
Lesson 4 Changing Column Widths

Lesson Topics

- Changing Column Widths
- Creating a Profit and Loss Statement

Lesson Objectives

At the end of the lesson, you will be able to:

- Change the width of individual and adjacent columns;
- Change the width of all columns in a worksheet;
- Adjust the standard column width for a worksheet;
- Understand what happens when text or a value is too long for a cell;
- Create a Profit and Loss statement.

Student Files Used

You will not use any files from your student folder.

Student Files Created

You will save the following new file to your student folder:

- Miller's P&L Statement

Changing Column Widths

Excel presets the column widths to 8.43, which means that 8.43 characters (using the default font) can fit into each cell. If you have to enter text or values that need more room, you have to change this width. Excel lets you change the widths of *individual* columns, *multiple* columns, or *all* the columns in a worksheet.

Changing Individual Columns

You are going to change individual columns with the *Column Width* command on the Format menu. Before changing the width of a column, the column has to be selected.

1. **A new workbook should be open and maximized.**
2. **Click the column A heading (the letter A).**

Notice that the entire column is selected. (A1 is not highlighted because that is the active cell.)

3. **Click the Format menu and point to *Column*.**

The Column submenu appears.

4. **On the Column submenu, choose *Width*.**

The Column Width dialog box appears. Notice 8.43 highlighted in the *Column width* text box. It is highlighted so that you can easily change it.



Tip: You can always cancel changes you make in a dialog box by clicking the Cancel button, clicking its Close button (X), or tapping the ESC key. Excel will close the dialog box without making changes.

5. **With 8.43 highlighted, type: 25**
6. **Click OK.**

Notice that column A is wider than the other columns.

	A	B	C	D	E
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

Note: The maximum column width is 255.

- You do not have to click the column heading to be able to change the width. You can click any cell in the column. You are going to change the width of column B to 20.

Position the active cell anywhere in column B.

Notice that when you click a cell in column B, column A is de-selected.

- Click the Format menu and point to *Column*.**
- On the submenu, choose *Width*.**
- With 8.43 highlighted in the *Column width* text box, type: 20**
- Click OK.**

Notice that the width of column B has changed.

You can also change the width of a column by dragging the right column heading border. The active cell can be anywhere.

- You are going to increase the width of column A to 40 using this method.

Point to the vertical line between the A and B column headings.

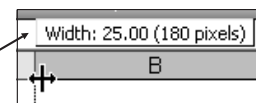


Notice that the pointer turns into a vertical bar with arrows pointing left and right.



- Without releasing, hold down the mouse button.**

Notice *Width: 25.00* in a ScreenTip above the Formula bar. (If you do not see it, the vertical bar with arrows pointing left and right was not showing when you held down the mouse button.)



- 3. Drag to the right until *Width: 40.00* is in the ScreenTip and then release.**

Notice the width of the column.

- 4. You are going to decrease the width of column A to 10.**

Point to the vertical line between the A and B column headings.

The pointer turns into a vertical bar with arrows pointing left and right.

- 5. Drag to the left until *Width: 10.00* appears in a ScreenTip and then release.**

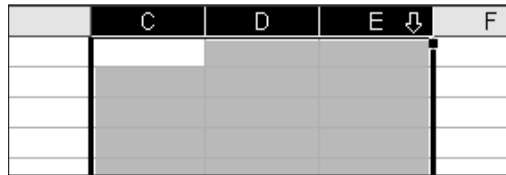
Tip: Using the Column Width dialog box is useful when you want a precise width, such as 4.25. Dragging the right column heading border to change a column is often easier, because you can see what you are doing.

Changing the Widths of Several Columns

You can also change the widths of columns that are next to each other. You are going to change the widths of columns C, D, and E.

- 1. Click the column C heading, drag right to column E, and release.**

The three columns should be selected. (Once again, C1 is not highlighted because it is the active cell.)



- 2. Click the Format menu, point to *Column* and then choose *Width*.**
- 3. Change the contents of the *Column width* text box to: 5**
- 4. Click OK.**
- 5. Click in any cell to remove the highlight.**

Notice the three narrow columns.

- 6. Rather than using the column headings to select all three columns, you can drag across the columns so that at least one cell in each column is selected.**

Point to C1, drag right to E1, and release.

