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#### Importing Text Files In An Excel Sheet

In this article I'll explain how to ease importing of .txt, .prn and/or .csv files into an existing sheet in Excel.

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This article has been published on one of the Microsoft<sup>®</sup> blogs: <u>Importing Text Files</u> in an Excel Sheet

#### Introduction

If you've ever tried to open a text file, you have probably used the Text import wizard.

If you have ever opened a CSV file, you have probably noted you can't set up how it gets imported. The text import wizard does not start for these file types.

What if you have the situation where you get files with similar structure, which need the same text import settings over and over?

How do you import the data from those files into the same worksheet each time, without having to re-define the import settings over and over again?

I'll tell you.

# Setting up which file (type) to import

First select the sheet where your data needs to appear. Note that the following steps differ for the various Excel versions.

#### Excel 2013/2010/2007

On the ribbon, click the data tab and then

**Excel Tables** (VBA) Excel Web App Mashups **Fix Links to UDFs Formula Wrapper Import textfiles Inventory System Keep Userform** On Top Listbox AutoSize **Least Squares Object Lister Pivottable Slicers** Performance Class **Prevent Open Event Register UDFs Round2Digits** Select a range (VBA) **Show Picture** Startup Problems **Styles in Excel Transpose Table Treeview control Undo With Excel** VBA Update An add-in WebQuery **Wheel of Fortune** Workbook Open Bug XML and Excel **Books Reviews Downloads** Links Contact **Privacy Policy** 

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### click the "From Text" button on the "Get External data" group.



The "From Text" button, located on the Data tab of the ribbon.

Select your file from the next dialog:

Import Text F	ile		22
Look in:	📋 My Docu	nents	💌 🔮 - 🖄 🗙 🔛 -
My Recent	Name		Size Type
Documents	PaypalTE	ST.csv	3 KB Microsoft Excel
🚱 Desktop	README:	xt	1 KB Text Document
	📳 WordRibb	onControls.txt	90 KB Text Document 🗏
Documents	📳 PPTRibbo	nControls.txt	51 KB Text Document
Documents	📳 OutlookTa	skitemRibbonControls.txt	54 KB Text Document
Computer	📳 OutlookSł	naringReadItemRibbonControls.txt	55 KB Text Document
- Mu Network	📳 OutlookSł	naringComposetternRibbonControls.txt	57 KB Text Document
Places	📳 OutlookRS	SSItemRibbonControls.txt	51 KB Text Document
	📳 OutlookRe	esenditemRibbonControls.txt	57 KB Text Document
	<	Ш	>
	File <u>n</u> ame:		~
	Files of <u>t</u> ype:	Text Files (*.prn; *.txt; *.csv)	~
Tools 🔻			Import Cancel

The import text file dialog.

Click Import. (continue to read after the section on Excel 2003 and older)

#### Excel 2003 and older

From the menu, select Data, Get External Data, Import Data. The following dialog opens:



The select data source dialog of Excel 2003, selecting source type.

In this dialog, choose the "Text files" option and then navigate to your file:

Select Data Sou	irce		? ×
Look in:	Clients	🕑 • 🖄 🔍 🗙 🚰 🖬 •	• Too <u>l</u> s •
	PaypalTEST.csv	And Street Street Prints	- Internet
My Recent Documents			
Desktop		Contraction (	
10			
Clients		el estilución	and the second party states
<b>&gt;</b>		Contraction of the second s	Section of the sectio
My Documents			
0			
	File <u>n</u> ame:	▼ New Source	<u>O</u> pen
DOWNLOAD	Files of type: Text Files (*.txt; *.prn; *.	csv; *.tab; * 💌	Cancel

Select data source dialog, selecting a file

# All versions: defining the import settings

So far we've selected what to import. Now it is time to define what settings we need for the import. This section applies to all Excel versions as of Excel XP (and maybe even older). The screenshots shown here may look slightly different

