

Adding Comments in Microsoft Excel 2003

Introduction

Microsoft Excel has a very useful facility which allows you to add explanatory notes to your worksheet. These can be used, for example, to explain what a particular formula is calculating or to store further information which doesn't generally need to be displayed. Comments can also be useful where an Excel file is shared by several people in an office - each user can add comments to inform the others of any changes.

Adding a Comment to a Cell

Starting on a new worksheet, create an expenses form:

1. Type the heading `Expenses` into cell **A1** and press **<Enter>**
2. Press **<right arrow>** to move to cell **B2** and type `Travel`
3. Press **<right arrow>** again to move to cell **C2** and type `Food`
4. Press **<Enter>** then **<left arrow>** *twice* to move to cell **A3**
5. In cell **A3** type a date (e.g. `2/3/05`) then press **<right arrow>** to move to cell **B3**
6. In cell **B3** type `=16.4+0.8*2` - press **<right arrow>** to move to **C3**
7. In cell **C3** type `=1+0.35+2.25` - press **<Enter>**
8. Select cells **B3** and **C3** then apply a **[Currency]** format using the toolbar button

Now add the explanatory notes:

1. Click on cell **B3** then open the **Insert** menu and choose **Comment**
2. Use **<Backspace>** to delete the existing words, if you want to
3. Now type: `Rail: £16.40`, press **<Enter>** then type `Bus: £0.80 (x2 journeys)`
4. Using the lower right *comment handle* widen the comment box slightly (so that each item is on a single line) and shrink it vertically

Note that a comment box for a particular cell can be placed anywhere on the spreadsheet - it doesn't have to be immediately to the right of the cell. You may, for example, want to move it so that you can view information in the cell hidden by the comment. To do this:

5. Use the **<arrow>** keys to move the comment downwards and to the left

6. Alternatively, point the mouse cursor to the comment box border (the cursor becomes an arrow with a double-headed cross), hold down the mouse button and drag the comment to its new position

Now add a comment to list your food expenses:

7. *Right click* on cell **C3** then choose **Insert Comment** from the pop-up menu - this is an alternative to using the **Insert** menu
8. **<Backspace>** to delete the existing words, if you want
9. Now type: coffee: £1.00, press **<Enter>** then crisps: £0.35, press **<Enter>** then sandwich: £2.25
10. Press **<Esc>** to end the typing and select the comment box, then position it using the **<arrow>** keys (or drag it using the mouse) - resize it if you like
11. Finally, click on any empty cell to close the comment box

Note the little red triangles in the top right corner of cells B3 and C3 which denote that these cells have a comment attached.

Displaying Cell Comments

Whenever the mouse cursor points to a cell, the comment is displayed:

1. Move the mouse cursor over cell **B3** and watch the comment reappear - the comment is displayed close to the cell, not where it has been positioned
2. Move the mouse cursor slightly to the right and the comment for cell **C3** appears

To permanently display both comments:

3. Open the **View** menu and choose **Comments**

The *Reviewing Toolbar* will appear:



By default, this appears with the other toolbars at the top of the screen but many users prefer to *float* it (just drag it onto the worksheet). The buttons on this toolbar include **[New/Edit Comment]** (if the current cell already has a comment you can edit it, otherwise you get a new comment), go to **[Previous Comment]** or **[Next Comment]**, **[Show/Hide Comment]** (just the current one) or **[Show/Hide All Comments]**, and **[Delete Comment]**. You will be trying some of these out next.

4. Click on cell **B3**
5. Click on the **[Hide Comment]** button to hide just this comment
6. Click on the same button again (now called **[Show/Hide Comment]**) - the comment reappears
7. Click on **[Next Comment]** *twice* to move to the other comment (if you are already viewing the last comment a dialog box appears asking you if you would like to circle round to the first one - press **<Enter>** for **[OK]**)
8. Use **[Hide Comment]** to hide that one
9. Finally, click on **[Hide All Comments]** to hide both the comments

Editing a Cell Comment

If a comment is displayed then you can edit it simply by clicking on it - the insertion point is positioned at the end of the comment. To edit a comment which isn't displayed:

1. *Right click* on cell **C3** then choose **Edit Comment** from the pop-up menu
2. Make the required changes to the comment then click on another cell to hide it again

Note: if the *Reviewing Toolbar* is displayed and the current cell does not have a comment attached, the first button on the toolbar is set to **[New Comment]** (rather than **[Edit Comment]**). This offers yet another way of adding a comment to a cell.

3. Try attaching a comment to an empty cell using the **[New Comment]** button

Note that comments move, along with the cell contents, if you use sort or cut/copy and paste. The only exception to this is in a Pivot Table. *Paste Special* allows you to cut/copy just the comment from one cell to another.

Deleting a Cell Comment

To remove a comment from a cell:

1. **Either** move to the cell and open the **Edit** menu then select **Clear** followed by **Comments**
Or move to the cell and use the **[Delete Comment]** button
Or right click on the cell and select **Delete Comment** from the pop-up menu

2. Try out the above, if you like, then click on **[Undo]** to restore the comment

Tip: To delete all the comments, first select them by using **Go To...** from the **Edit** menu then choose **[Special...]** and **Comments**. Alternatively, select the range of cells (note: this allows you to delete just some of the comments). Once selected, you can use any of the above methods to remove the comments.

Searching for a Cell Comment

Excel allows you to search for information stored in a comment via a special option in the Find dialog box.

