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Compare two worksheets in excel

Watch Video - How to Compare Two Excel Sheets for Differences Comparing two Excel files (or comparing two sheets in the same file) can be tricky as an Excel workbook only shows one sheet at a time. This becomes more difficult and error-prone when you have a lot of data that needs to be compared. Thankfully, there are some cool features in Excel that allow you to open and easily compare two Excel files. In this Excel tutorial, I will show you multiple ways to compare two different Excel files (or sheets) and check for differences. The method you choose will depend on how your data is structured and what kind of comparison you're looking for. Let's get started! Compare Two Excel Sheets in Separate Excel Files (Side-by-Side) If you want to compare two separate Excel files side by side (or two sheets in the same workbook), there is an in-built feature in Excel to do this. It's the View Side by Side option. This is recommended only when you have a small dataset and manually comparing these files is likely to be less time-consuming and error-prone. If you have a large dataset, I recommend using the conditional method or the formula method covered later in this tutorial. Let's see how to use this when you have to compare two separate files or two sheets in the same file. Suppose you have two files for two different months and you want to check what values are different in these two files. By default, when you open a file, it's likely to take up your entire screen. Even if you reduce the size, you always see one Excel file at the top. With the view side-by-side option, you can open two files and then arrange these horizontally or vertically. This allows you to easily compare the values without switching back and forth. Below are the steps to align two files side by side and compare them: Open the files that you want to compare. In each file, select the sheet that you want to compare. Click the View tab in the Windows group, click on the 'View Side by Side' option. This becomes available only when you have two or more Excel files open. As soon as you click on the View side by side option, Excel will arrange the workbook horizontally. Both of the files will be visible, and you're free to edit/compare these files while they are arranged side by side. In case you want to arrange the files vertically, click on the Arrange All option (in the View tab). This will open the 'Arrange Windows' dialog box where you can select 'Vertical'. At this point, if you scroll down in one of the worksheets, the other one would remain as is. You can change this so that when you scroll in one sheet, the other also scrolls at the same time. This makes it easier to do a line by line comparison and spot any differences. But to do this, you need to enable Synchronous Scrolling. To enable Synchronous Scrolling, click on the View tab (in any of the workbooks) and then click on the Synchronous Scrolling option. This is a toggle button (so if you want to turn it off, simply click on it again). Comparing Multiple Sheets in Separate Excel Files (Side-by-Side) With the 'View Side by Side' option, you can only compare two Excel file at one go. In case you have multiple Excel files open, when you click on the View Side by Side option, it will show you a 'Compare Side by Side' dialog box, where you can choose which file you want to compare with the active workbook. In case you want to compare more than two files at one go, open all these files and then click on the Arrange All option (it's in the View tab). In the Arrange Windows dialog box, select Vertical/Horizontal and then click OK. This will arrange all the open Excel files in the selected order (vertical or horizontal). Compare Two Sheets (Side-by-Side) in the Same Excel Workbook In case you want to compare two separate sheets in the same workbook, you can't use the View side by side feature (as it works for separate Excel files only). But you can still do the same side-by-side comparison. This is made possible by the 'New Windows' feature in Excel, that allows you to open two instances on the same workbook. Once you have two instances open, you can arrange these side by side and then compare these. Suppose you have an Excel workbook that has two sheets for two different months (Jan and Feb) and you want to compare these side by side to see how the sales per store have changed: Below are the steps to compare two sheets in Excel: Open the workbook that has the sheets that you want to compare. Click the View tab in the Window group, click on the 'New Window' option. This opens the second instance of the same workbook. In the 'View' tab, click on 'Arrange All'. This will open the Arrange Windows dialog box Select 'Vertical' to compare data in columns (or select Horizontal if you want to compare data in rows). Click OK. The above steps would arrange both the instances of the workbook vertically. At this point in time, both the workbooks would have the same worksheet selected. In one of the workbooks, select the other sheet that you want to compare with the active sheet. How does this work? When you click on New Window, it opens the same workbook again with a