

An Excel Function You Shouldn't Be Without – Index Match

Is vlookup() your best friend? It's ours... from period close to conversions and reconciliations and finding that ONE missing share...we've become dependent. But over the last few months, we discovered something better. Then over the last week, we finally perfected my ability to use it without thinking (just like vlookup). Drumroll... index match...

Why is it better than vlookup?

It Reduces File Size and Increases File Speed:

Because vlookup looks at a target MATRIX of data (column B to column AX, for example), vlookups make files big and slow. Have you ever dealt with tranche-level data? Hundreds of thousands of rows in tab 1 looking up in tab 2, also with hundreds of thousands of rows? Be ready to get a cup of coffee because that filter you just applied is going to take 20 minutes to work, even on my laptop with four fast processors. Index match only looks at THREE columns: the one with the data you want returned, the one you are trying to match from and the one you are matching to. Better, stronger, faster.

It's Harder to Break:

Vlookup, as we discussed above, looks up in a matrix of data. Start here and go to here and match in the 27th column of data. So what happens if you insert a column? Or delete a column? Suddenly your vlookup is returning the wrong value - which may or may NOT create an error in your spreadsheet and it's more dangerous if it doesn't create an error, because you're much less likely to find the error.

You Can Look Up from RIGHT to LEFT, Not Just Left to Right :

Vlookup requires that the column you are attempting to match be on the LEFT side of the "matrix" from which you will return a value. Index match works whether the "key" is on the left or right of the data you are trying to pull in.

It is a little harder to use than vlookup, since it combines two different Excel functions (at least I thought so at first). But after using it a few times, you will get the hang of it. And it will be well worth the effort!

The syntax is:

=index(column in target data source I want a value FROM, match(column in source data I'm matching, column in target data I'm matching,0))

[Online Demo of Index Match](#)

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This article was originally published August 2015.