

Microsoft EXCEL 2013 – Flash Fill

Excel 2013's great new Flash Fill feature gives you the ability to take a part of the data entered into one column of a worksheet table and enter just that data in a new table column using only a few keystrokes. Flash Fill also gives you the ability to combine multiple columns into one. Flash Fill uses patterns to try and figure out what you're trying to accomplish and applies the results.

The series of entries appear in the new column, literally in a flash (thus, the name *Flash Fill*), the moment Excel detects a pattern in your initial data entry that enables it to figure out the data you want to copy. The beauty is that all this happens without the need for you to construct or copy any kind of formula.

Flash Fill uses pattern recognition to extract data (and also concatenate data). Just enter a few examples in a column that's adjacent to the data, and choose Data->Flash Fill ICON (or press CTRL + E). Excel analyzes the cell or cells and attempts to fill in the remaining cells. If Excel didn't recognize the pattern you had in mind, press CTRL + Z, add another example or two, and try again.

The two important Short-Cut keys you will need to know:

- a. **CTRL** Key + **Enter** Key (Locks in your pattern)
- b. **CTRL** Key + **E** Key (Auto Fills your pattern)

Below is an example of how powerful Flash Fill is. I have last name with a comma, space, first name, space, and middle initial with a period. I want first name, space, middle initial with period, space, and last name.

	A	B
1	Smith, Ed L.	
2	Smith, Monice	
3	Smith, Chad E.	
4	Smith, Madison T.	
5	Smith, Amber L.	
6		

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Type in Cell “B1” Ed L. Smith and in Cell “B2” Monice Smith explaining to Flash Fill that Monice Smith doesn’t have a middle initial with a period. You’ve given Excel two patterns to analyze from. Lock in the pattern by the hitting the CTRL + Enter Key. Now, hit the CTRL + “E” Key to auto fill to the rest of the cells. See result below.

	A	B
1	Smith, Ed L.	Ed L. Smith
2	Smith, Monice	Monice Smith
3	Smith, Chad E.	Chad E. Smith
4	Smith, Madison T.	Madison T. Smith
5	Smith, Amber L.	Amber L. Smith
6		

Now we’ll try something that is even more complex. What happens if you have names in one style and other names in a different style? You want all names the same style. See example below. Notice the different Styles. One has last name, comma, first name, space, middle initial with period. The other style is first name, space, middle initial with period, space, and last name. The style we want for the entire column is first name, space, middle initial with period, space, and last name. See example below.

	A	B
1	Smith, Ed L.	
2	Amber L. Smith	
3	Smith, Monice	
4	Madison T. Smith	
5	Jones, Madison T.	
6	Jones, Amber L.	
7	Ed L. Jones	
8	Monice Jones	
9	Chad E. Smith	
10	Jones, Chad E.	

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We'll set the pattern in two cells so Excel can analyze what we're trying to accomplish. We'll type in cell "B1" Ed L. Smith and in cell "B2" Amber L. Smith. Hit the CTRL + Enter Key and then hit CTRL "E" Key. See results below.

	A	B
1	Smith, Ed L.	Ed L. Smith
2	Amber L. Smith	Amber L. Smith
3	Smith, Monice	Monice Smith
4	Madison T. Smith	Madison T. Smith
5	Jones, Madison T.	Madison T. Jones
6	Jones, Amber L.	Amber L. Jones
7	Ed L. Jones	Ed L. Jones
8	Monice Jones	Monice Jones
9	Chad E. Smith	Chad E. Smith
10	Jones, Chad E.	Chad E. Jones
11		

Now we'll take three separate columns and combine into one using Flash Fill. See example below.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Ed	L.	Fritts		
2	Chad	E.	Fritts		
3	Madison	T.	Fritts		
4	Amber	L.	Fritts		
5	Monice		Fritts		
6					

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Type in Cell “D1” Ed L. Fritts and Hit the CTRL + Enter Key and then hit CTRL “E” Key. See results below.

	A	B	C	D
1	Ed	L.	Fritts	Ed L. Fritts
2	Chad	E.	Fritts	Chad E. Fritts
3	Madison	T.	Fritts	Madison T. Fritts
4	Amber	L.	Fritts	Amber L. Fritts
5	Monice		Fritts	Monice Fritts
6				