

# (Archives) Microsoft Excel 2007: Separating Text

Last Modified on 08/31/2020 10:29 am CDT

This article is based on legacy software.

Excel's *Text to Columns* feature allows you to separate the text that is contained in a single cell and split it into multiple columns. For example, a full name appears in one cell (e.g., Doe, John). You can use *Text to Columns* to put the last name in one column and the first name in the next column. This would make it easier to use in a mail merge.

Another example would be city and state information appearing in one cell (e.g., Eau Claire, WI). You can use *Text to Columns* to put city names in one column and state abbreviations in another. This makes sorting by state easier.

This data must be separated by delimiters, such as commas or spaces. Excel allows you to separate cell data either by selecting predefined delimiters or using custom delimiters.

## Considerations

Here are some things to consider before separating your cells:

- To ensure consistent data separation, standardize all cell data and corresponding delimiters. *Using Find and Replace (Win | Mac)* can make standardization quicker and easier.
- Do not use delimiters that also function as text characters.  
EXAMPLE: In *Eau Claire WI*, the space between *Eau Claire* and *WI* could work as a delimiter. But there is also a space operating as a text character between *Eau* and *Claire*, which you would not want to separate. One solution could involve separating cities and states with commas and using the comma as your delimiter.
- Determine if you should separate your data into three columns (e.g., Jane M. Doe or John Doe Jr.).
- Look for consecutive delimiters (e.g., the comma and space in Canton, OH). If your cell data has consecutive delimiters, you should select the *Treat consecutive delimiters as one* option.

*NOTE: If you use a space as one of your delimiters, Excel automatically selects Treat Consecutive Delimiters As One. If you do not wish to use this option, deselect it.*

*WARNING: Separating data overwrites both the source cells and the cells directly to their right. To avoid deleting adjacent cell data, you can insert one more blank columns to the right of the column you are separating. For more information on adding columns, refer to Working with Rows and Columns (Win | Mac).*

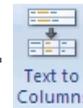
# Separating the Data

1. Select the cells containing the data you want to separate.

*NOTE: Excel can only separate one column at a time.*

2. Windows only: Select the **Data** command tab.

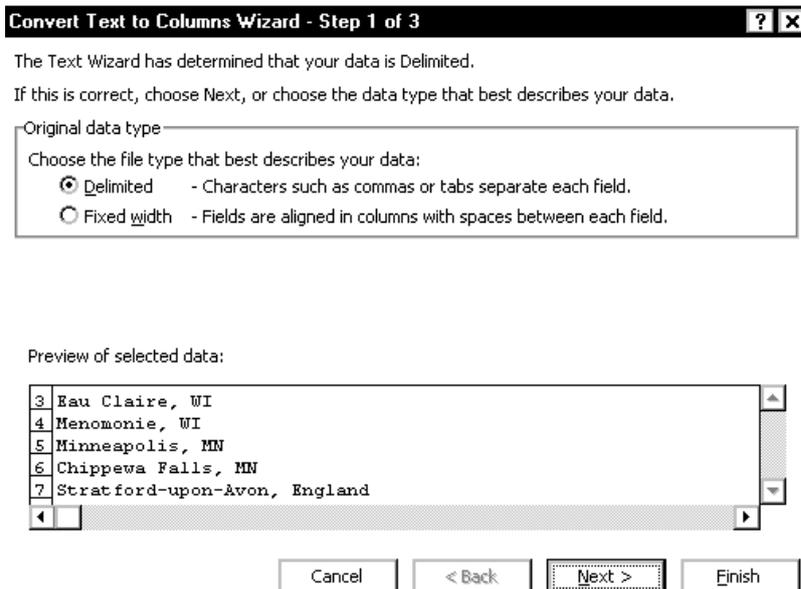
3. Windows: In the *Data Tools* group, click **Text to Columns**.



Macintosh: From the *Data* menu, select **Text to Columns...**

The *Convert Text to Columns Wizard* dialog box appears.

*NOTE: Your data is displayed in the Preview of selected data section.*



4. Under *Original data type*, select **Delimited**.

5. Click **Next**.

6. Under *Delimiters*, select or deselect the appropriate delimiters.

The *Data preview* box shows you how your data will be separated.

*NOTE: If you would like to keep some data containing your delimiter from being separated, the Text qualifier pull-down menu allows you to select the symbol you wish to use to indicate that the data included within is to be treated as text.*

### Convert Text to Columns Wizard - Step 2 of 3

This screen lets you set the delimiters your data contains. You can see how your text is affected in the preview below.

Delimiters

Tab

Semicolon

Comma

Space

Other:

Treat consecutive delimiters as one

Text qualifier: "

Data preview

|                     |         |
|---------------------|---------|
| Eau Claire          | WI      |
| Menomonie           | WI      |
| Minneapolis         | MN      |
| Chippewa Falls      | MN      |
| Stratford-upon-Avon | England |

Cancel < Back **Next >** Finish

7. (Optional) As appropriate, select or deselect ***Treat consecutive delimiters as one***.  
*HINT: For more information, refer to Considerations above.*

8. Click **Next**.

9. (Optional) To change the location where the separated data will appear on the worksheet, in the *Destination* text box, type the data destination in the format of: [\$(column letter)\$(row number)]

**OR**

a. In the *Destination* text box, click **Collapse Dialog**. 

b. Select the cell(s) where you want the separated data to appear.

c. To return to the *Convert Text to Columns Wizard*, click **Restore Dialog**. 

10. Click **Finish**.

If there is any existing data in the cells where the separated data will be placed, a dialog box appears asking if you want to replace the content of the destination cells.

11. To replace the data, click **OK**.

To cancel the data separation and leave the cells as they were, click **Cancel**.