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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.

This article has been published on one of the Microsoft® blogs: [Importing Text Files 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

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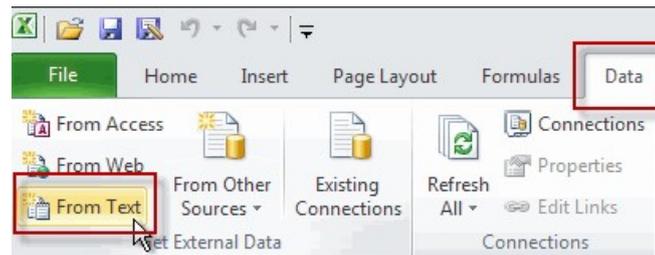
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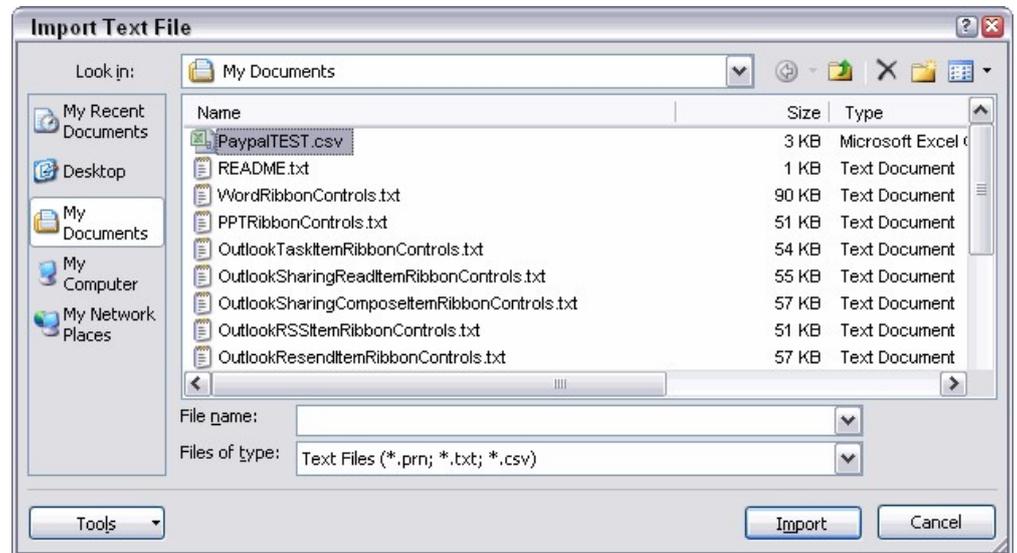
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click the "From Text" button on the "Get External data" group.



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

Select your file from the next dialog:

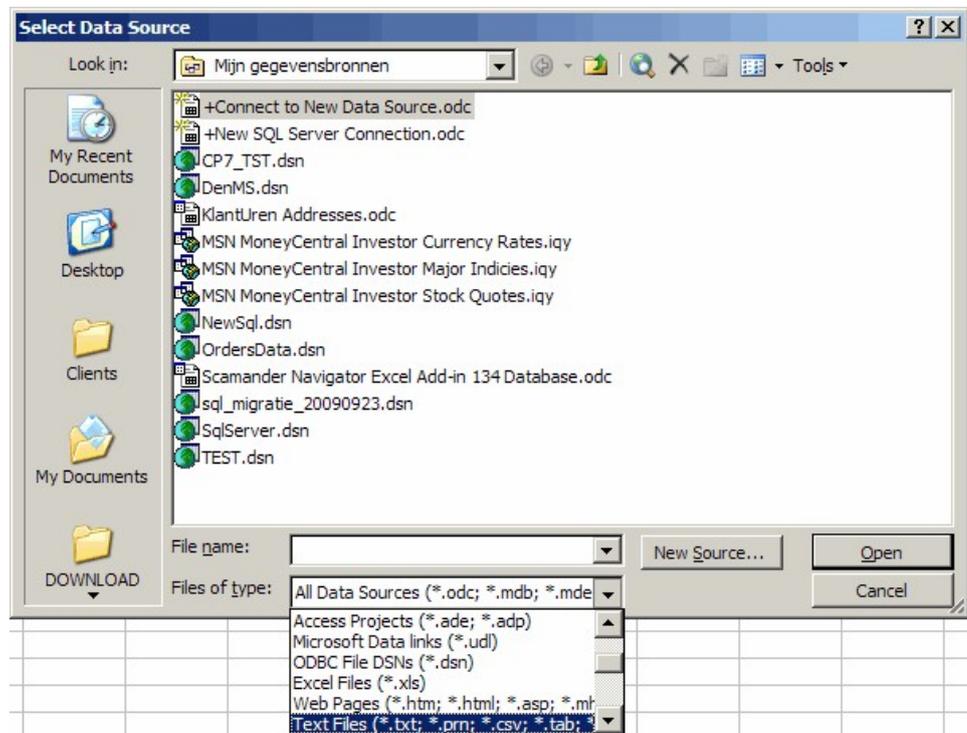


The import text file dialog.

