HOUR 9

Formatting Worksheets to Look Great

Excel makes it easy to make even simple worksheets look professional. AutoFormat quickly formats your worksheet within the boundaries you select. If you want to format your worksheet by hand, the formatting commands you learn in this hour will enable you to pinpoint important data and highlight that data. Others can then look at your worksheets and easily find your highlighted information.

The highlights of this hour include the following:

- What AutoFormat can do with your worksheets
- How to apply custom formats to selected cells
- How special orientation and wrapped text can improve your worksheet's appearance
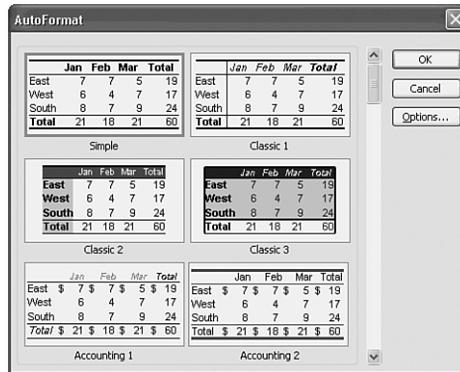
AutoFormatting Worksheets

Before diving into additional formatting commands, remember that the AutoFormat feature in Excel converts an otherwise dull worksheet into a nice-looking, professional one. You saw how simple it is to use AutoFormat in Hour 6, "Understanding Excel 2003 Workbooks," when you applied an AutoFormat to the simple worksheet you created.

Your Excel worksheet's presentation is almost as important as the data within the worksheet. If your worksheet needs sprucing up, try using AutoFormat because it gives a good-looking, consistent dimension to your entire worksheet. After AutoFormat finishes, your worksheet will have a uniform appearance. You can then add finishing touches to the worksheet, such as highlighted totals that you want to make stand out.

To use AutoFormat, select the data in your worksheet that you want to format. AutoFormat works on selected cells, so you need to select your worksheet data first. Select Format, AutoFormat to display the AutoFormat dialog box, as shown in Figure 9.1.

FIGURE 9.1
Let AutoFormat improve your worksheet.

Scroll through the AutoFormat samples and choose any format. When you click OK, Excel applies the format to your selected worksheet cells. Figure 9.2 shows that AutoFormat knows to highlight totals and also knows to separate headings from the data detail.

To omit certain AutoFormat format styles, click the Options button in the AutoFormat dialog box to check or uncheck styles. You can keep AutoFormat from changing your worksheet's font, for example, by unchecking the Font option that appears.

FIGURE **9.2**

AutoFormat improved the appearance of this worksheet.
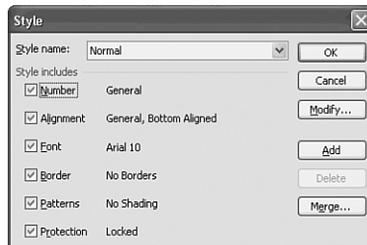

Modifying Styles

Suppose that you often print worksheets to fax to others, and your fax requires boldfaced worksheets so that the recipients can read the numbers. Instead of changing your worksheet text to boldface before faxing the worksheet, you can make boldface the default font style. Excel enables you to change several of the font defaults. So if you find yourself applying the same font style over and over, consider making that style part of Excel's default style.

To Do: Modify the Default Style

To modify the default style, follow these steps:

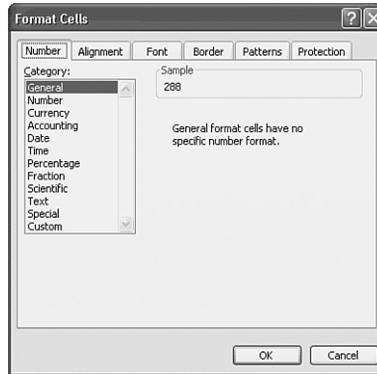1. Select Format, Style to display the Style dialog box, as shown in Figure 9.3.

FIGURE **9.3**

You can change any named style.

2. Select the default style, Normal, from the Style Name drop-down list box. (The Normal style is probably already the style you see when you open the dialog box.)

3. To change the Normal style, click the Modify button. Excel displays the Format Cells dialog box, as shown in Figure 9.4, from which you can modify the named style.