#### from yours, but the principle is the same.

### Click the Open button. The text import wizard opens up:

Text Import Wizard - Step 1 of 3	? 🔀
The Text Wizard has determined that your data is Fixed Width.	
If this is correct, choose Next, or choose the data type that best describes your data.	
Original data type	
Choose the file type that best describes your data:	N
Delimited - Characters such as commas or tabs separate each field.	NG
Fixed width - Fields are aligned in columns with spaces between each field.	
Start import at row: 1 File origin: Windows (ANSI) Preview of file C:\Documents and Settings\Jan Karel Pieterse.JKP-E9298012435\M\PaypalTEST.csv.  Date, Time, Time Zone, Name, Type, Status, Currency, Gross, Fee, Net, F 2 "30-12-2009", "09:35:50", "PST", "Foo", "Web Accept Payment Received", "Comp 3 "26-12-2009", "09:01:20", "PST", "John Doe", "Web Accept Payment Received", 4 "22-12-2009", "09:53:05", "PST", "Alex Smith", "Web Accept Payment Received 5 "15-12-2009", "22:59:55", "PST", "Jake Hanson", "Web Accept Payment Received	
Cancel < Back Next > Eini	sh

Step 1 of the Text Import Wizard, define file type.

In this example I have selected to import a delimited file and set the file origin to Windows (ANSI). Click Next when you're happy with the settings.

Step 2 of the wizard allows us to define the delimiters. I selected Comma:

Text Import V	Vizard - St	ep 2 of 3					? 🛛
This screen lets y below.	ou set the de	limiters your dat	a contains. You c	an see how you	ur text is aff	ected in the p	review
Delimiters	Text g	at consecutive Jualifier: "	delimiters as one				
Date 30-12-2009 26-12-2009 22-12-2009	Time 09:35:50 09:01:20 09:53:05	Time Zone PST PST PST	Name Foo John Doe Alex Smith	Type Web Accept Web Accept Web Accept	Payment Payment Payment	Received Received Received	St: ^ Com; = Com; Com;
L2-2009	p2:59:55	pst	µake Hanson	Web Accept	Payment	Received	
			Cancel	< <u>B</u> ack		:>	Einish

Step 2 of the Text Import Wizard: define delimiters

Click Next again to go into the third step, where you can select a format for each column of your file. I changed the date format of the first column to dmy order. Click a column to set up its formatting.

ext Import V	Vizard - St	ep 3 of 3					2
his screen lets y Column data for O General O Text O Date: DM O Do not impo	ou select eac mat IY (ski rt column (ski	h column and se 'General' ( remaining p)	t the Data Format converts numeric values to text.	:. values to numbe Advanced	ers, date va 1	lues to dates,	and all
Data preview —	Ceneral	General	Ceneral	General			Gend
Data preview — DMY Date	Ceneral Time	General Time Zone	Ceneral Name	General Type			Gene Sta A
Data preview DMY Date 30-12-2009	Ceneral Time 09:35:50	<u>Ceneral</u> Time Zone PST	Ceneral Name Foo	Ceneral Type Web Accept	Payment	Received	Cens Sta Comp
Data preview DMY Date 30-12-2009 26-12-2009	General Time 09:35:50 09:01:20	General Time Zone PST PST	Ceneral Name Foo John Doe	Ceneral Type Web Accept Web Accept	Payment Payment	Received Received	Gens Sta Comp
Data preview DHY Date 30-12-2009 26-12-2009 22-12-2009	Ceneral Time 09:35:50 09:01:20 09:53:05	General Time Zone PST PST PST	<mark>Ceneral</mark> Name Foo John Doe Alex Smith	Ceneral Type Web Accept Web Accept Web Accept	Payment Payment Payment	Received Received Received	Cen: Sta Com: Com: Com:
Data preview DMY Date 30-12-2009 26-12-2009 22-12-2009 15-12-2009	Ceneral Time 09:35:50 09:01:20 09:53:05 22:59:55	General Time Zone PST PST PST PST	<mark>Ceneral</mark> Name Foo John Doe Alex Smith Jake Hanson	Ceneral Type Web Accept Web Accept Web Accept Web Accept	Payment Payment Payment Payment	Received Received Received Received	Cens Sta Comp Comp Comp Comp
Data preview Date 30-12-2009 26-12-2009 22-12-2009 15-12-2009	Ceneral Time 09:35:50 09:01:20 09:53:05 22:59:55	General Time Zone PST PST PST PST	<mark>Ceneral</mark> Name Foo John Doe Alex Smith Jake Hanson	Ceneral Type Web Accept Web Accept Web Accept Web Accept	Payment Payment Payment Payment	Received Received Received Received	Cong Cong Cong Cong Cong Cong

