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you know? Efficiently eliminates the need to export data manually and rebuild status dashboards. Get started by pulling live data into pre-built Sheets dashboards. Need to find differences between Excel spreadsheets? This guide covers six methods to compare Excel files, from built-in tools to advanced formulas. Microsoft Excel's Spreadsheet Compare tool offers a straightforward way to identify differences between two workbooks. Step 1. Open Spreadsheet Compare from the Excel ribbon. Look for the Data Tools group and select Spreadsheet Compare. If you don't see this option, you may need to install it from Office Settings. Step 2. Select the two Excel files for comparison. In the Spreadsheet Compare window, click Compare Files. Browse and select your first Excel file. Repeat the process for the second file you want to compare. Step 3. Choose comparison options. Specify which elements to compare: formulas, cell formatting, macros, etc. Select specific sheets or entire workbooks for comparison. Adjust sensitivity settings for detecting differences. Step 4. Analyze the results in the comparison view. Review the side-by-side comparison of both files. Differences are highlighted for easy identification. Use the navigation pane to jump between discrepancies. Step 1. Use the IF function to compare individual cells. In a new column, enter the following formula: =IF(A1=B1, "Difference", "Match"). This formula compares the values in cells A1 and B1. If the values are the same, it returns "Match"; otherwise, it returns "Difference". Step 2. Use the COUNTIF function to compare ranges. For example, to compare the number of cells containing the value "Apple" in two ranges, use the following formula: =COUNTIF(A1:A10, "Apple") - COUNTIF(B1:B10, "Apple"). This formula returns the difference in the count of "Apple" between the two ranges. Step 3. Use the VLOOKUP function to compare data. For example, to compare the value in cell A1 of Sheet1 with the value in cell B1 of Sheet2, use the following formula: =VLOOKUP(A1, Sheet2!\$A\$1:\$B\$100, 2, FALSE). The first argument is the lookup value, the second is the range to search, the third is the column index number, and the fourth is the match type. Step 4. Use the INDEX and MATCH combination for more flexible comparisons. This formula: =INDEX(Sheet2!\$B\$1:\$B\$100, MATCH(A1, Sheet1!\$A\$1:\$A\$100, 0)) This allows for non-sequential data and is more versatile than VLOOKUP. Step 5. Implement SUMPRODUCT function for array-based comparisons. For comparing entire columns, use: =SUMPRODUCT((Sheet1!\$A\$1:\$A\$100=Sheet2!\$A\$1:\$A\$100)). This counts the total number of matches between two columns. Visual methods can quickly highlight differences between Excel files. Step 1. Enable View Side by Side feature. Open both Excel files you want to compare. Go to the View tab and click View Side by Side. Scroll through both sheets simultaneously to spot differences. Step 2. Use Conditional Formatting to highlight differences. Select the range you want to compare in both sheets. Go to Home > Conditional Formatting > New Rule. Choose Use a formula to determine which cells to format. Enter this formula: =A1=Sheet2!A1. Select a format to highlight differences. Step 3. Implement Go To Special tool to identify cell differences. Select the range you want to compare. Press F5 to open the Go To dialog. Click Special and select Row Differences or Column Differences. Excel will highlight cells that differ between the selected ranges. VBA (Visual Basic for Applications) can automate the comparison process for large or frequently compared files. Step 1. Create a simple VBA macro for file comparison. Press Alt + F11 to open the VBA editor. Insert a new module and paste the basic code below. Step 2. Use the VBA editor to create a more complex macro. For example, to compare the values in a specific range of two sheets, use the following code: Sub CompareRange() Dim rngCell As Range Dim rngCell2 As Range Dim rngCell3 As Range Dim rngCell4 As Range Dim rngCell5 As Range Dim rngCell6 As Range Dim rngCell7 As Range Dim rngCell8 As Range Dim rngCell9 As Range Dim rngCell10 As Range Dim rngCell11 As Range Dim rngCell12 As Range Dim rngCell13 As Range Dim rngCell14 As Range Dim rngCell15 As Range Dim rngCell16 As Range Dim rngCell17 As Range Dim rngCell18 As Range Dim rngCell19 As Range Dim rngCell20 As Range Dim rngCell21 As Range Dim rngCell22 As Range Dim rngCell23 As Range Dim rngCell24 As Range Dim rngCell25 As Range Dim rngCell26 As Range Dim rngCell27 As Range Dim rngCell28 As Range Dim rngCell29 As Range Dim rngCell30 As Range Dim rngCell31 As Range Dim rngCell32 As Range Dim rngCell33 As Range Dim rngCell34 As Range Dim rngCell35 As Range Dim rngCell36 As Range Dim rngCell37 As Range Dim rngCell38 As Range Dim rngCell39 As Range 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Clear Rules >> choose Clear Rules from Selected Cells or Entire Sheet. This removes only the formatting, not your original data.Can I compare values but ignore formatting differences?Yes, Conditional formatting and formulas allow you to compare actual cell values not cell colors, borders, or fonts. To include formatting in the comparison, use the Inquire add-in. Can I highlight only the rows that contain any mismatch?Yes, you can adjust your conditional formatting formula to