you combine the names. Here's how...

1. Click on the heading for column B (see image below) to select the entire column.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Peggy	Banks			
2	Polly	Ester			
3	Sid	Downe			
4	Herb	Avore			
5	Justin	Case			
6	Tommy	Hawk			
7	Rosie	Cheeks			
8	Miles	Away			
9	Drew	Blood			
10	Penny	Pincher			
11	Bill	Fold			
12	Clay	Potts			
13	Lou	Zerr			
14	Hans	Zupp			
15	Arty	Choke			
16					
17					

2. Click the Sort and Filter icon from the Home Ribbon (see image below).



3. From the menu that appears... select Sort A to Z.
4. Because you only selected column B and the program realizes there another column nearby that is probably associated with column B (the first names in column A) you will receive a message asking if you wish to Expand the selection or to Continue with the current selection. Choose to Expand the selection and then click the Sort button.

NOTE: Continuing with the current selection would only move the last names (and mix up the first/last name combinations).

NOTE: If you choose to sort by first name after you've combined the first and last names you won't receive the dialog box asking you to Expand your selection because you only have one column of data.

Let us know if you have any comments or questions concerning these topics.

Also, if you have any other chores you'd like to accomplish using MS Excel... send an email to technology@dadecs.org.

Please send any questions or comments about this installment of Tips & Tricks to technology@dadecs.org.