All three cells have been selected and should look like the example below. You have selected a *range* of cells, which will be explained more thoroughly a little later. For now, be aware that C1 is the active cell, but D1 and E1 are also selected.

	C	D	E	F

7. **Click the Format menu, point to *Column* and then choose *Width*.**
8. **Change the contents of the *Column width* text box to: 12**
9. **Click OK.**

Notice that the columns are wider.

You can also drag a column heading border to change the width of adjacent columns. This can only be done, however, when you use the column headings to select the columns. You cannot select cells in the columns as you just did.

1. **Point to the column C heading, drag to the column E heading, but do not release.**

Notice the ScreenTip, 3C (for 3 columns), to the right of the E heading. All three columns are selected.

	C	D	E	3C	F

2. **Release.**
3. **Point to the vertical line between the D and E column headings, until the pointer turns into a vertical bar with arrows pointing left and right.**
4. **Drag left until *Width: 8.00* appears in a ScreenTip, and then release.**
5. **Click in any cell to remove the highlight.**

The widths of the selected columns have changed.

Changing the Widths of All Columns

There are two ways to change the widths of all columns of a worksheet:

- You can change the *Standard Width*. When you use this method, the columns that were set individually will not change.
- You can select the entire worksheet and then use either the Column Width dialog box or drag a column heading border. All columns, including those that you set individually, will be changed.

You are going to use the first method to change the widths of all columns to 4 except those that have been set individually.

- 1. The active cell can be anywhere.**
- 2. Click the Format menu, choose *Column* and then choose *Standard Width*.**

The Standard Width dialog box appears. Notice that 8.43 appears in the *Column Width* text box.

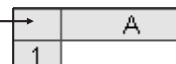
- 3. Change the *Standard Width* to: 4**
- 4. Click OK.**

Notice that the widths of all the columns except A-E changed to 4. Columns A-E did not change because they had already been set individually.

The second method is the more common way of changing the widths of all columns because those set individually will also be changed. You are going to change the widths of all columns to 6.

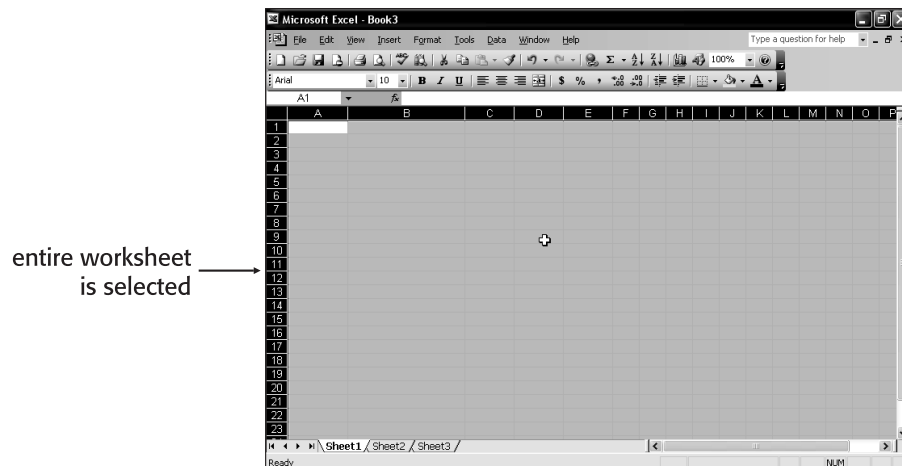
- 1. The Select All button selects the entire worksheet. It is the empty button to the left of the column headings.**

Click the Select All button.



Notice on the next page that the entire worksheet is selected. A1 is not highlighted, indicating that it is the active cell.

Tip: You can also use CTRL/A to select the entire worksheet. (You may have to use it two times, if the active cell contains information.)



2. **Click the Format menu, point to *Column* and then choose *Width*.**

The *Column width* text box is empty because you have selected columns of different widths.

3. **In the *Column width* text box, type: 6**
4. **Click OK.**
5. **Click in any cell to remove the highlight.**

Notice that all the columns are of equal width, including the ones you set individually.

6. You are going to drag a column heading border to change the widths of all the columns to 12.

This time, use CTRL/A to select the entire worksheet.

7. **Point to the vertical line between the A and B column headings.**
8. **Drag right until *Width: 12.00* appears in a ScreenTip, and release.**
9. **Click in any cell to remove the highlight.**

Notice that all the columns have the same width.

