

Excel 2019 (Part 18): Sorting Data

You can quickly reorganize your spreadsheet by sorting your data.

In Excel, as you add more content to a worksheet, organizing this information becomes especially important. You can quickly reorganize a worksheet by sorting your data. For example, you can sort a list of contacts by last name. Content can be sorted alphabetically, numerically, and in several other ways.

Classification methods

When sorting data, it is important to first decide whether you want to apply it to the entire worksheet (1) or just a range of cells (2).

1. In case (1), all data in the worksheet will be organized into one column. Related information on each row is saved together when the sort is applied. In the example below, the **Contact Name** column (column A) has been sorted to display names in alphabetical order.

	A	B	C	D
1	Customer Contact List			
2	CONTACT NAME	BILLING ADDRESS	PHONE	EMAIL ADDRESS
3	Chaturvedi, Rick	2428 S Redding St #2 B	360-555-5422	info@newhaventraders.com
4	Dean, Hank	3034 Foggy Wharf Loop	308-555-1050	hdean@venturebrewing.com
5	Figgis, Mallory	3520 Sleepy Hearth Dr	425-555-5370	malloryf@archerproperties.com
6	Finn, Jake	1407 Dusty Fawn Ln So	605-555-6435	jake@adventureoutfitters.com
7	Kinkade, Chris	1028 Quiet Dale Rd Ho	443-555-4942	chris.kinkade@placervilleins.com
8	Lawson, Miranda	5316 Colonial Pkwy Est	575-555-9255	mlawson@massairlines.com
9	Reyes, Felicia	8544 Lazy Bluff Ave Wh	316-555-3256	felicia@everlypublishing.com
10	Sebastian, Lil	9060 Easy Evening Ln V	207-555-7225	lil@knopeequestrian.com
11	Silva, Vivica	8595 Thunder Brook Ci	360-555-4289	vivica@rileygardensupply.com
12	Stark, Katie	971 Cinder Butterfly St	603-555-2460	katie.stark@ariarealestate.com
13	Torrance, Jill	3160 Amber Gate Rd R	605-555-4495	jtorrance@overlookinn.com
14	Yuen, Phillip	5108 Crystal Gate Blvd	913-555-5928	yuenp@corepharmaceuticals.com

1. In case (2), only the data in a range of cells is sorted, which can be useful when working with a worksheet that contains multiple tables. Sorting a range will not affect other content in the worksheet.

	A	B	C	D	E
1					
2	EXERCISES	SET 1		SET 2	
3		REPS	WEIGHT (lbs)	REPS	WEIGHT (lbs)
4	Bench Press	14	65	12	75
5	Bench Press (Decline)	10	60	8	70
6	Triceps Extension	15	35	20	35
7	Average	13.9	50.5	12.5	54
8					
9		Running Log			
10		Date	Distance (miles)	Time (hrs:mins)	
11		25-Jun	2.8	0:45	
12		26-Jun	3	0:44	
13		27-Jun	2.75	0:42	
14		29-Jun	3.25	0:44	
15		30-Jun	3.25	0:45	
16		2-Jul	2.5	0:44	
17		3-Jul	3	0:30	
18		Total	20.55		
19					

