

ABOUT

www.AuditExcel.co.za provides assistance with all things related to Excel spreadsheets. Learn more at our training course on 9th & 10th Feb 2010.

DATES in Microsoft Excel

There are a number of very useful functions for handling dates in Excel. However you should be aware of a Excel treats dates..

- Excel sees dates and time differently to a human
- Basis its dates on the 1 Jan 1900.
- If you format a date as a number you will see something like 39814 (1 Jan 2009). That means is it 39814 days from the 1st Jan 1900
- If you add a decimal on to this number it represents the time (% of a 24 hour day) e.g. 0.25 means 06h00 (25% of 24 hrs).
- Based on this everything else is normal arithmetic

BUT

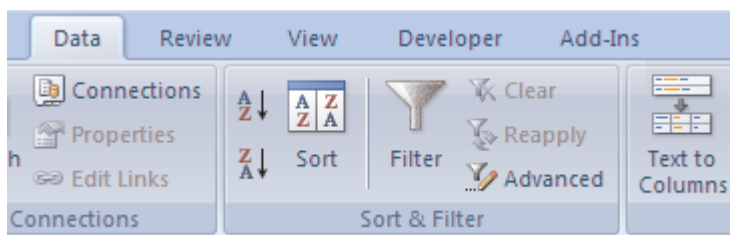
- USA and rest of the world have different Date Covenants which cause problems
- US= mm/dd/yyyy
- Other= dd/mm/yyyy
- Excel can be confused by this.
- Depends mostly on your computer settings (Regional and Language Options in your Control Panel).

As a result dates sometimes cause problems in calculations. One of the more common problems is getting dates in US format on a South African machine. Excel recognises some of the dates and ignores the rest.

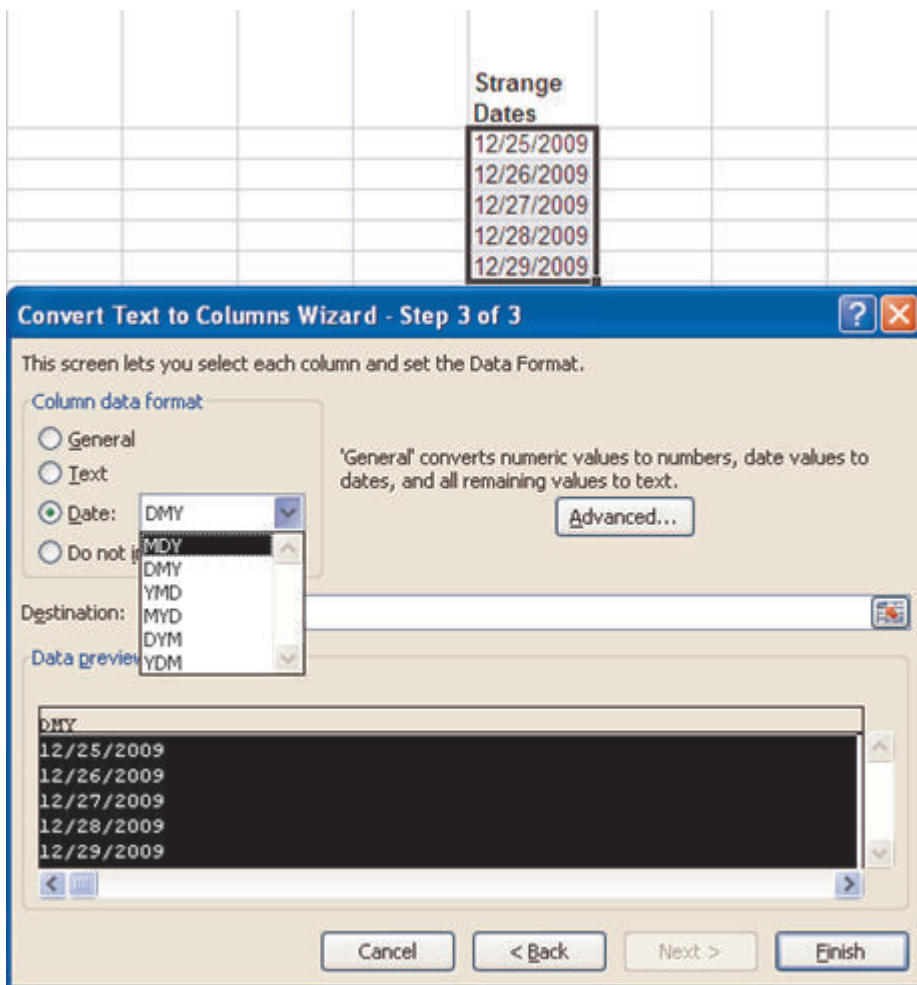
CONVERT TEXT TO COLUMNS TO SOLVE SOME PROBLEM DATES

(For Excel 2003 use DATA/ TEXT TO COLUMNS. Watch a video clip on using this tool at www.AuditExcel.co.za) Occasionally you get a situation where you receive information that to the human eye is clearly a date but Excel doesn't recognize it e.g. US format dates on a South African machine.

In this case you can use the CONVERT TEXT to COLUMNs tool to tell excel to read the cells as dates. The CONVERT TEXT TO COLUMNS tool is found in the DATA tab in DATA TOOLS box as shown below.



Once you have highlighted the cells concerned and clicked the TEXT to COLUMNS button the standard dialogue box will appear. In this case as we have only one column we can ignore any delimitation requirements and go straight to the format section. Here you can identify the cells as a date (see below) and then tell Excel what the current date format is. In this case it is showing MONTH, DAY , YEAR so you would choose MDY.



When you click finish it will convert the cells into dates based on your default date format, but more importantly it will now recognize the cell as a date.