slightly different name. For example, if your workbook name is 'Test' and you click on New Window, it will name the already open workbook 'Test - 1' and the second instance as 'Test - 2'. Note that these are still the same workbook. If you make any changes in any of these workbooks, it would be reflected in both. And when you close any one instance of the open file, the name would revert back to the original. You can also enable synchronous scrolling if you want (by clicking on the 'Synchronous Scrolling' option in the 'View' tab) Compare Two Sheets and Highlight Differences (Using Conditional Formatting) While you can use the above method to align the workbooks together and manually go through the data line by line, it's not a good way in case you have a lot of data. Also, doing this level of comparison manually can lead to a lot of errors. So instead of doing this manually, you can use the power of Conditional Formatting to quickly highlight any differences in the two Excel sheets. This method is really useful if you have two versions in two different sheets and you want to quickly check what has changed. Note that you CAN NOT compare two sheets in different workbooks. Since Conditional Formatting can not refer to an external Excel file, the sheets you need to compare needs to be in the same Excel workbook. In case these aren't, you can copy a sheet from the other file to the active workbook and then make this comparison. For this example, suppose you have a dataset as shown below for two months (Jan and Feb) in two different sheets and you want to quickly compare the data in these two sheets and check if the prices of these items have changed or not. Below are the steps to do this: Select the data in the sheet where you want to highlight the changes. Since I want to check how prices have changed from Jan to Feb, I have selected the data in the Feb sheet. Click the Home tab in the Styles group, click on 'Conditional Formatting' In the options that show up, click on 'New Rule' In the 'New Formatting Rule' dialog box, click on 'Use a formula to determine which cells to format' In the formula field, enter the following formula: =B2[Jan]<B2[Jan]&B2[Jan]>B2[Jan] In the 'Format Cells' dialog box that shows up, click on the 'Fill tab' and select the color in which you want to highlight the mismatched data. Click OK Click OK The above steps would instantly highlight any changes in the dataset in both the sheets. How does this work? Conditional formatting highlights a cell when the given formula for that cell returns a TRUE. In this example, we are comparing each cell in one sheet with the corresponding cell in the other sheet (done using the not equal to operator in the formula). When conditional formatting finds any difference in the data, it highlights that in the Jan sheet (the one in which we have applied the conditional formatting. Note that I have used relative reference in this example (A1 and not \$A\$1 or \$A1 or A\$1). When using this method to compare two sheets in Excel, remember the following: This method is good to quickly identify differences, but you can't use it on an on-going basis. For example, if I enter a new row in any of the datasets (or delete a row), it would give me incorrect results. As soon as I insert/delete the row, all subsequent rows are considered as different and highlighted accordingly. You can only compare two sheets in the same Excel file You can only compare the value (not the difference in formula or formatting). Compare Two Excel Files/Sheets And Get The Differences Using Formula If you're only interested in quickly comparing and identifying the differences between two sheets, you can use a formula to fetch only those values that are different. For this method, you will need to have a separate worksheet where you can fetch the differences. This method would work if want to compare two separate Excel workbook or worksheets in the same workbook. Let me show you an example where I am comparing two datasets in two sheets (in the same workbook). Suppose you have the dataset as shown below in a sheet called Jan (and similar data in a sheet called Feb), and you want to know what values are different. To compare the two sheets, first, insert a new worksheet (let's call this sheet 'Difference'). In cell A1, enter the following formula: =IF(Jan!A1<Feb!A1,"Jan Value:"&Jan!A1&CHAR(10)&"Feb Value:"&Feb!A1,"") Copy and paste this formula for a range so that it covers the entire dataset in both the sheets. Since I have a small dataset, I will only copy and paste this formula in A1:B10 range. The above formula uses an IF condition to check for differences. In case there is no difference in the values, it will return blank, and in case there is a difference, it will return the values from both the sheets in separate lines in the same cell. The good thing with this method is that it only gives you the differences and show you exactly what the difference is. In this example, I can easily see that the price in cell B4 and B8 are different (as well as the exact values in these cells). Compare Two Excel Files/Sheets And Get The Differences Using VBA If you need to compare Excel files or sheets quite often, it's a good idea to have a ready Excel