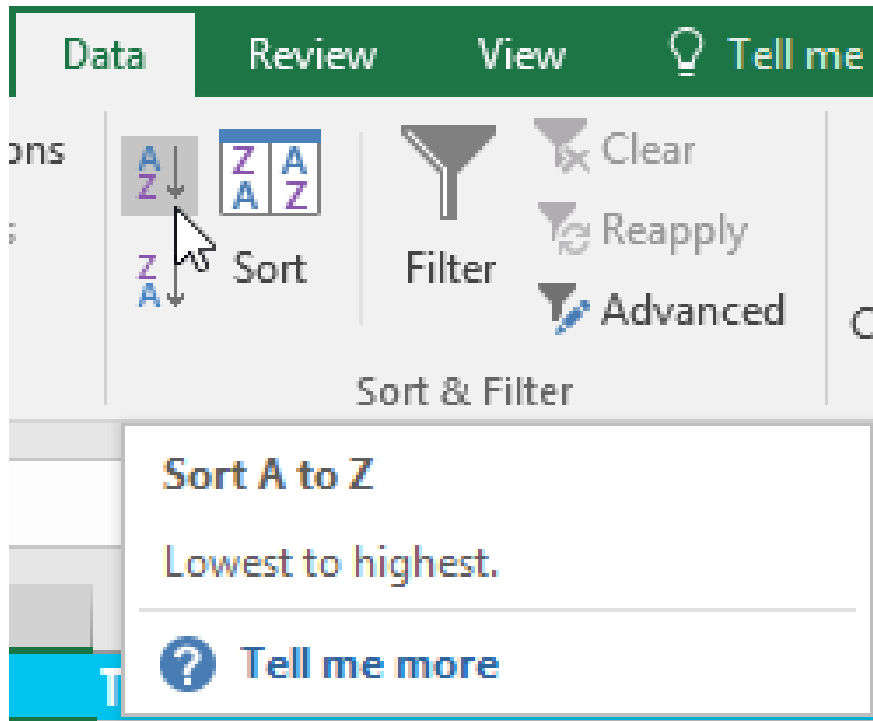
How to arrange a spreadsheet

For example, we will sort t-shirt orders alphabetically based on **Last Name** (column C).

1. Select a cell in the column you want to sort. For example, we would select cell **C2**.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Homeroom #	First Name	Last Name	T-Shirt Size	Payment Method
2	105	Christiana	Chen	Medium	Check Bounced
3	105	Derek	MacDonald	Large	Cash
4	105	Esther	Yaron	Small	Pending
5	105	Melissa	White	Small	Debit Card
6	105	Nathan	Albee	Medium	Check
7	105	Sidney	Kelly	Medium	Check
8	110	Gabriel	Del Toro	Medium	Cash
9	110	Kris	Ackerman	Large	Money Order

2. Select the **Data** tab on the Ribbon, then click the **AZ** command to sort from A to Z or the **ZA** command to sort from Z to A. The example will select sorting from A to Z.



3. The worksheet will be sorted by the selected column. In this example, the worksheet is currently sorted by last name.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Homeroom #	First Name	Last Name	T-Shirt Size	Payment Method
2	110	Kris	Ackerman	Large	Money Order
3	105	Nathan	Albee	Medium	Check
4	220-B	Samantha	Bell	Medium	Check
5	110	Matt	Benson	Medium	Money Order
6	105	Christiana	Chen	Medium	Check Bounced
7	110	Gabriel	Del Toro	Medium	Cash
8	220-A	Brigid	Ellison	Small	Cash
9	220-A	Juan	Flores	X-Large	Pending

