

# How to create a drop list in Excel 2016

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The drop-down list restricts the number of entries for an input field, avoiding spelling errors. Excel provides features to create flexible drop-down lists, so it is suitable for forms or data collection, making it easier for readers to select items in the drop-down list.

Use the drop-down list in a cell when there are specific options for that cell. For example, you can create a drop-down list containing options like Men and Women, Yes and No, etc. This article will show you how to create a drop-down list in Excel 2016 spreadsheet.

## How to create a drop- down list in Excel

Here are the steps to create a drop-down list in Excel:

**Step 1: Create a Range and name the data area:** This step is necessary to create a user list for the drop-down list.

**Step 2: Control input data with Data Validation : Data Validation** feature displays a list of drop-down options or data type restrictions.

**Step 3: Add the named data area to the Data Validation :** Finally, add the data area to the Data Validation and specify the source for the drop-down list.

**Step 4: Set the input message for Data Validation (optional):** This step will add a message to guide users to use the spreadsheet.

Now, go to step-by-step details to create a drop-down list in Excel.

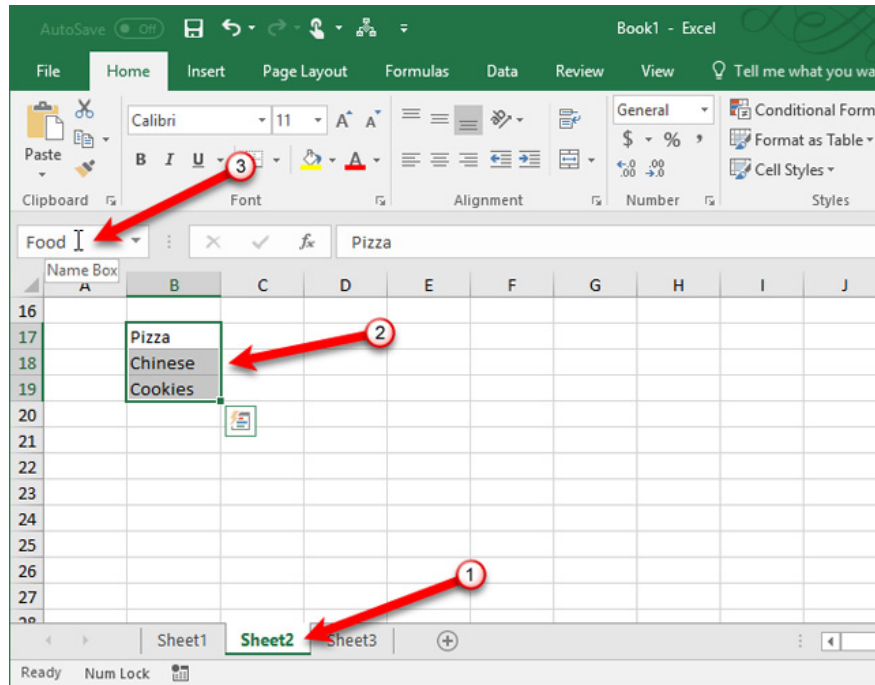
### 1. Create a data area

The way to add a list of items to a drop-down list uses Data Validation is to create a list in the spreadsheet and name the range containing the list. This list can be on the same worksheet or different worksheet as the drop-down list. Setting a priority for the range of cells in the drop-down list is easy for users to follow.

In this lesson, we will create a drop down list containing some different foods on **Sheet 2** . Enter each item in a separate cell or in a column or row, then select items, name the selected range in the **Name Box** and press **Enter**

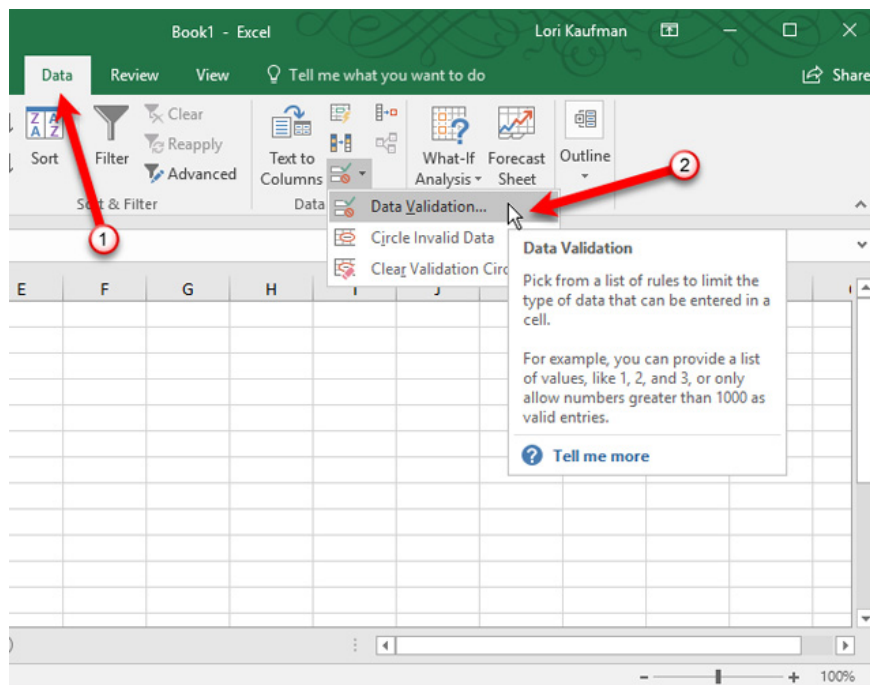
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## 1. Excel data entry faster



## 2. Control input data with Data Validation

Go to the worksheet containing the drop-down list, click on the **Data** tab and then click **Data Validation** in the **Data Tools** section.