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

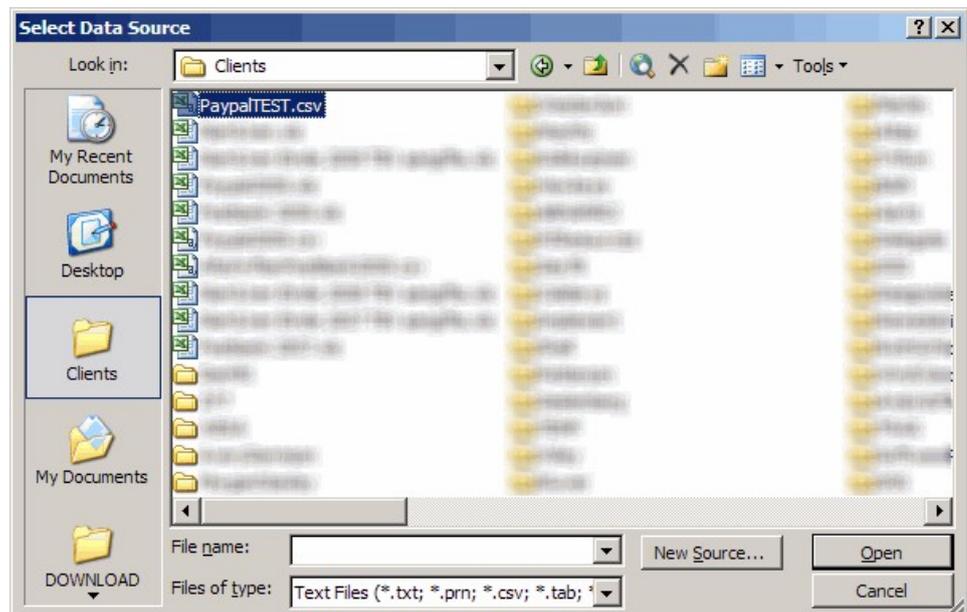
## Excel 2003 and older

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:



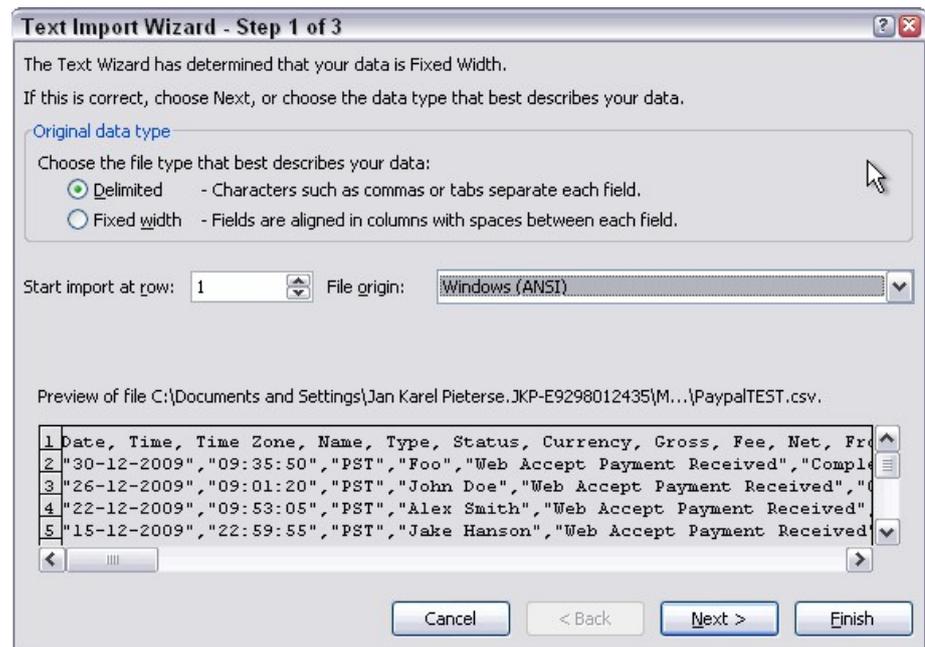
Select data source dialog, selecting a file