macro VBA code and use it whenever you need to make the comparison. You can also add the macro to the Quick Access Toolbar so that you can access with a single button and instantly know what cells are different in different files/sheets. Suppose you have two sheets Jan and Feb and you want to compare and highlight differences in the Jan sheet, you can use the below VBA code: Sub CompareSheets() Dim rngCell As Range For Each rngCell In Worksheets("Jan").UsedRange If Not rngCell = Worksheets("Feb").Cells(rngCell.Row, rngCell.Column) Then rngCell.Interior.Color = vbYellow End If Next rngCell End Sub The above code uses the For Next loop to go through each cell in the Jan sheet (the entire used range) and compares it with the corresponding cell in the Feb sheet. In case it finds a difference (which is checked using the If-Then statement), it highlights those cells in yellow. You can use this code in a regular module in the VB Editor. And if you need to do this often, it's better to save this code in the Personal Macro Workbook and then add it to the Quick Access toolbar. In those ways, you will be able to do this comparison with a click of a button. Here are the steps to get the Personal Macro Workbook in Excel (it's not available by default so you need to enable it). Here are the steps to save this code in the Personal Macro Workbook. And here you will find the steps to add this macro code to the QAT. Using a Third-Party Tool - XL Comparator Another quick way to compare two Excel files and check for matches and differences is by using a free third-party tool such as XL Comparator. This is a web-based tool where you can upload two Excel files and it will create a comparison file that will have the data that is common (or different data based on what option you selected. Suppose you have two files that have customer datasets (such as name and email address), and you want to quickly check what customers are there is file 1 and not in file 2. Below is how you compare two Excel files and create a comparison report: Open Use the Choose file option to upload two files (maximum size of each file can be 5MB) Click on the Next button. Select the common column in both these files. The tool will use this common column to look for matches and differences Select one of the four options, whether you want to get matching data or different data (based on File 1 or File 2) Click on Next Download the comparison file which will have the data (based on what option you selected in step 5) Below is a video that shows how XL Comparator tool works. One concern you may have when using a third-party tool to compare Excel files is about privacy. If you have confidential data and privacy is really important for it, it's better to use other methods shown above. Note that the XL Comparator website mentions that they delete all the files after 1 hour of doing the comparison. These are some of the methods you can use to compare two different Excel files (or worksheets in the same Excel file). Hope you found this Excel tutorial useful. You may also like the following Excel tutorials: Excel only displays one worksheet at a time in a given window. Therefore, comparing two workbooks or worksheets becomes a challenge. Luckily, there are multiple ways that can be used to solve this challenge. From the use of formulas, to Pivot Tables or Event third-party Addins, you can easily navigate this challengeIn this tutorial, I will guide you step by step on how you can compare two Excel sheets for differences. VBA helps users to automate Excel Tasks programmatically. Comparing Two Excel sheets for differences is not an Exception. 1. Open VBA editor by using the shortcut ALT+F11 for windows and FN + OPT +F11 on Mac2. Click on insert>module3. Copy and paste the following VBA codeSub CompareSheets() Dim ws1 As Worksheet Dim ws2 As Worksheet Dim cell1 As Range Dim cell2 As Range Dim diffCount As Long 'Set references to the sheets you want to compare Set ws1 = ThisWorkbook.Sheets("Sheet1") 'Change "Sheet1" to your first sheet name Set ws2 = ThisWorkbook.Sheets("Sheet2") 'Change "Sheet2" to your second sheet name 'Initialize counter for differences diffCount = 0 'Loop through each cell in the first sheet For Each cell1 In ws1.UsedRange 'Set the corresponding cell in the second sheet Set cell2 = ws2.Cells(cell1.Row, cell1.Column) 'Compare cell values If cell1.Value < cell2.Value Then 'Highlight the cells with differences cell1.Interior.Color = RGB(255, 0, 0) 'Red color cell2.Interior.Color = RGB(255, 0, 0) 'Red color 'Increment the difference count diffCount = diffCount + 1 End If Next cell1 'Display a message with the number of differences found If diffCount > 0 Then MsgBox diffCount & " differences found!", vbExclamation Else MsgBox "Sheets are identical.", vbInformation End If End Sub 4. You can then run the CompareSheets macro from the "Run Macro" As you can see from the image below, the macro highlights all the differences.The easiest way to compare two Excel Sheets or Workbooks for differences is by using the compare side-by-side feature in Excel. Let's look at how you can compare side by side in different scenarios.If the Excel Sheets you want to compare are in the same workbook, then this is very