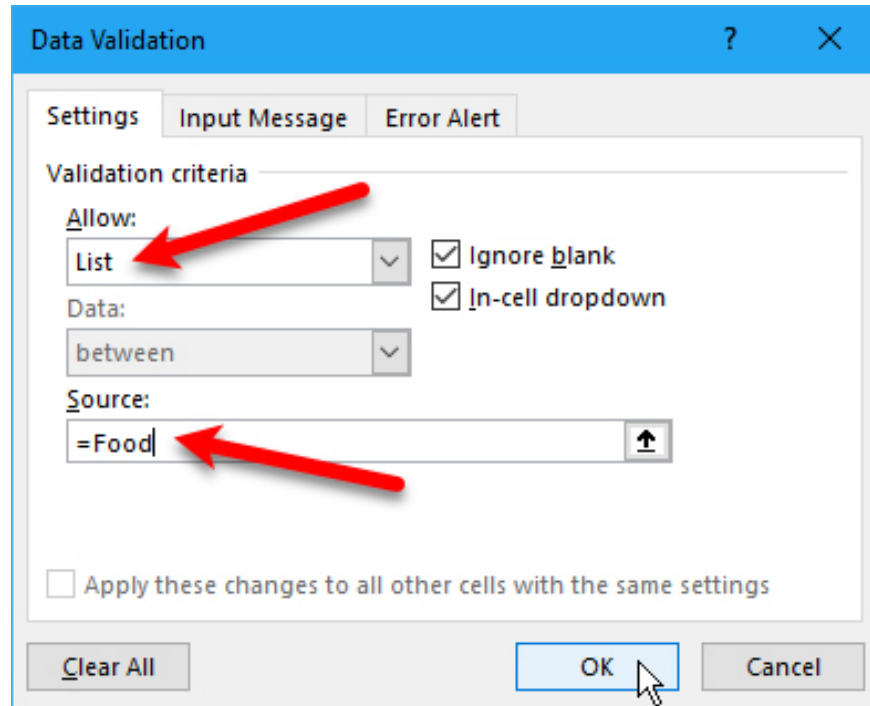


## 3. Add the named data area to the Data Validation

In the **Settings** tab in the **Data Validation** dialog box, select **List** from the **Allow** drop-down list. We will use the name of the named range in the previous step , type the following in the **Source** box.

= Food

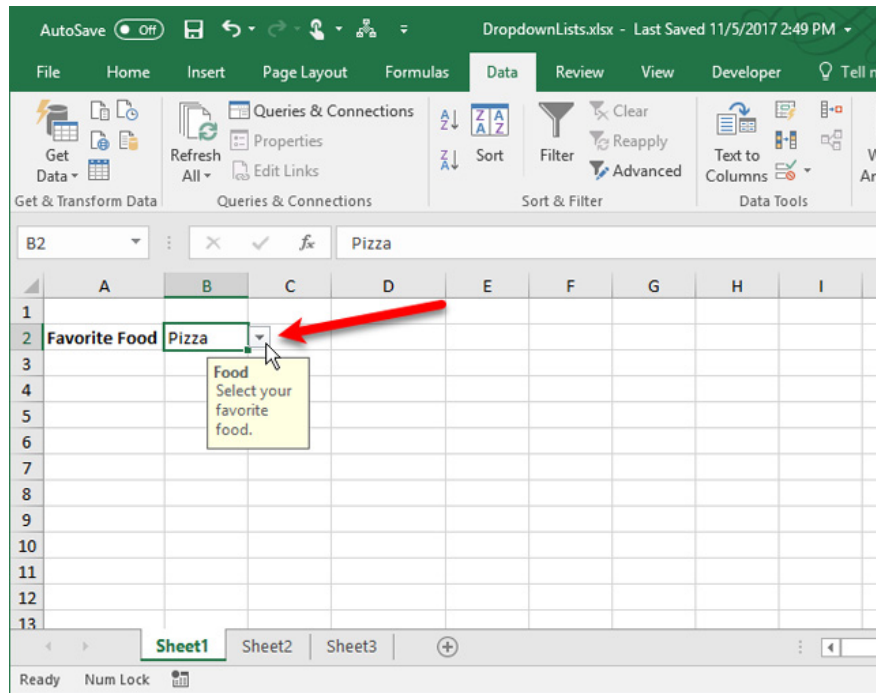
Replace "Food" with your data name, then click **OK** .



**Ignore blank** is selected by default, it allows you to select a cell and then uncheck the box without selecting an item. If you want to select an option from the drop-down list, uncheck **Ignore blank** .

#### 4. Set up data entry notifications for Data Validation

If you want to create a message displayed when selecting a cell in the drop-down list, click the **Input Message** tab, select the **Show input message** box **when the cell is selected** and fill in the **Title** and **Input messages** box. In addition, you can also use the **Error Alert** tab to add a message that appears when invalid entered in the drop-down list (for example, if someone typed in the box instead of selecting the option). Select **Show Error alert after invalid data is entered** , then select **Style** and fill in the **Title** and **Error message** box , click **OK**.

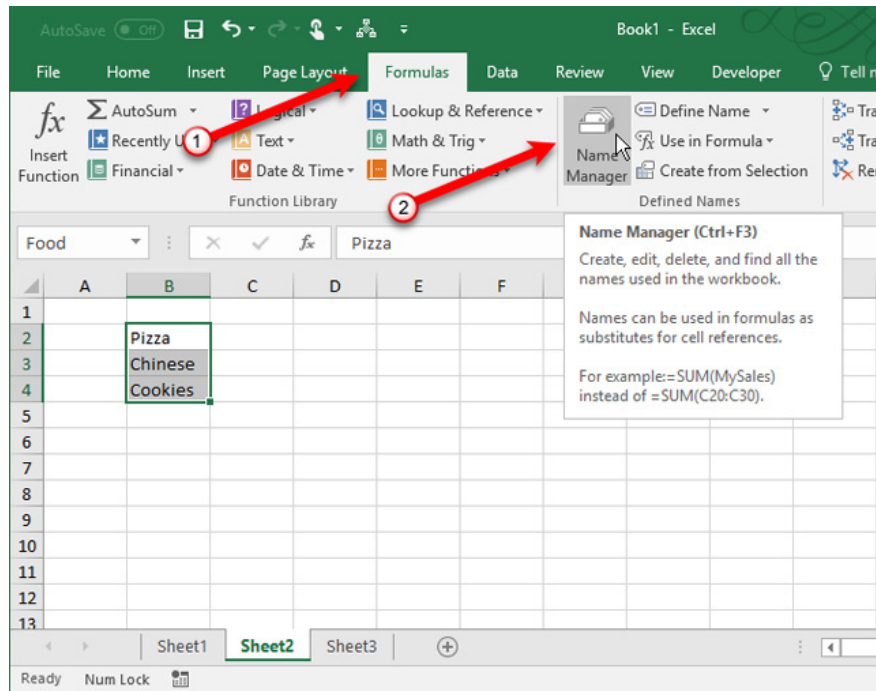


The arrow appears only when the cell containing the drop-down list is selected and is located to the right of the cell. If the drop-down list contains more than eight items, you'll see a scroll bar in the drop-down list when clicking the arrow.

