

20 Powerful Excel Tricks for Everyday Work

Opening (Face video):

Most people use Excel every day
and still miss some of its fastest tools.

In the next few minutes,
I'll show you 20 practical Excel tricks
that can save you time, reduce mistakes,
and make long worksheets much easier to manage.

We start simple,
but stay with me because later
I'll show you how to lock formula references in one key press,
watch a total from anywhere in a worksheet,
and finally turn a cell range into a live picture that updates automatically.

My name is Athanas,
and here at Athanas Inspires,
we make digital skills simple and practical.

Open Excel if you can, practise with me, and let's go."

SKILL #1: Create a Drop-Down List

Our first skill is: Create Drop-Down Lists.

If you keep typing the same few answers again and again, stop typing them.

Let Excel give you a list instead.

Here we have a customer payment tracker.

For every customer,
we need a payment status.

We could keep typing
Paid, Partly Paid, or Not Paid
again and again.

But Excel can make this faster.

Select the Payment Status cells.

Go to Data. Choose Data Validation.

Under Allow, select List.

For Source,
select these three prepared options.

Click OK.

Beautiful.

Now every cell has a drop-down.

No repeated typing.

Just choose the status you need.

It's faster. It reduces typing mistakes. And it keeps your data consistent.

Whenever you repeat the same choices,
think drop-down list.

And if you want to practise all 20 skills using the same workbook I'm using in this video, check the link in the description or pinned comment.

Now, whenever you repeat the same choices,
think drop-down list."

Skill #2: Drag Dates, Months, Days & Number Patterns Automatically

Now, skill number two:

Never type January to December one by one again.

Give Excel the beginning of a pattern, and let Excel continue it.

Look at January.

Instead of typing February, March, April, select January and drag the Fill Handle across.

Beautiful.

Excel recognizes the pattern and continues the months for us.

The same works with days.

Start with Monday.

Drag across, and Excel continues the week.

Dates work the same way.

Start with 1 September 2026.

Drag across, and Excel continues the dates automatically.

Now look at the numbers.

Here we have 1 and 2.

Select both, then drag downward.

Excel continues the number pattern without us typing every number.

One simple drag can save a lot of repeated work.

That principle works far beyond months. When Excel can see the pattern, make Excel do the repetition.

But repeated typing is not the only thing that wastes time.

Sometimes the challenge is finding one piece of information inside a long worksheet.

Skill #3: Find Information Quickly with Ctrl + F.

Now, skill number three: Find Information Quickly with Control plus F.

Thirty products are easy to scan.

Three thousand are not.

So, let's learn the habit that still works when your worksheet becomes huge.

Suppose we want to find
Wireless Mouse.

We could scroll through the worksheet
and search row by row.

But there is a much faster way.

Press Control plus F.

Type Wireless Mouse.

Then click Find Next.

And there it is.

Excel takes us directly
to the information we need.

This works with product names,
codes, numbers,
and other information in your worksheet.

So when your data becomes long,
don't waste time searching manually.

Use Control plus F
and let Excel find it for you.

Three skills in, and notice what is happening.

Less typing.

Less searching.

More control.

But what if your table has hundreds of rows
and you need to fill something all the way down?

That brings us to the next skill.

Skill #4: Double-Click the Fill Handle for Long Tables.

Now, skill number four: Double-Click the Fill Handle for Long Tables.

Here we have fifty sales records.

We want Excel to calculate
Total Sales for every row.

In the first Total Sales cell,
type equals D4 times E4.

Press Enter.

Our first result is ready.

Dragging through fifty rows is possible.

Dragging through five thousand? No, thank you. 😊

There's a faster way.

Select the first result.

Then double-click the Fill Handle.

Look at that.

Excel instantly copies the formula
all the way down the table.

Fifty rows.

One double-click.

And this becomes even more powerful
when your worksheet has hundreds
or thousands of records.

Don't drag forever
when Excel can do the travelling for you.

If think this'll save you some time, give this video a like.
It helps more people discover these practical Excel tips.

Now that we can move formulas quickly,
let's see another simple way
to connect information between cells.

Skill #5: Link Cells Quickly Using =

Now, skill number five: Link Cells Quickly Using the Equals Sign.

