

CONVERTING TEXT TO COLUMNS (EXCEL)

In the world of spreadsheets and data analysis, a basic rule of thumb is that if you are not going to do a calculation on the values in a column or if the column has dates, then that column needs to be formatted as “text”, even if that text is a number, such as a zip code or an NIGP code. Some of the numbers for zip codes or NIGP codes start with a zero. If Excel thinks that the column is a number, then it will remove leading zeroes. For example, if your NIGP code is 00514, and the column is formatted as a “number”, then Excel will display 514, not 00514. In the NIGP Summary Tool, the formulas in the spreadsheet will not work properly if leading zeroes are removed.

When downloading purchase order data from PeopleSoft, some columns have numbers (e.g. supplier ID, NIGP code) and download correctly as text. But, if something happens and they don’t, you can “convert” them. Simply formatting the column as text will not work once the data has been imported into Excel as a number field. You must actually “convert” the numbers to text. Of course, if any leading zeroes have been removed, then you will need to manually fix those by typing in the correct value with the leading zeroes.

Depending on the data you have, you can split a single column of text into two or more columns based on either *fixed-width* or *delimiter*.

- When you split a column based on *fixed-width*, you tell Excel to put the first X number of spaces in one column, the next X number of spaces into the next column, and so forth, until you have told Excel how many new columns you want to make out of the original column.
- When you split a column based on a *delimiter*, you designate a character that Excel recognizes as separating what is in one column from what is in the next column. The most common delimiter is the comma (“,”) but you can also have tab-delimited, space-delimited, semi-colon delimited, etc.

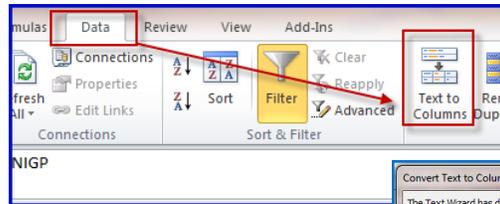
When you need to convert a column of numbers to a column of text, you can use either of these methods. In the instructions below, you will convert a column of NIGP codes from numbers to text using the *fixed-width* method because it is easier when you are converting one column to one column.

Using the Fixed-Width Method

Click on the column letter to highlight the entire column you want to convert.

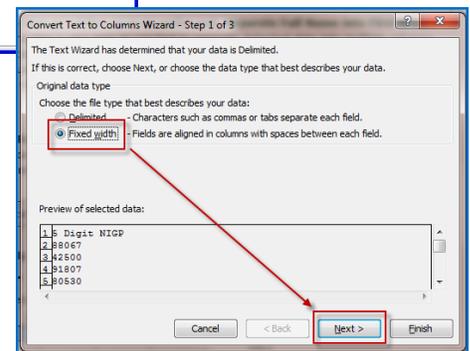
| | P |
|---|-------|
| 1 | 88067 |
| 1 | 42500 |
| 1 | 91807 |
| 1 | 80530 |
| 2 | 80530 |
| 1 | 90735 |
| 2 | 90735 |
| 1 | 95878 |
| 1 | 58060 |
| 1 | 20477 |
| 1 | 34028 |
| 1 | 20800 |
| 2 | 20687 |

On the **Data** tab, click on **Text to Columns**.

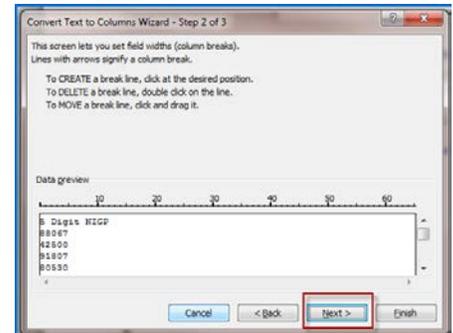


Click on the **Fixed width** radio button.

Click **Next**.



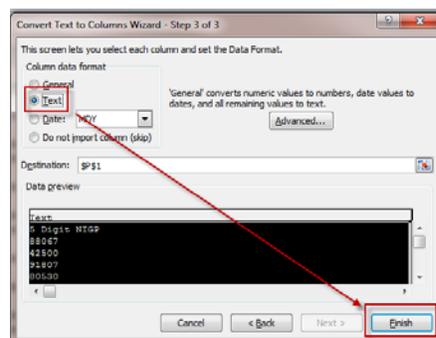
Click **Next** since you are not going to split the column into more than one column.



Click on the **Text** radio button. If you do not click on the **Text** but leave it as **General**, Excel will still think that the NIGP codes are numbers. You **must** click on **Text** here.

Click on **Finish**.