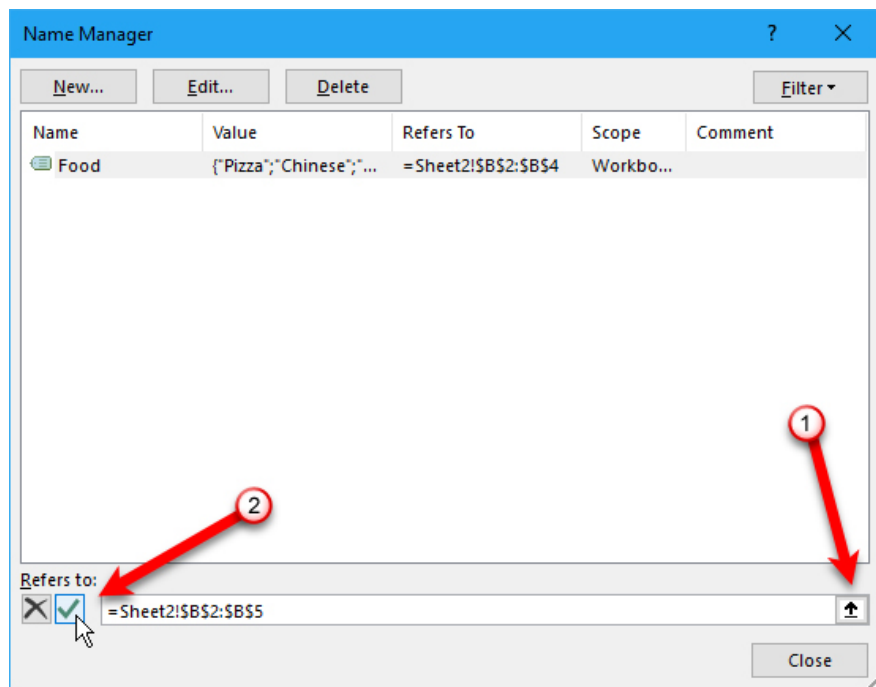
## How to set the book to the top

### Edit or delete a data area

To edit or delete a named range, use **Name Manager**, click the **Formulas** tab, and then select **Name Manager** in the **Defined Names** section.



To change the range name in the **Name Manager** dialog box, select **Name** in the list and click the cell range button at the bottom of the dialog box. Then, select the range and click the umbrella button again in the thumbnail of the **Name Manager** dialog box. Next, click the green checkmark button to save the new range with the selected name.



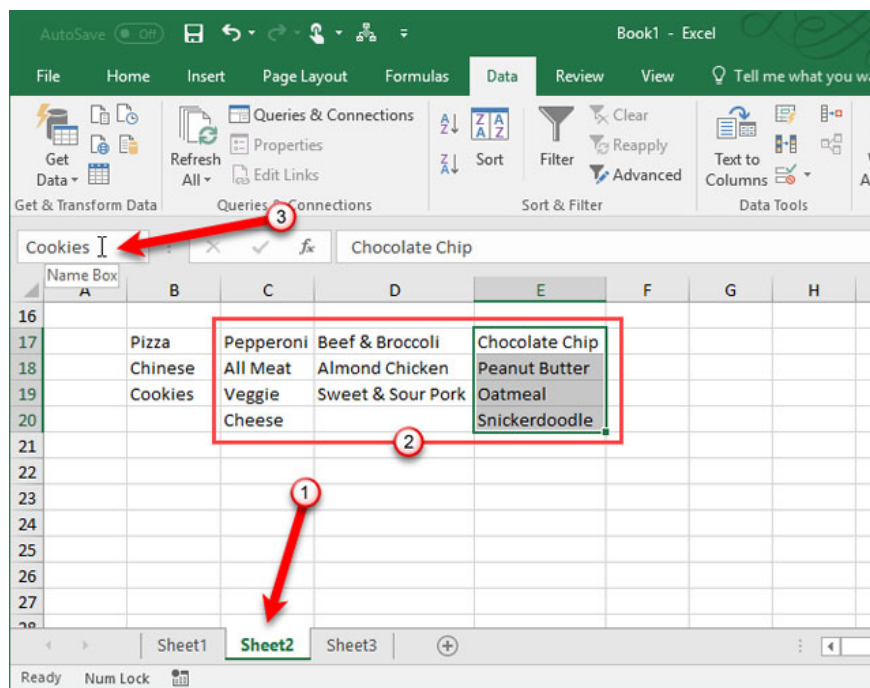
Alternatively, you can change the name by selecting it in the list, clicking **Edit**, changing the name in the **Edit Name** dialog box and clicking **OK** or changing the range of cells on the **Edit Name** dialog box. To delete a name, select **Name** in the list and click **Delete**.

## Create a dependent drop-down list

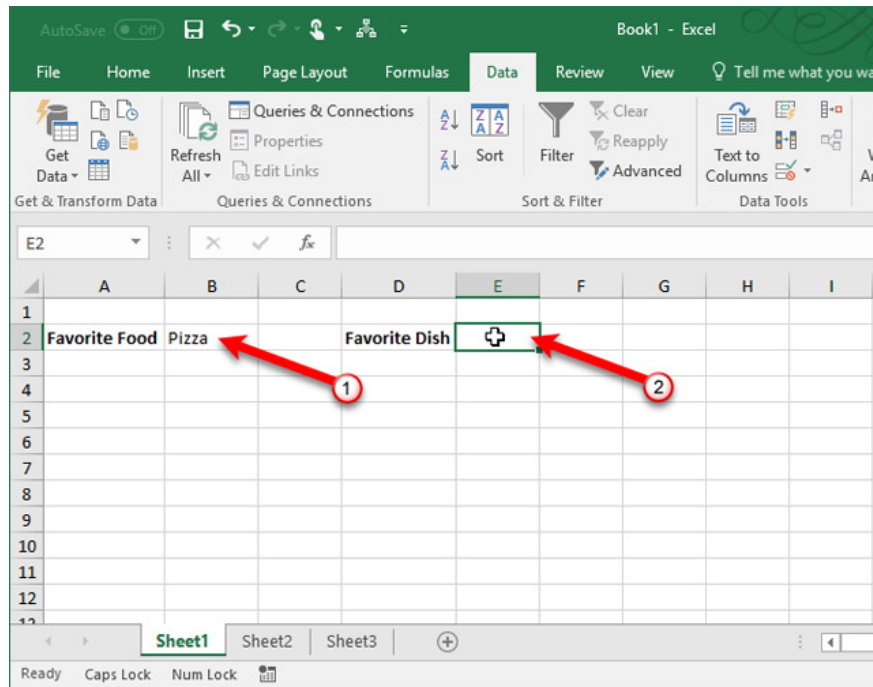
The dependent drop-down list is a list of options that vary according to the options in the main drop-down list. For example, when selecting **Pizza** in the drop-down list, the second dependent drop-down list will contain pizza types. If you select Chinese, the options in the dependent drop-down list will contain different types of Chinese dishes.

