Excel 2013 Sort: Custom Sorts, Sort Levels, Changing Level & Sorting by Colored Cells

As you keep adding more content to a worksheet, organizing that information becomes important. You can quickly **reorganize** a worksheet by **sorting** your data. For example, you could organize a list of contact information by last name. Content can be sorted alphabetically, numerically, and in many other ways. Watch a quick video of <u>Sorting Data in Excel</u>.

Types of sorting:
When sorting data, sort to apply to the **entire worksheet** or just a **cell range**.
Sort sheet organizes all of the data in your worksheet by one column. Related information across each row is kept together when the sort is applied. In the example below, the **Contact Name** column (column **A**) has been sorted to display the names in alphabetical order.

	A	B	C	D
1		Customer Contact List		
2	CONTACT NAME	BILLING ADDRESS	PHONE	EMAIL ADDRESS
3	Bell, William	2201 Treasure Court	206-555-2303	wbell@bishopresearch.com
4	Dean, Hank	3034 Foggy Wharf	308-555-1050	hdean@venturebrewing.com
5	Figgis, Mallory	3520 Sleepy Hearth Dr	425-555-5370	malloryf@archerproperties.com
6	Finn, Jake	1407 Dusty Fawn Ln	605-555-6435	jake@adventureoutfitters.com
7	Kinkade, Chris	1028 Quiet Dale Rd	443-555-4942	chris.kinkade@placervilleins.com
8	Lawson, Miranda	5316 Colonial Pkwy	575-555-9255	mlawson@massairlines.com
9	Reyes, Felicia	8544 Lazy Bluff Ave	316-555-3256	felicia@everlypublishing.com
10	Sebastian, Lil	9060 Easy Evening Ln	207-555-7225	lil@knopeequestrian.com
11	Silva, Vivica	8595 Thunder Brook	360-555-4289	vivica@rileygardensupply.com
12	Stark, Katie	971 Cinder Butterfly St	603-555-2460	katie.stark@ariarealestate.com
13	Torrance, Jill	3160 Amber Gate Rd	605-555-4495	jtorrance@overlookinn.com
14	Yuen, Phillip	5108 Crystal Gate Blvd	913-555-5928	yuenp@corepharmaceuticals.com

Sort range sorts the data in a range of cells, which can be helpful when working with a sheet that contains several tables. Sorting a range will not affect other content on the worksheet.
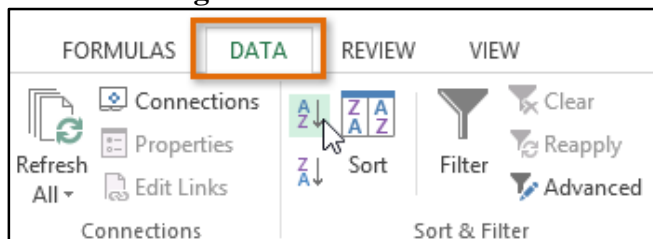
	A	B	C	D	E
1					
2	EXERCISES		SET 1	SET 2	
3		REPS	WEIGHT (lbs)	REPS	WEIGHT (lbs)
4	Bench Press	14	65	12	75
5	Bench Press (Decline)	10	60	8	70
6	Triceps Extension	15	35	20	35
7	Average	13.9	50.5	12.5	54
8					
9			Running Log		
10		Date	Distance (miles)	Time (hrs:mins)	
11		25-Jun	2.8	0:45	
12		26-Jun	3	0:44	
13		27-Jun	2.75	0:42	
14		29-Jun	3.25	0:44	
15		30-Jun	3.25	0:45	
16		2-Jul	2.5	0:44	
17		3-Jul	3	0:30	
18		Total	20.55		
19					

To sort a sheet:

