

Kati's Crash Courses: How to make and use a database in Excel

Yes, yes, I know that Excel is a SPREADSHEET application, but you can do cool database type things in it too! Coupled with the fact that it's easy to export out of and import into Excel, this could be your new best friend!

1. Get some data! Either start a spreadsheet with labeled columns, or use the sample I've posted here:
2. Go up to the headings at the top, and choose Data → Filter → Auto Filter. Notice you now have drop down menus on the top of all your column headings. You may want to widen the columns so you can still read the labels.
3. Sorting: Go to the grade column, and click on the down arrow to access the drop down menu. Choose the first item- sort ascending. Voila! You now have the table sorted numerically by grade.
4. Filtering: Now go to the age column, and click on the down arrow to access the drop down menu. Choose "10." Now you only have the 10 year olds listed. Also notice that the down arrow has turned blue- this is to help you recognize that you have filtered by this column. Go back up to the top to Data → Filter → Show all and you're back at the beginning.
5. More filtering: Go to the club column, click on the down arrow to access the drop down menu. Choose custom. A text box pops up. Leave the first box as equals, and in the second box choose Kenwood. Change the button in the middle to "or" (instead of "and"). In the next box, choose equals again, and then put Sonoma Valley in the next box, and hit ok. Voila- now you have the campers from the west side of the county. Go back up to the top to Data → Filter → Show all and you're back at the beginning.

Now for some tests:

- Show all the girls who are going to camp 1.
 - Show all the boys from Cotati and Petaluma.
 - Show all the 10 year olds who are going to camp 2.
6. Do you ever need sign in sheets? Duh, of course you do! Don't make a separate sheet- use your spreadsheet! Go all the way to the right and add a column called "Signature." Then highlight the columns you don't need (on the sample, let's say you don't need the world to see gender, address, city, state, or zip). Right click anywhere in the highlighted area, and choose "hide." Voila! The columns are now hidden. Notice also that a thick dark line is in its place, and that the column labels now go from A to G. Hit print and you've got your sign in sheet! When you want the columns back, Highlight the columns to the left and the right of the hidden columns (in this case, A and G), right click and choose unhide.
 7. One more cool function: Do you ever have someone do data entry for you? It can be scary to grant access to you data to someone- what if they get a little carried away and mess it up? There is an easy way to handle this: Go up to Data → Form. Up pops a cute little text box- each row is now displayed as a record! You can hit tab to move between fields, down and up arrow to move between records, and use the buttons on the right side to add or delete.