

Excel 2007 Using the Fill Handle

Identifying the Selected Cell and the Fill Handle

A cell (or a range of cells) that is selected within an Excel Spreadsheet displays with a thick black border around it. In Figure 1, the cell B2 is the selected cell. Notice the little black square on the lower right hand corner of cell B2—this black square is the **Fill Handle**.

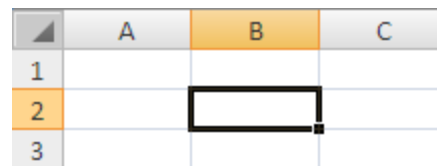


Figure 1

Both the black border around the selected cell and the Fill Handle serve useful purposes beyond just indicating which cell is selected.

Moving the Contents of a Cell by Clicking and Dragging

Different operations can be performed by clicking on the selected cell, and dragging the mouse while holding down the mouse button.

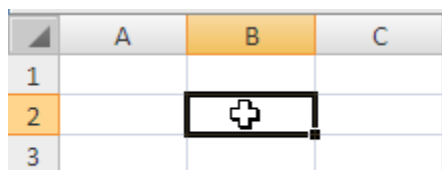


Figure 2

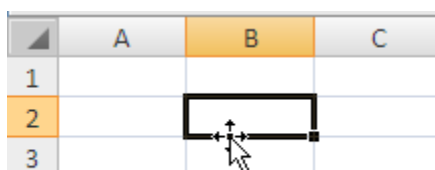


Figure 3

When you move your pointer over the cells of a spreadsheet, your pointer usually displays as a white cross, as shown in Figure 2. When your pointer is displaying as this white cross, if you click and hold the left mouse button while dragging the mouse, a range of cells will be selected. Drag until the range of cells that you want to select is highlighted, and then release the mouse button.

If you point your pointer at the black border surrounding the selected cell, the pointer icon changes to the move icon, as shown in Figure 3. When you see this icon, clicking and holding the left mouse button and dragging the mouse will move the contents of the cell to a new location. Drag until you are over the location where you want to move the cells contents to, and release the mouse button.

This also works for moving the data contained within a range of cells. First, select the range of cells that you want to move; the black boarder will surround the entire range of cells. Position your pointer over the black boarder (you should see the pointer change to the move icon shown in Figure 3), and then click and drag. An outline the same size as the selected range will move along with your pointer. When this outline is over the area where you wish to move the data, release the mouse button.

Moving data like this is basically another method of cutting and pasting data within a spreadsheet. If you move a cell or range of cells to an area of the spreadsheet that already contains data, whatever was there previously there will be written over. (You will receive a warning message before this happens, and you can choose the cancel button to cancel the move.)

Tip: *If you accidentally move the contents of a cell or range of cells, remember you can always hit the undo button. This would move the data back to its original location, and bring back any data that was written over.*

Copying with the Fill Handle

If you position your pointer over the **Fill Handle**, the pointer will become a black cross, or plus sign, as shown in Figure 4. Clicking on the fill handle and dragging the mouse as you continue to hold down the mouse button will copy the contents of the selected cell across the range of cells you drag over. Releasing the mouse button completes the copy.

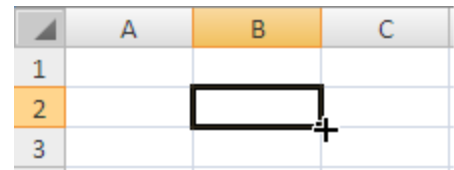


Figure 4

The Fill Handle allows you to quickly copy text, numbers, formulas, and functions. Anything that is stored in one cell can quickly be duplicated across a row or down a column.

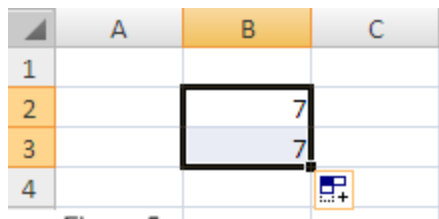


Figure 5

After you have copied something with the fill handle, the **Auto Fill Options** tag will appear below and to the right of the range of cells that you just updated (see Figure 5). Clicking on the Auto Fill Options tag brings up a list of options that modify the effects of the fill handle. For example, you could choose to copy the contents of the cell without copying the formatting of the original

cell by choosing **Fill Without Formatting**.

This Auto Fill Options tag will remain on the screen until you perform the next action, like typing in another cell. Once you move on to doing something else in the spreadsheet, the Auto Fill Options tag disappears.