check entire rows and apply a format if any value differs across that row. Alternatively, use VBA to flag full rows instead of individual cells. Wrapping upIn this tutorial, we learned how to compare two Excel sheets and highlight differences using various techniques. We covered simple Side by Side viewing, Conditional Formatting, custom formulas, the Inquire add-in, and a VBA macro to automate cell-by-cell comparison. Feel free to download the practice file and share your thoughts and suggestions. Post Views: 372 In this tutorial, you will learn a variety of methods to compare Excel files and identify differences between them. See how to open two Excel windows side by side, how to use Excel formulas to create a difference report, highlight differences with conditional formatting, and more.When you have two similar Excel workbooks, or better say two versions of the same workbook, what's the first thing you usually want to do with them? Right, compare those files for differences, and then probably merge them into a single file. In addition, workbook comparison can help you spot potential problems like broken links, duplicate records, inconsistent formulas or wrong formatting.So, let's have a closer look at various methods to compare two Excel sheets or entire workbooks and identify differences between them. If you have relatively small workbooks and a sharp eye for detail, this quick and easy way to compare Excel files might work well for you. I am talking about View Side by Side mode that lets you arrange two Excel windows side by side. You can use this method to visually compare two workbooks or two sheets in the same workbook. Let's say you have sales reports for two months and you want to view both of them simultaneously to understand which products performed better this month and which did better last month.To open two Excel files side by side, do the following:Open the workbooks you want to compare.Go to the View tab, Window group, and click the View Side by Side button. That's it!By default, two separate Excel windows are displayed horizontally.To split Excel windows vertically, click Arrange All button and select Vertical:As the result, two separate Excel windows will be arranged side by side, like in the below screenshot.If you want to scroll through both worksheets simultaneously to compare data row-by-row, make sure the Synchronous Scrolling option is turned on. This option resides on the View tab, in the Window group, right under the View Side by Side button, and is usually turned on automatically as soon as you activate View Side by Side mode.For more information about using this Excel feature, please see View Excel workbooks side by side. To view more than 2 Excel files at a time, open all the workbooks you want to compare, and click the View Side by Side button. The Compare Side by Side dialog box will appear, and you select the files to be displayed together with the active workbook.To view all open Excel files at a time, click the Arrange All button on the View tab, in the Window group, and choose your preferred arrangement: tiled, horizontal, vertical or cascade. Sometimes, 2 sheets that you want to compare reside in the same workbook. To view them side by side, perform the following steps.Open your Excel file, go to the View tab > Window group, and click the New Window button. This will open the same Excel file in a different window.Enable View Side by Side mode by clicking the corresponding button on the ribbon.Select sheet 1 in the first window and sheet 2 in the second window. It is the simplest way to compare data in Excel that lets you identify cells with different values. As the result, you will have a difference report in a new worksheet.To compare two Excel worksheets for differences, just open a new empty sheet, enter the following formula in cell A1, and then copy it down and to the right by dragging the fill handle:=IF(Sheet1!A1 Sheet2!A1, "Sheet1:&Sheet1!A1&" vs Sheet2:"&Sheet2!A1, "")Due to the we use of relative cell references, the formula will change based on a relative position of the column and row. As the result, the formula in A1 will compare cell A1 in Sheet1 and Sheet2, the formula in B1 will compare cell B1 in both sheets, and so on. The result will look similar to this:As you can see in the above screenshot, the formula compares 2 sheets, identifies cells with deferent values and displays the differences in corresponding cells. Please note that in the difference report, dates (cell C4) are presented by serial numbers as they are stored in the internal Excel system, which is not very convenient for analyzing differences between them. To highlight cells that have different values in two sheets with the color of your choosing, use the Excel conditional formatting feature.In the worksheet where you want to highlight differences, select all used cells. For this, click the upper left cell of the used range, usually A1, and press Ctrl + Shift + End to extend the selection to the last used cell.On the Home tab, in the Styles group, click Conditional Formatting > New rule, and create a rule with the following formula:=A1Sheet2!A1Where Sheet2 is the name of the other sheet you are comparing.As the result, the cells with different values will get highlighted with the selected color.If you are not very familiar with Excel conditional formatting, you can find the detailed steps to