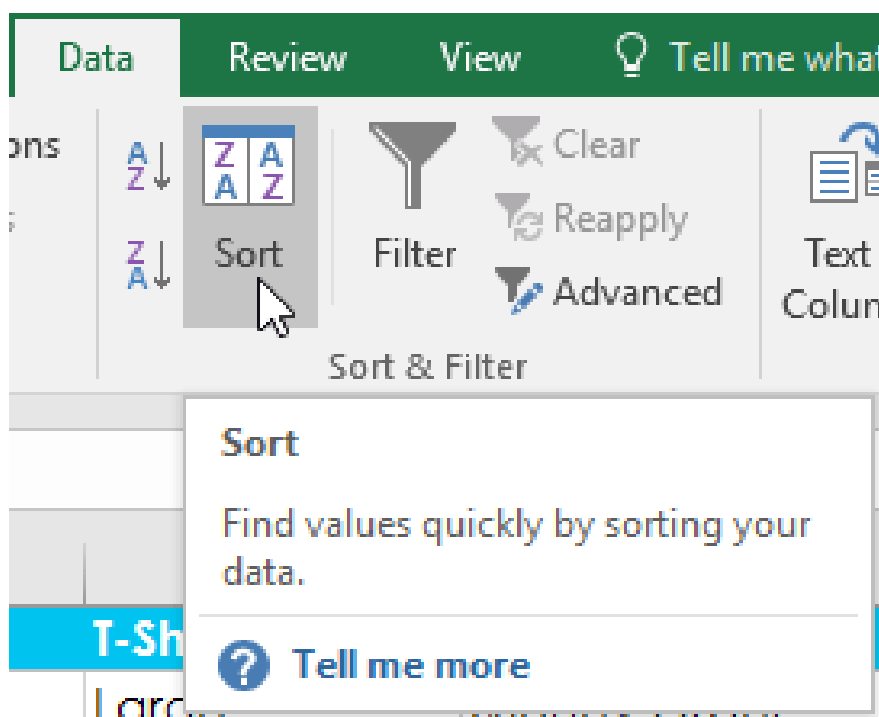
How to sort a range of cells

For example, a separate table would be selected within the t-shirt order form to sort the number of shirts ordered for each class.

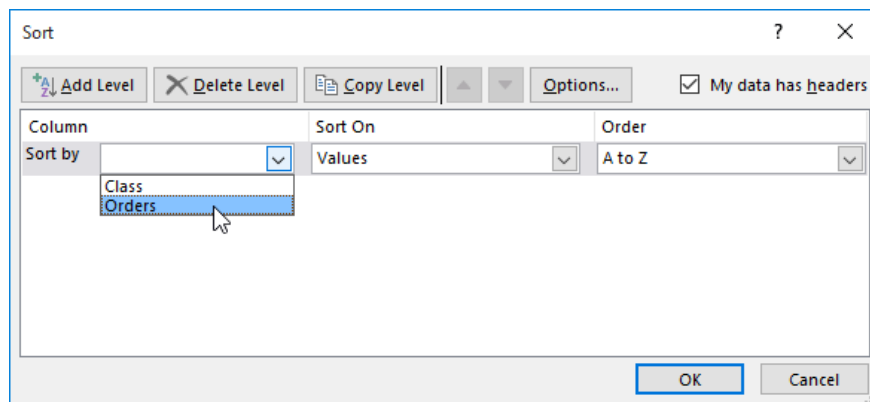
1. Select the range of cells you want to sort. For example, we would select the range **G2:H6**.

	F	G	H	I
		Total Orders (by Grade)		
		Class	Orders	
		Freshmen	5	
		Sophomore	7	
		Junior	10	
		Senior	+ 5	

2. Select the **Data** tab on the Ribbon, then click the **Sort command** .

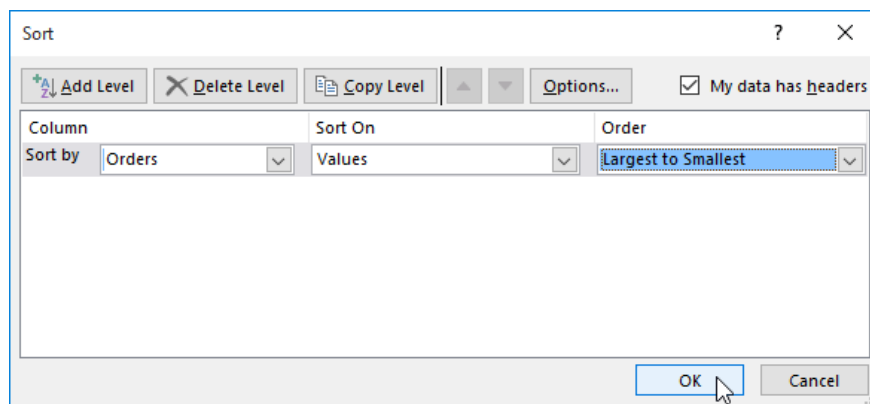


3. **The Sort** dialog box will appear. Select the column you want to sort. For example, if you want to sort the data by the number of t-shirt orders, the **Orders** column will be selected.



4. Decide on the sorting order (ascending or descending). For example, we will use the **Largest to Smallest** option .

5. Once you are satisfied with your selection, click **OK**.



6. The range of cells will be sorted by the selected column. In the example, the **Orders** column will be sorted from highest to lowest. Note that other content in the spreadsheet is not affected by this sorting.

F	G	H	I
	Total Orders (by Grade)		
	Class	Orders	
	Junior	10	
	Sophomore	7	
	Freshmen	5	
	Senior	5	

If your data isn't sorted correctly, double-check the cell values ??to ensure they're entered into the spreadsheet accurately. Even a small typo can cause problems when sorting a large spreadsheet. The example below forgot to

add a hyphen to cell A18, resulting in slightly inaccurate sorting.