FIGURE 9.4

The Format Cells dia-log box allows you to modify any format cur-rently set.

4. Indicate the changes you want to make to the style in the Format Cells dialog box. When you're finished, click OK to close the Format Cells dialog box.

5. Click OK to close the Style dialog box. Excel applies your style to the selected cells. If you made changes to the Normal style, Excel automatically uses that for-mat on future worksheets unless you modify the format or style.

> If you plan to create additional worksheets that are similar to the one you just created, consider saving the worksheet as a template. To do this, choose File, Save As and then select Template on the Save As Type list. When you are ready to create the next similar worksheet, load the template; your for-mats will already be in place.
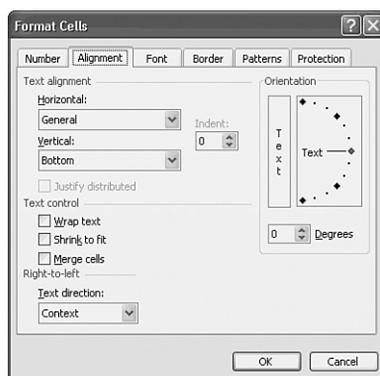
Additional Formatting Options

Many of Excel's formatting features are identical to Word's, such as boldface, italics, underline, font color, and fill color (the cell's background color). In addition, you now know how to change the alignment for a range. Excel supports several special formats that go further to improve the look of your worksheets. AutoFormat uses some of these special formats, and you can create your own styles that use these formats as well.

The following sections briefly introduce you to these Excel formatting options, which provide you with additional ways to add impact to your worksheets. You can change any of these formats in the Format Cells dialog box. Open the Format Cells dialog box by selecting Format, Cells or by pressing Ctrl+1.

Special Alignment

Not only can you left-justify, center-justify, right-justify, and justify across selected cells, you can also orient text vertically or to whatever slant you prefer. When you click the Format, Cells, Alignment tab, Excel displays an Orientation box inside the Alignment page, shown in Figure 9.5, in which you can adjust text orientation.

FIGURE 9.5

Align text with the Format Cells dialog box Alignment page.

When you click the Alignment page's first orientation text box (the text box with the word Text dropping down the screen), Excel changes all selected cells to vertical orientation. If you want to slant text, such as titles, select a different Degrees value or click the rotating text pointer to the slant you desire. When you click OK, Excel rotates the selected text to your chosen angle. Figure 9.6 shows an example of slanted titles produced by selecting a negative 45-degree angle on the Alignment page of the Format Cells dialog box. The text prints at an angle as well.

If you need to include a lot of text in one or more cells, you already know that Excel either truncates the text or pours the cell's contents into the next cell to the right, depending on whether the adjacent cell includes data. Excel offers several other cell-overflow options as well.

When a cell includes a lot of text, select the Wrap Text option on the Alignment page of the Format Cells dialog box. Excel wraps the text within the cell's width, increasing the cell (and, therefore, row) height to display all the wrapped text. If you click the Shrink to

Fit option, Excel decreases the cell's font size (as much as feasible) to display the entire cell contents within the cell's current width and height. If you click Merge Cells, Excel combines adjacent cells into a single wide cell.

FIGURE 9.6

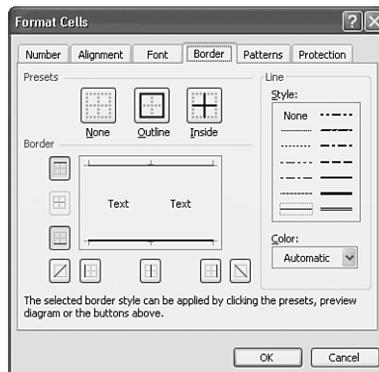*You can change the vertical alignment of selected text.*

Special Cell Borders

When you select Format, Cells and click the Border tab, the Border page (shown in Figure 9.7) appears. You can use options on this page to apply an outline, or *border*, around selected cells.

FIGURE 9.7

Add borders around cells to highlight key data.

The Border dialog box enables you to add a border to any side of the selected cells as well as diagonal lines inside the cells so that you can show a cell x'd out or otherwise cross off a cell's contents for a printed report. As you select among the Outline and Inside options, the preview area shows what the resulting border looks like.

> The Draw Borders toolbar button is quicker to use than the Border dialog box, but you cannot control as many border details.
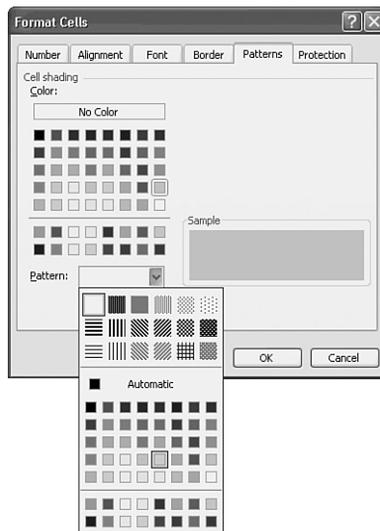
9

Select Style options on the Border page to change the pattern of the border that you choose. If you want to remove any selected cell's border, click None on the Style list. Of course, you can easily change the border's color, which is black by default, from the Color drop-down list box.

Special Cell Shades

When you select Format, Cells and click the Patterns tab, the Patterns page appears and enables you to add color or a shading pattern to selected cells. The Fill Color button colors cell backgrounds more quickly than using the Patterns page options. However, the Patterns page enables you to add a shading pattern to the background in addition to a colored background.

Figure 9.8 shows the Patterns page's extended Patterns palette that is displayed when you click the Pattern drop-down list.

FIGURE 9.8

Choose a pattern for the selected cell.
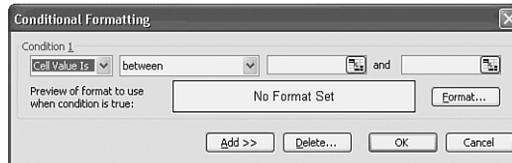
Conditional Formatting

Excel supports *conditional formatting*, whereby you apply a format based on data values and not based on data type or position on the worksheet. Suppose, for example, you are the manager of a company and need to be alerted when sales fall below a fixed level of $500,000. You can set a conditional format on your sales report worksheets to boldface and color the sales values red if any of them fall below 500,000.

Figure 9.9 shows the Conditional Formatting dialog box that appears when you select Format, Conditional Formatting. The Conditional Formatting dialog box uses these parameters:

- The cell value or the formula result of the selected cell (or cells).
- The value or formula between or somehow related to the two values.
- The starting value and the ending value of the condition's range. Click the icons (named the collapse dialog box arrows) to point to cells that form the range if desired.
- The format that Excel is to apply if and only if the condition is met.

You can set multiple conditions for the same selected range by clicking Add and setting up additional conditions.

FIGURE 9.9
Format based on the data value.

> If you have the Office Assistant turned on, the assistant offers to help you with the Conditional Formatting dialog box. Some of the Conditional Formatting options are rather advanced, and the Office Assistant can help get you through them.

Separating Worksheets with Tab Colors

If you need to store multiple worksheets within the same Excel workbook file, you can apply a unique color to each worksheet tab. The colors enable you to more easily distinguish the worksheet tabs at the bottom of the screen.

To apply a color to a worksheet tab, right-click any worksheet tab and select Tab Color. Excel displays a color palette from which you can select.

> The tab colors affect only the tab and not the worksheet. After you click a tab to bring that worksheet into focus, the tab color, just as the worksheet (unless you've modified the worksheet's background) becomes white.

9

Summary

Having completed this hour, you can format your worksheets to look any way you want. If you want to let Excel give formatting a try, select your worksheet data and start Excel's AutoFormat feature. Add color, patterns, shading, and borders to your worksheets.

You have learned how to create great looking worksheets, but you have yet to see other ways that Excel can present data to users. In the next hour's lesson, you learn how Excel can display graphs and charts of the data you enter.

Q&A

Q When would I want to create a style?

A If you find yourself applying the same kinds of format commands to cells quite often, consider giving that set of format commands a style name by using the Format, Style dialog box. After you create a style, you can apply it by selecting it from the Style dialog box's list.

Q How can colors help me manage worksheets?

A Apply colors to each worksheet's tab so that you can more easily keep your worksheets separate from each other.