create a rule in the following tutorial. Excel conditional formatting based on another cell value.As you see, it's very easy to compare two Excel sheets by using formulas or conditional formats. However, these methods are not well suited for all-round comparison because of the following limitations:They find differences only in values, but cannot compare formulas or cell formatting.They cannot identify added or deleted rows and columns. As soon as you add or delete a row / column in one sheet, all subsequent rows / columns will be marked as differences.They work on a sheet level, but cannot detect workbook-level structural differences such as sheet additions and deletions. When it comes to merging different versions of the same Excel file, the Compare and Merge feature comes in handy. It is especially useful when several users collaborate on the same Excel workbook because it lets you view the changes and comments of all users at a time. To leverage this feature, be sure to do the following preparations:Share your Excel workbook before you make it available to other users.To share a workbook, just click the Share Workbook button on the Review tab, in the Changes group, select the Allow Changes by More Than One User box, and click OK. Allow Excel to save the workbook if prompted. Turning on the Track Changes feature shares the workbook automatically. Each person who makes any edits to the shared workbook must save a copy (.xls or xlsx file) using a unique file name.Now that all initial preparations are done properly, you are ready to combine the copies of a shared workbook. Although, the Compare and Merge Workbooks feature is available in all versions of Excel 2010 through Excel 365, this command is not displayed anywhere in Excel by default. To add it to the Quick Access toolbar, perform the following steps:Open the Quick Access ribbon menu and select More Commands.In the Excel Options dialog box, select All Commands under Choose commands from.In the list of commands, scroll down to Compare and Merge Workbooks, select it and click the Add button to move it to the right-hand section.Click OK. When all of the users have finished working with your shared Excel workbook, you can merge all the copies into one file.Open the primary version the shared workbook.Click the Compare and Merge Workbooks command on the Quick Access toolbar. In the dialog box that appears, select a copy of the shared workbook that you want to merge. To select several copies, hold the Shift key while clicking the file names, and then click OK. Done! The changes from each copy are merged into a single workbook. To see all the edits by different users at a glance, just do the following:Switch to the Review tab > Changes group, and click Track Changes > Highlight Changes. In the Highlight Changes dialog, select All in the When box, Everyone in the Who box, clear the Where box, select the Highlight changes on screen box, and click OK.To point out the row and columns with differences, Excel highlights the column letters and row numbers in a dark red color. At the cell level, edits from different users are marked with different colors. To see who made a specific change, just hover over the cell.Note. If the Compare and Merge Workbooks command is greyed out in your Excel, most likely you are trying to combine different Excel files. Please remember, the Compare and Merge Workbooks feature allows merging only copies of the same shared workbook. As you have just seen, Microsoft Excel provides a handful of features to compare data in two or more workbooks. But none of the built-in options is sufficient to comprehensively compare Excel sheets, let alone entire workbooks, spotting all the differences in values, formulas or formatting.So, if you need advanced and really efficient means to compare two Excel files, then most likely you would have to use one of the third-party tools specially designed for comparing, updating and merging Excel sheets and workbooks. Below you will find a quick overview of a few tools that, in my opinion, are best performers in this area. The Synkronizer Excel Compare add-in can quickly compare, merge and update two Excel files saving you the trouble of searching for differences manually.If you are looking for a quick and reliable method to compare two Excel sheets or workbooks, you will certainly find helpful the following features of Synkronizer Excel Compare:Identifying the differences between two Excel sheets.Combining multiple Excel files into a single version without producing unwanted duplicates.Highlighting the differences in both sheets.Showing only the differences that are relevant to your task.Merging and updating the sheets.Presenting detailed and easy to read difference reports.To get some basic idea about Synkronizer Excel Compare's capabilities and performance, let's carry out a couple of field tests. Supposing you are organizing some event and, in your Excel table, you gather information about the participants such as a participant name, arrival date, number of seats, etc. Also, you have a couple of managers in direct contact with participants and the database, and as a result, you have 2 versions of the same Excel file.Okay, let's see how efficiently Synkronizer can compare our two sheets and identify differences between them.To run Synkronizer Excel Compare, go to the Add-ins tab, and click the Synchroizer 11 