	A	B	C	D
1	Homeroom #	First Name	Last Name	T-Shirt Size
16	135	Jordan	Weller	Large
17	135	Alex	Yuen	Large
18	220A	Christopher	Peyton-Gomez	Small
19	220-A	Brigid	Ellison	Small
20	220-A	Juan	Flores	X-Large
21	220-A	Chevonne	Means	Medium

Custom classification

Sometimes you may find that the default sorting options can't sort the data in the order you need. Fortunately, Excel lets you create a custom list to define your own sorting order.

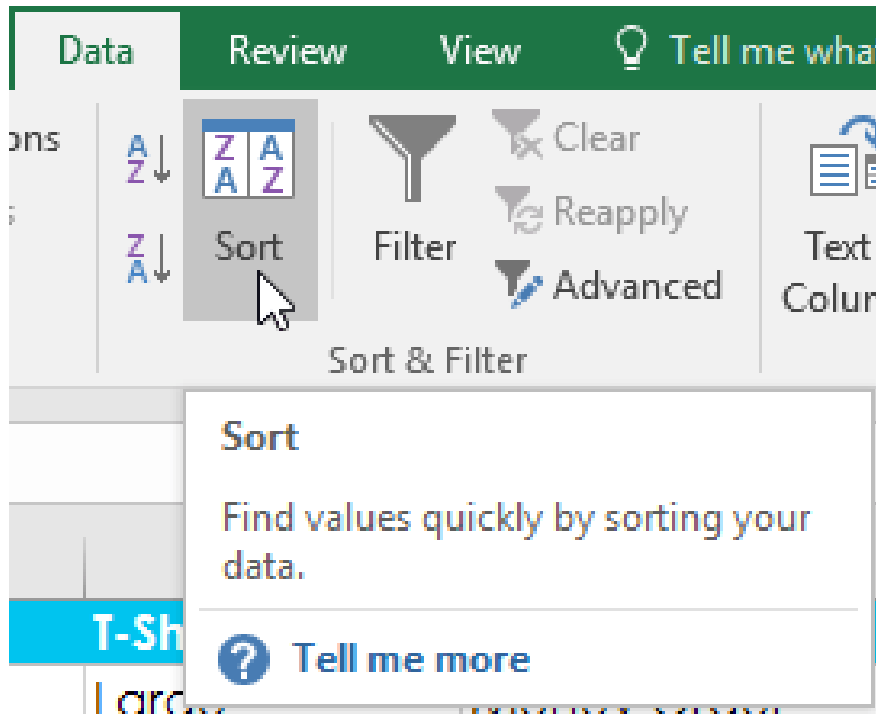
How to create custom taxonomies

For example, if you want to sort a spreadsheet by **T-Shirt Size** (column D), the usual sorting method would sort the sizes alphabetically, which is impractical. Instead, you need to create a custom list to sort from smallest to largest.

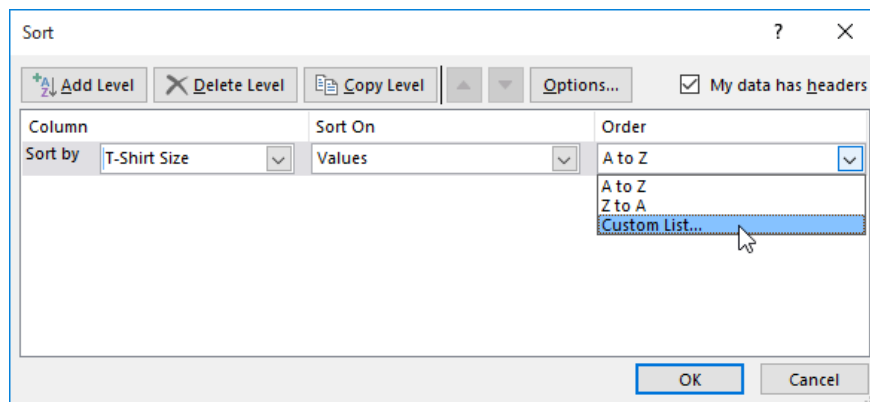
1. Select a cell in the column you want to sort. For example, we would select cell **D2**.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Homeroom #	First Name	Last Name	T-Shirt Size	Payment Method
2	110	Kris	Ackerman	Large	Money Order
3	105	Nathan	Albee	Medium	Check
4	220-B	Samantha	Bell	Medium	Check
5	110	Matt	Benson	Medium	Money Order
6	105	Christiana	Chen	Medium	Check Bounced
7	110	Gabriel	Del Toro	Medium	Cash
8	220-A	Brigid	Ellison	Small	Cash
9	220-A	Juan	Flores	X-Large	Pending
10	220-B	Tyrese	Hanlon	X-Large	Debit Card

