

THE EXCEL & DATA SHELF · BOOK 1 OF 11

Excel, Built Right

Fast, tidy workbooks that don't break

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How every chapter works

The task → Why it matters → The method → A worked example
→ Practice → 3-line summary

Included with this book

Printable worksheets: **Shortcut tracker**, **Workbook map**, **List check**, **Data type check**, **Input rules plan**, **House style sheet**, **Sharing plan**, **Pre-send file check**. Excel files: **Practice workbook (8 exercises)**, **Answers workbook**, **Workbook starter file**. All in your download.

1

Work at keyboard speed: the 30 shortcuts that matter

The mouse is fine for finding things. The keyboard is how you get work done.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Why speed comes from fewer steps, not faster fingers
- Move around a sheet of thousands of rows
- Select without dragging
- Enter, fill and edit without the mouse
- Drive the ribbon with the Alt key
- Example: a month-end, minus the mouse
- Practice: the ten-minute drill
- Your worksheet: shortcut tracker

By the end, you will be able to

- Jump anywhere in a large sheet in one or two keystrokes
- Select, fill and format ranges without dragging
- Use the 30 shortcuts that cover most everyday work

Reading time: about 20 minutes · 1 exercise · 1 worksheet

THE TASK

Speed comes from fewer steps

Watch a fast Excel user and you will notice they hardly touch the mouse. They are not typing faster than anyone else. They are taking fewer steps: one keystroke to reach the bottom of a list, another to select it, a third to total it. The mouse way needs scrolling, dragging and hunting through the ribbon for each of those.

Shortcuts matter most in the jobs you repeat every day: moving through long lists, selecting columns, filling formulas down, pasting values and turning on filters. Learn the few that cover those, and the time comes back every single day.

Task	With the mouse	With the keyboard
Reach row 1,201 of a list	Scroll for 20–40 seconds	Ctrl + ↓ : instant
Select a whole column of data	Drag down, overshoot, drag back	Ctrl + Shift + ↓
Copy a formula to 1,200 rows	Drag the fill handle all the way	Double-click the fill handle, or select and press Ctrl + D
Paste values only	Right-click, Paste Special, Values, OK	Ctrl + Alt + V , then V, Enter
Turn filters on or off	Data tab, then Filter	Ctrl + Shift + L

A rough sum

If shortcuts save you just 2 seconds, 300 times a working day, that is 10 minutes a day: about 40 hours over a working year. Most people who switch save far more, because they also stop losing their place.

How to learn them

Don't try to learn all 30 at once. Pick three, use only those for a week, then add three more. The worksheet at the end of this chapter keeps track.

THE METHOD

Move around a big sheet

Ctrl + **↓** jumps to the last filled cell in a column, just before the first blank. From A1 of a 1,200–row list it lands on row 1,201 in one keystroke. The other arrows work the same way across rows.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Date	Invoice	Region	Customer	Qty	Rate	Amount
2	01-Apr-25	MD-0001	Central	Annapurna General Stor	2	1,150	2,300
3	02-Apr-25	MD-0002	North	Shubham Enterprises	3	1,680	5,040
...	:						

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1200	31-Mar-26	MD-1199	West	Gayatri Supermarket	15	1,980	29,700
1201	01-Mar-26	MD-1200	West	Durga Traders	40	1,440	57,600

1 Shortcuts

- 1 Start anywhere in the column.
- 2 One press of **Ctrl** + **↓** lands on the last row.

#	Keys	What they do
1	Ctrl + ↓ ↑ ← →	Jump to the edge of the data in that direction
2	Ctrl + Home	Go to A1 (or the top-left of frozen panes)
3	Ctrl + End	Go to the last used cell of the sheet
4	Ctrl + PgDn / Ctrl + PgUp	Next sheet / previous sheet
5	Ctrl + G or F5	Go To: type a cell such as D600, or a name
6	Ctrl + [	Jump to the cells the active formula uses

Why blank rows hurt

Ctrl + arrow stops at the first blank cell, so blank rows make you jump block by block. Chapter 3 shows how to keep lists clean.

