

EXCEL



By Bill Jelen

Try Excel 2013

The new Office 2013 will be hitting store shelves this quarter, but you can download and try the new features now using the Office Preview website. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/xl13preview> and click the Excel logo at the bottom. From the Try It section on the right, choose Office 365 Home Premium. Then click the Try It bar and register for a preview version. This option will let you try out Office 2013 on five computers. Documents and settings will be shared among those five computers.

New Features in Excel 2013

As we've discussed in the last few months, there are a number of new features in Excel 2013. Here's a quick look at some of the most significant ones.

Flash Fill. How often do you receive a worksheet where a single column has multiple fields? You need to break apart the part number and description or account number and account name. If you're lucky, the Text to Columns wizard or a clever combination of LEFT, MID, RIGHT,

and FIND would let you extract the desired data. With the new Excel 2013 Flash Fill feature, you simply have to type an example in the first two cells of the adjacent column. As soon as you start typing the third cell, Excel will detect the pattern and fill in the rest of the column (see Figure 1). In complex cases, you might need to refine some of the suggestions. Once you fix one, Flash Fill will automatically go through the data and apply the new rule.

Quick Analysis. When you select a range of data in Excel, a new Quick Analysis icon appears below the bottom-right corner of the selection. Click the icon to get quick access to choices for formatting, adding totals, running totals,

percentage of total, charts, sparklines, or pivot tables.

Excel App Store. In the past, if you wanted to extend the functionality of Excel, you would have to use VBA macros to create add-ins for Excel. The Excel 2013 App Store offers a variety of javascript applications that can interact with your data. Using free apps from the App Store, you can plot the data on a map using the Bing Maps app or create a speedometer dial chart (Figure 2). New apps are appearing every week. Many are available for free, and most others cost between \$1.99 and \$3.99.

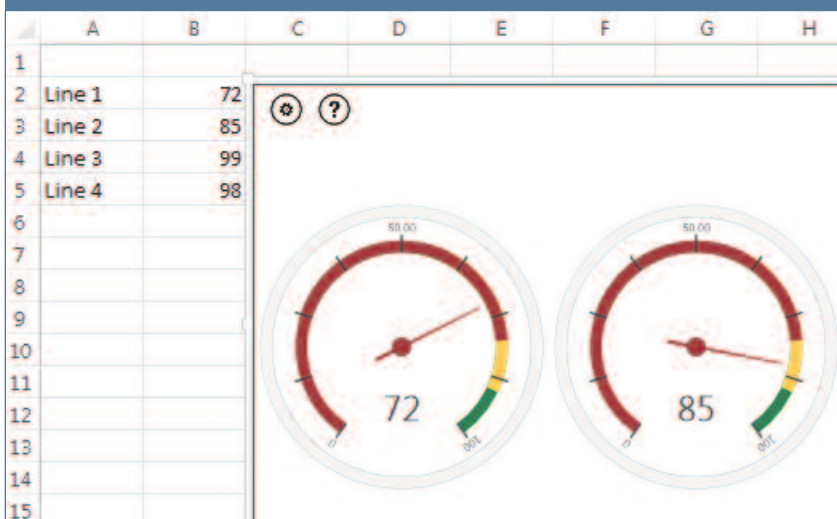
Avoid VLOOKUP in Pivot Tables. Imagine that you have a transactional data set with ID fields such as ProductID, CustomerID, or SalesRepID. Normally,

you'd have to use VLOOKUP functions to bring the Product Description, Category, Customer Name, Region, and so on into your main data set. In Excel 2013, you can define a Data Model with the transactional data set, plus each of the lookup ranges. Define the key fields that link each range, and the pivot table engine will join

Figure 1

| | A | B |
|---|--|----------|
| 1 | Movie List | Genre |
| 2 | 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) Sci-Fi | Sci-Fi |
| 3 | Airplane! (1980) Comedy | Comedy |
| 4 | Airport (1970) Disaster | Disaster |
| 5 | Armageddon (1998) Disaster | Disaster |
| 6 | Blade Runner (1982) Sci-Fi | Sci-Fi |
| 7 | Bringing Up Baby (1938) Comedy | Comedy |
| 8 | E.T. - The Extra-Terrestrial (1982) Sci-Fi | Sci-Fi |

Figure 2



the tables without the overhead of thousands of VLOOKUP formulas.

FORMULATEXT Function. You can document your worksheets by showing the formula used in a cell. Currently, you have to toggle back and forth between showing formulas and values using the Ctrl+` shortcut. In Excel 2013, you can permanently show the formula by using =FORMULATEXT.

Web Lookup. A new WEBSERVICE function allows you to take data from your worksheet, pass it to a Web service, then parse the results back into your formula cells. You could use this to pull the weather data for a particular date and city or to look up the current exchange rates for a certain currency. And what if the Web service returns a huge blob of data? There's a FILTERXML function that can parse the bits of information you

need from the results.

Cloud Storage. The Save As screen now offers to store files on your computer, your network, or in the SkyDrive. Saving to the SkyDrive allows you to easily access the files from another computer. If you sign in to the same SkyDrive account from multiple computers, the Recent Files list will sync between the computers, allowing you to pick up at home right where you left off at work.

Support for Dual Monitors. As we discussed in detail last month, Excel 2013 lets you easily arrange a workbook on each monitor—with each workbook getting a full ribbon interface and working copy-and-paste between the workbooks.

Better Chart Formatting. You can quickly apply chart formatting using the paintbrush icon that appears to the right

of a chart in Excel 2013, which was covered in depth in the November column.

A New Way to Buy Office 2013

Your employer will likely roll out the enterprise edition of Office 2013 at work. In the past, most power Excel users would supplement this using Office 2010 Home and Student for their home PCs. Starting with Office 2013, Microsoft is directing people to the Office 365 Home Premium subscription. For \$99 per year, you can share Office 2013 among five computers (including Macs). This subscription plan also provides 20GB of online storage and a clever click-to-run version of Office. If you find yourself at great-grandma's house where there's no Office, you can sign in to your Office 365 account to stream just the necessary components for Excel, Word, or PowerPoint to that machine for your temporary use. Other versions of Office 365 add components such as SharePoint. **SF**

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