2. Select the **Data** tab , then click the **Sort command**.

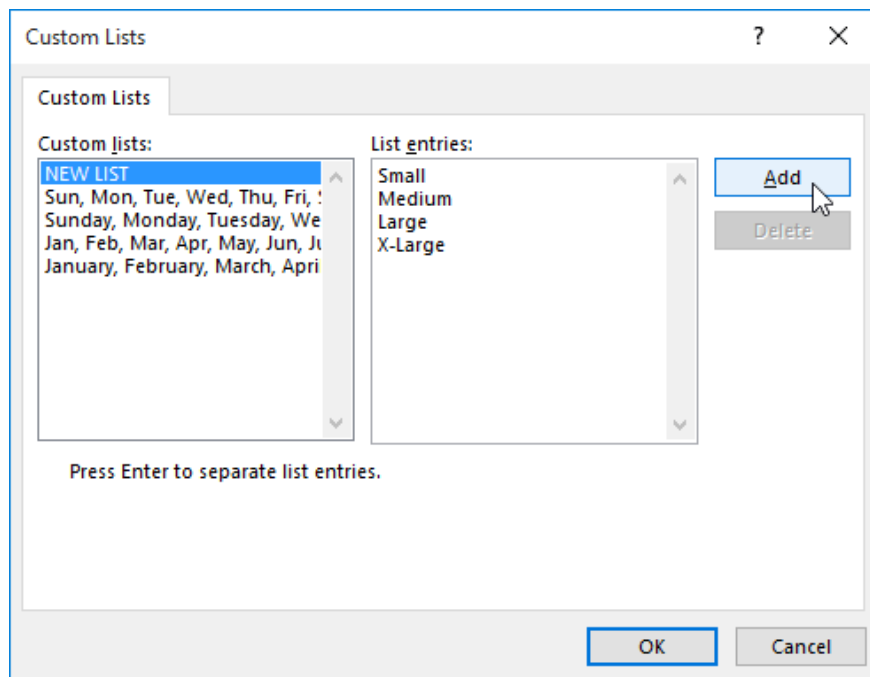


3. The **Sort** dialog box will appear. Select the column you want to sort, then select **Custom List**. from the **Order** field. For example, we will choose to sort by **T-Shirt Size**.