Before starting, go back to the previously created drop-down list and create a Favorite Food drop-down list if you haven't already. Now we will create three more lists and name them. Enter a list for each option in the main drop-down list, then name that list in **Name Box** and press **Enter** . Do the same for the remaining listings.

The names of other lists must match the options in the main drop-down list. For example, the list contains cookies that will be named **Cookies** . The other two lists in the red box as shown below are named **Pizza** and **Chinese** .



Before creating the dependent drop-down list, select an item in the main drop-down list. Then, select the cell you want to add the dependent drop-down list.

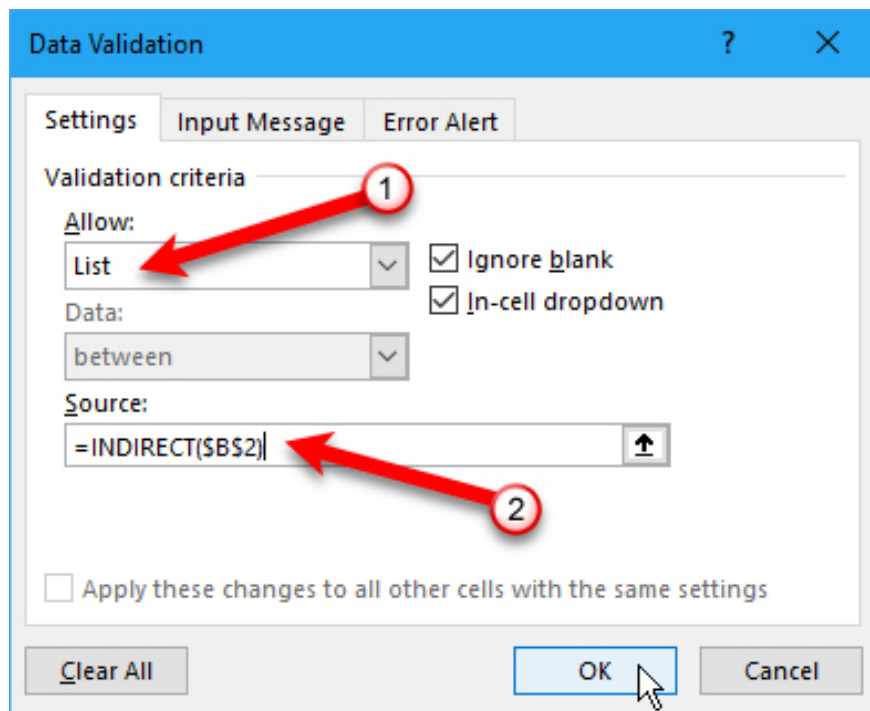


Click the **Data** tab and then click **Data Validation** in the **Data Tools** section. Select **List** in the **Allow** drop-down list. Enter the following text in the **Source** box, replace "**\$ B \$ 2**" with a reference to the cell containing your main drop-down list, but remember to keep the dollar symbols in the cell reference, which is an absolute reference to that cell will not change even when copying or moving the reference formula to that cell.

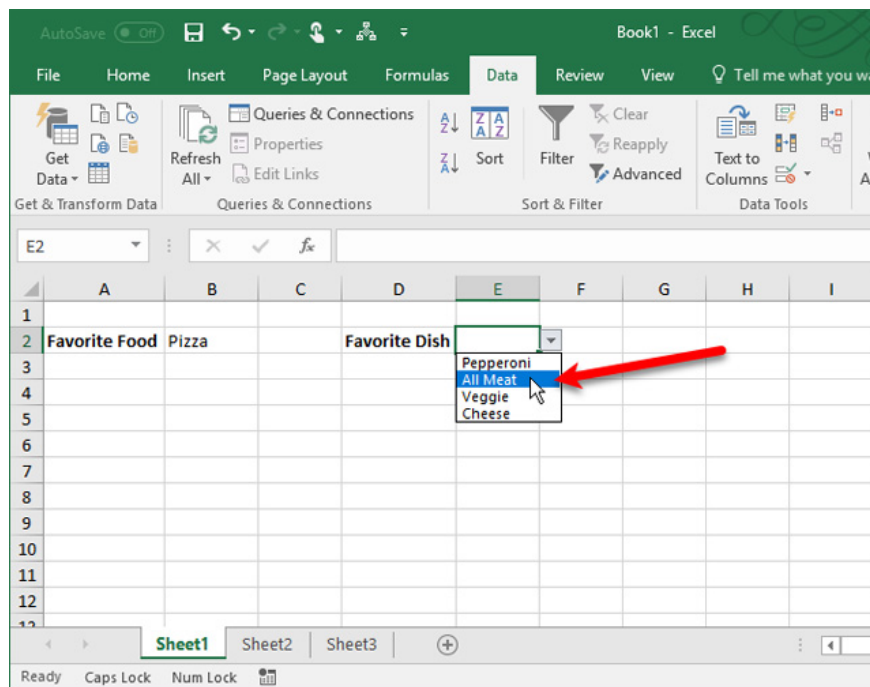
1. These are the most basic functions in Excel that you need to understand

= *INDIRECT* (**\$ B \$ 2**)

INDIRECT returns the reference specified with a text string, in this case the text from the selected option in the main drop-down list in cell B2. For example, if you select **Chinese** from the main drop-down list, = **INDIRECT** (**\$ B \$ 2**) will return the **Chinese** reference. Therefore, the second drop-down list contains **Chinese** entries. Then, click **OK**.



The list in the **Favorite Dish** drop-down list in the example below changes depending on the selection in the main **Favorite Food** drop-down list.