THE METHOD

Select without dragging

Dragging across thousands of rows is slow and easy to overshoot. Add Shift to any movement key and Excel selects everything between where you were and where you land.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Date	Invoice	Region	Customer	Qty	Rate	Amount
2	01-Apr-25	MD-0001	Central	Annapurna General Stor	2	1,150	2,300
3	02-Apr-25	MD-0002	North	Shubham Enterprises	3	1,680	5,040
4	03-Apr-25	MD-0003	East	Navkar Provision Store	24	1,440	34,560
5	03-Apr-25	MD-0004	South	Arihant Enterprises	2	420	840
6	03-Apr-25	MD-0005	East	Annapurna Mart	12	650	7,800
...	:						
Average: 20,669 Count: 1,200 Sum: 2,48,02,220							

From G2, Ctrl + Shift + ↓ selects all 1,200 amounts. The status bar shows the sum, count and average without a single formula.

#	Keys	What they do
7	Shift + ↓ (any arrow)	Grow the selection one cell at a time
8	Ctrl + Shift + ↓ (any arrow)	Select to the edge of the data
9	Ctrl + Space	Select the whole column
10	Shift + Space	Select the whole row
11	Ctrl + A	Select the current block of data; press again for the whole sheet
12	Ctrl + Shift + End	Select from here to the last used cell

Read the status bar

Right-click the status bar at the bottom of the window to choose what it shows: Sum, Count, Average, Minimum, Maximum. It is the fastest check of any selection.

THE METHOD

Enter and edit without the mouse

Most time in Excel goes on typing, copying and fixing. These nine shortcuts remove the mouse from that work.

#	Keys	What they do
13	F2	Edit the active cell (the cursor goes to the end of its contents)
14	Ctrl + Enter	Type once, fill every selected cell with the same entry
15	Ctrl + D	Copy the top cell of the selection down
16	Ctrl + R	Copy the left cell of the selection to the right
17	Alt + Enter	Start a new line inside the same cell
18	Ctrl + ;	Type today's date (a fixed date that won't change tomorrow)
19	Ctrl + + / Ctrl + -	Insert or delete cells; with a whole row selected, inserts or deletes the row
20	F4	In a formula: add or cycle \$ signs. Otherwise: repeat your last action
21	Ctrl + Alt + V	Paste Special: then V for values, T for formats, Enter

Example (invented): filling 1,200 rows in four keys

You write `=E2*F2` in H2 and need it in every row down to H1201. Press **Ctrl** + **↓** in column G to reach row 1,201, press **→** to step into column H, then **Ctrl** + **Shift** + **↑** to select back up to H2, and **Ctrl** + **D** to fill. No dragging, no overshooting.

Paste values: the shortcut you will use most

When you copy figures from a report into another file, paste values only. Otherwise you carry the formulas and links with you, and the numbers change the next time the source changes.

THE METHOD

Drive the ribbon with the Alt key

Press and release **Alt**. Letters appear over every tab and button of the ribbon: these are key tips. Type them in order to reach any command. You read them as you go; your fingers soon remember the common ones.

Key tips	Command
Alt H O I	Home > Format > AutoFit column width (select the columns first)
Alt H V V	Home > Paste > Paste values
Alt W F F	View > Freeze panes (keeps headings in view)
Alt A T	Data > Filter (same as Ctrl + Shift + L)

THE LAST NINE OF THE 30

#	Keys	What they do
22	Alt + =	AutoSum below or beside the selection
23	Ctrl + T	Turn a list into an Excel Table (Chapter 3)
24	Ctrl + Shift + L	Filters on or off
25	Ctrl + 1	Format Cells: number formats, alignment, protection
26	Ctrl + Shift + 1	Number format with separators and 2 decimals
27	Ctrl + Shift + 5	Percentage format
28	Ctrl + `	Show formulas instead of results (press again to switch back)
29	Ctrl + F / Ctrl + H	Find / Find and replace
30	F12	Save As: choose the name, folder and file type

In Google Sheets

Most movement and selection keys work the same. Instead of key tips, press **Alt** + **/** to search every menu by name.

A WORKED EXAMPLE

A month-end, minus the mouse

Rekha (an invented accounts executive at a pharma distributor in Ahmedabad) builds the same summary on the first working day of each month. She pastes the month's invoice export into her file, totals it by branch, and sends it to the finance head. It used to take her most of a morning.