In our example, we'll sort a T-shirt order form alphabetically by **Last Name** (column **C**). Select a **cell** in the column you wish to sort by. In our example, we'll select cell **C2**.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Homeroom #	First Name	Last Name	T-Shirt Size	Payment Method	
2	105	Christiana	Chen	Medium	Cash	
3	105	Melissa	White	Small	Debit Card	
4	105	Esther	Yaron	Small	Check	
5	135	Anisa	Naser	Small	Check	
6	135	Chantal	Weller	Medium	Cash	
7	220-A	Juan	Flores	X-Large	Pending	
8	220-B	Malik	Reynolds	Small	Cash	
9	220-B	Avery	Kelly	Medium	Debit Card	
10	105	Derek	MacDonald	Large	Cash	

Select the **Data** tab on the **Ribbon**, then click the **Ascending** command $\overset{A}{\underset{Z}{\downarrow}}$ to **Sort A to Z**, or the **Descending** command $\overset{Z}{\underset{A}{\downarrow}}$ to **Sort Z to A**. In our example, click the **Ascending** command.

The worksheet will be **sorted** by the selected column. In our example, the worksheet is now sorted by **last name**.

|	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Homeroom #	First Name	Last Name	T-Shirt Size	Payment Method	
2	110	Kris	Ackerman	Large	Money Order	
3	105	Nathan	Albee	Medium	Check	
4	220-B	Samantha	Bell	Medium	Check	
5	110	Matt	Benson	Medium	Money Order	
6	105	Christiana	Chen	Medium	Cash	
7	110	Gabriel	Del Toro	Medium	Cash	
8	220-A	Brigid	Ellison	Small	Cash	
9	220-A	Juan	Flores	X-Large	Pending	
10	220-B	Tyrese	Hanlon	X-Large	Debit Card	

To sort a range:

In our example, we'll select a **separate table** in our T-shirt order form to sort the number of shirts that were ordered on different dates.

Select the **cell range** you wish to sort. In our example, we'll select cell range **A13:B17**.
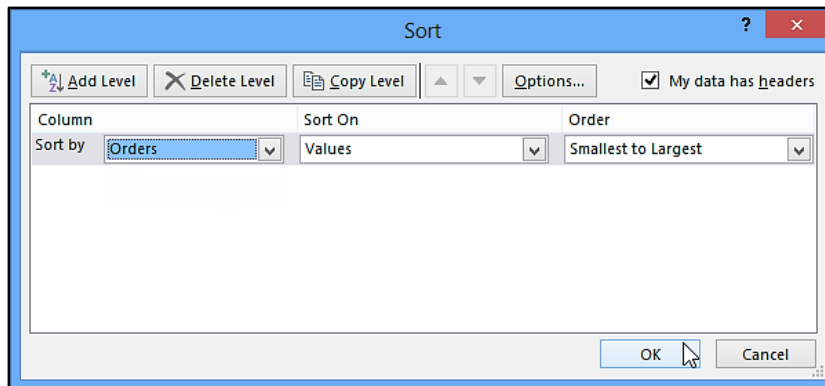

Select the **Data** tab on the **Ribbon**, then click the **Sort** command.

The **Sort** dialog box will appear. Choose the **column** you wish to sort by. In our example, sort the data by the number of T-shirt orders, so we'll select **Orders**.
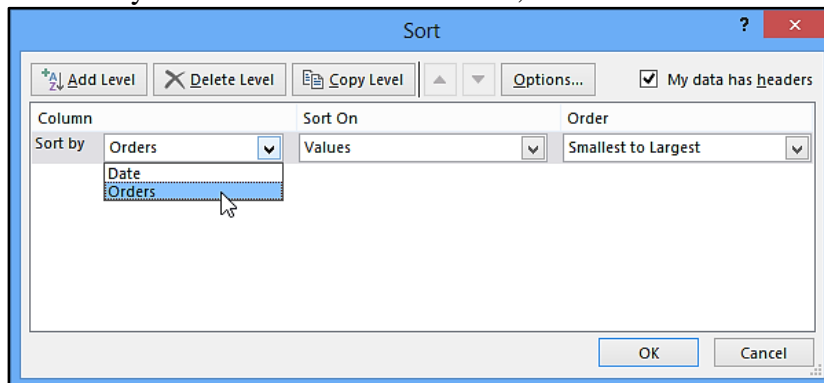
Decide the **sorting order** (either ascending or descending). In our example, use **Smallest to Largest**. Once you're satisfied with your selection, click **OK**.