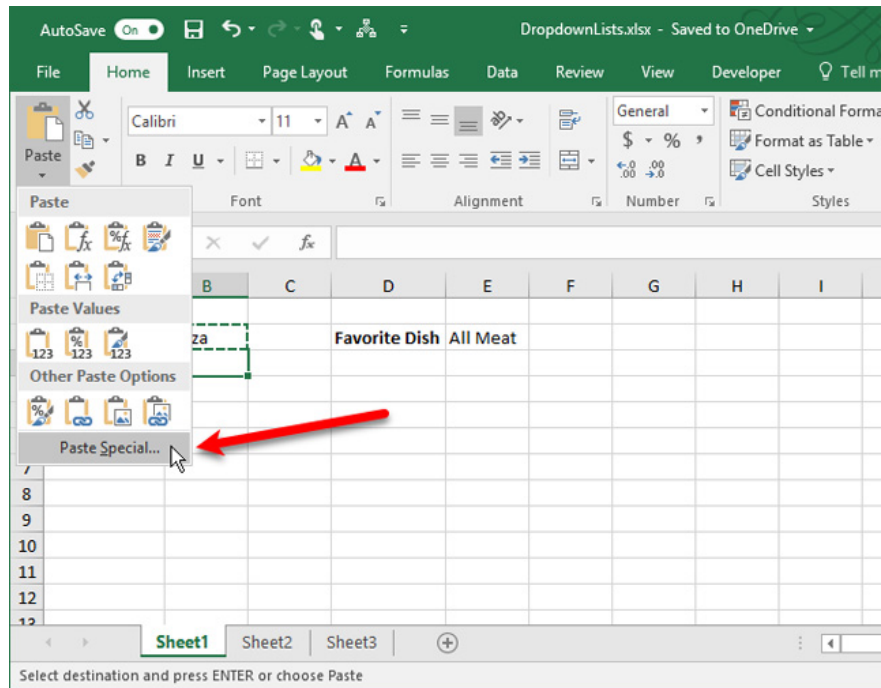


## Copy and d projects the drop- down list

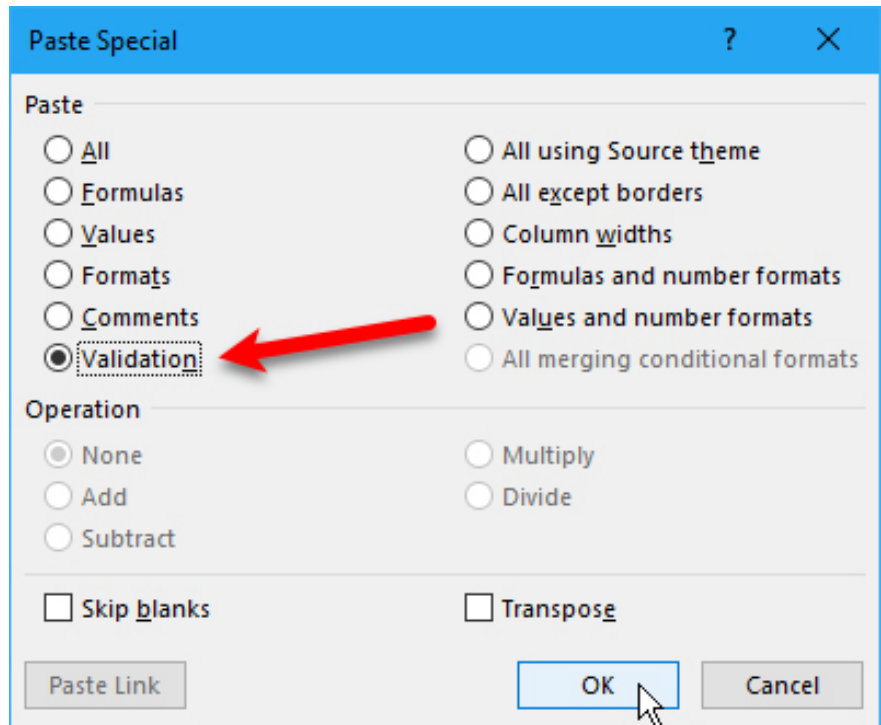
To copy the drop-down list with data control to other cells, press **Ctrl + C** and **Ctrl + V** on the cell you want to copy to copy the list and keep the format.

If you just want to copy the drop down list with data control but don't need to keep the format, select the cell you want to copy and press **Ctrl + C** , then go to the **Home** tab and click **Paste** in the **Clipboard** section, select **Paste Special** .

1. 10 ways to use the Paste feature in Excel



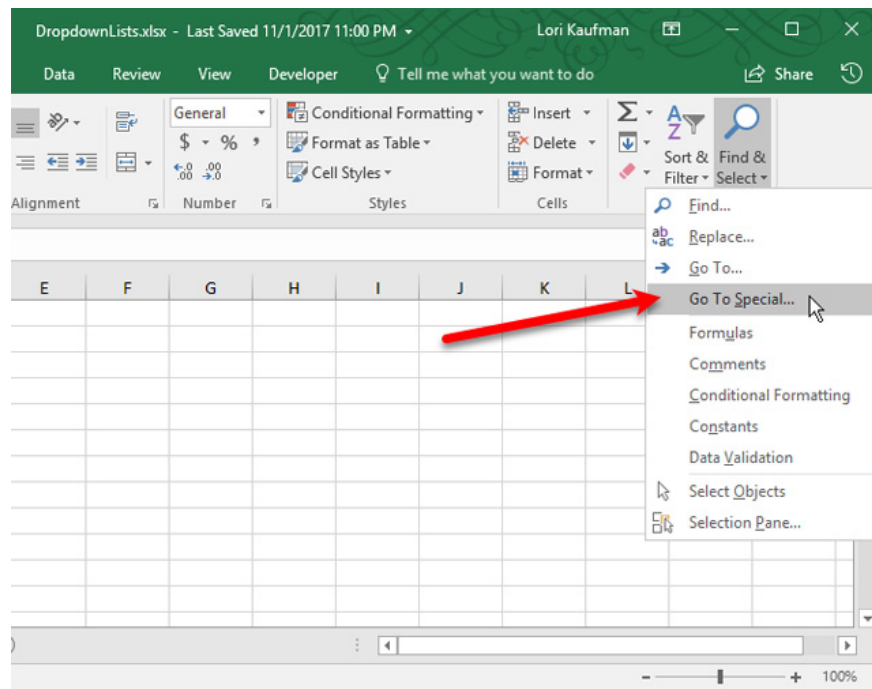
On the **Paste Special** dialog box, select **Validation** in the **Paste** section, then click **OK** .