You will now see that the values in the cells are left-justified. This means that Excel now recognizes the numbers as text.



| | P |
|---|-------|
| 1 | 88067 |
| 1 | 42500 |
| 1 | 91807 |
| 1 | 80530 |
| 2 | 80530 |
| 1 | 90735 |
| 2 | 90735 |
| 1 | 95878 |
| 1 | 20477 |
| 1 | 34028 |
| 1 | 20800 |
| 2 | 20687 |

Using the Delimited Method

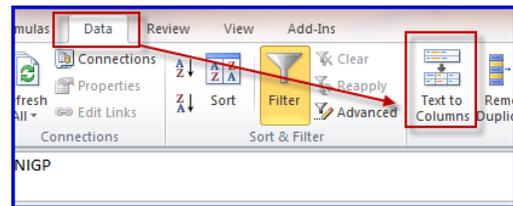
The **Delimited** method is one that uses a special character to tell Excel where to split the values in cells into two or more columns. A common need for this is to split a column that has first name and last name information. In this example, you will split a buyer name that is shown as Last Name, First Name into two columns, one for the last name and one for the first name.

Plan ahead. Know how many columns you want to split your data into. In this example, you want to have two columns instead of one, so you will have to insert a new column between column N (Buyer) and column O. The new column O will be blank but when you are finished, it will have the first name while column N will have just the last name.

Just as you did above for the fixed-width method, highlight the entire column that you want to split.

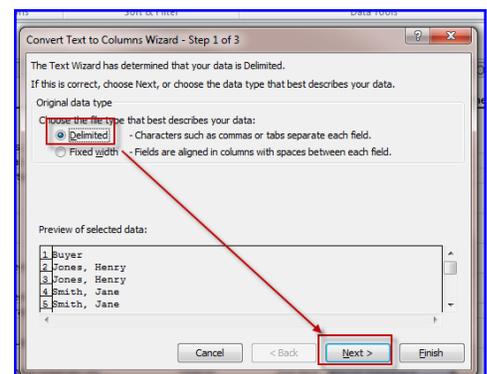


On the **Data** tab, click on **Text to Columns**.

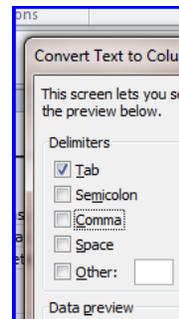


Leave the **Delimited** radio button (the default method) checked.

Click **Next**.



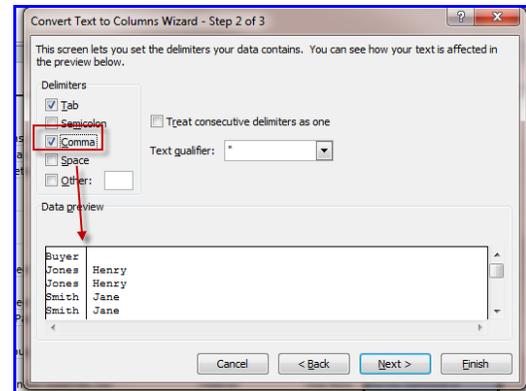
The default delimiter type is **Tab**.



Converting Text to Columns

Click on the checkbox next to **Comma**. You can leave **Tab** checked if you want to. Notice that when you click on **Comma**, a line showing the columns appears where the comma was.

Click **Next**



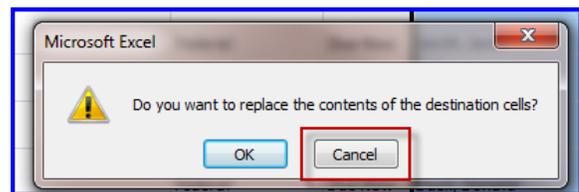
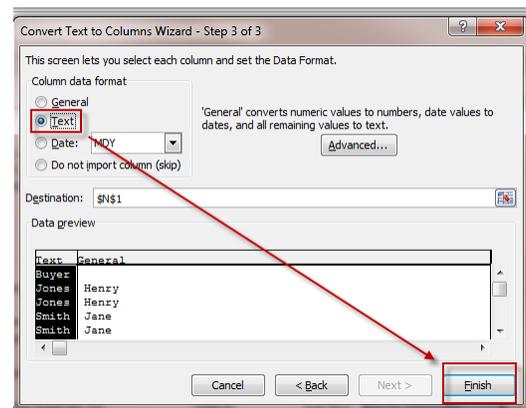
Click on the columns in the sample data and then the **Text** radio button. Do this for each column. [NOTE: If you know that all of your data is already “text”, then you can leave the data format as **General** but it is always best to specify **Text** so that you don’t have surprises later.]

[**TIP**: You can select multiple columns by clicking on the first column, holding down the **Shift** key, and then clicking on another column. Excel will highlight all columns between the first column you clicked and the last column. You can then select **Text** for all columns.]

Click **Finish**.

If you get this message, you did not insert enough columns to the right of the original column and some of your data will be overwritten. Click **Cancel**, insert enough columns, and repeat the text to columns steps.

You can now relabel your columns to **Last Name** and **First Name**.



| | N | O |
|--|-----------|------------|
| | Last Name | First Name |
| | Jones | Henry |
| | Jones | Henry |
| | Smith | Jane |
| | Smith | Jane |
| | Mouse | Mickey |
| | Duck | Donald |
| | Duck | Donald |
| | Mouse | Mickey |