icon.The Synkronizer pane will show up in the left part of your Excel window, where you do the following:Select 2 workbooks to compare: Select sheets to compare. If the selected workbooks have any sheets with the same names, all those sheets will be matched and automatically selected for comparison (like Participants sheets in the below screenshot). Also, you can select worksheets manually or instruct the add-in to match sheets by other criteria, for example by worksheet type - all, protected, or hidden. Once you've selected the sheets, the Synkronizer add-in will open them side by side, arranged vertically or horizontally, like in Excel's View Side by Side mode. Select one of the following comparison options:Compare as normal worksheets - the default option that works in most cases.Compare with link options - if the selected sheets do not contain any new or deleted rows and columns, you can compare them '1 on 1'.Compare as database - recommended for comparing sheets that have a database structure.Compare selected ranges - if you do not want to compare the entire sheets, define the ranges to be compared.Choose the content types to be compared (optional).On the Select tab, in the Compare group, you can choose the content type(s) relevant to your current task. Under Content, you can select comments and names (in addition to cell values, formulas and calculated values that are compared by default).Under Formats, you choose what cell formats such as alignment, fill, font, border etc.The Filters option lets you filter out differences that you don't want to display. For example, you can ignore case, leading or trailing spaces, all formulas or different formulas with the same result, hidden rows or column, and more.Finally, click the big red Start button on the ribbon and proceed to examining the results. Usually it takes Synkronizer only a few seconds to compare 2 sheets and present two summary reports on the Results tab:In a summary report, you can see all difference types at a glance: changes in columns, rows, cells, comments, formats, and names.To view the detailed difference report, just click a specific difference type on the summary report.The following screenshot shows the summary report (in the upper part of the Results pane), and cell difference report (in the lower part of the pane) that were created for our sample sheets:Clicking on a difference in the detailed report will select the corresponding cells on both sheets (the below screenshot shows just one sheet because there's enough room to show both :)In addition, you can create a difference report in a separate workbook, either standard or hyperlinked, and jump to a specific difference with a mouse click: If the two Excel files you are comparing contain multiple sheets, all matching worksheet pairs will be presented in the summary report for your perusal: By default, the Synkronizer Excel Compare add-in highlights all found differences, like in the following screenshot:Yellow - differences in cell values Lilac - differences in cell formats Green - inserted rows To highlight only the relevant differences, click the Outline button on the Results tab, and select the required options: The merge function is definitely one of the most useful features of the Synkronizer Excel Compare add-in. You can transfer individual cells or move different columns/rows from the source to target sheet, and have your primary sheet updated in seconds. To update one or more differences, select them on the Synkronizer's pane and click one of the 4 update buttons - the first and last buttons update all differences, while the 2nd and 3rd buttons update selected differences only (the button arrows indicate the transfer direction).Well, these are the key features of the Synkronizer add-in, but there is certainly much more to it. Want to give it a try? An evaluation version is available for download here.Synkronizer is certainly worth your attention, but it's not the only way to compare files in Excel. A handful of other comparison tools exist, which basically provide the same set of features but in different implementations. The latest version of our Ultimate Suite includes over 40 new features and improvements, the most exciting of which is Compare Sheets - our own tool to compare worksheets in Excel.To make the comparison more intuitive and user-friendly, the add-in is designed in this way:A step-by-step wizard walks you through the process and helps configure different options.You can choose the comparison algorithm best suited for your data sets.Instead of a difference report, the compared sheets are displayed in the Review Differences mode so that you could view all the differences at a glance and manage them one-by-one.Now, let's try the tool on our sample spreadsheets from the previous example and see if the results are any different.Click the Compare Sheets button on the Ablebits Data tab, in the Merge group: The wizard will show up asking you to select the two worksheets you'd like to compare for differences. By default, the entire sheets are selected, but you can also select the current table or a specific range by clicking the corresponding button: On the next step, you select the comparison algorithm:No key columns (default) - works best for sheet-based documents like invoices or contracts.By key columns - is appropriate for column-organized sheets that have one or more