

Prevent Excel from turning fractions into dates

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If you do not apply a fraction format to a cell before you enter a fraction into it, Excel will convert the fraction into a date. For example, if you enter $1/50$ into a cell, Excel immediately converts it to *Jan-50*. If you then try to reformat the same cell to a fraction, Excel converts it to *18264*, the internal number that represents Jan-50. In that case, if you want Excel to recognize your cell entries as fractions, you must apply the appropriate fraction format to the cell *before* you enter the data.

For example, say you are importing a column of data from an Access database table that contains fractions such as $1/50$, $2/70$, and $30/65$. You will need to format the column of cells containing the data to an appropriate fraction format before importing. Follow these steps:

Select the column that will contain the fractional data.

Right-click the selection.

Select Format Cells.

In the Number tab, under Category, select Fraction.

Under Type, select Up To Two Digits ($21/25$), then click OK.

Now, when you import the data to that column, Excel will format each entry as a fraction. Keep in mind that if the data contained fractions such as $30/750$, you would select Up To Three Digits ($312/943$) in Step 5. If you wanted to display your data as fractions over 100 (for example, $30/65$ displayed as $46/100$), you would select As Hundreds ($30/100$) in Step 5.

Alternately, if you won't be using the fractions in calculations, you can prevent Excel from changing your entries to dates by applying the Text format to the cell before you enter the data. In that case, in Step 4 select Text under the Category list, and then click OK.

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