easy. 1. Open the Excel file 2. Click on the View Tab then Navigate to the Window group and select New WindowThis action will launch the same Excel file in a different window3. Click on the view side-by-side option on the ribbon to enable this mode4. Select one sheet to display in the first window and another to display in the second window5. Arrange All to view the sheets side by side verticallyTo make the comparison easier, you can make use of synchronous scrolling. You can find this option in the view tab.Finally, remember that both windows show the same workbook. Thus when you make any changes it will be reflected in both. Once you close any instance the file name will revert to as it was.Note that this method only allows you to compare two Excel files. In case you have more than two open then Excel will prompt you with a dialogue box so you choose two files. Also, note the Files that need to be compared have to be opened. If they are not open then Excel will not detect them in this feature. Here are the steps.1. Launch the two workbooks you wish to compare2. On the first workbook click on the view tab by side under the Window groupNote that in default Excel displays the two workbooks side by side in a horizontal position. 3. You can set it in a vertical position by clicking on Arrange All, and then selecting the vertical option.Finally, you can compare row by row simultaneously by enabling the Synchronous Scrolling option. You can arrange more than two Excel files side by side by following these steps. 1. Open all the Workbooks that you wish to compare2. Click on the view tab then select Side by Side optionThis will launch a dialogue box containing all the open Excel files. 3. If you want to view all at the same time click on the Arrange All option from the ribbon. Now choose your preferred mode to view your workbooks side by side. You have the following optionsTiledHorizontal/VerticalCascadeYou can compare two Excel sheets for differences by using a formula. This will indicate the cells that have different values in the sheets in question. Here are the steps:1. First open a blank sheet beside the ones you wish to compare. 2. Copy and paste the following formula in cell A1 of the sheet you have just created. =IF(Sheet1!A1<Sheet2!A1,"Sheet1:"&Sheet1!A1&" vs Sheet2:"&Sheet2!A1,"")Note that the above formula assumes that the Excel sheets you want to compare are named Sheet1 and Sheet2 respectively. If they have different names make sure to replace them in the formula.3. Copy it down and to the right by using the fill handle. Make sure the formula covers the range equivalent to the other sheets that you wish to compare to have accurate results.Since this formula uses relative cell reference, the formula will adjust depending on the cell. Therefore, the formula in A1 looks through A1 in sheet1 and A1 in sheet 2. Also, the formula in B1 looks through B1 in the sheets that you wish to compare. 4. In case there is a difference in the two sheets the results will be displayed in this new sheet. However, it is important to note that the differences in dates using this method are presented as serial numbers. Thus, this may not be the best method to compare two sheets with dates for differences. What better way to compare differences in two Excel sheets than something that is visual? Conditional formatting makes it easy for users to spot differences. Here are the steps1. Select all the cells that you want to check differences by using the mouse or the shortcut Ctrl+Shift+End2. Navigate to the Home tab then click on conditional formatting under the styles group. Then click on the new rule copy and paste the formula below=A1<Sheet2!A1Note that Sheet2 refers to the name of the second file that you want to check for differences.3. Lastly select the color that you wish to highlight the different values then click on okay. Although this method is good for finding differences in values between two sheets, it has some limitations. It only finds the difference in values hence, it cannot find the difference in cell formatting or compare formulas.It only works on sheet level hence it cannot detect any structural differences.The conditional formatting method Another way to compare two Excel sheets or files for differences is by using add-ins. You can use third-party add-ins such as:Kutools>Abblebits>Synkronizer Excel compare>XL compare>Addins help simplify Excel tasks with custom-made functions and features integrated directly into the Excel software. To compare Excel files using the above addins you need to download them and install them first. Once you do click on the respective add-in tab then look for the compare feature. Finally, select the sheets you want to compare. Note that some add-ins require a subscription. Others are free and some offer limited free features that you can take advantage of. Subscribe to get the latest posts sent to your email. Watch Video - How to Compare Two Excel Sheets for Differences Comparing two Excel files (or comparing two sheets in the same file) can be tricky as an Excel workbook only shows one sheet at a time. This becomes more difficult and error-prone when you have a lot of data that needs to be compared. Thankfully, there are some