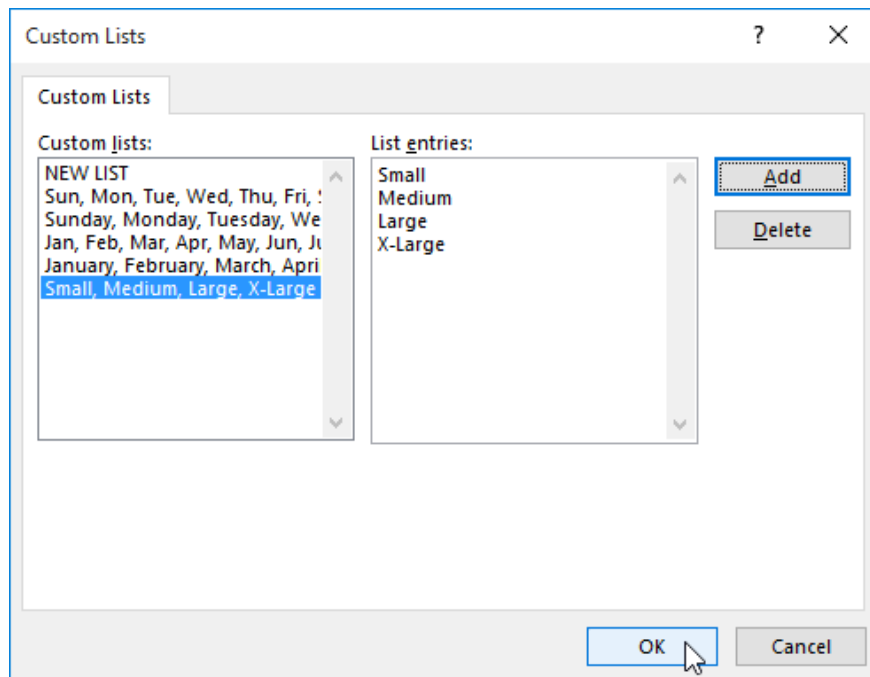


4. The **Custom Lists** dialog box will appear. Select **NEW LIST** from the **Custom Lists** box.

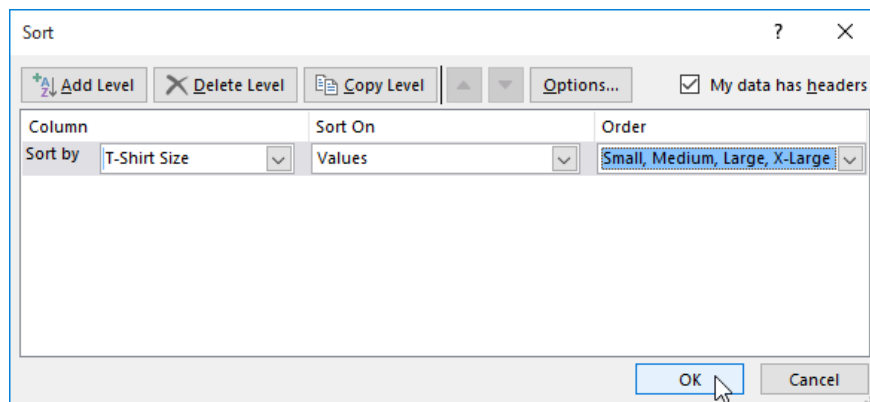
5. Enter the items in your desired custom order into the **List entries:** box. For example, if you want to sort your data by t-shirt size from smallest to largest, you would enter the values **Small, Medium, Large, and X-Large**, pressing **Enter** after each item.



6. Click **Add** to save the new sorting order. The new list will be added to the **Custom lists:** box. Make sure the new list is selected, then click **OK**.



7. The **Custom Lists** dialog box will close. Click **OK** in the **Sort** dialog box to apply the custom sort.



8. The spreadsheet will be sorted in a custom order. In this example, the spreadsheet is currently sorted by t-shirt size from smallest to largest.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Homeroom #	First Name	Last Name	T-Shirt Size	Payment Method
2	220-A	Brigid	Ellison	Small	Cash
3	220-B	Michael	Lazar	Small	Cash
4	135	Anisa	Naser	Small	Check Bounced
5	220-A	Christopher	Peyton-Gomez	Small	Check
6	220-B	Malik	Reynolds	Small	Cash
7	220-B	Wendy	Shaw	Small	Cash
8	105	Melissa	White	Small	Debit Card
9	105	Esther	Yaron	Small	Pending
10	105	Nathan	Albee	Medium	Check
11	220-B	Samantha	Bell	Medium	Check
12	110	Matt	Benson	Medium	Money Order
13	105	Christiana	Chen	Medium	Check Bounced
14	110	Gabriel	Del Toro	Medium	Cash
15	105	Sidney	Kelly	Medium	Check
16	220-B	Avery	Kelly	Medium	Debit Card
17	220-A	Chevonne	Means	Medium	Money Order
18	135	James	Panarello	Medium	Check
19	135	Chantal	Weller	Medium	Debit Card
20	110	Kris	Ackerman	Large	Money Order
21	105	Derek	MacDonald	Large	Cash

Sorting levels

If you need more control over how your data is sorted, you can add multiple levels to any type. This allows you to sort your data by multiple columns.