Generating a Series with the Fill Handle

Besides just allowing you to copy data, the Fill Handle also is able to fill in data in a series across a range of cells. For certain types of data, the default action for the Fill Handle is to fill a series rather than copy the contents of the original cell.

For example, in Figure 6 the text Monday was typed in cell **A1**. The fill handle was used to fill the series, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, into cells **A2** through **A5**.

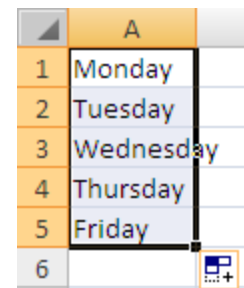


Figure 6

Days of the week, months of the year, dates and times are often automatically auto filled in a series when you use the fill handle. If you wanted to copy the same day, month, or date over and over, rather than filling in a series, you can click on the Auto Fill Options tag, and then choose Copy Cells.

Besides things having to do with dates, the fill handle can also fill in a series of numbers. The default would be for Excel to just copy the numbers when you use the fill handle, but just after the copying is done with the fill handle, you can click on the Auto Fill Options tab, and chose "Fill Series" from the menu that appears. This will change the copied numbers into a series of numbers. So instead of having to type numbers 1 through 500 down a column, for example, you can use the fill handle to generate that series of numbers.

You can also use a the fill handle to generate a series of items like student 1, student 2, student 3, or Day 1, Day 2,

Day 3, Day 4, across a row or down a column. In Figure 7, only cells **B1** and cells **A2** were typed in, and the rest of the cells were filled in using the fill handle.

	A	B	C	D
1		8:00 PM	9:00 PM	10:00 PM
2	Day 1			
3	Day 2			
4	Day 3			

Figure 7

The choices that appear on the Auto Fill Options menu differ based upon the type of data that was originally copied/filled with the fill handle. When you fill dates, for example, there is a choice on the menu for only filling in week days. If you select this option, dates that fall on Saturday and Sunday would be skipped over in your series.

Figure 8 shows the Auto Fill Options that are available to you when you use the fill handle to fill in a series of dates.

If you establish a pattern by typing what you want to appear in the first several cells, you can use the fill handle to continue filling in the pattern across a row or down a column. To do this, select the cells where you have the pattern established, and then click on the fill handle and drag across the cells you wish to fill and then release the mouse button.

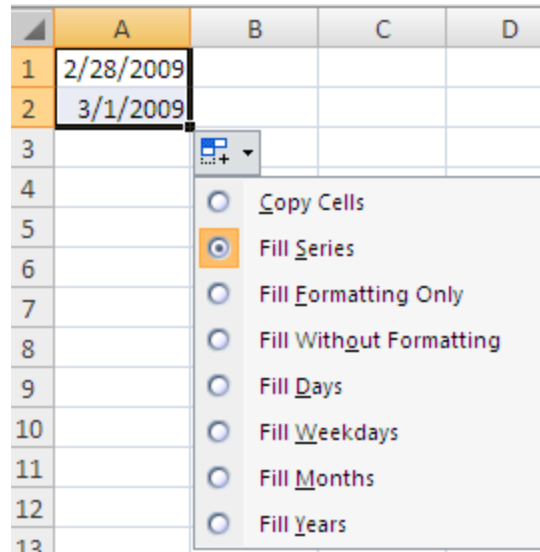


Figure 8

In Figure 9, the first few cells in each column were filled in, establishing a pattern, and the fill handle was used to generate that same pattern for the rest of the column.

In column A, A was typed in cell **A1**, B was typed in cell **A2**, and C was typed in cell **A3**. Then cells **A1** through **A3** were selected. With those cells selected, clicking on the fill handle and dragging the mouse downward while holding the down the mouse button filled in the rest of the column.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	A	9:00 AM	2	1	Joe
2	B	1:00 PM	4	3	Sue
3	C	9:00 AM	6	5	Fred
4	A	1:00 PM	8	7	Dawn
5	B	9:00 AM	10	9	Joe
6	C	1:00 PM	12	11	Sue
7	A	9:00 AM	14	13	Fred
8	B	1:00 PM	16	15	Dawn
9	C	9:00 AM	18	17	Joe
10	A	1:00 PM	20	19	Sue

Figure 9

In column B, the first 4 cells had to be typed in to establish the pattern, and the rest were generated using the fill handle.

In columns C and D, the rows 1 and 2 were typed in, and the rest of the numbers were generated using the fill handle.

In column E, the first four names were typed, and then they rest were generated using the fill handle.