## 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:



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:



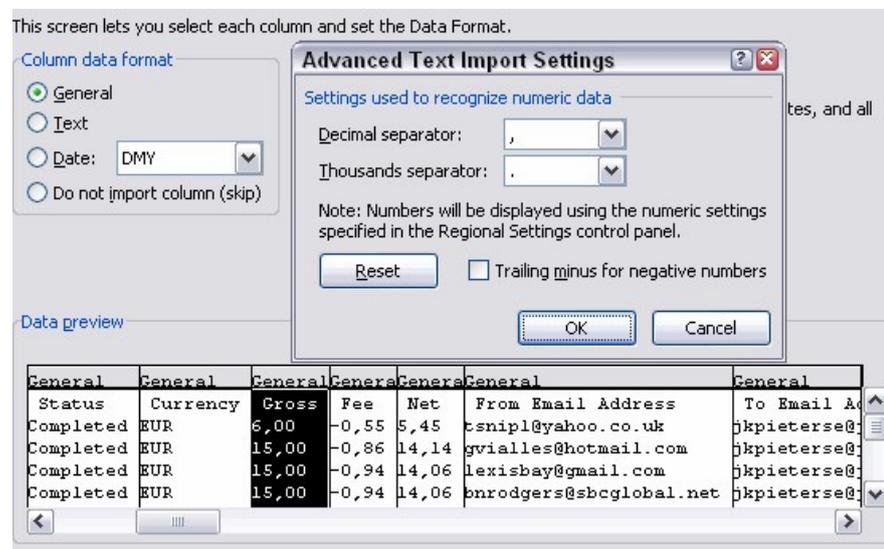
Step 2 of the Text Import Wizard: define delimiters

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.



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):



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!



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 let's 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:

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Date	Time	Time Zone	Name	Type
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!

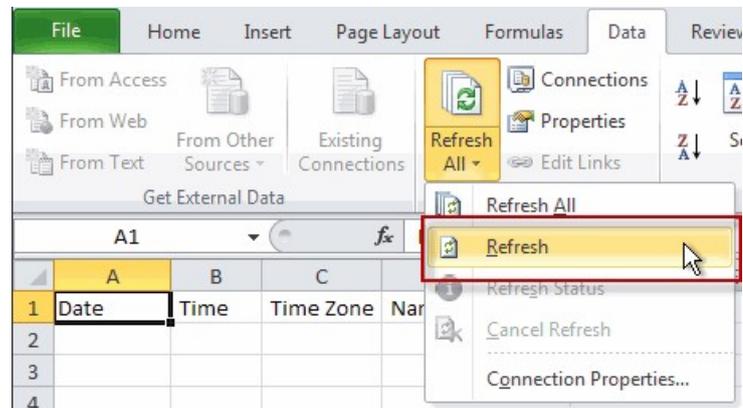
## Refresh your data

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":



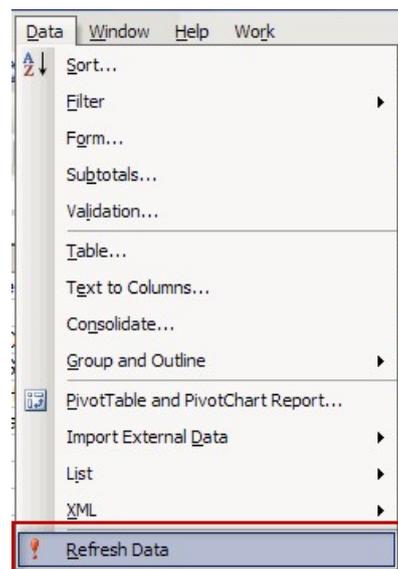
The Refresh All button on the ribbon

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

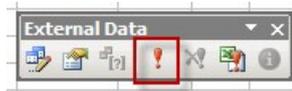
In Excel 2003, the refresh button can be found in two places.

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



The refresh button on the data menu

2. On the External data toolbar:



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.

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## Comments

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

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Comment by: Robert (9/29/2017 2:10:51 PM)

[deeplink to this comment](#)

Hi Jan,

I lose partial text formatting when saving and closing my .xlsx file.

It seems to have stopped working after about 400 rows with many cells containing partial text formatting.

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

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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.

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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!

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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?

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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

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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.

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