The cell range will be **sorted** by the selected column. In our example, the **Orders** column will be sorted from **lowest to highest**. Notice the other content in the worksheet was not affected by the sort.

If your data isn't sorting properly, double-check your cell values to make sure they are entered into the worksheet correctly. Even a small typo could cause problems when sorting a large worksheet. In the example below, we forgot to include a hyphen in cell A18, causing our sort to be slightly inaccurate. Spaces can also be a problem for sorting.

|	A	B	C	D
1	Homeroom #	First Name	Last Name	T-Shirt Size
16	135	Jordan	Weller	Large
17	135	Alex	Yuen	Large
18	220A	Christopher	Peyton-Gomez	Small
19	220-A	Brigid	Ellison	Small
20	220-A	Juan	Flores	X-Large
21	220-A	Chevonne	Means	Medium

Custom sorting

Sometimes you may find that the default sorting options can't sort data in the order you need. Fortunately, Excel allows you to create a **custom list** to define your own sorting order.

To create a custom sort:

In our example below, we want to sort the worksheet by **T-Shirt Size** (column **D**). A regular sort would organize the sizes alphabetically, which would be incorrect. Instead, we'll create a custom list to sort from smallest to largest.

Select a **cell** in the column you wish to sort by. In our example, we'll select cell **D2**.

D2			fx	Large		
	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Homeroom #	First Name	Last Name	T-Shirt Size	Payment Method	
2	110	Kris	Ackerman	Large	Money Order	
3	105	Nathan	Albee	Medium	Check	
4	220-B	Samantha	Bell	Medium	Check	
5	110	Matt	Benson	Medium	Money Order	
6	105	Christiana	Chen	Medium	Cash	
7	110	Gabriel	Del Toro	Medium	Cash	
8	220-A	Brigid	Ellison	Small	Cash	
9	220-A	Juan	Flores	X-Large	Pending	
10	220-B	Tyrese	Hanlon	X-Large	Debit Card	

Select the **Data** tab, then click the **Sort** command.