Step 3 of the wizard, Define column formats

You can click the advanced button to set up details like the decimal and thousands separators (note I switched them here):

This screen lets you select each	column and set the Data Format.	
Column data format	Advanced Text Import Settings 🛛 🛛 🖓	)
General <u>T</u> ext <u>D</u> ate: DMY     Do not import column (skip     Data preview	Settings used to recognize numeric data         Decimal separator:         Ihousands separator:         Note: Numbers will be displayed using the numeric settings specified in the Regional Settings control panel.         Reset       Trailing minus for negative numbers         OK       Cancel	tes, and all
General General	GeneralGeneraGeneral Gene	ral
Status Currency	Gross Fee Net From Email Address To	Email Ad
Completed EUR	5,00 -0,55 5,45 csnipl@yahoo.co.uk jkpi	eterse@
Completed BUR	15,00 -0,86 14,14 gvialles@hotmail.com jkpi	eterse@:
Completed EUR	15,00 -0,94  14,06  lexisbay@gmail.com jkpi	eterse@
Completed EUR	15,00 -0,94 14,06 bnrodgers@sbcglobal.net jkpi	eterse@ 😽
		>

The Advanced text Import Settings dialog

Note that any changes made in this dialog apply to all columns.

After you finished defining all columns, click the Finish button. Excel opens the Import Data dialog, asking where to put the results. Select the proper location.



The Import Data dialog

Hold your horses, don't click OK yet! Click the properties button instead. The External Data Range Properties dialog opens up. There are some very important settings to be made here!

External Data Range Properties 🔹 🛽 🔊
Name: PaypalTEST
Query definition
Save guery definition
Befrech control
Prompt for file name on refresh
Refresh every 60 🗢 minutes
Refresh data when opening the file
Remove external data from worksheet before closing
Data formatting and layout
✓ Include field names Preserve column sort/filter/layout
Include row numbers 🛛 Preserve cell formatting
Adjust column width
If the number of rows in the data range changes upon refresh:
Insert cells for new data, delete unused cells
O Insert entire ro <u>w</u> s for new data, clear unused cells
• Overwrite existing cells with new data, clear unused cells
Eill down formulas in columns adjacent to data
OK Cancel

The External Data Range Properties dialog

Note that I have highlighted some important features in this dialog. I'll discuss them below.

#### Save Query Definition

We wouldn't want to redo the settings each time, so lets keep this one checked!

## Prompt for the file name on refresh

Checking this box forces Excel to prompt you for a file name each time you hit the refresh button. Leave this box unchecked if you are importing the same file over and over.

Overwrite existing cells with new data, clear unused cells

What selection is best here depends on your needs entirely. The first two will force Excel to push existing data down and pull existing data up, depending on the size of your file.

> I recommend NOT to put anything below an area where you are importing data; use a dedicated worksheet for this purpose.

## Fill down formulas in columns adjacent to data

A very useful option. If you are planning to do calculations on each row, this option ensures each row of data will have your formulas.

Hit OK if you're happy with the settings.

#### **Import your data**

Finally, click OK to have your data imported. My sheet looks like this:

1	А	В	С	D	E
1	Date	Time	Time Zone	Name	Туре
2	30-12-2009	9:35:50	PST	Foo	Web Accept Payment Received
3	26-12-2009	9:01:20	PST	John Doe	Web Accept Payment Received
4	22-12-2009	9:53:05	PST	Alex Smith	Web Accept Payment Received
5	15-12-2009	22:59:55	PST	Jake Hanson	Web Accept Payment Received
6	23-11-2009	22:26:26	PST	Jan Karel Pieterse	Web Accept Payment Received

Results after importing the textfile

Now that you have properly set up your import, save your file!

#### **Refresh your data**

All of this was meant to predefine an import routine you have to do over and over again. So how do you import a new file? Easy. Click any cell within your sheet that holds data of a previous import. Next, we'll need to split this up in two sections again, because the various Excel versions differ in how it is done.

