

How can I compare two lists in Excel using VLOOKUP?

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VLOOKUP is a function in Excel that allows users to compare two lists and retrieve corresponding data from one list to the other. To use VLOOKUP, the lists must have at least one column with matching data. The function searches for a specified value in the first column of one list and returns a value from a specified column in the same row of the other list. This allows for quick and efficient comparison of data between two lists. By using VLOOKUP, users can easily identify common data points and analyze any differences or similarities between the two lists.

Compare Two Lists in Excel Using VLOOKUP

You can use the following basic formula to compare two lists in Excel using the VLOOKUP function:

=ISNA(VLOOKUP(A2,\$C\$2:\$C\$9,1,False))

Using the Conditional Formatting tool in Excel, we can use this formula to highlight every value in column A that does not belong to a range in column C.

The following example shows how to use this formula in practice.

Example: Compare Two Lists Using VLOOKUP

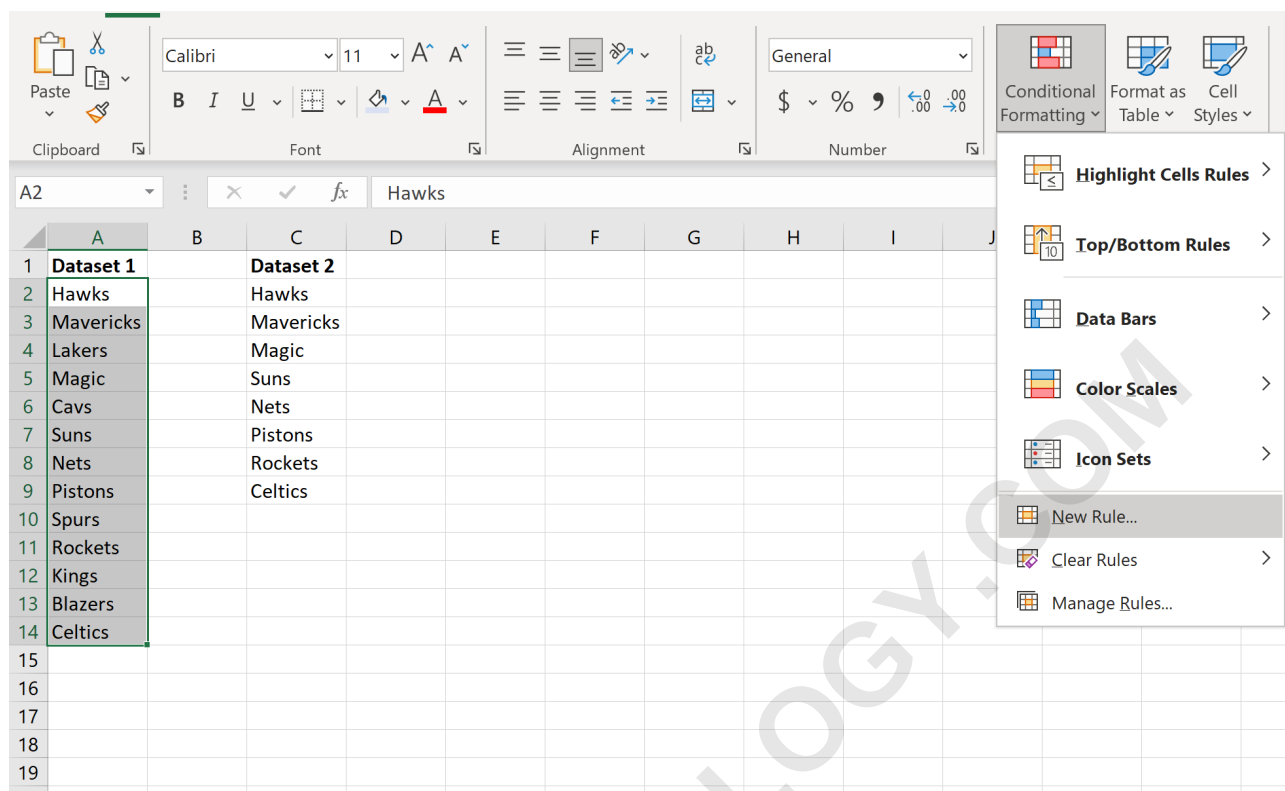
Suppose we have the following two datasets in Excel:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Dataset 1		Dataset 2				
2	Hawks		Hawks				
3	Mavericks		Mavericks				
4	Lakers		Magic				
5	Magic		Suns				
6	Cavs		Nets				
7	Suns		Pistons				
8	Nets		Rockets				
9	Pistons		Celtics				
10	Spurs						
11	Rockets						
12	Kings						
13	Blazers						
14	Celtics						
15							
16							
17							
18							
19							
20							
21							
22							
23							

Suppose we'd like to identify the teams in Dataset 1 that are not in Dataset 2.

To do so, we can highlight every value in column A and then click the Conditional Formatting button on the Home tab along the top ribbon.

We can then click New Rule...



In the new window that appears, select the option that says Use a formula to determine which cells to format then type in the following formula:

=ISNA(VLOOKUP(A2,\$C\$2:\$C\$9,1,False))

Then click the Format button and choose a color to fill in values:

The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet with two columns of basketball team names. Column A is labeled 'Dataset 1' and contains: Hawks, Mavericks, Lakers, Magic, Cavs, Suns, Nets, Pistons, Spurs, Rockets, Kings, Blazers, and Celtics. Column C is labeled 'Dataset 2' and contains: Hawks, Mavericks, Magic, Suns, Nets, Pistons, Rockets, and Celtics. A 'New Formatting Rule' dialog box is open, showing the formula `=ISNA(VLOOKUP(A2,$C$2:$C$9,1,False))` under the 'Format values where this formula is true' section. The preview shows a light orange fill. The dialog box also lists several rule types under 'Select a Rule Type'.

	A	B	C
1	Dataset 1		Dataset 2
2	Hawks		Hawks
3	Mavericks		Mavericks
4	Lakers		Magic
5	Magic		Suns
6	Cavs		Nets
7	Suns		Pistons
8	Nets		Rockets
9	Pistons		Celtics
10	Spurs		
11	Rockets		
12	Kings		
13	Blazers		
14	Celtics		

New Formatting Rule

Select a Rule Type:

- Format all cells based on their values
- Format only cells that contain
- Format only top or bottom ranked values
- Format only values that are above or below average
- Format only unique or duplicate values
- Use a formula to determine which cells to format

Edit the Rule Description:

Format values where this formula is true:

`=ISNA(VLOOKUP(A2,$C$2:$C$9,1,False))`

Preview: AaBbCcYyZz

Format... OK Cancel

Once you click OK, every value in column A that does not appear in column C will be highlighted:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Dataset 1		Dataset 2				
2	Hawks		Hawks				
3	Mavericks		Mavericks				
4	Lakers		Magic				
5	Magic		Suns				
6	Cavs		Nets				
7	Suns		Pistons				
8	Nets		Rockets				
9	Pistons		Celtics				
10	Spurs						
11	Rockets						
12	Kings						
13	Blazers						
14	Celtics						
15							
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19							
20							
21							
22							
23							

Hawks appear in both Dataset 1 and Dataset 2, so it is not highlighted. Mavericks appear in both Dataset 1 and Dataset 2, so it is not highlighted. Lakers appear in Dataset 1 but not Dataset 2, so it *is* highlighted.

And so on.

Note that we chose to highlight values that did not belong to both datasets, but we could also apply a different styling such as bolded text, increased font size, a border around cells, etc.