The **Sort** dialog box will appear. Select the **column** you want to sort by, then choose **Custom List...** from the **Order** field. In our example, we will choose to sort by **T-Shirt Size**.
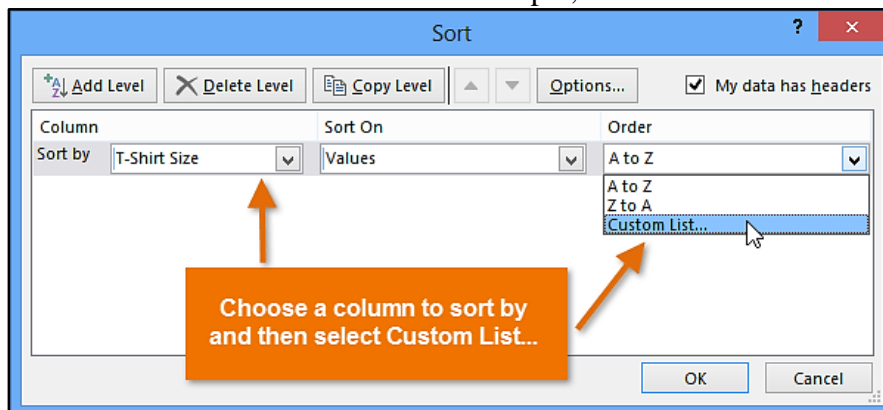
The **Custom Lists** dialog box will appear. Select **NEW LIST** from the **Custom Lists:** box. Type the items in the desired custom order in the **List entries:** box. In our example, we want to sort our data by T-shirt size from **smallest** to **largest**, so we'll type **Small**, **Medium**, **Large**, and **X-Large**, pressing **Enter** on the keyboard after each item.
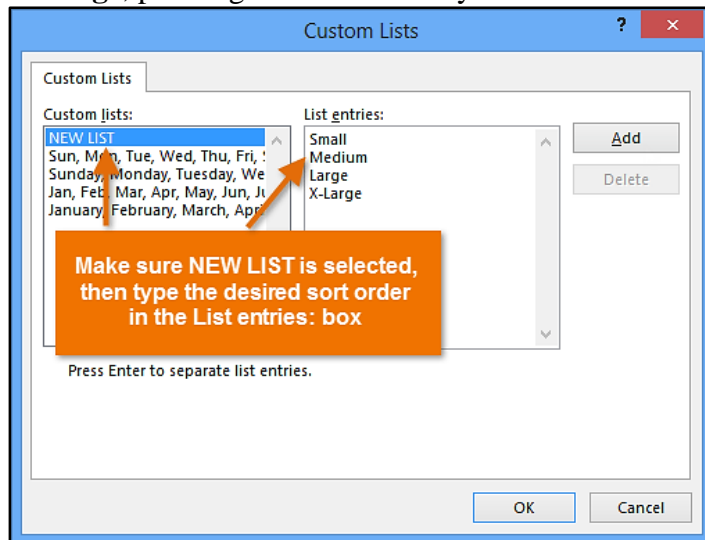
Click **Add** to save the new sort order. The new list will be added to the **Custom lists:** box. Make sure the new list is **selected**, then click **OK**.
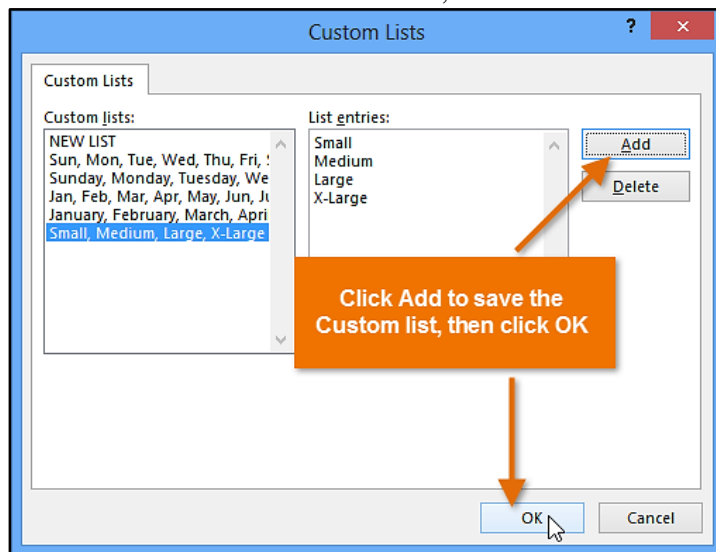
The **Custom Lists** dialog box will close. Click **OK** in the **Sort** dialog box to perform the custom sort.
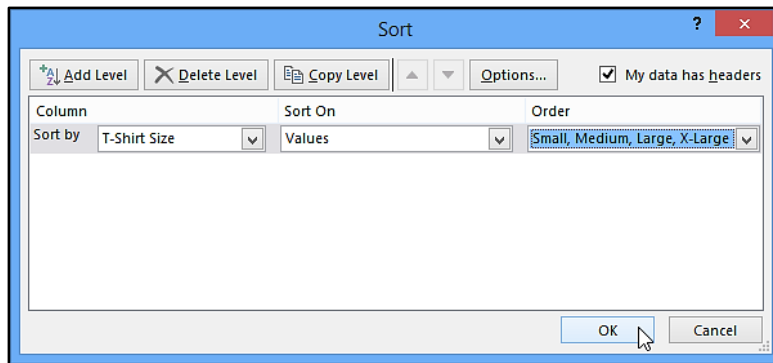
The worksheet will be **sorted** by the custom order. In our example, the worksheet is now organized by T-shirt size from smallest to largest.


To sort by cell formatting:

You can also choose to sort your worksheet by **formatting** rather than cell content. This can be especially helpful if you add color coding to certain cells. In our example below, we'll sort by **cell color** to quickly see which T-shirt orders have outstanding payments.

