

Excel: Use CONCATENATE with New Line

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Excel stands as the industry standard for data management, offering robust capabilities for organization, analysis, and sophisticated visualization. Its utility extends far beyond simple spreadsheet calculations; it is a critical tool for improving business productivity and streamlining complex data workflows. One of the most frequently utilized features for data restructuring is the ability to combine textual information from disparate cells into a single, unified string. This process is known as string concatenation. While basic concatenation is straightforward, presenting combined data in a clean, multi-line format often requires a specialized approach.

The core challenge in aggregating text data is maintaining readability, especially when merging multiple distinct pieces of information, such as names, titles, and dates, into one cell. Simply joining them together results in a long, unformatted string that is difficult to parse. This is where the powerful combination of the CONCATENATE function and the hidden character function becomes invaluable. By strategically inserting a new line character as a separator, users can transform raw combined data into a structured, highly organized block of text within a single cell, significantly enhancing the readability and presentation quality of their spreadsheets.

This detailed guide explores how to leverage the classic CONCATENATE function alongside the character function specific to line breaks. We will delve into the syntax, provide comprehensive examples, and outline the necessary formatting steps to ensure these line breaks are visible. Mastering this technique allows users to create elegant, formula-driven solutions for data aggregation, moving beyond basic data merging toward professional report generation directly within the spreadsheet environment.

Understanding Text Manipulation Functions

In the realm of spreadsheet software, efficiently handling text strings is paramount. The primary tool for this aggregation process is the CONCATENATE function, designed explicitly to join multiple strings together. While newer functions like CONCAT or TEXTJOIN (for users with newer versions of Excel) offer streamlined syntax, CONCATENATE function remains universally supported across all historical versions, making it a reliable choice for formula creation. The fundamental capability allows users to take values from any number of referenced cells and present them as one contiguous output.

You can use the **CONCATENATE** function in Excel to concatenate values from multiple cells into one cell. This action is essential when generating unique identifiers, compiling mailing addresses, or preparing summary reports where source data is spread across various columns. However, merely joining text often sacrifices clarity. To overcome this, we must introduce specific non-printing characters that act as structural breaks within the output string.

The introduction of a line break transforms the output from a single, run-on sentence into a

formatted block of text, where each component occupies its own line. This manipulation requires integrating a specific character into the function arguments, treating it as a literal piece of text to be joined. This character, which is invisible on its own, signals to the spreadsheet display engine that the subsequent text should begin on a new line, provided the cell formatting is correctly applied.

Mastering Line Breaks: The Role of CHAR(10)

To achieve the desired line break effect, we employ the CHAR(10) function. The **CHAR** function in Excel returns the character specified by a number from the standard ASCII or Unicode character set. Specifically, the number 10 corresponds to the line feed character (LF). When this character is inserted between arguments in the CONCATENATE function, it forces the subsequent text element to start on a new line within that single cell, effectively serving as a multi-line delimiter.

Understanding the numeric code is critical: **CHAR(10)** is the standard representation for a line break across Windows versions of Excel. If you were working in a Unix-based environment or other systems, other character codes might be needed, but for standard Excel use, 10 is the universally accepted value for text wrapping within a cell. This allows developers and analysts to programmatically control the vertical layout of textual output, far surpassing the limitations of simple space or comma delimiters.

To use the **CONCATENATE** function with a line break as the delimiter, you can use the following formula structure. Notice how the cell references are separated by the required character function, ensuring proper sequence and insertion of the newline character at strategic points in the final string:

Syntax Deep Dive: Combining Text and New Lines

=CONCATENATE(A2, CHAR(10), B2, CHAR(10), C2)

This particular formula combines the values in cells **A2**, **B2** and **C2** into one cell, using a line break as the delimiter. The formula alternates between the source cell (the text you want to include) and the delimiter (the line break), ensuring that after each piece of data, the cursor moves down one line before inserting the next piece of data. This explicit structuring is key to achieving a perfectly formatted output.