unique identifiers such as order numbers or product ID's.Cell-by-cell - best to be used to compare spreadsheets with the same layout and size, like balance sheets or year-to-year reports.Tip. If you are unsure which option is right for you, go with the default one (No key columns). Whichever algorithm you select, the add-in will find all the differences, it will only highlight them differently (entire rows or individual cells). On the same step, you can choose the preferred match type:First match (default) - compare a row in Sheet 1 to the first found row in Sheet 2 that has at least one matching cell.Best match - compare a row in Sheet 1 to the row in Sheet 2 that has the maximum number of matching cells.Full match only - find rows in both sheets that have exactly the same values in all the cells, and mark all other rows as different. In this example, we will look for Best match by using the default No key columns comparing mode: Finally, specify which differences to highlight and which to ignore, and how to mark the differences. Cell formatting is important to us, so we select Show differences in formatting. Hidden rows and columns are irrelevant, and we tell the add-in to ignore them: Click the Compare button and allow the add-in a couple of minutes to process your data and make the backup copies. Backups are always created automatically, so you may not worry about the safety of your data. Once the worksheets are processed, they are opened side-by-side in a special Review Differences mode, with the first difference selected:On the screenshot above, the differences are highlighted with the default colors:Blue rows - rows that exist only in Sheet 1 (on the left).Red rows - rows that exist only in Sheet 2 (on the right).Green cells - difference cells in partially matching rows.To help you review and manage the differences, each worksheet has its own vertical toolbar. For the inactive worksheet (on the left) the toolbar is disabled. To enable the toolbar, just select any cell in the corresponding sheet.By using this toolbar, you go through the found differences one-by-one and decide whether to merge or ignore them:As soon as the last difference is dealt with, you will be prompted to save the workbooks and exit the Review differences mode.If you have not finished processing the differences yet but would like to take a break for now, click the Exit Review Differences button at the bottom of the toolbar and choose either to:Save the changes you've made and remove the remaining difference marks, orRestore the original workbooks from the backup copies.That's how you compare two sheets in Excel with our tool (hope you liked it :) If you are curious to give it a shot, an evaluation version is available for download here. Using the xlCompare utility, you can compare two Excel files, worksheets, names and VBA Projects. It identifies added, deleted and changed data and allows you to quickly merge differences. In addition, it provides the following options:Find duplicate records between two worksheets and remove them.Update all existing records in one sheet with values from another sheet.Add unique (new) rows and columns from one sheet to another.Merge all updated records from one workbook to another.Sort data on the sheets by the key column.Filter the comparison results to display differences or identical records.Highlight comparison results with colors. With Change pro for Excel, you can compare two sheets in desktop Excel as well as on mobile devices with optional server-based comparison. The key features of this tool are:Find differences between 2 sheets in formulas and values.Identify layout changes, including added / deleted rows and columns.Recognize embedded objects such as charts, graphs and images.Create and print difference reports of formula, value and layout differences.Filter, sort, and search the difference report on key changes.Compare files directly from Outlook or document management systems.Support for all languages, including multi-byte. Apart from desktop tools and utilities, there exist a number of online services that let you quickly compare two Excel sheets for differences without installing any software on your computer. Probably it's not the best solution in terms of security, but if your Excel files do not contain any sensitive information why not use some free online service for immediate results?For example, you can try XLComparator or CloudyExcel, or find some other similar services on the net. This is how the CloudyExcel service looks like:You just upload the two Excel workbooks you want to compare, and click the Find Difference button at the bottom of the screen. In a moment, the differences in two active sheets will get highlighted with different colors:Well, this is how you can compare Excel files for differences. If none of the solutions described in this tutorial is suitable for your task, check out the following resources that cover other aspects of Excel file comparison. And if you know any other ways to compare two Excel files, your comments will be greatly appreciated. I thank you for reading and hope to see you on our blog next week!

How to compare 2 excel files for differences. Excel 2010 compare two worksheets. How to compare two excel files for differences. Excel compare two documents. Excel compare two sheets for differences.

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