10. In preparation for the next section, you are going to change all the columns back to the default width of 8.43.

Use CTRL/A.

11. **Click the Format menu, point to *Columns* and then choose *Width*.**

12. In the *Column width* text box, type: 8.43

13. Click OK.

All the columns are once again a width of 8.43.

Note: In most situations, you will probably want to use your eye to change column widths rather than specify an exact measurement.

When Text is Too Long

When text is longer than the width of the column, it will continue into the cell to the right if that cell is empty. If it is not empty, the text will be cut off. It will still be stored in the cell, but you will not be able to see it. You are going to see this happen.

1. First, so this section of the lesson will work properly, you are going to verify that the width of the columns is 8.43.

Use CTRL/A.

2. Click the **Format** menu, point to *Column* and then choose *Width*.
3. Verify that 8.43 is in the *Column width* text box. If it is not, change it to 8.43 and click OK.
4. You are going to type text into A1 that is longer than 8.43.

In A1, type North America and click the check box.

Notice that part of *North America* overlaps into B1. Also notice that all of the text appears on the Formula bar, including that portion that is in B1.

	A1	B	C	D
1	North America			

5. Go to B1.

Notice that part of the text is in the cell but not on the Formula bar. B1 is being used only temporarily to display part of the contents of A1.

6. In B1, type Africa and click the check box.

Notice that *Africa* appears in the cell and on the Formula bar. *North America* in A1 has been cut off. B1 now has its own text and

	A	B	C
1	North America	Africa	

can no longer be used for anything that might overlap from A1.

7. **Go to A1 and notice that all of *North America* still appears on the Formula bar, even though it is cut off in the cell.**
8. You are going to change the width of column A to 14, so all of the text can be displayed in the cell.

Point to the vertical line between the A and B column headings until the pointer turns into a vertical bar with arrows pointing left and right.

9. **Drag right until *Width: 14.00* is displayed on the Formula bar, and release.**

Notice that all of *North America* is displayed in A1.

There are two other ways you could have used to adjust the width of the cell in the last example. The *AutoFit Selection* option on the Column submenu changes the width of the active column to fit the active cell. You can also double-click on a column separator to adjust the column width to the longest entry.

You are going to use the first method.

1. **Go to B2.**
2. **Type *South America* and this time, for practice, use CTRL/ENTER to enter the text in the cell rather than clicking the check box.**

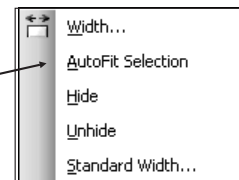
South America continues into C2.

3. **Verify that B2 is still the active cell.**

4. **On the Format menu, point to *Column* and then choose *AutoFit Selection*.**

Notice that the column is as wide as the active cell, B2.

South America fits within the column.



	A	B
1	North America	Africa
2		South America
3		

You are going to use the second method by double-clicking on the right column heading border.

1. In C3, type Central America and click the check box.

Notice that the text has extended into D3.

2. Point to the vertical line between the C and D column headings until the pointer turns into a split bar.

3. Double-click.

Notice that the width of column C has been adjusted to fit the *longest* text in the column.

Note: When you use the double-click method, the active cell can be anywhere. It does not have to be in the column you are adjusting. The width of the column will always adjust to the longest entry in the column.

Remember: When you use *AutoFit Selection*, the active column takes on the width of the active cell, whether or not it is the widest in the column.

When a Value is Too Long

When a value is too long to fit in a cell, it is not continued into a blank cell to the right or cut off like text. Instead, it is displayed with scientific notation. Even though it appears this way on the screen, the entire value is still stored in the cell.

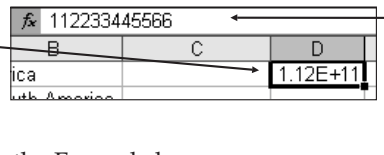
1. In D1, type 112233445566 and use CTRL/ENTER.

Notice that the number was converted into scientific notation

(e.g., $1.12E+11$).

Also notice that the entire number

is still displayed on the Formula bar.



2. If a column is not wide enough to display a cell's contents, hash marks (#) are displayed in the cell.

With D1 the active cell, click the Format menu, point to Column on the Format menu and then choose Width.