It is important to emphasize the specific function used for the line break: **Note:** In Excel, **CHAR(10)** is used to represent a line break. This function call must be included as a separate argument within the **CONCATENATE** function, separated by commas from the surrounding cell references or text strings. If you were to concatenate three cells, as shown above, you would require two instances of CHAR(10) to separate the three pieces of information onto three distinct lines.

The following practical example shows precisely how to use this powerful formula in a real-world data management scenario, transforming a standard table into a consolidated summary column.

Practical Application: Step-by-Step Scenario

To solidify the concept, let us walk through a practical scenario involving personnel data. Imagine a dataset where key employee attributes--specifically their official title, full name, and years of service (tenure)--are stored in separate columns (A, B, and C, respectively). Our objective is to create a single, consolidated column (D) that clearly presents all three attributes vertically within one cell, suitable for quick reference or report exporting.

Suppose we have the following dataset in Excel that shows the title, name and tenure for various people associated with some basketball team, starting in row 2: Column A contains the Title, Column B contains the Name, and Column C contains the Tenure. The goal is to merge A2, B2, and C2 into D2, ensuring each item occupies a new line. This aggregation process dramatically improves the clarity of the resulting data block compared to traditional comma-separated lists.

We would like to concatenate each corresponding cell in each row into a single destination cell, utilizing the line break character as the mandatory delimiter. This requires meticulous placement of the CHAR(10) function after every element we wish to separate. For the first entry in row 2, we initiate the formula in cell D2, referencing the three source cells and inserting the line break operator twice.

Implementing the CONCATENATE Formula

The exact formula implementation must follow the syntax previously discussed. We begin the entry process in cell **D2**, ensuring the formula accurately captures the sequence of data elements and line breaks:

We can type the following formula into cell **D2** to achieve the desired multi-line output for the first employee entry:

=CONCATENATE(A2, CHAR(10), B2, CHAR(10), C2)

Once the formula is entered into **D2**, it pulls the title from A2, inserts a line break, pulls the name from B2, inserts another line break, and finally pulls the tenure from C2. The result in D2, initially, might appear as a single, long string if the default cell formatting is applied, but the underlying line breaks are present. The next crucial step is applying this formula across the entire dataset.

We can then use the fill handle--the small square at the bottom-right corner of the selected cell--to click and drag this formula down to each remaining cell in column D (from D2 to D8, assuming the

dataset spans seven rows). This action automatically adjusts the cell references (A2 becomes A3, A4, etc.) for each row, quickly populating the consolidated data for all personnel records:

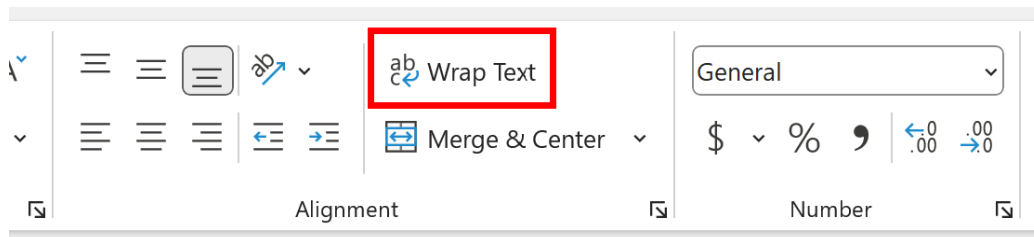
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Title	Name	Tenure				
2	CEO	Andy	9	CEOAndy9			
3	COO	Bob	4	COOBob4			
4	CTO	Chad	12	CTOChad12			
5	Manager	Doug	40	ManagerDoug40			
6	Trainer	Eric	2	TrainerEric2			
7	Coach	Frank	8	CoachFrank8			
8	Owner	Greg	17	OwnerGreg17			
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
15							

Crucial Formatting Step: Enabling Wrap Text

A common pitfall encountered after successfully implementing the CONCATENATE function with CHAR(10) is that the output still appears as a single, horizontally scrolling line of text. This is because the line feed character (CHAR(10)) only indicates where a line break **should** occur; Excel requires an explicit formatting instruction to render this break visually. This required instruction is the **Wrap Text** feature.