**Note:** You must be very careful when working with the drop-down list in Excel. When copying a cell that does not contain a drop-down list to a cell that contains a drop-down list, this list will be lost. Excel does not display a notification about the operation, but you can still undo it by pressing **Ctrl + Z**.

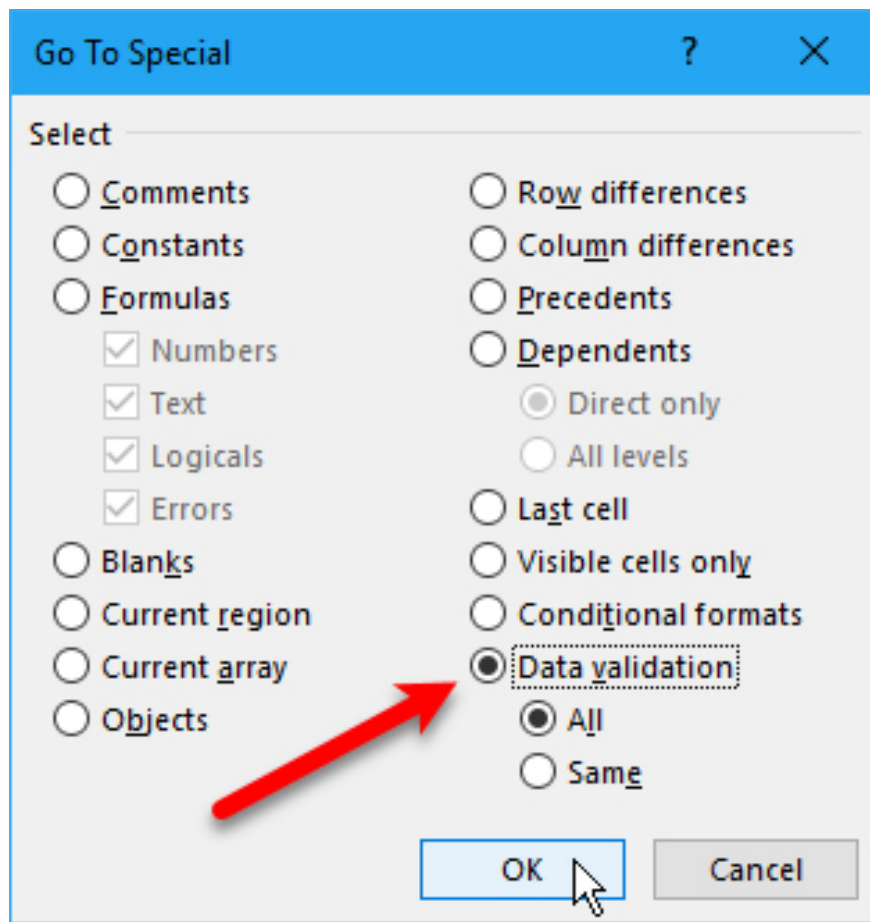
## Select all cells containing the drop- down list

Because the arrow button is not displayed on the drop-down list unless the cell is selected, it is difficult to know which cell contains the drop-down list. You can apply different formats to the cells in the drop-down list for easy distinction. But first you need to find all the drop-down lists. There is a way to select all the cells that contain the drop-down list. First, select a box containing the drop-down list, go to the **Home** tab and click on **Find & Select** in the **Editing** section, then select **Go To Special**.

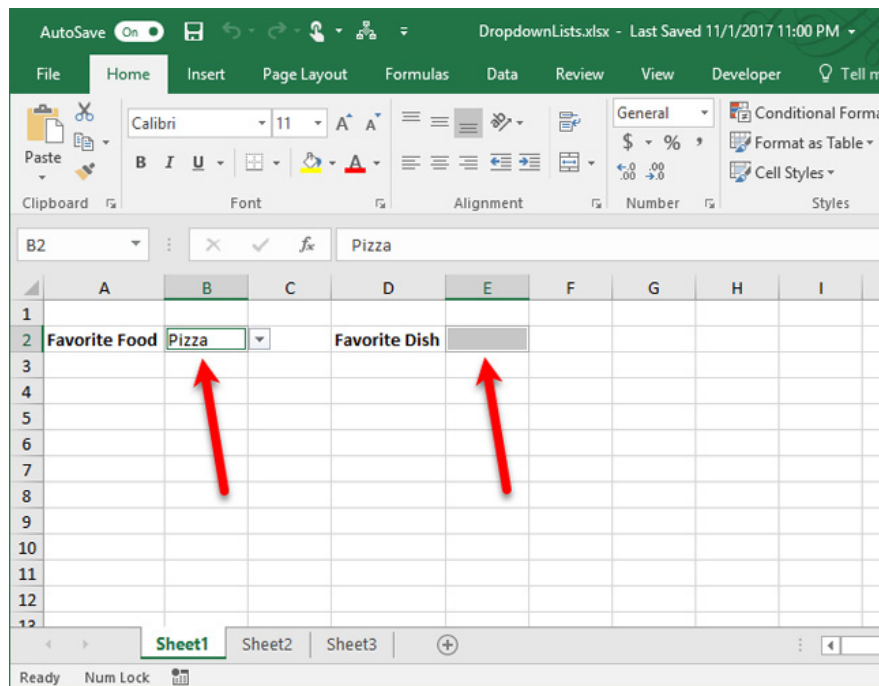


On the **Go To Special** dialog box, select **Data Validation**. **All** option under **Data Validation** will select all cells that apply data control rules. The **Same** option selects only the cells in the drop-down book using the same data control rules as the selected cell.

Select the option that fits your data, here select **All** because the drop-down list uses different rules, then click **OK**.



Two drop-down lists are selected.