Here we have a Sales Summary.

We want this Total Sales value
to come directly from our previous sales table.

I'll type an equals sign, go to our previous worksheet,
and click the Total Sales for Wireless Mouse.

Notice that I'm not copying the number.
I'm creating a connection to the original cell.

Press Enter.

Beautiful.

The value is now linked.

We didn't type the amount again.

But watch what happens.

Let me briefly return to
04 Double Click Fill
and change the quantity for Wireless Mouse.

Now back to our Sales Summary.

Look at that.

The Total Sales value has changed automatically.

That is the power of linking cells.

Change the source once,
and every linked cell can follow.

One source.
Connected information.

And since we're saving time on repeated entry,
let's look at something else we enter very often:
today's date.

Skill #6: Insert the Current Date with Control plus Semicolon

Now, skill number six: Insert the Current Date with Control plus Semicolon.

Here we have a Daily Expense Log.

We're adding a new expense,
and the only thing missing is today's date.

Of course, we could type the date manually.

But there is a faster way.

I'll click the Date cell
and press Control plus Semicolon.

And there it is.

Excel inserts today's date instantly.

One important detail:

this is a fixed date.

If you want a date that changes automatically,
that is a different method using the TODAY function.

No typing.

No checking the calendar.

Just one quick shortcut.

This is especially useful
when you record transactions, attendance, tasks,
or anything that needs today's date.

Small shortcut.

Real time saved.

But as our worksheets grow longer,
another problem appears.

The headings can disappear while we scroll.

Let's fix that next.

Skill #7: Freeze Headings While Scrolling

Now, skill number seven: Freeze Headings While Scrolling.

Have you ever scrolled down a long worksheet and suddenly forgotten what each column means? That's exactly what Freeze Panes solves.

At the top,
we can clearly see what every column represents.

But watch what happens
when I scroll down.

The headings disappear.

And now it becomes harder
to remember which column is Mathematics,
English, Science, Total, or Average.

Let's fix that.

I'll return to the top, click cell B3,
directly below the headings,
then go to View, Freeze Panes, and Freeze Panes.

Then under View,
I'll choose Freeze Panes,
and Freeze Panes again.

Now watch.

As I scroll down,
the headings stay with us.

Much better.

On long worksheets,
keeping your headings visible
makes your data much easier to follow.

And since this table already has totals,
let's see how quickly Excel can calculate one
using a simple keyboard shortcut.

Skill #8: Use AutoSum with Alt plus Equals

Now, skill number eight: Use AutoSum with Alt plus Equals.

Here we have weekly sales for several products.

First, I'll select C4 to G9
and press Alt plus Equals.

Excel calculates the monthly totals across the rows.

Next, I'll select C10 to G10
and press Alt plus Equals again.

This time, Excel calculates the totals down the columns.

Beautiful.

Now watch this.

Now for the power move.

I'll delete the totals, then select C4 to G10,
including the blank Total column and Total row.

Press Alt plus Equals. Look at that.

Excel calculates the row totals and column totals in one move.

Horizontal.

Vertical.

One shortcut.

And next,

let's make important information stand out automatically.

Skill # 9: Color Cells Containing Specific Text with Conditional Formatting

Now, skill number nine: Color Cells Containing Specific Text with Conditional Formatting.

Here we have an inventory table.

The Status column is already connected to Quantity.

If the quantity falls below ten,
Excel shows Low Stock.

Now let's make those words stand out automatically.

I'll select the Status cells,
go to Conditional Formatting,
choose Text that Contains,
and enter Low Stock.

I'll choose the highlight style
and confirm.

Beautiful.

Every Low Stock item is now easy to see.

But watch this.

Wireless Mouse currently has a quantity of twenty-two.

I'll change it to five.

The status changes to Low Stock...

and the color changes automatically too.

That's the power of conditional formatting.

The point is not decoration.

The point is attention.

Excel can make the information that needs action come to you.

Next, let's look at a simple way
to temporarily hide information we don't need.

Skill # 10: Hide and Unhide Rows or Columns

Now, skill number ten: Hide and Unhide Rows or Columns.

Sometimes,
we want a cleaner view
without deleting any data.