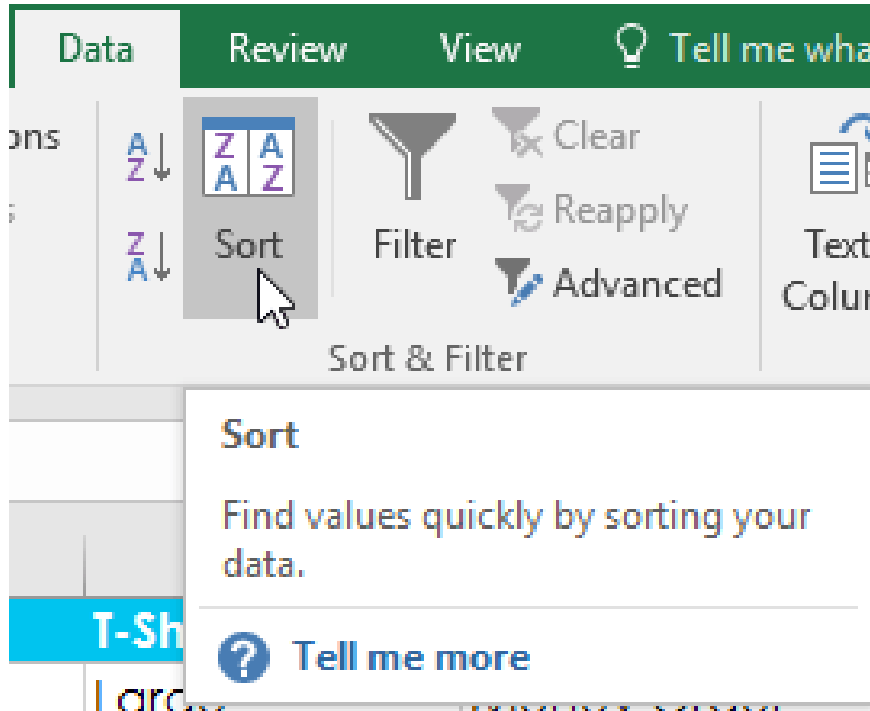
How to add a level

The example below will sort the spreadsheet by **T-Shirt Size** (Column D), then by **Homeroom #** (Column A).

1. Select a cell in the column you want to sort. For example, we would select cell **A2**.

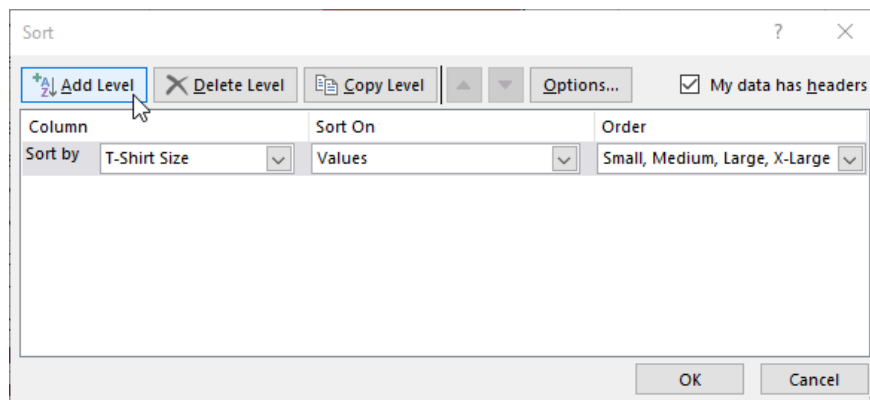
	A	B	C	D	E
1	Homeroom #	First Name	Last Name	T-Shirt Size	Payment Method
2	220-A	Brigid	Ellison	Small	Cash
3	220-B	Michael	Lazar	Small	Cash
4	135	Anisa	Naser	Small	Check Bounced
5	220-A	Christopher	Peyton-Gomez	Small	Check
6	220-B	Malik	Reynolds	Small	Cash
7	220-B	Wendy	Shaw	Small	Cash
8	105	Melissa	White	Small	Debit Card
9	105	Esther	Yaron	Small	Pending
10	105	Nathan	Albee	Medium	Check