cool features in Excel that allow you to open and easily compare two Excel files. In this Excel tutorial, I will show you multiple ways to compare two different Excel files (or sheets) and check for differences. The method you choose will depend on how your data is structured and what kind of comparison you're looking for. Let's get started! Compare Two Excel Sheets in Separate Excel Files (Side-by-Side) If you want to compare two separate Excel files side by side (or two sheets in the same workbook), there is an in-built feature in Excel to do this. It's the View Side by Side option. This is recommended only when you have a small dataset and manually comparing these files is likely to be less time-consuming and error-prone. If you have a large dataset, I recommend using the conditional method or the formula method covered later in this tutorial. Let's see how to use this when you have to compare two separate files or two sheets in the same file. 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In case you want to arrange the files vertically, click on the Arrange All option (in the View tab). This will open the 'Arrange Windows' dialog box where you can select 'Vertical'. At this point, if you scroll down in one of the worksheets, the other one would remain as is. You can change this so that when you scroll in one sheet, the other also scrolls at the same time. This makes it easier to do a line by line comparison and spot any differences. But to do this, you need to enable Synchronous Scrolling. To enable Synchronous Scrolling, click on the View tab (in any of the workbooks) and then click on the Synchronous Scrolling option. This is a toggle button (so if you want to turn it off, simply click on it again). Comparing Multiple Sheets in Separate Excel Files (Side-by-Side) With the 'View Side by Side' option, you can only compare two Excel file at one go. 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Once you have two instances open, you can arrange these side by side and then compare these. Suppose you have an Excel workbook that has two sheets for two different months (Jan and Feb) and you want to compare these side by side to see how the sales per store have changed: Below are the steps to compare two sheets in Excel: Open the workbook that has the sheets that you want to compare. Click the View tab in the Window group, click on the 'New Window' option. This opens the second instance of the same workbook. In the 'View' tab, click on 'Arrange All'. This will open the Arrange Windows dialog box Select 'Vertical' to compare data in columns (or select Horizontal if you want to compare data in rows). Click OK. The above steps would arrange both the instances of the workbook vertically. At this point in time, both the workbooks would have the same worksheet selected. In one of the workbooks, select the other sheet that you want to compare with the active sheet. How does this work? 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So instead of doing this manually, you can use the power of Conditional Formatting to quickly highlight any differences in the two Excel sheets. This method is really useful if you have two versions in two different sheets and you want to quickly check what has changed. Note that you CAN NOT compare two sheets in different workbooks. Since Conditional Formatting can not refer to an external Excel file, the sheets you need to compare needs to be in the same Excel workbook. In case these aren't, you can copy a sheet from the other file to the active workbook and then make this comparison. For this example, suppose you have a dataset as shown below for two months (Jan and Feb) in two different sheets and you want to quickly compare the data in these two sheets and check if the prices of these items have changed or not. Below are the steps to do this: Select the data in the sheet where you want to highlight the changes. Since I want to check how prices have changed from Jan to Feb, I have selected the data in the Feb sheet. Click the Home tab in the Styles group, click on 'Conditional Formatting' In the options that show up, click on 'New Rule' In the 'New Formatting Rule' dialog box, click on 'Use a formula to determine which cells to format' In the formula field, enter the following formula: =B2[Jan]<B2[Jan]&B2[Jan]>B2[Jan] In the 'Format Cells' dialog box that shows up, click on the 'Fill tab' and select the color in which you want to highlight the mismatched data. Click OK Click OK The above steps would instantly highlight any changes in the dataset in both the sheets. How does this work? Conditional formatting highlights a cell when the given formula for that cell returns a TRUE. In this example, we are comparing each cell in one sheet with the corresponding cell in the other sheet (done using the not equal to operator in the formula). When conditional formatting finds any difference in the data, it highlights that in the Jan sheet (the one in which we have applied the conditional formatting. Note that I have used relative reference in this example (A1 and not \$A\$1 or \$A1 or A\$1). When using this method to compare two sheets in Excel, remember the following: This method is good to quickly identify differences, but