Flash Fill

Flash Fill

The Flash Fill feature was introduced in Excel 2013. It is an awesome feature that will increase your productivity.

Before the Flash Fill feature, you would have used the =Left(), =Right(), =Mid(), =Find(), =Len(), =Text(), =Concatenate() and maybe a few nested =If(), =And() and/or =Or() functions. The Flash Fill feature will reduce the need for these functions and thereby speed up your worksheet and let you get home in time for dinner.

Flash Fill attempts to replicate a pattern it notices as you type info into a second cell (at least). It can extract, concatenate or re-arrange data. It will replicate uppercase v lowercase. It will replicate your typos too, so be careful!

As you begin typing the second entry (typically…), Excel's Flash Fill (AI) begins to seek patterns to replicate. Once the pattern is identified, Excel "ghosts" the adjacent cells with what Excel thinks you want to put in those cells.

Name Extractions	Last, First
Abe Simpson	Simpson, Abe
Amber Simpson	Simpson, Amber
Bartholomew JoJo Simpson	Simpson, Bartholomew
Homer Jay Simpson	Simpson, Homer
Lisa Marie Simpson	Simpson, Lisa
Margaret Evelyn Simpson	Simpson, Margaret
Marjorie Jacqueline Simpson	Simpson, Marjorie
Mona Penelope Simpson	Simpson, Mona
Agnes Skinner	Skinner, Agnes
Seymour Skinner	Skinner, Seymour
Waylon Smithers	Smithers, Waylon
Roy Snyder	Snyder, Roy
Jebediah Springfield	Springfield, Jebediah
Brandine Spuckler	Spuckler, Brandine
Cletus Spuckler	Spuckler, Cletus
Dolph Starbeam	Starbeam, Dolph
Moe Szyslak	Szyslak, Moe

If you like what you see in the "ghosted" cells, hit Enter to accept the proposed data.

If you don't like what you see, keep typing or hit Esc.

Extracting Data From Text Strings

Excel's Flash Fill (AI) feature will pull data from strings, so long as a pattern is recognized. Note the table below.

If you type "25" in the number column for the first row, and as you type 10 in the second row, Excel's Flash Fill will "ghost" the numbers found in the "Text String" column. Again, if you like what is proposed, hit Enter to accept.

Extracting Data From Text Strings	
Text String	**#s**
Archie's brought 25 buddies,	
Betty brought 10 of her friends,	
Veronica brought 2 more,	
Jughead invited 12 more people	
and Reggie arrived alone.	
20 cops arrived and shut it down.	
Start With 2,456.32	
Add 15	
Subtract 1,550.4	
Multiply by 3.1416	

Flash Fill

Converting Number Strings

Excel's Flash Fill (AI) feature will pull convert numeric data from strings, so long as a pattern is recognized. Note the table below.

If you type (214) 555-1234 in the first row of the Converted column, and as you begin to type "(" in the second row of the Converted column, Excel's Flash Fill will "ghost" the phone numbers found in the "Phone #" column. Again, if you like what is proposed, hit Enter to accept.

Converting Number Strings	
Phone #	**Converted**
2145551234	

Converting Number Strings

Excel's Flash Fill (AI) feature will pull text data and re-arrange it from text strings, so long as a pattern is recognized. Note the table below.

In the first row of the "Last, First" column, if you type "Simpson, Abe" and in the second row, begin typing "Simpson, Amber", the Flash Fill feature will not recognize the pattern until you type the "m" in Amber. Initially, Excel will presume "Simpson, Abe" from the row above, until you break one pattern and establish a new one by typing the "m" in Amber.

Because Abe Simpson and Amber Simpson do not have middle names listed in the "Name Extractions" column, you cannot begin with those two and expect the Flash Fill feature to put an middle initial in the first row. You'll need to begin with row three by typing "Simpson, Bartholomew J.". In row 4, begin typing "Simpson, Homer J." The Flash Fill feature will not recognize the pattern until you type the "H" in Homer. Initially, Excel will presume "Simpson, Bartholomew J." from the row above, until you break one pattern and establish a new one by typing the "H" in Homer.

In the first row of the "E-Mail Addresses" column, if you type "abe.simpson@HelpMeExcel.com" and in the second row, begin typing "amber.simpson@HelpMeExcel.com", the Flash Fill feature will not recognize the pattern until you type the "m" in Amber. Initially, Excel will presume "abe.simpson@HelpMeExcel.com" from the row above, until you break one pattern and establish a new one by typing the "m" in Amber.

Re-Arranging Data			
Name Extractions	Last, First	Last, First MI.	E-Mail Addresses
Abe Simpson			
Amber Simpson			
Bartholomew JoJo Simpson			
Homer Jay Simpson			
Lisa Marie Simpson			
Margaret Evelyn Simpson			
Marjorie Jacqueline Simpson			
Mona Penelope Simpson			
Agnes Skinner			
Seymour Skinner			
Waylon Smithers			
Jebediah Springfield			
Brandine Spuckler			
Cletus Spuckler			
Dolph Starbeam			
Moe Szyslak			