I'll select the Supplier column
and press Control plus zero.

Hidden.

Now I'll select a few rows
and press Control plus nine.

Hidden too.

The information is still there.

To bring it back,
I'll select the columns on both sides,
right-click,
and choose Unhide.

I can do the same with the hidden rows.

Nothing deleted.
Just temporarily out of view.
Just remember: hidden does not mean deleted,
and it also does not mean protected.

And next,
let's see how quickly we can insert or delete rows and columns.

We're halfway there.

If these practical Excel tips are helping you,
subscribe to Athanas Inspires because we have much more to learn together.
And don't go yet.

The second half contains some tricks Excel users often miss,
especially Skills 16, 19 and 20.

Skill # 11: Insert or Delete Rows and Columns with Control plus Shift plus Plus and Control plus Minus

Now, skill number eleven: Insert or Delete Rows and Columns with Control plus Shift plus Plus and Control plus Minus.

Here we have an order table.

Suppose we need space for a new order.

I'll select the row
and press Control plus Shift plus Plus.

Excel inserts a new row instantly.

The same works with columns.

I'll select a column
and press Control plus Shift plus Plus again.

Now we have a new column.

And when we no longer need them,
Control plus Minus removes them just as quickly.

Simple.

Add space when you need it.
Remove it when you don't.

And next,
let's see how to make a safe copy of a worksheet
before making changes.

Skill # 12: Create a copy of a Worksheet to Keep the Original

Now, skill number twelve: Create a Copy of a Worksheet to Keep the Original.

Here we have a completed Monthly Sales Report.

Before making major changes,
it's often safer to keep the original.

I'll hold Control,
drag the worksheet tab,
and release it.

And there it is.

Excel creates an exact copy
of the worksheet.

The data,
formulas,
and formatting all come with it.

Now I can work on the copy
while the original stays untouched.

Before experimenting with an important report,
make a copy first.

Future-you may be very grateful.

Simple habit.
Extra safety.

And next,
let's see how to quickly turn data arranged in rows
into columns.

Skill # 13 Transpose with Paste Special

Now, skill number thirteen: Transpose with Paste Special.

Here we have monthly sales arranged across columns.

But suppose we want the same information arranged vertically instead.

I'll copy the data,
choose a blank area,
open Paste Special,
and select Transpose.

And there it is.

The months that were across the row
are now arranged down the column.

The sales values move with them.

Same data.

Different direction.

No retyping.

This is very useful
when your data is arranged the wrong way
for a report or analysis.

And next,
let's look at another quick shortcut
for inserting the current time.

Skill # 14: Insert the Current Time with Control plus Shift plus Semicolon

Now, skill number fourteen: Insert the Current Time with Control plus Shift plus Semicolon.

Here we have a Visitor Log.

Lucy Martin has just arrived,
and the Time In cell is still blank.

Instead of typing the time manually,
I'll select the cell
and press Control plus Shift plus Semicolon.

And there it is.

Excel inserts the current time instantly.

And just like the date shortcut, this inserts a fixed time, not a clock that keeps changing.

No typing.
No checking the clock.

This is useful for visitor logs,
attendance, task records,
and other time-based entries.

Quick entry.
Accurate time.

And now that we have records building up,
let's see how to sort them
using more than one level.

Skill # 15: Custom Sort with Multiple Levels

Now, skill number fifteen: Custom Sort with Multiple Levels.

Here we have a longer Visitor Log.

Suppose we want to organize these records
first by Purpose,
and then by Time In.

I'll select the table,
open Sort,
and choose Purpose as the first level.

I'll sort it from A to Z.

Then I'll add another level
for Time In
and sort from oldest to newest.

Click OK.

Beautiful.

Excel first groups similar purposes together,
then organizes the times inside each group.

One sort.
Multiple levels.

And next,
let's see how to lock cell references
so formulas behave exactly the way we want.

Skill # 16: Lock Cell References Quickly with F4

Now, skill number sixteen: Lock Cell References Quickly with F4.

Here we have product prices
and one fixed discount rate of ten percent.

We want every product
to use this same discount rate.

In the first Discount Amount cell,
I'll multiply the Unit Price
by the Discount Rate.