Step	Before (mouse)	After (keyboard)
Reach the end of the export	Scrolled through 6,000 rows	Ctrl + ↓
Copy the new data	Dragged, often missed rows	Ctrl + A , Ctrl + C
Paste into her file as values	Right-click menu, four clicks	Ctrl + Alt + V , V , Enter
Fill formulas to the new last row	Dragged the fill handle	Ctrl + Shift + ↑ , Ctrl + D
Check the total	Typed a SUM in a spare cell	Selected the column, read the status bar
Filter one branch to check	Data tab, Filter, scroll	Ctrl + Shift + L and the drop-down
Save under the month's name	File > Save As > browse	F12

She learnt three shortcuts a week. By the second month-end the routine took well under an hour, and, more importantly, she stopped missing the last few rows of the export, which had caused two wrong reports earlier in the year.

The lesson

Shortcuts don't just save time. They make every step the same each month, and the same steps give the same, checkable result.

PRACTICE

Practice: the ten-minute drill

Open the practice workbook and go to the sheet **1 Shortcuts**. It holds 1,200 invoices from Meridian Distributors (invented) for April 2025 to March 2026. Do each step with the keyboard only, and write down the answers. They are in Chapter 9.

- 1 **Jump to the end.** Click A1 and press **Ctrl** + **↓**. Which invoice is on the last row?
- 2 **Find the last column.** Press **Ctrl** + **Home**, then **Ctrl** + **→**. Which heading is there?
- 3 **Total without a formula.** Go to G2 and press **Ctrl** + **Shift** + **↓**. Read Sum and Count in the status bar.
- 4 **Go to a cell.** Press **Ctrl** + **G**, type D600, press Enter. Which customer is in that cell?
- 5 **Filter one region.** Press **Ctrl** + **Shift** + **L**, then **Alt** + **↓** on the Region heading. Show only West, select the visible amounts and read the sum.
- 6 **Clear the filter.** Press **Ctrl** + **Shift** + **L** again so every row shows.
- 7 **Fill ten cells at once.** Type Checked by in K1. Select K2:K11, type your initials and press **Ctrl** + **Enter**.
- 8 **Tidy the columns.** Press **Ctrl** + **A**, then **Alt** H O I to AutoFit every column.

Do it twice

Time yourself the first time, then do the whole drill again tomorrow. Most people halve their time on the second try.

APPLY IT · SHORTCUT TRACKER

Shortcut tracker

Pick three shortcuts a week. Tick each day you use them without thinking, and add three more once a row is full.

Shortcut	What it does for me	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Ctrl + ↓ / ↑ / ← / →						
Ctrl + Shift + ↓						
Ctrl + Enter						
Ctrl + D						
Ctrl + Alt + V						
Ctrl + Shift + L						
Ctrl + T						
Ctrl + I						
F4						
Ctrl + `						

CHAPTER 1 IN 3 LINES

What to remember

- 1** Speed comes from fewer steps: jump, select and fill instead of scrolling and dragging.
- 2** Ctrl + arrow moves to the edge of the data; add Shift to select on the way.
- 3** Learn three shortcuts a week, and use key tips for everything else.

KEY WORDS

Key tips

The letters that appear on the ribbon when you press Alt.

Status bar

The strip at the bottom of the window that shows Sum, Count and Average of a selection.

Paste values

Pasting results only, without formulas, links or formats.

Common mistakes

- Learning all 30 in one go, and using none
- Leaving blank rows that stop Ctrl + arrow
- Pasting formulas when you meant to paste values

Try this week

- Do the ten-minute drill twice
- Use Ctrl + Alt + V for every paste this week
- Add your three most-used buttons to the Quick Access Toolbar

Quick self-check: You need the total of 3,400 amounts in column F, without writing a formula. Which keys do you press from F2, and where do you read the answer?

Next: **Chapter 2 · One sheet, one job**

You've just read Chapter 1 of Excel, Built Right.

The full book has 9 chapters, 8 worksheets and 104 pages. It is Book 1 of The Excel & Data Shelf: 11 short, practical books on one subject, sold together.

STILL TO COME IN EXCEL, BUILT RIGHT

2 One sheet, one job

3 Excel Tables

4 Numbers, dates and text

5 Drop-downs and input checks

6 Format for clarity

7 Protect, share and print

8 Check before you send

9 Your Excel toolkit

THE 11 BOOKS IN THE EXCEL & DATA SHELF

1 Excel, Built Right

2 Formulas That Think

3 Match & Merge

4 Answers in Minutes

5 Clean Data Fast

6 Charts That Speak

7 The One-Page Dashboard

8 The Monthly MIS

9 Power BI for Excel Users

10 Automate the Repeat

11 Numbers You Can Trust

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