Select a **cell** in the column you wish to sort by. In our example, we'll select cell **E2**.

Select the **Data** tab, then click the **Sort** command.

The **Sort** dialog box will appear. Select the column you wish to sort by, then decide whether you'll sort by **Cell Color**, **Font Color**, or **Cell Icon** from the **Sort On** field. In our example, we'll sort by **Payment Method** (column **E**) and **Cell Color**.
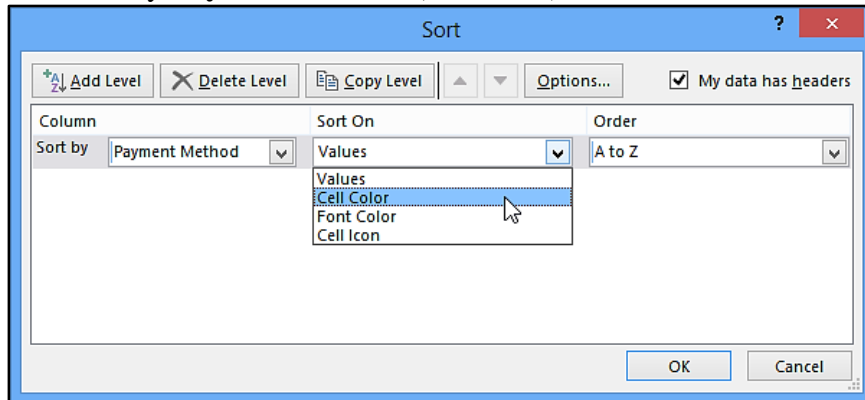
Choose a **color** to sort by from the **Order** field. In our example, we'll choose **light red**.
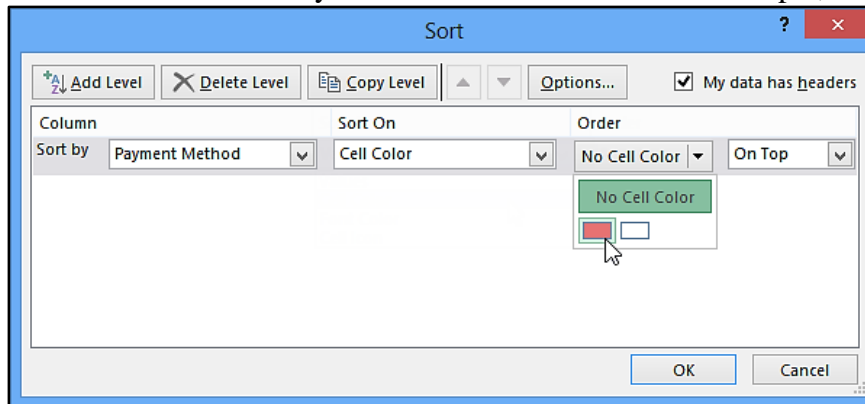
Click **OK**. In our example, the worksheet is now sorted by **cell color**, with the light red cells on top. This allows us to see which orders still have outstanding payments.

Sorting Levels

If you need more control over how your data is sorted, you can add multiple **levels** to any sort. This allows you to sort your data by **more than one column**.

To add a level:

In our example below, we'll sort the worksheet by **Homeroom Number** (column **A**), then by **Last Name** (column **C**). Select a **cell** in the column you wish to sort by. In our example, we'll select cell **A2**.

A2	▾ ⋮	✕ ✓	*fx*	220-B	

◢	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Homeroom #	First Name	Last Name	T-Shirt Size	Payment Method	
2	220-B ⊕	Malik	Reynolds	Small	Cash	
3	220-B	Windy	Shaw	Small	Cash	
4	220-B	Michael	Lazar	Small	Cash	
5	220-A	Brigid	Ellison	Small	Cash	
6	135	Chantal	Weller	Medium	Cash	
7	105	Christiana	Chen	Medium	Cash	
8	110	Gabriel	Del Toro	Medium	Cash	
9	105	Derek	MacDonald	Large	Cash	
10	135	Lia	Richards	X-Large	Cash	

Click the **Data** tab, then select the **Sort** command.

