Paste as You Like It

USE "PASTE SPECIAL" TO PASTE DATA IN A VARIETY OF WAYS

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Now that you're familiar with cutting, copying, and pasting data from the last *Billing* article, the next step is to learn how to utilize Excel's "Paste Special" function. Recent versions of Excel have replaced words with icons that describe "Paste Special" options – perhaps because it assumes users know about each option. This article will explain what "Paste Special" is, when to use it, and some of the most frequently used "Paste Special" icons and options.

"Paste Special" 101

When you cut or copy cells in Excel and then paste those cells, Excel assumes you want to paste exactly what you cut or copied, including formulas and formats. But that may not always be the case. For example, I recently added the 26 modifier to a list of 100 procedure codes in Excel. The procedure code, 70030, was in cell D1. I typed "26" in cell E1, and wrote the formula =D1&E1 (the "&" function joins the two cells together) in cell F1. Cell F1 displays "7003026," but cell F1 actually contains the formula =D1&E1. When I copied cell F1 to cells F2 through F100, Excel pasted the formula in each of the new cells, which was exactly

what I wanted it to do. If I copy cells F1 to F100 to another area of my spreadsheet, Excel will paste the formula again – except this time I want to paste the result of the formula (7003026) instead of the formula itself (=D1&E1).

When you need to paste the values that result from a formula instead of the formula itself, it's time to use "Paste Special."

Another common use of "Paste Special" is to format pasted cells differently than the copied cells. For example, if the cells you copy are formatted with a bold-red font and a light-red fill, pasting those cells will result in the same bold-red font and light-red fill. Similarly, if you copy cells with conditional formatting rules applied to the cell, the pasted cells will inherit the same conditional formatting rules. If you want to paste either the values or the formulas but not the formatting, "Paste Special" is the way to do it.

Put "Paste Special" to work

To access the "Paste Special" menu, first copy some data. Note that you need to copy, not cut, to use "Paste Special." Once you have the data copied to the clipboard, click the triangle at the bottom of the "Paste" button to see the "Paste Special" options, as shown in Figure 1. You can hover over each picture to get a brief description of the "Paste Special" options. Once you're familiar with "Paste Special," many of the options are self-explanatory, but here are some of the options I use most frequently.

1. PASTE VALUES

Paste Values is circled in Figure 2. If you want to copy the result of a formula instead of the formula itself, copy the cells with the values you need, select the area to paste the values, and click "Paste Values." I used "Paste Values" to paste the 7003026 value instead of the =D1&E1 formula when I was working on the example I explained above.
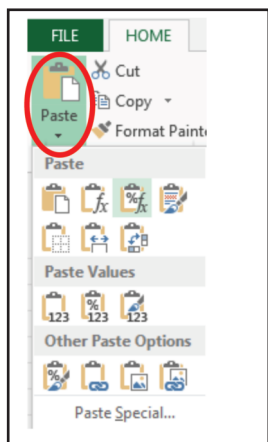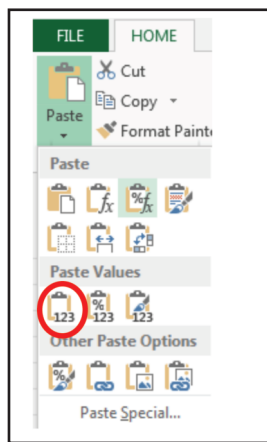
FIGURE 1

FIGURE 2

FIGURE 3

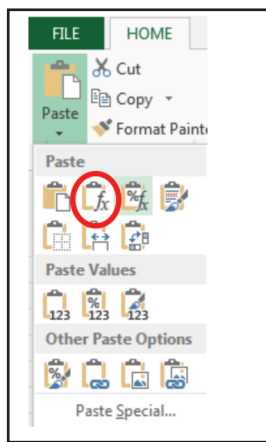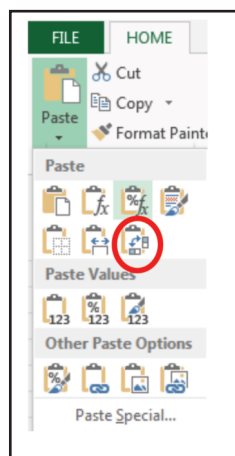| FIGURE 4	FIGURE 5	FIGURE 6	FIGURE 7

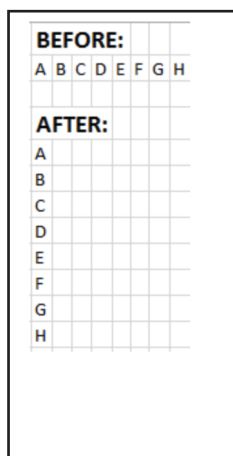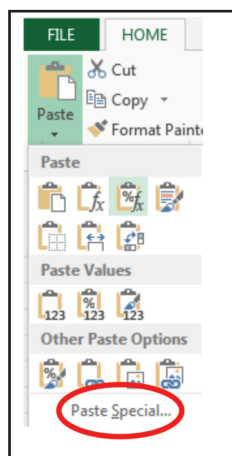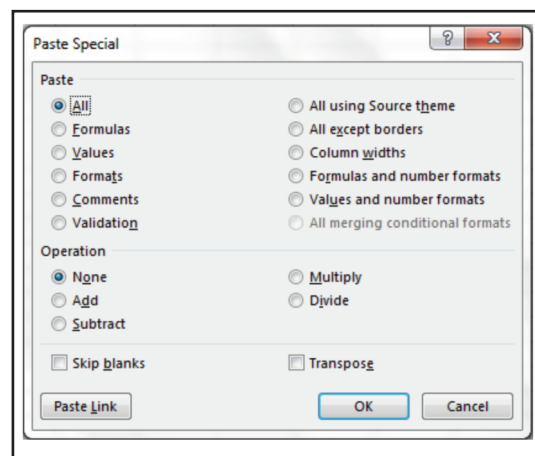## 2. PASTE FORMULAS

"Paste Formulas" is circled in Figure 3. If you only want to copy a formula but don't need to copy the cell's formatting, copy the cells with the formulas you need, select the area to paste the values, and click "Paste Formulas."

3. TRANSPOSE

"Transpose" is circled in Figure 4. This is a handy application of "Paste Special" that can save you a lot of time.

Let's say you have data in rows that you need in columns, or vice versa. Copy the data you need to transpose, select the area where you want to paste the values, and the "Transpose" function will change the data for you. For example, in Figure 5 the letters A through H were originally stored across several columns in the same row. Transposing the data moved the data to several rows in the same column.

There are even more options for using "Paste Special." For the most flexibility with this function, select it at the bottom of the "Paste Special" window, as shown in Figure 6. The window that appears is shown in Figure 7. Here, you will find ways to paste the comments from a cell, make calculations, and skip blank cells.

Also keep in mind that the "Paste Special" menu is context-sensitive. If you copy a picture in Excel, the "Paste Special" options relate to the picture, instead of the options discussed in this article. "Paste Special" is also included in other Microsoft Office programs, such as Word and PowerPoint.

Copying and pasting data is a very common operation in Excel. Because it's so common, even small tricks that make the process faster or that paste exactly what you need without additional formatting can be big timesavers. The next time you copy data, use "Paste Special" to help you save some time. ■

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