

note

Older versions of Excel hid all of their best features underneath an arcane system of menu navigation. Many users didn't know that half of the features were there at all.

Because only the standard and formatting toolbars were visible on screen, users didn't explore the menu options and, instead, used only a tiny subset of Excel's features.

The Ribbon makes Excel seem overwhelming because all of those features are right in your face.

Hardly anybody in the workplace today understands every one of Excel's features. You'll be doing productive work with Excel by session two of this book while using a tiny subset of the full feature set. By the end of the book you'll be thoroughly competent working with Excel.

note**The Ribbon shows more if you have a wide screen**

When I work with Excel I use a 22 inch widescreen monitor running at 1,680*1,050 pixels.

Excel uses the extra screen space to display extended descriptions of each feature on the Ribbon.

For example, the Styles pane on the Home Ribbon expands to show buttons for nine common cell styles allowing them to be applied with a single click rather than two clicks.

Lesson 1-8: Use the Ribbon

Look what they've done to my song, Ma
Look what they've done to my song
Well it's the only thing I could do half right
And it's turning out all wrong, Ma
Look what they've done to my song

Song lyric by Melanie (M. Safka)

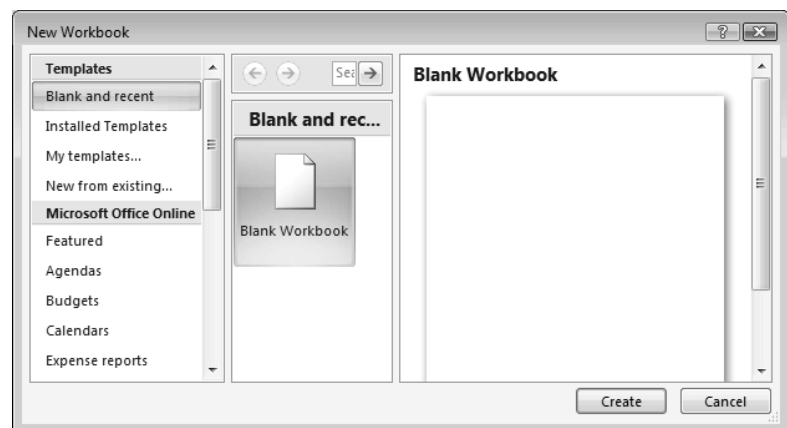
The Ribbon causes huge frustration for seasoned Excel 97 to 2003 users as everything seems to be in the "wrong place". "Look what they've done to Excel" they cry. But it's a better, and an entirely new, way of working.

The sheer breadth of Excel features can seem overwhelming. This book will gently introduce all of the most important features, one at a time. By the end of the book you'll be really comfortable and productive with the Ribbon.

1 Start Excel and open a new workbook.

1. Click Office→New.

The New Workbook dialog appears.



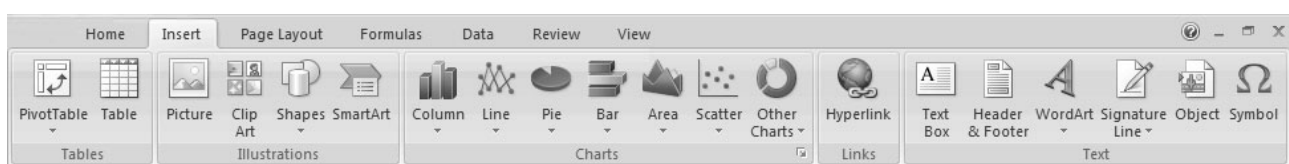
2. Double-click the *Blank Workbook* icon to create a new blank workbook.

2 Use Ribbon tabs.

Each Ribbon tab has its own toolkit available to you. By far the most important tab is the *Home* tab which has buttons for all of the most common and useful features.

Click each tab in turn and view the buttons. The screen grab below has the *Insert Tab* selected. Don't worry if the buttons seem cryptic at the moment. Most of them will make complete sense by the end of this book.

If you later go on to complete the Expert course too, Excel will have no mysteries left at all!



note

contextual tabs

If you are doing something special, such as previewing a worksheet, Excel doesn't want to bother you with a lot of commands that are irrelevant.

For this reason you'll often see a cut-down version of the Ribbon, listing only the commands that are available at that time. For example, when you change to print preview view (we cover that later in *Lesson 1-10: Customize the Quick Access Toolbar and preview the printout*), you'll see a cut-down Ribbon with only one tab containing all of the things you are able to do when previewing a printout.

Sometimes Excel will show you even more tabs. For example, when you select a picture, a *Picture Tools* tab group will magically appear containing a *Format* tab. This enables you to enhance the picture.

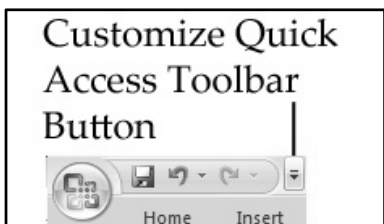
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Other ways to show and hide the Ribbon

1. Press <Ctrl>+<F1>.
2. Right-click anywhere on the Ribbon and choose *minimize the Ribbon* from the shortcut menu.

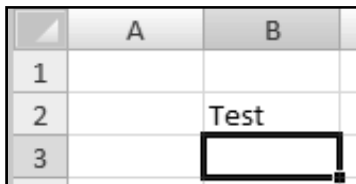
You can do any of the above a second time to bring the Ribbon back.

If you close Excel with the Ribbon hidden it will still be hidden when you re-open it.



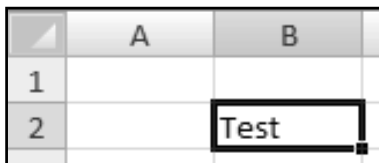
- 3 Type the word **Test** into any blank cell and then press the <Enter> key on the keyboard once.

Notice how the Active Cell moves to the cell beneath.



- 4 Make the cell with the word *Test* into the active cell.

Click once on the word *Test* or use the arrow keys on the keyboard to navigate back to the cell. Be very careful not to double-click otherwise Excel will think that you want to edit the cell.



- 5 Click the *Home* tab on the Ribbon and focus upon the Font panel (it's the second panel from the left). Try clicking each of the buttons and you will see the word *Test* change to reflect your choices.

This drop-down allows you to change the font to something different to the default Calibri.

This drop-down allows you to change the size of the font (measured in points).

These buttons allow you to change the cell's background and text colour.

Click here once to make the text Bold, Italic or Underlined (or all three). Click again to restore it to Normal.

Clicking here puts a single underline along the entire length of the bottom of the cell. Try the drop-down arrow too for more border options.

This drop-down arrow allows you to add a double underline.

- 6 Minimize the Ribbon.

To minimize the Ribbon in order to save screen space, click the *Customize the Quick Access Toolbar* button (see sidebar) and choose *Minimize the Ribbon* from the drop-down menu. Notice how the Ribbon now takes up far less screen space.

An even quicker way of doing the same thing is to double-click any of the tabs.

Double-click once more to bring the Ribbon back to full size.

- 7 Save your work with the name *Ribbon Test* and close Excel.

Click Office→Save As→Excel Workbook, type in the file name (Ribbon) and then click the Save button.