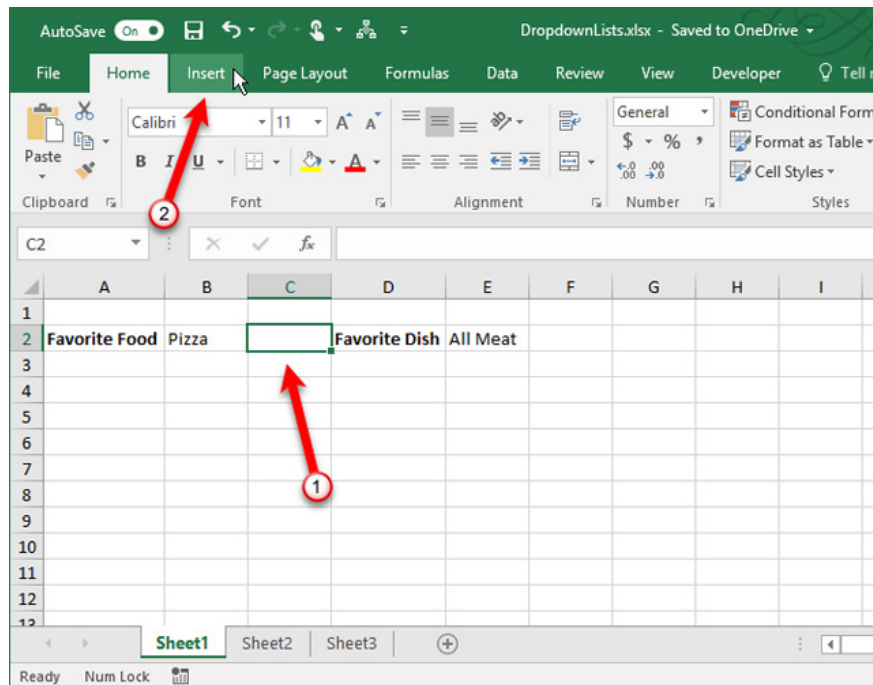
You can now format these cells to distinguish them from other cells.

## The way to make an arrow in the drop-down list always appears

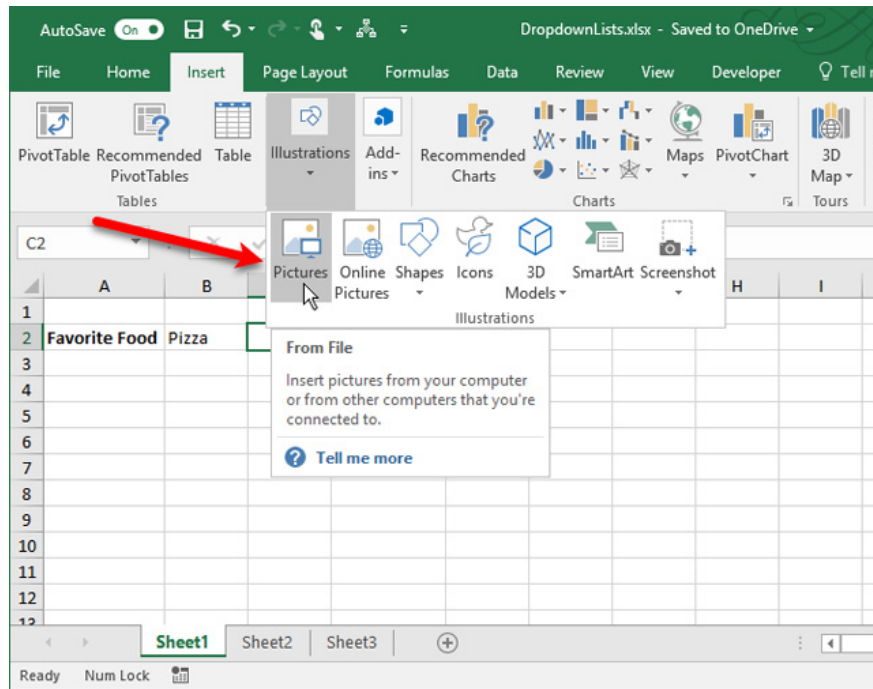
The arrow buttons on a drop-down list will disappear when no cells are selected. We will solve this problem by adding the arrow button permanently to the right of the drop-down list.

To create an arrow that always appears in the drop-down list, take a screenshot containing the arrow in the list, then take the arrow, insert the image into the box to the right of the drop-down list, so you will see Arrow button even if you don't select the drop-down list. When selecting the drop-down list, the arrow button will appear on the inserted image.

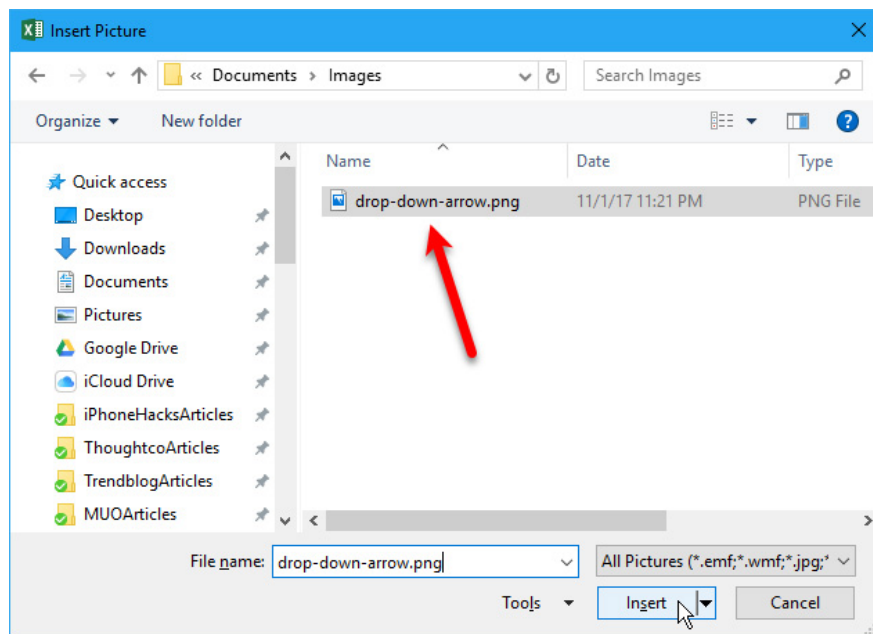
To start, download the **drop-down-arrow.png** arrow file (right-click on the link and select **Save link as** ). Then, select the box to the right of the drop-down list and go to the **Insert** tab.