2. Click on the **Data** tab , then select the **Sort command**.

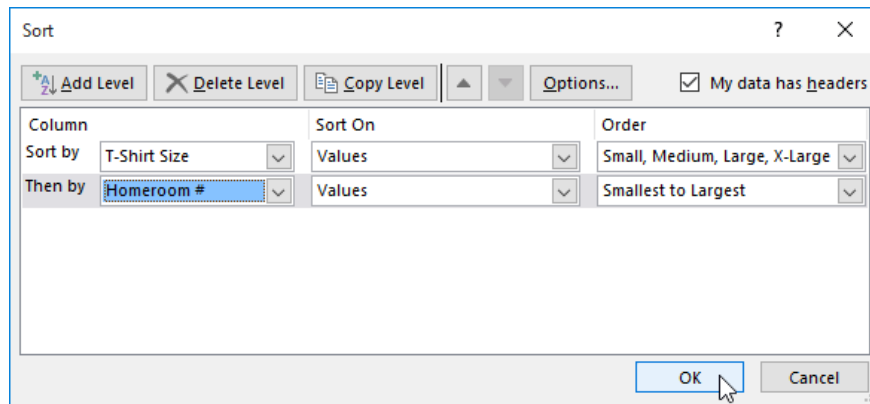


3. **The Sort dialog box will appear.** Select the first column you want to sort. This example will sort by **T-Shirt Size** (column D) using the custom list previously created for **the Order field**.

4. Click **Add Level** to add another column for sorting.



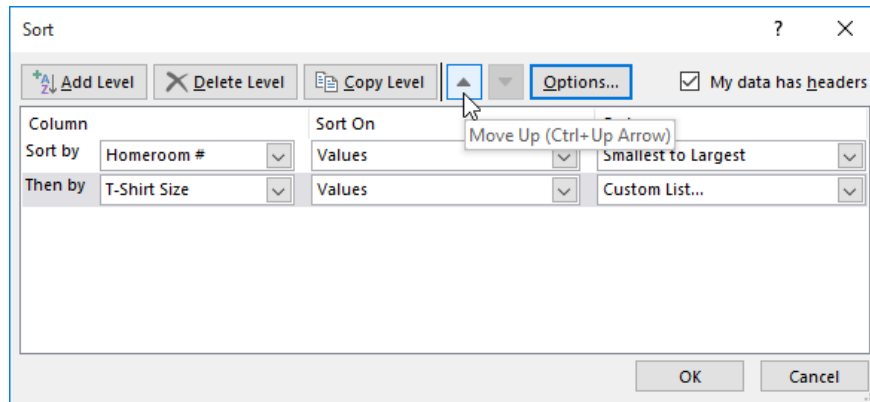
5. Select the next column you want to sort, then click **OK**. For example, this will sort by **Homeroom #** (column A).



6. The spreadsheet will be sorted in the selected order. In the example, the orders are sorted by t-shirt size. Within each group t-shirt size, students are sorted by class number.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Homeroom #	First Name	Last Name	T-Shirt Size	Payment Method
2	105	Melissa	White	Small	Debit Card
3	105	Esther	Yaron	Small	Pending
4	135	Anisa	Naser	Small	Check Bounced
5	220-A	Brigid	Ellison	Small	Cash
6	220-A	Christopher	Peyton-Gomez	Small	Check
7	220-B	Michael	Lazar	Small	Cash
8	220-B	Malik	Reynolds	Small	Cash
9	220-B	Wendy	Shaw	Small	Cash
10	105	Nathan	Albee	Medium	Check
11	105	Christiana	Chen	Medium	Check Bounced
12	105	Sidney	Kelly	Medium	Check
13	110	Matt	Benson	Medium	Money Order
14	110	Gabriel	Del Toro	Medium	Cash
15	135	James	Panarello	Medium	Check
16	135	Chantal	Weller	Medium	Debit Card
17	220-A	Chevonne	Means	Medium	Money Order
18	220-B	Samantha	Bell	Medium	Check
19	220-B	Avery	Kelly	Medium	Debit Card
20	105	Derek	MacDonald	Large	Cash
21	110	Kris	Ackerman	Large	Money Order

If you need to change the sorting order across multiple levels, it's easy to control which column is sorted first. Simply select the desired column, then click the **Move Up** or **Move Down** arrow to adjust its priority level.



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