But before I finish,
I'll select the H3 reference
and press F4.

Excel changes it to
dollar H dollar 3.

That locks the reference.

And here's the bonus: press F4 again
and Excel cycles through the different locking combinations.
You don't need to type the dollar signs manually.
On some laptops, you may need Fn plus F4.

Now when I fill the formula down,
every row still uses the same discount rate.

Without locking it,
the reference would keep moving.

One key.
Fixed reference.

If you're learning something new today,
hit Like and subscribe.
That tells me to keep creating more Excel lessons like this.

And next,
let's see how to split the worksheet window
so we can view different parts of the same sheet at once.

Skill # 17: Split the Worksheet Window

Now, skill number seventeen: Split the Worksheet Window.

Here we have a long Student Results sheet.

Suppose I want to view records near the top while also checking records much further down.

I don't want to scroll back and forth.

Because I want two horizontal views of this worksheet,

I'll click cell A20,

go to View,

and choose Split.

Look at that.

Excel divides the worksheet into separate sections.

Now I can scroll one section without moving the other.

Same worksheet.

Two different views.

And when I'm finished,

I can click Split again to remove it.

Next,

let's see how to protect a worksheet from unwanted changes.

Skill # 18: Protect a Worksheet

Now, skill number eighteen: Protect a Worksheet.

Here we have a completed Student Results sheet.

Suppose we want to prevent accidental changes.

I'll go to Review
and choose Protect Sheet.

Here, we can even add a password
for extra protection.

I'll enter a password,
confirm it,
and protect the sheet.

Now let me try changing one student's mark.

Excel blocks the edit.

Beautiful.

The worksheet is still visible,
but the protected cells cannot be changed.

And because we added a password,
anyone who wants to unprotect the sheet
will need that password.

So make sure you remember it.

One important note:
Protect Sheet is mainly for controlling editing
and preventing accidental changes.
Don't treat it as a system for securing highly confidential data.

Protect the work you have finished.

And next,
let's see how to monitor important cells
even when they are far away in the worksheet.

Skill # 19: Watch Windo

Now, skill number nineteen: Watch Window.

Here we have a long Sales Report
with the Grand Total far down the worksheet.

Our Grand Total is all the way down here.

But what if I want to watch it while changing numbers sixty rows away,
without constantly scrolling back and forth?

I'll select the Grand Total cell,
go to Formulas,
open Watch Window,
and add the cell.

Now I'll return to the top of the report.

Watch this.

I'll change one Quantity value.

The Grand Total updates instantly
inside the Watch Window.

I don't need to scroll all the way down
just to check the result.

This is very useful
when important formulas are far away
from the cells you are working on.

Think of Watch Window as giving an important cell its own little monitor.

And for our final skill,
let's look at one of Excel's hidden gems:
the Camera Tool.

SKILL #20: Create a Live Picture with the Camera Tool

"Here is the hidden gem I promised.

At the bottom of this worksheet, we have a small Sales Summary.

Suppose I want to display this summary somewhere else without rebuilding it.

First, if the Camera Tool is not already on your Quick Access Toolbar, you only need to add it once.

Open More Commands,

choose All Commands,

find Camera, add it, and click OK.

Now I'll select B18 to C22.

Click Camera.

Then click in a blank area of the worksheet.

Excel creates a picture of that range.

But this is not an ordinary screenshot. Watch this.

I'll change the Quantity of Wireless Mouse from 12 to 20.

The Total Sales changes... and the picture changes too.

That's the magic. The picture stays connected to the original cells.

You can use this for dashboards,

summaries, reports,

or anywhere you want to display the same information in another location.

Same data.

Different view.

Always connected.

That is Excel's Camera Tool."

You have just completed 20 practical Excel skills you can start using today.

But knowing them is only the beginning.

Real growth comes when you practise and use them.

Which of these skills was the most useful or surprising to you?

Tell me in the comments below.

If you haven't subscribed yet,

subscribe to Athanas Inspires

and continue learning with my other Excel sessions.

Visit athanasinspires.com for learning resources,

assignments,

tools,

and inspiration.

Your Excel journey doesn't end here.

Keep building, keep growing.

Keep learning. Keep practising.

From confusion to clarity.