

note

Flash Fill doesn't understand mathematics

You could be forgiven for thinking that Flash Fill could solve this problem:

	A	B
1	100	101
2	120	121
3	150	

It seems obvious that column B simply adds 1 to the value in column A. Unfortunately, Flash Fill doesn't understand mathematical calculation so you are out of luck.

Flash Fill can, however, work with numbers in the same way that it works with text. Consider this example:

	A	B
1	123	23
2	777	77
3	727	27

Flash Fill is happy to strip off the first digit from column A. It can do this because no calculations are involved.

You need to be careful with the treatment of zeros when tackling this sort of problem. Consider this example:

	A	B
1	123	23
2	777	77
3	707	7

You may have thought that Flash Fill would have entered 07 in cell B3 rather than 7.

This can be achieved using custom number formatting. Custom number formatting is beyond the scope of this *Basic Skills* book but is covered in depth in the *Essential Skills* book in this series (in *Lesson 4-4: Create custom number formats*).

Client Names-1

Lesson 2-20: Use multiple example Flash Fill to concatenate text

Understand concatenation

In: *Lesson 2-18: Use automatic Flash Fill to split delimited text*, you learned how to split text with this example:

	A	B	C
3	Name	First Name	Last Name
4	Jessica Sagan	Jessica	Sagan
5	Stephen Bell	Stephen	Bell

In the above example the text: *Jessica Sagan* was split into two separate words: *Jessica* and *Sagan*.

Concatenation is exactly the opposite of splitting. The two separate words *Jessica* and *Sagan* can be concatenated to produce the single word: *Jessica Sagan*. This is an example of very simple concatenation.

In this lesson we'll perform some very advanced concatenation using *Flash Fill*.

1 Open *Client Names-1* from your sample files folder.

This workbook contains a list of very inconsistently formatted client names:

	A	B	C	D
3	Last	Middle	First	
4	Sagan	Elizabeth	Jessica	
5	Bell	p	Stephen	
6	Jennings		John	

We want to clean up this data so that client names are consistently formatted like this:

	A	B	C	D
3	Last	Middle	First	Formatted Name
4	Sagan	Elizabeth	Jessica	Sagan, Jessica E.
5	Bell	p	Stephen	Bell, Stephen P.
6	Jennings		John	Jennings, John
7	Simpson	Jane	Meryl	Simpson, Meryl J.
8	hawking		Alfred	Hawking, Alfred
9	Ashe	m	Lucille	Ashe, Lucille M.

In order for Flash Fill to automate this task you will need to tell Flash Fill what is needed by providing more than one example.

2 Type: **Formatted Name** into cell D3 and bold face the text.

(Excel will probably bold-face the text automatically).

It is important that the header text in row 3 is bold faced.

When Flash Fill sees different formatting in the first row the row is assumed to be a header row. Flash Fill excludes the value in the header row from its logic, providing more reliable results.

3 Provide a single example result in cell D4.

Type: **Sagan, Jessica E.** into cell D4.

4 Flash fill cells D5:D9 based upon the example result in cell D4.

	A	B	C	D
3	Last	Middle	First	Formatted Name
4	Sagan	Elizabeth	Jessica	Sagan, Jessica E.
5	Bell	p	Stephen	Bell, Stephen T.
6	jennings		John	jennings, John O.
7	Simpson	Jane	Meryl	Simpson, Meryl E.
8	hawking		Alfred	hawking, Alfred L.
9	Ashe	m	Lucille	Ashe, Lucille U.

You learned how to do this in: *Lesson 2-19: Use manual Flash Fill to split text.*

Excel completes the task but the results are not what we wanted (see sidebar).

With only one example, Flash Fill has completely misunderstood the requirement.

5 Provide two example results in cells D3 and D4.

1. Delete the names in cells D5:D9.
2. Provide another example of the correct result (in cell D4).

	A	B	C	D
3	Last	Middle	First	Formatted Name
4	Sagan	Elizabeth	Jessica	Sagan, Jessica E.
5	Bell	p	Stephen	Bell, Stephen P.
6	Jennings		John	

6 Flash fill cells D6:D9 based upon the example results in cells D4 and D5.

1. Select cells D4:D9.
2. Click: Home→Editing→Fill→Flash Fill.

This time Flash Fill has done a better job (see sidebar).

Notice the two blank results (for *John Jennings* and *Alfred Hawking*).

Flash Fill doesn't yet understand how to treat clients without a middle name. The blank spaces are Flash Fill's way of asking you for yet another example.

	A	B	C	D
3	Last	Middle	First	Formatted Name
4	Sagan	Elizabeth	Jessica	Sagan, Jessica E.
5	Bell	p	Stephen	Bell, Stephen P.
6	jennings		John	
7	Simpson	Jane	Meryl	Simpson, Meryl J.
8	hawking		Alfred	
9	Ashe	m	Lucille	Ashe, Lucille M.

7 Provide another example result in cell D6.

1. Type: **Jennings, John** into cell D6.
2. Press the <Enter> key.

Usually Flash Fill will instantly replace the value in cell D8. If it doesn't, you'll have to manually flash fill the entire list based upon the three examples provided. Do this by completing the following steps:

3. Select cells D4:D9.
4. Click: Home→Editing→Fill→Flash Fill.

This time Flash Fill has completed the task successfully (see sidebar).

	A	B	C	D
3	Last	Middle	First	Formatted Name
4	Sagan	Elizabeth	Jessica	Sagan, Jessica E.
5	Bell	p	Stephen	Bell, Stephen P.
6	jennings		John	Jennings, John
7	Simpson	Jane	Meryl	Simpson, Meryl J.
8	hawking		Alfred	Hawking, Alfred
9	Ashe	m	Lucille	Ashe, Lucille M.

8 Save your work as *Client Names-2*.