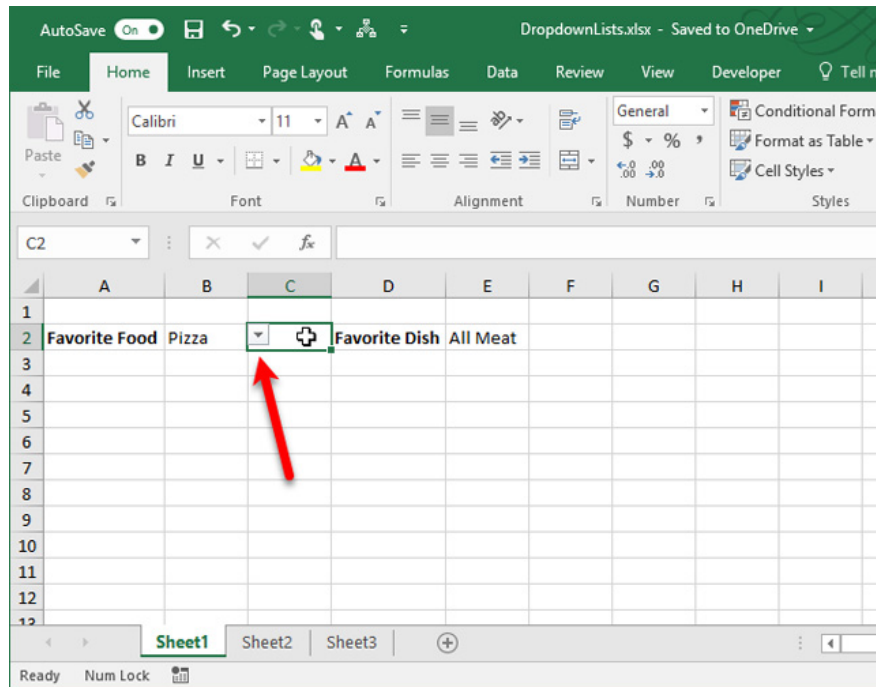
Click **Illustrations** and select **Picture** .



On the **Insert Picture** dialog box, navigate to the location of the downloaded file above and select the file, then click **Insert** .

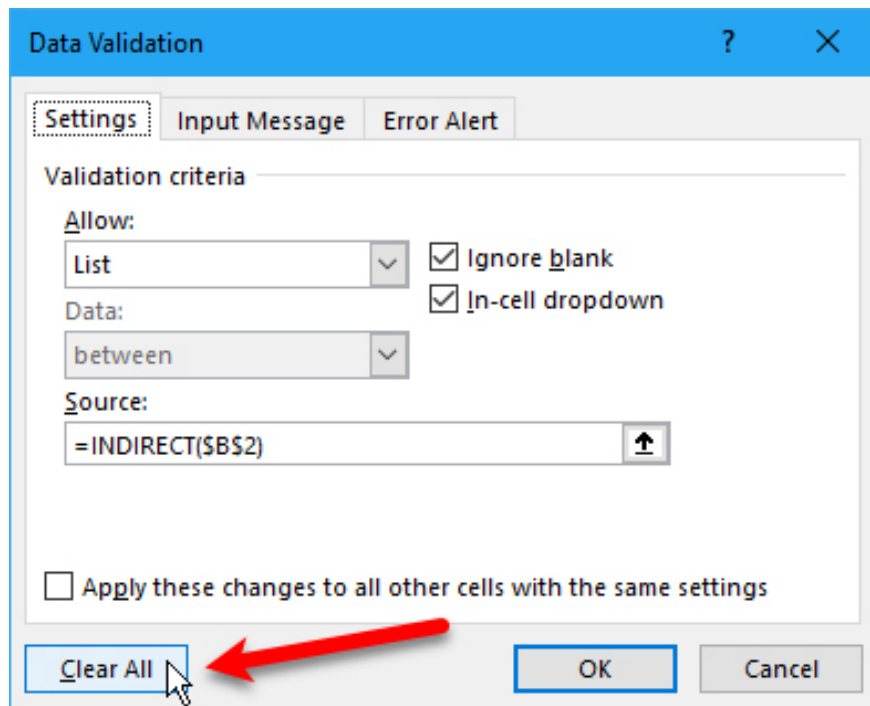


The image is inserted to the left of the cell.

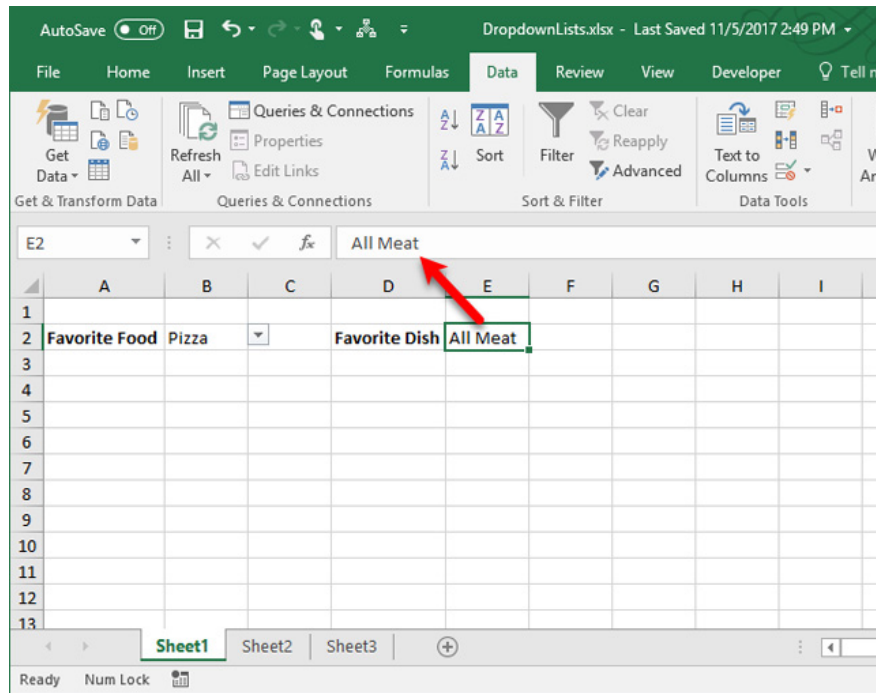


## Delete a drop-down list in a cell

To delete the drop-down list in a cell, select that box and open the **Data Validation** dialog box (go to the **Data** tab and click **Data Validation** in the **Data Tools** section), click the **Clear All** button. The options on the **Data Validation** dialog will be set to the default value, then click **OK**.



The drop-down list has been deleted and the box will be restored to its default format. If there is an option selected when deleting the drop-down list, that cell will be entered with the value of that option.



If you don't want to save any value when deleting the drop-down list, you can copy the blank cell and paste it in the box that contains the drop-down list, which will be deleted.

See also: [Summary of expensive shortcuts in Microsoft Excel](#)

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