EXCEL ‹‹‹‹‹‹

By Bill Jelen

Excel 2013 Solves the Two-Monitor Problem

Having two monitors is common in the workplace today. Millions of people have been trying to use Excel across a two-monitor setup, and it's never pretty. If you had one workbook on the left monitor and one on the right, the workbook on the right never had any ribbon commands because they were on the left monitor. Most people would open two separate instances of Excel, but the copy and paste functions didn't always work correctly between the two instances of Excel. For example, not all the Paste Special options would be available—you could copy values but not formulas.

With Excel 2013, it's finally easy to put one workbook on the left monitor and another workbook on the right monitor. Each workbook has a ribbon, formula bar, status bar, and a set of Window controls. Both workbooks also will be running in a single instance of Excel, which means you can easily copy and paste between the two workbooks. You can switch between them with CTRL+TAB.
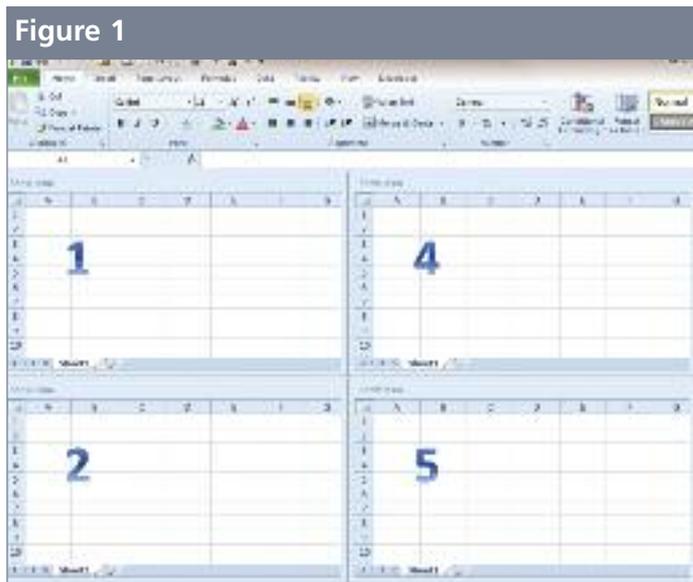
This change is due to the ongoing transition from MDI (Multiple Document Interface) to SDI (Single Document Interface). Other Office applications have been transitioning from MDI to SDI. Word switched in Office 2007. PowerPivot switched in Office 2010. Excel joins the SDI world starting with Excel 2013.

While displaying Excel on two monitors is going to make a lot of people happy, there are a few people who won't like the change.

Ribbon Confusion

Say that you use View, Side by Side to compare two workbooks side by side. You'll see the full ribbon above both workbooks. It's possible to display the Home tab of the ribbon in the left workbook and the Data tab of the ribbon in the right workbook. If you're working in one workbook and reach over to use a command in the other workbook's ribbon, focus will switch to the other workbook, and the command will be invoked in the wrong workbook.

Tiling Many Workbooks

I occasionally meet people who love to tile many workbooks. I don't just mean tiling two workbooks to do a visual comparison. I've met people who routinely keep 12 workbooks open and tiled on their monitor. Back in Excel 2010, you could easily have 12 workbooks tiled under a single ribbon in a single window (see Figure 1). Each workbook

Figure 1

would show 10 rows by six or seven columns.

If you routinely tile many workbooks, you'll now find that you have a ribbon, a formula bar, and Window controls for each workbook. Due to the extra space consumed by the ribbon in each tile, you can now see only four rows per workbook (see Figure 2).

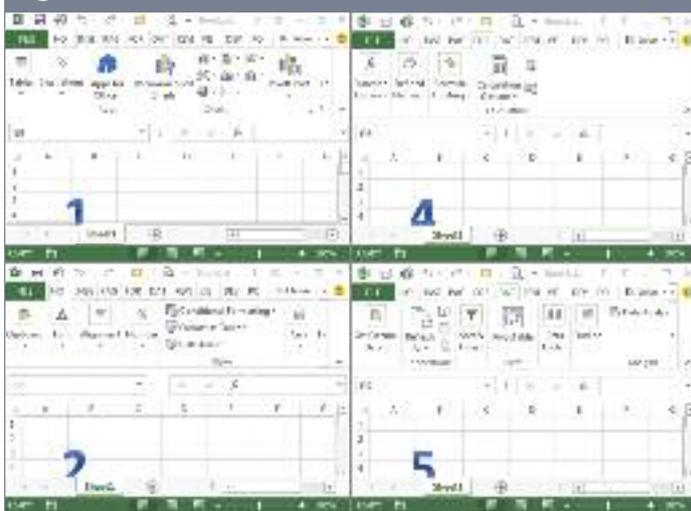To see as many rows as you could in Excel 2010, turn off the formula bar using View, Show, Formula Bar in one of the 12 workbooks. This will turn off the formula bar in all of the tiled windows. You then need to go through and use the Caret (^) symbol at the right side of all 12 ribbons to minimize the ribbon in each window.

In Figure 1, you could click one minimize icon to minimize the entire arrangement to the task bar. In Figure 2, you'll have to minimize each of the 12 workbooks individually.

Macro Complexity

Many VBA macros are self-contained

Figure 2

workbooks; the macro code, data, and reports are all contained in a single workbook. But some macros are more complicated, where one workbook contains all of the macro code and other workbooks contain the data and templates. If you write that type of macro, you might have to adjust your macros in Excel 2013. In earlier versions, there was only one ribbon above all of the open workbooks. The macro in Workbook A could easily display a custom dialog box above Workbook B. The changes in Excel 2013

add new complexity since Workbook B is running in a different tiled Excel window with a different ribbon.

Forcing Excel to Open in a New Instance

There might be times when you want Excel to open in a separate instance. For example, you might have a macro in Workbook A that will run for an hour, and you'd like to continue to work in Workbook B while the macro is running in Workbook A.

To open a second instance of Excel 2013, go to the Start menu. Before you click the icon for Excel 2013, hold down the ALT key. As Excel starts to open, you get a message asking if you want the workbook to open in a second instance of Excel. **SF**

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