3. In the Column width text box, type: 5

4. Click OK.

Notice ### has replaced the value in the cell. Also notice that the entire number is still displayed on the Formula bar.

fx 112233445566		
B	C	D
rica		#####
uth America		

- You are going to increase the width of column D so the number will fit in the cell.

Click the Format menu, point to *Column* and then choose *AutoFit Selection*.

Notice the scientific notation.

- For practice, you are going to close the workbook without saving the changes.

Click the Close button at the right of the Menu bar.

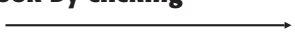
- Click the No button on the alert box.**

If no other workbooks (i.e., document windows) were open, only the application window is open. If another workbook is now the active document, leave it open for now — you will close it at the end of the lesson.

Note: As you have just seen, when a number is very large, by default Excel will display that number in scientific notation. To change this, you must change the cell's formatting, which you will learn about in Lesson 6.

Creating a Profit and Loss Statement

You are going to create a profit and loss statement for a shoe company.

- Take a look at the profit and loss statement on page 51 and then come back to this point.**
- Open a new workbook by clicking the New button.** 
- Change the width of all columns to 10 and the width of column A to 13.**



You can do this in two ways: either change the width of column A to 13 and then, using the *Column Width* dialog box, change the Standard Width to 10, or select the entire worksheet, change the column widths to 10 and then change the width of column A to 13.

4. In A1, type MILLER'S SHOE DEPARTMENT and tap the ENTER key.

The title overlaps into the cells to the right, because there is nothing in those cells.

5. Type the remainder of the worksheet below. (The text in row 3 and column A is left-aligned, so you do not have to apply special alignment.) Do not type any formulas yet. You will enter them later. Notice that there are negative numbers. These are displayed with a minus sign, although you will soon learn how to display them in parentheses.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	MILLER'S SHOE DEPARTMENT				
2					
3		Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
4					
5	Footwear				
6	Children	400	-100	-50	
7	Men	2000	2500	3000	
8	Women	3500	3000	4000	
9					
10	Total				
11					
12	Expenses	4000	3500	3000	
13					
14	Profit				

You are going to save the worksheet before making more changes.

1. Use CTRL/S.
2. Verify that *FLS Excel2003 Student Files* is displayed in the Save in box.
3. In the File name text box, type: Miller's P&L Statement
4. Click Save.

Notice *Miller's P&L Statement* on the Title bar.

You are now going to enter the formulas.

1. In B10, enter the following formula to calculate the total: =B6+B7+B8
2. Enter a similar formula in C10 and D10, making the necessary adjustments.

3. In B14, enter the following formula: =B10-B12
4. Enter a similar formula in C14 and D14, making the necessary adjustments.
5. In E6, enter the following formula to calculate the total across: =B6+C6+D6
6. Enter a similar formula in E7, E8, E10, E12, and E14, making the necessary adjustments.
7. On the File menu, choose *Save*.

If you have entered the formulas correctly, your worksheet should look like the following:

	A	B	C	D	E
1	MILLER'S SHOE DEPARTMENT				
2					
3		Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
4					
5	Footwear				
6	Children	400	-100	-50	250
7	Men	2000	2500	3000	7500
8	Women	3500	3000	4000	10500
9					
10	Total	5900	5400	6950	18250
11					
12	Expenses	4000	3500	3000	10500
13					
14	Profit	1900	1900	3950	7750

The correct formulas are as follows:

Formulas:

B10:	=B6+B7+B8	B14:	=B10-B12
C10:	=C6+C7+C8	C14:	=C10-C12
D10:	=D6+D7+D8	D14:	=D10-D12
E6:	=B6+C6+D6	E10:	=B10+C10+D10
E7:	=B7+C7+D7	E12:	=B12+C12+D12
E8:	=B8+C8+D8	E14:	=B14+C14+D14

Note: E10 could also have the formula =E6+E7+E8 and E14 could have the formula =E10-E12.

You are going to change the value in B6 and notice that the values change in the following five cells: B10, B14, E6, E10, and E14. This is, of course, because B6 is a part of the formula in those cells.

- 1. Go to B6.**
- 2. Type: 15000**
- 3. Now watch the values change in the five cells.**
Tap the ENTER key.
- 4. Change some other values and watch the values change in cells with formulas.**

When finished, close all open workbooks. Again, it is up to you whether you save changes. If you want to end this session, be sure to exit Excel.

End of Lesson 4