

Word, Excel & Microsoft 365 | Medium | 2 min read

Excel: how to create a drop-down list in a cell

A drop-down list lets people pick from a set of choices instead of typing. This keeps spellings consistent, which helps when you filter, count or sum your data later.

Create a simple list

1. Click the cell, or select several cells, where you want the drop-down.
2. Click the **Data** tab, then **Data Validation**.
3. On the **Settings** tab, change **Allow** to **List**.
4. In the **Source** box, type your choices separated by commas, for example Yes,No,Maybe.
5. Make sure **In-cell dropdown** is ticked.
6. Click **OK**.

A small arrow now appears when you click the cell.

Use a list stored on the sheet

This is better for longer lists or lists that change.

1. Type your choices down a column, for example in cells H2 to H6.
2. Click the target cell, open **Data Validation** and choose **List**.
3. Click in **Source**, then click and drag over H2 to H6 on the sheet.
4. Click **OK**.

If you want the list to grow, turn it into a table first by clicking inside and pressing Ctrl+T. Using a table as the source is a bit more advanced, so ask us if you get stuck.

Show a message or a warning

- **Input Message** tab: shows a helpful hint when the cell is selected.
- **Error Alert** tab: decides what happens if someone types something not on the list. **Stop** refuses it. **Warning** and **Information** allow it after a prompt.

Remove a drop-down

Select the cell, open **Data Validation** and click **Clear All**.

Common problems

- **The arrow does not show:** In-cell dropdown might be unticked, or the sheet is protected. Click the cell to see if the arrow appears.
- **Copying and pasting removes it:** pasting a normal cell over it removes the rule, so use **Paste Special**, then **Values** to avoid this.
- **People can still type anything:** the Error Alert style is set to Warning or Information.
- **Mac:** it is the same under **Data**, then **Data Validation**.

When to get more help

If you want a list that feeds from another file or many linked lists, ask us for a hand to set it up properly.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.