1. Press **<Ctrl Home>** to move to cell *A1*
2. Open the **Edit** menu and choose **Find...**
3. Type the search text into the *Find what:* box (e.g. *Bus*)
4. Click on **[Options>>]** then on the *list arrow* attached to the **Look in:** box and select **Comments**
5. Press **<Enter>** or click on **[Find Next]** to locate the cell with the specified comment
6. Finally, press **<Esc>** to **[Close]** the *Find* dialog box

Note that the *Replace* command cannot be used with comments.

Formatting Cell Comments

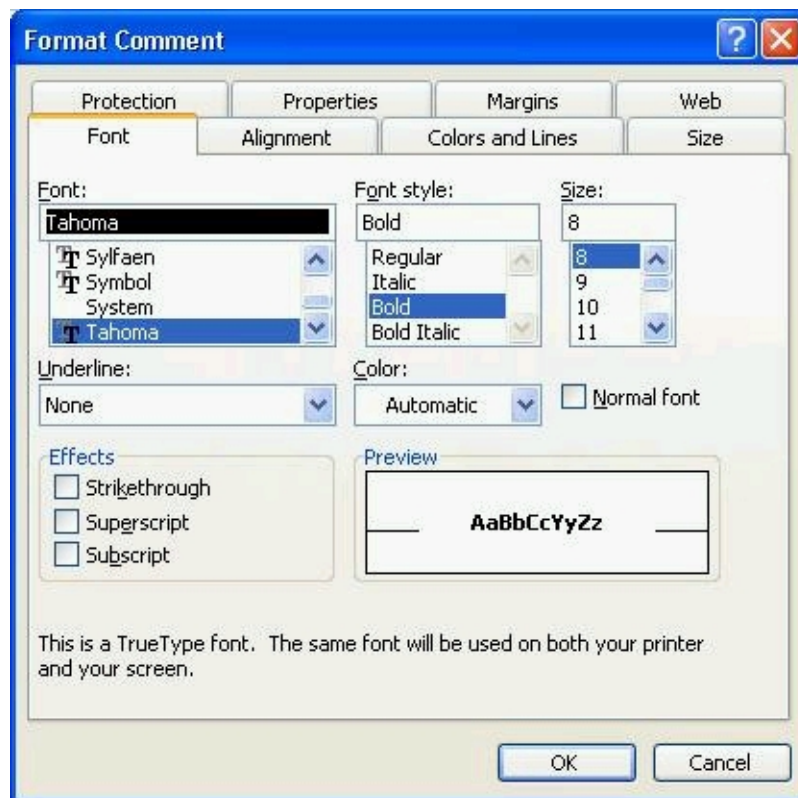
To format a comment, simply select it and then apply the formatting:

1. Make sure one or more comments are displayed - if necessary, select **Comments** from the **View** menu or the **[Show Comment]** or **[Show All Comments]** button
2. Click on the comment you wish to format then press **<Esc>** to select it
3. Using the buttons on the *Formatting* toolbar, try changing the **[Font]** and **[Font Size]**
4. Change the *justification* to **[Center]**
5. Set a different **[Fill Color]** and **[Font Color]**

These and several other options can also be set on the *Format Comment* dialog box:

6. Open the **Format** menu and select **Comment...** or press **<Ctrl 1>** - or *right click* on the comment border and select **Format Comment...** from the pop-up menu

The following dialog box appears:



The *Font*, *Colors and Lines* and *Alignment* tabs offer you the same settings as the buttons, plus a few more. *Size* lets you set the precise dimensions; *Protection* can be used to *lock* the comments (i.e. make them *read only*) if the datasheet is also protected; *Properties* determines whether the comments move and grow/shrink if the cell is resized; *Margins* can be used to set up internal margins; *Web* can be used to add text for web engine searches.

7. On the *Colors and Lines* tab, select a different **Fill Color** - click on **[OK]**
8. With the reformatted comment still selected, use the **[Format Painter]** button to copy the new format to any other comments

Note that the default fill colour used for a comment is the *ToolTip* colour set up in the Windows Control Panel. This default setting can be changed, if you want.

Additional Comment Options

Two further comment settings are to be found in the Excel *Options* settings. These let you hide the comment indicators (the red triangles) and alter the default heading which appears in each comment.

1. Open the **Tools** menu and select **Options...**
2. On the *View* tab under the *Comments* heading note the **None** option - choosing this turns off the red indicators
3. On the *General* tab, note the bottom **User Name:** setting - this is what is used for the comment heading. Note that the *User Name* cannot be blank - this field must contain at least one character
4. Press **<Enter>** or click on **[OK]** to close the Options dialog box and save the settings

Reset either or both of these options, if you like, and note their effect (you would need to insert a new comment to see any new *User Name*).

Printing Cell Comments

By default, comments are not printed. However, you can print them either as displayed or at the end of the sheet.

1. Open the **File** menu and select **Page Setup...**
2. On the *Sheet* tab, click on the *list arrow* attached to the **Comments:** box under the *Print* heading
3. Note the alternative settings - choose **At end of sheet** then press **<Enter>** for **[OK]**
4. Click on **[Print Preview]** to see the results

You will find the comments appear on a separate sheet. This may or may not be what you would like - change the **[Setup...]** if necessary.

5. Click on **[Close]** to return to your spreadsheet
6. Close the workbook - there's no need to save it