Excel 2013/2010/2007

On the Data tab, find the group called "Connections". Click the dropdown "Refresh All" and select "Refresh:



The Refresh All button on the ribbon

If you have set the option to prompt for a file, Excel will open the appropriate dialog. Select your file and click Import.

#### Excel 2003 and older

In Excel 2003, the refresh button can be found in two places.

1. On the Data menu (you need have a cell selected within an imported table):

Data	a <u>W</u> indow <u>H</u> elp Wo <u>r</u> k	
₽↓	<u>S</u> ort	
	Eilter	-
	F <u>o</u> rm	
	Su <u>b</u> totals	
	Validation	
	Table	
	Text to Columns	
	Co <u>n</u> solidate	
	<u>G</u> roup and Outline	•
17	PivotTable and PivotChart Report	
	Import External Data	•
	L <mark>is</mark> t	+
	XML	•
1	Refresh Data	

The refresh button on the data menu

2. On the External data toolbar:

External Data	а	9		×
🚽 🚰 🖏	1	×	-	0

The refresh button on the External data toolbar

So there you go, all set!

#### Conclusion

Importing text files into Excel can be a labor-intensive process if you're going through the same steps over and over again. With proper use of the data import options Excel offers, you can save yourself quite some work and at the same time improve consistency.

This article has given you an overview of how this should be set up.

Feel free to add comments and/or questions below.

#### Comments

Showing last 8 comments of 284 in total (Show All Comments):

Comment by: Robert (9/29/2017 2:10:51 PM) deeplink to this comment

Hi Jan,

I lose partial text formating when saving and closing my .xlsx file. It seems to have stopped working after about 400 rows with many cells containing partial text formating. I am using MS Office 365. I format say the first word only in a cell as BOLD and after saving and re-opening the file, BOLD format is lost. Seems to work ok on a workbook with only a few text formatings. Any ideas? Thank you. -Robert Comment by: Jan Karel Pieterse (9/29/2017 5:07:56 PM) deeplink to this comment

Hi Robert,

To be honest I wouldn't know. I hardly ever use partial cell format because it is a pain to work with. Excel isn't very good at this.

Comment by: Yvette Allen (11/17/2017 11:41:30 AM) deeplink to this comment

I am trying to import a text file (from Notepad). I select data, then 'from csv or txt", I select the file and then click import but the wizard does not show up. I went into options, data and turned on the wizard and tried again but it still does not show. What am I doing wrong?

Comment by: Jan Karel Pieterse (11/17/2017 3:27:22 PM) deeplink to this comment

Hi Yvette,

That is odd. I have no idea why it wouldn't show!

Comment by: Joe L (11/27/2017 10:52:21 PM) deeplink to this comment

Does anyone know an easy way to bring multiple rows into one row. I have a nasty fixed width report that I need to condense into one row per record in excel. There are four rows of data for each record that need to be combined into one row and then broken out into a column for each field. This seems to be very difficult to do unless you're a VBA ninja. Thanks for the help.

Comment by: Jan Karel Pieterse (11/30/2017 10:42:20 AM) deeplink to this comment

Hi Joe,

Can you share two rows of sample data?

Comment by: Pete Maz (10/18/2018 4:32:09 PM) deeplink to this comment

Hi. I've been trying to find a way to import the delimited text file which was last saved to a directory. I have a directory with over two dozen files, each of which is date in the title; i.e. \Dir\TextFile\_01012001 \Dir\TextFile\_02012001 etc. I want to import only \Dir\TextFile\_17012001 and ADD it to the files already delimited into excel.

Any ideas, please

Comment by: Jan Karel Pieterse (10/18/2018 4:57:48 PM) deeplink to this comment

Hi Pete,

If you're onm Office 365 I'd recommend using "New Query", "From File", "From Folder" from the Data tab of the ribbon.

Have a question, comment or suggestion? Then please use this form.

If your question is not directly related to

this web page, but rather a more general "How do I do this" Excel question, then I advise you to ask your question here: www.eileenslounge.com.

Please enter your name (required):

Your e-mail address (optional, will only be used to inform you when your comment is published or to respond to your question directly):

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Jan Karel Pieterse <u>info@jkp-ads.com</u> Copyright 2019, All Rights Reserved.

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