The **Sort** dialog box will appear. Select the first column you wish to sort by. In this example, we will sort by **Homeroom #** (column **A**). Click **Add Level** to add another column to sort by.
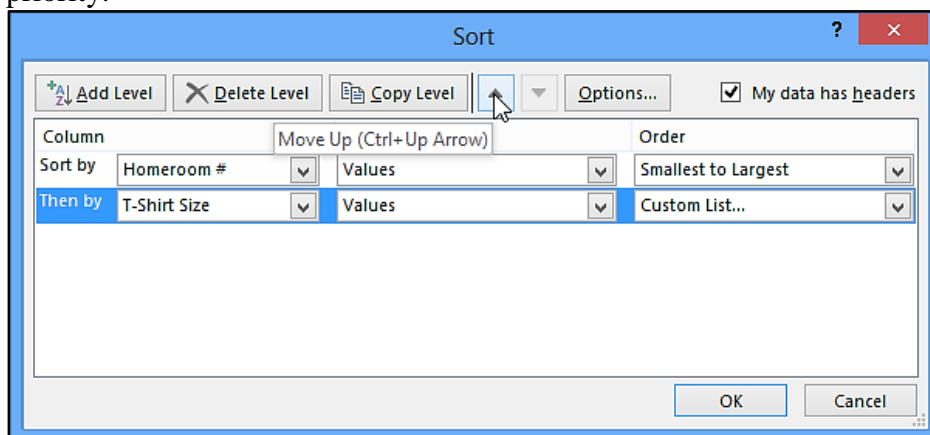

Select the next column you wish to sort by, then click **OK**. In our example, we'll sort by **Last Name** (column **C**).

The worksheet will be **sorted** according to the selected order. In our example, the homeroom numbers are sorted numerically. Within each homeroom, students are sorted alphabetically by last name.

| A2 | ▼ | : | × | ✓ | fx | 105 |

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	**Homeroom #**	**First Name**	**Last Name**	**T-Shirt Size**	**Payment Method**	
2	105	Nathan	Albee	Medium	Check	
3	105	Christiana	Chen	Medium	Cash	
4	105	Sidney	Kelly	Medium	Check Bounced	
5	105	Derek	MacDonald	Large	Cash	
6	105	Melissa	White	Small	Debit Card	
7	105	Esther	Yaron	Small	Check	
8	110	Kris	Ackerman	Large	Money Order	
9	110	Matt	Benson	Medium	Money Order	
10	110	Gabriel	Del Toro	Medium	Cash	

If you need to change the order of a multilevel sort, it's easy to control which column is sorted first. Select the desired **column**, then click the **Move Up** or **Move Down** arrow to adjust its priority.

| Sort | | | | | | ? | × |

| *A↓ Add Level | ✗ Delete Level | 🖹 Copy Level | ▲ ▼ | Options... | ☑ My data has headers |

Column		Move Up (Ctrl+Up Arrow)		Order	
Sort by	Homeroom #	▼	Values	▼	Smallest to Largest	▼
Then by	T-Shirt Size	▼	Values	▼	Custom List...	▼

OK   Cancel

Challenge!

Open an existing Excel workbook.

Sort a worksheet in ascending $A↓$ or descending $A↓$ order. If you are using the example, sort by **Homeroom #** (column **A**).

Sort a **cell range**. If you are using the example, sort the cell range in the cell range **G3:H7** from highest to lowest by **Orders** (column **H**).

Add a **level** to the sort, and sort it by **cell color**, **font color**, or **cell icon**. If you are using the example, add a second level to sort by **cell color** in column **E**.

Add another level, and sort it using a **custom list**. If you are using the example, create a custom list to sort by **T-Shirt Size** (column **D**) in the order of Small, Medium, Large, and X-Large.

Change the **sorting priority**. If you are using the example, reorder the list to sort by **T-Shirt Size** (column **D**), **Homeroom #** (column **A**), and **Last Name** (column **C**).