In order to actually see the line breaks embedded by the formula, we must specifically enable wrapping for the output cell range. First, highlight the relevant cell range, in our case **D2:D8**. Next, navigate to the **Home** tab on the Ribbon, locate the **Alignment** group, and click the **Wrap Text** icon. This action tells Excel to display all content within the cell, using multiple lines if necessary, respecting the internal line break characters generated by the formula.

Failure to enable **Wrap Text** will mean that while the formula is technically correct, the resulting text will spill over horizontally or be truncated from view. The moment this formatting is applied, the cells dynamically resize (often requiring manual adjustment of row height for optimal display) to accommodate the new vertical structure, immediately improving the visual presentation and clarity of the data.



Once we click this icon, the formatting takes effect, and we will be able to clearly see the distinct line breaks in column D, where each piece of data (Title, Name, Tenure) is neatly stacked:

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Title	Name	Tenure		
2	CEO	Andy	9	CEO Andy 9	
3	COO	Bob	4	COO Bob 4	
4	CTO	Chad	12	CTO Chad 12	
5	Manager	Doug	40	Manager Doug 40	
6	Trainer	Eric	2	Trainer Eric 2	
7	Coach	Frank	8	Coach Frank 8	
8	Owner	Greg	17	Owner Greg 17	
9					
10					

Beyond CONCATENATE: Using the Ampersand Operator

While the CONCATENATE function is highly effective, modern Excel users often prefer the ampersand operator (&) for string concatenation due to its shorter syntax and greater flexibility. The ampersand serves as a direct operator to join strings, eliminating the need to type the function

name repeatedly. This method works identically when incorporating the line break character.

Using the ampersand operator, the equivalent formula for combining cells A2, B2, and C2 with line breaks would look like this: **=A2 & CHAR(10) & B2 & CHAR(10) & C2**. This syntax is generally quicker to type and easier to manage for formulas involving numerous elements. It is crucial to remember that both methods--using the function or the operator--require the insertion of the CHAR(10) function to achieve the multi-line effect.

Furthermore, users of Excel 2019 or Microsoft 365 have access to the **TEXTJOIN** function, which is even more efficient as it can use a specified delimiter (like CHAR(10)) and apply it across an entire range without listing every single cell reference, offering a cleaner and more scalable solution for large datasets. However, when aiming for maximum compatibility across all Excel versions, the methods using **CONCATENATE** or the ampersand operator remain the gold standard.

Summary and Best Practices

The ability to combine data elements into a single, vertically organized cell is a hallmark of advanced data presentation in Excel. By utilizing the **CONCATENATE** function in conjunction with the system-specific line break function, **CHAR(10)**, users gain precise control over output structure. This technique is indispensable for tasks such as creating formatted mailing labels, summary notes, or comprehensive data cards within a spreadsheet.

For optimal results, always follow these best practices:

Verify the Formula: Ensure that **CHAR(10)** is included as a distinct, comma-separated argument between every element that requires a line break.

Apply Formatting: The result will not be visible until the **Wrap Text** feature is explicitly activated for the output cells.

Adjust Row Height: After applying **Wrap Text**, manually or automatically adjust the row height to ensure all lines of concatenated text are fully visible without truncation.

Mastering this technique ensures that your Excel reports are not only accurate but also highly professional and easy for end-users to digest. This specialized use of CONCATENATE function exemplifies how simple functions can be combined to achieve powerful formatting results.

Note: You can find the complete documentation for the **CONCATENATE** function in Excel by visiting the official Microsoft Support website.