you can't use it on an on-going basis. For example, if I enter a new row in any of the datasets (or delete a row), it would give me incorrect results. As soon as I insert/delete the row, all subsequent rows are considered as different and highlighted accordingly. You can only compare two sheets in the same Excel file You can only compare the value (not the difference in formula or formatting). Compare Two Excel Files/Sheets And Get The Differences Using Formula If you're only interested in quickly comparing and identifying the differences between two sheets, you can use a formula to fetch only those values that are different. For this method, you will need to have a separate worksheet where you can fetch the differences. This method would work if want to compare two separate Excel workbook or worksheets in the same workbook. Let me show you an example where I am comparing two datasets in two sheets (in the same workbook). Suppose you have the dataset as shown below in a sheet called Jan (and similar data in a sheet called Feb), and you want to know what values are different. To compare the two sheets, first, insert a new worksheet (let's call this sheet 'Difference'). In cell A1, enter the following formula: =IF(Jan!A1<Feb!A1,"Jan Value:"&Jan!A1&CHAR(10)&"Feb Value:"&Feb!A1,"") Copy and paste this formula for a range so that it covers the entire dataset in both the sheets. Since I have a small dataset, I will only copy and paste this formula in A1:B10 range. The above formula uses an IF condition to check for differences. In case there is no difference in the values, it will return blank, and in case there is a difference, it will return the values from both the sheets in separate lines in the same cell. The good thing with this method is that it only gives you the differences and show you exactly what the difference is. In this example, I can easily see that the price in cell B4 and B8 are different (as well as the exact values in these cells). Compare Two Excel Files/Sheets And Get The Differences Using VBA If you need to compare Excel files or sheets quite often, it's a good idea to have a ready Excel macro VBA code and use it whenever you need to make the comparison. You can also add the macro to the Quick Access Toolbar so that you can access with a single button and instantly know what cells are different in different files/sheets. Suppose you have two sheets Jan and Feb and you want to compare and highlight differences in the Jan sheet, you can use the below VBA code: Sub CompareSheets() Dim rngCell As Range For Each rngCell In Worksheets("Jan").UsedRange If Not rngCell = Worksheets("Feb").Cells(rngCell.Row, rngCell.Column) Then rngCell.Interior.Color = vbYellow End If Next rngCell End Sub The above code uses the For Next loop to go through each cell in the Jan sheet (the entire used range) and compares it with the corresponding cell in the Feb sheet. In case it finds a difference (which is checked using the If-Then statement), it highlights those cells in yellow. You can use this code in a regular module in the VB Editor. And if you need to do this often, it's better to save this code in the Personal Macro Workbook and then add it to the Quick Access toolbar. In those ways, you will be able to do this comparison with a click of a button. Here are the steps to get the Personal Macro Workbook in Excel (it's not available by default so you need to enable it). Here are the steps to save this code in the Personal Macro Workbook. And here you will find the steps to add this macro code to the QAT. Using a Third-Party Tool - XL Comparator Another quick way to compare two Excel files and check for matches and differences is by using a free third-party tool such as XL Comparator. This is a web-based tool where you can upload two Excel files and it will create a comparison file that will have the data that is common (or different data based on what option you selected. Suppose you have two files that have customer datasets (such as name and email address), and you want to quickly check what customers are there is file 1 and not in file 2. Below is how you compare two Excel files and create a comparison report: Open Use the Choose file option to upload two files (maximum size of each file can be 5MB) Click on the Next button. Select the common column in both these files. The tool will use this common column to look for matches and differences Select one of the four options, whether you want to get matching data or different data (based on File 1 or File 2) Click on Next Download the comparison file which will have the data (based on what option you selected in step 5) Below is a video that shows how XL Comparator tool works. One concern you may have when using a third-party tool to compare Excel files is about privacy. If you have confidential data and privacy is really important for it, it's better to use other methods shown above. Note that the XL Comparator website mentions that they delete all the files after 1 hour of doing the comparison. These are some of the methods you can use to compare two different Excel files (or worksheets in the same Excel file). Hope you found this Excel tutorial useful. You may also like the following Excel tutorials: