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Excel match columns in different sheets

Comparing columns in Excel is something we all do from time to time. Microsoft Excel offers a number of options for comparing and matching data, but most of them focus on searching a column. In this tutorial, we will explore several techniques to compare two columns in Excel and find matches and differences between them. How to compare 2 columns in Excel row by row

When performing data analysis in Excel, one of the most common tasks is to compare data in each individual row. This task can be performed using the IF function, as shown in the following examples. Example 1. Compare two columns for matches or differences in the same row To compare two columns in Excel row by row, type a common IF formula that compares the first two cells. Enter the formula in some other column in the same row, and then copy it to other cells by dragging the fill handle (a small square in the lower right corner of the selected cell). While you do this, the cursor changes to the plus sign: Formula for matches To find cells within the same row that have the same content, A2 and B2 in this example, the formula is as follows: IF(A2=B2,Match,) Formula to find cells in the same row with different content, just replace with the non-equality sign: IF(A2<<>B2.No match.No match, No match, nothing prevents you from finding matches and differences with a single formula: IF(A2=B2,Match,No match) or ? IF(A2<<>B2.No match,Match) The result may look similar to this: As you can see, the formula handles numbers, dates, times and text strings equally well. Example 2. Compare two lists for case-sensitive matches in the same row As you probably noticed, the formulas in the previous example are case-sensitive when comparing text values, as in row 10 in the previous screenshot. If you want to find case-sensitive matches between 2 columns in each row, use the EXACT: IF(EXACT(A2, B2), Match,) To find case-sensitive differences in the same row, enter the corresponding text (Unique in this example) in the 3rd argument of the IF function, for example: IF(A2, B2), Match, Unique) Compare multiple columns for matches in the same row In your Excel worksheet, you can compare multiple columns based on the following criteria: Find rows with the same values in all columns (Example 1) Find rows with the same values in any 2 columns (Example 2) Example 1. Match all cells within the same row If the table has three or more columns and you want to search for rows that have the same values in all cells, an IF formula with an AND statement will work as a gift: IF(AND(A2=B2, A2=C2), Full match,) If your table has many columns, more elegant solution would be to use the COUNTIF function: IF(COUNTIF(\$A 2:\$E 2, \$A 2) =5, Full match,) Where 5 is the number of columns you are comparing. Example 2. Match two cells in the same row If you are looking for a way to compare columns for two or more cells cells the same values within the same row, use an IF formula with an OR: statement, IF(OR(A2=B2, B2=C2, A2=C2), Match,) In case there are many columns to compare, your OR statement may grow too large. In this case, a better solution would be to add several COUNTIF functions. The first COUNTIF counts how many columns have the same value as in the 1st column, the second COUNTIF counts how many of the remaining columns are equal to the 2nd column, and so on. If the count is 0, the formula returns Unique, Match otherwise. For example: IF(COUNTIF(B2:D2,A2)+COUNTIF(C2:D2,B2)+(C2=D2)=0,Unique,Match) Assume that you have 2 data lists in Excel, and you want to find all values (numbers, dates, or text strings) that are in column A but not in column B. To do this, you can embed the COUNTIF(\$B:\$B, \$A 2)-0 function in your IF logic test and check whether it returns zero (no match found) or any other number (at least 1 match is found). For example, the following IF/COUNTIF formula searches the entire column B for the value in cell A2. If no match is found, the formula returns No match in B, an empty string otherwise: IF(COUNTIF(\$B:\$B, \$A 2)=0, No match in B,) Tip: If the table has a fixed number of rows, you can specify a certain range (for example, \$B 2:\$B 10) instead of the entire column (\$B:\$B) so that the formula works faster on large datasets. The same result can be achieved by using an IF formula with the ISERROR and MATCH functions embedded: No \$B \$A matches B,) OR, by using the following array formula (remember to press Ctrl + Shift + Enter to enter correctly): IF(SUM(--(\$B\$2:\$B\$10-\$A 2))=0, Do not match in B,) If you want a single formula to identify both matches (duplicates) and differences (unique values), place some matching text in the empty double quotation marks () in any of the above formulas. For example: \$A \$B \$B Does not match in B, Match in B How to compare two lists in Excel, and extract matching data Sometimes you may not only need to match two columns in two different tables, but also extract matching entries from the second table. Microsoft Excel provides a special function for such purposes: the VLOOKUP function. Alternatively, you can use more powerful and versatile INDEX & MATCH formulas. For example, the following formula compares the product names in columns D and A, and if a match is found, a corresponding sales figure is extracted from column B. If no match is found, error #N/A. is returned for \$A \$A \$D \$B \$B detailed explanation of formula syntax and more formula examples, see the following tutorial: INDEX & MATCH in Excel - a better alternative to VLOOKUP. If you are not very comfortable with this formula, it is possible you want to try the Merge Tables wizard - a quick and intuitive solution that can compare and match 2 tables by any column. Compare two lists and highlight matches and differences When compared In Excel, you may want to display items that are present in one column but missing in the other. You can shade these cells in any color of your choice using excel's Conditional Formatting function and the following examples show the detailed steps. Example 1. Highlight matches and differences in each row To compare two columns and Excel and highlight cells in column A that have identical entries in column B in the same row, please do as follows: Select the cells you want to highlight (you can select cells within one column or in multiple columns if you want to highlight entire rows). Click Conditional Formatting > New Rule... > Use a formula to determine which cells to format. Create a rule with a simple formula such as \$B 2:\$A 2 (assuming row 2 is the first row with data, not including the column header). Verify that you use a relative row reference (without the \$sign) as in the above formula. To highlight the differences between column A and B, create a rule with the formula \$B 2<<>\$A 2 If you are new to Excel conditional formatting, see How to Create a Formula-Based Conditional Formatting Rule for step-by-step instructions. Example 2. Highlight unique entries in each list Whenever you are comparing two lists in Excel, there are 3 types of items that you can highlight: items that are only in the 1st list (unique) Items that are only in the 2nd list (unique) Items that are in both lists (duplicates) - shown in the following example. This example shows how to highlight items that are only in a list. Assume that List 1 is in column A (A2:A6) and List 2 in column C (C2:C5). Conditional formatting rules are created with the following formulas: Highlight the unique values in List 1 (column A): COUNTIF(\$C\$2:\$C\$5, \$A 2)=0 Highlight the unique values in List 2 (column C): COUNTIF(\$A\$2:\$A\$6, \$C 2)=0 And get the following result: Example 3. Highlight matches (duplicates) between 2 columns If you have closely followed the previous example, you will have no difficulty adjusting countIF formulas so that they find matches instead of differences. All you have to do is set the count greater than zero: Highlight matches in List 1 (column A): ? COUNTIF(\$C\$2:\$C\$5, \$A 2)>0 Highlight matches in List 2 (column C): ? COUNTIF(\$A\$2:\$A\$6, \$C 2)>0 Highlight row differences and matches in multiple columns When comparing values in multiple columns row by row, the fastest way to highlight matches is to create a conditional formatting rule, and the fastest way to shade differences is to adopt the Go To Special function, as shown in the following examples. Example 1. Compare multiple columns and highlight row matches To highlight rows that have identical values in all columns, create a conditional formatting based on one of the following formulas: AND(\$A 2:\$B 2, \$A 2:\$C 2) or COUNTIF (\$A 2:\$C 2, \$A 2) =3 Where A2, B2, and C2 are the largest cells and 3 is the number of columns that can be compared. Of course, neither the AND nor COUNTIF formula is To compare only 3 columns, you can use similar formulas to highlight rows with the same values in 4, 5, 6 or more columns. Example 2. Compare multiple columns and highlight row differences To quickly highlight cells with different values in each individual row, you can use Excel's Go To Special feature. Select the range of cells you want to compare. In this example, I selected cells A2 through C8. By default, the top cell of the selected range is the active cell, and the cells of the other selected columns in the same row will be compared to that cell. As you can see in the screenshot above, the active cell is white while all other cells in the selected range are highlighted. In this example, the active cell is A2, so the comparison column is column A. To change the comparison column, use the Tab key to navigate the selected cells from left to right or the Enter key to scroll from top to bottom. Tip: To select nonadjacent columns, select the first column, hold down Ctrl, and then select the other columns. The active cell will be in the last column (or the last block of adjacent columns). To change the comparison column, use the Tab or Enter key as described above. On the Home tab, go to the Edit group and click Find & Select > Go To Special... Then select Row Differences and click the OK button. Cells whose values are different from the comparison cell in each row are highlighted. If you want to shade the highlighted cells in some color, simply click the Fill Color icon on the ribbon and select the color of your choice. How to compare two cells in Excel In fact, comparing 2 cells is a particular case of comparing two columns in Excel row by row, except that you don't have to copy formulas to other cells in the column. For example, to compare cells A1 and C1, you can use the following formulas: For matches: IF (A1 = C1, Match,) For differences: IF (A1<<>C1, Difference,) To learn some other ways to compare cells in Excel, see How to compare strings in Excel. For more powerful data analysis, you may need more sophisticated formulas and you can find some good ideas in the following tutorials: Formula free way to compare two columns/lists in Excel Now that you know Excel's offers to compare and match columns, let me show you a workaround that can compare 2 lists with a different number of columns for duplicates (matches) and unique values (differences). Ablebits Duplicate Remover for Excel can search for identical and unique entries within a table, as well as compare two tables that reside on the same sheet or in 2 sheets different work/workbooks. For the purpose of this article, we'll focus on the feature called Compare Two Tables, which is specially designed to compare two lists by any column you specify. Comparing two datasets across multiple columns is a real challenge for both Excel formulas and conditional formatting, but this tool controls it Loosen. Compare 2 lists by multiple columns in 6 quick steps Supposing you have 2 data tables and you want to find duplicate rows based on 3 columns - Date, Item and Sales: Step 1. Assuming you have the Duplicate Remover for Excel installed, select any cell within the 1st table and click the Compare Two Tables button on the ribbon to start the wizard. This button resides on the Ablebits Data tab in the Dedupe group. Step 2. The wizard selects the entire table and suggests backing up the original table, just in case. Therefore, simply make sure that your 1st table is selected correctly and click Next. Step 3. Select the 2nd table using the standard Select Range icon. If both tables reside in the same workbook and have similar column names, there is a high probability that the second list will also be retrieved automatically. Step 4. Select whether to match or differentiate: Duplicate values - Look for matches, that is, items that exist in both tables. Unique values: Look for differences, that is, items found in Table 1 but not Table 2. In this example, we select Duplicate Values and click Next. Step 5. This is the key step where you select the column pairs that you want to compare in 2 tables. In this example, we are comparing 3 columns: Date, Item, and Sales. To have the wizard automatically find the matching columns, click the Autodiscover button in the upper-right corner. If the columns have different names in both tables, you may need to select the right column manually by clicking the small black arrow next to the Table 2 column on the right side. Step 6. In the final step, choose how to deal with the found items and click Finish. The following two options offer the results comparable to the Excel formulas and conditional formatting that we discussed earlier in this tutorial: Add a status column - add a new column with Duplicate or Unique, as Excel IF formulas do. Highlight: Shades duplicate or unique rows as an Excel conditional formatting rule. In addition, you can choose to delete duplicate entries, move or copy them to another worksheet, or simply select the found items. In this example, I decided to highlight duplicates in the following color: And I got the following result in a moment: If we chose Add a status column in the previous step, the result would look like this: This is how you compare columns in Excel for duplicates and uniques. If you are interested in trying this tool, you can download it as part of our Ultimate Suite for Excel. And we're happy to offer a special discount for our blog readers: Get Code from our Ultimate Suite - exclusive offer for our blog readers! Available Downloads Compare Excel Lists - Practice Workbook (xlsx) Ultimate Suite - Fully Functional Trial Version File (file .zip))

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