

How to Display Two Decimal Places in Excel Without Rounding

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February 17, 2026

RECOMMENDED CITATION

stats writer (2026). *How to Display Two Decimal Places in Excel Without Rounding*. PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES. Retrieved from <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=131195>

The Critical Importance of Numerical Precision in Excel

In the professional world of **data analysis**, maintaining the integrity of numerical information is paramount. **Microsoft Excel**, the industry-standard spreadsheet software, provides users with a multitude of tools to manage how numbers are displayed and calculated. However, a common challenge arises when users need to display **decimal places** without the software automatically applying rounding logic. Standard formatting often rounds a value like 12.488 to 12.49, which can introduce significant discrepancies in large-scale financial models or scientific datasets where every digit matters.

When working with currency, percentages, or complex physical constants, the distinction between a formatted display and the actual underlying value is vital. Excel's default behavior is designed to make data more readable by rounding to the nearest significant digit based on the user's chosen format. While this is helpful for general presentations, it can be detrimental when **precision** is the primary requirement. Ensuring that a number is truncated rather than rounded requires a shift from simple visual formatting to the application of specific mathematical functions that alter the data's structure.

This comprehensive guide will explore the methodologies for displaying exactly two decimal places without the interference of rounding. We will examine the difference between using the **Format Cells** dialog box and the more robust **TRUNC** function. By understanding these technical nuances, you can ensure that your reports remain accurate and that your data integrity remains uncompromised. Whether you are a financial analyst or a researcher, mastering these techniques will enhance your proficiency in handling sensitive numerical information within any Excel environment.

Utilizing the Format Cells Dialog for Visual Truncation

One of the most straightforward methods to adjust the appearance of numbers in Excel is through the **Format Cells** interface. This method is primarily used for aesthetic purposes and does not change the actual value stored in the cell, though it often triggers Excel's internal rounding rules. To begin this process, you must first select the specific cell or range of cells containing the numbers you wish to modify. Highlighting the data correctly ensures that your formatting changes are applied consistently across your entire dataset, preventing errors in visual representation.

Once your cells are selected, a right-click will reveal a context menu where you can choose the **Format Cells** option. This action opens a comprehensive dialog box that serves as the command center for cell appearance. Within this box, navigate to the **Number** tab, which contains various categories such as **Currency**, **Accounting**, and **Percentage**. For general numerical data, selecting the **Number** category is the most appropriate choice, as it provides direct control over the

number of decimal places displayed to the user.

In the **Decimal Places** field, you can manually enter the value 2. After clicking **OK**, Excel will update the selected cells to show two digits after the decimal point. It is important to note, however, that while this method is convenient for simple tasks, it inherently performs **rounding**. If your original value was 15.309, Excel would display 15.31. To achieve true truncation where the value would remain 15.30, we must look beyond basic formatting and utilize the power of Excel's built-in formulas, specifically designed for **mathematical precision**.

The Mechanics of the TRUNC Function

The most effective and reliable way to display numbers with two decimal places without any rounding is to employ the TRUNC function. This specific function is engineered to truncate a number to a specified number of digits by essentially "cutting off" the remaining decimals rather than evaluating them for rounding. This ensures that the data remains exactly as it was entered, up to the point of truncation, which is a critical requirement in many **engineering** and **accounting** workflows where precision is non-negotiable.

The easiest way to display numbers with two decimal places without rounding in Excel is to use the **TRUNC** function:

=TRUNC(A2, 2)

This function operates by taking two arguments: the number you want to truncate and the number of decimal places you wish to keep. In the formula provided above, the first argument refers to cell **A2**, while the second argument, 2, specifies that Excel should discard everything beyond the second decimal place. Unlike rounding functions, **TRUNC** does not look at the third decimal digit to decide whether to round up or down; it simply terminates the number at the requested length, providing a clean and predictable result.

For instance, if a cell contains the value **12.48832**, the application of the **TRUNC** formula will return **12.48**. If you were to use standard formatting or the **ROUND** function, the result would be 12.49. This distinction is the cornerstone of **computational accuracy** in complex spreadsheets. By using this formula, you are effectively instructing Excel to ignore the standard floating-point arithmetic rules that often lead to rounding errors in large cumulative calculations.

Step-by-Step Practical Application of Truncation

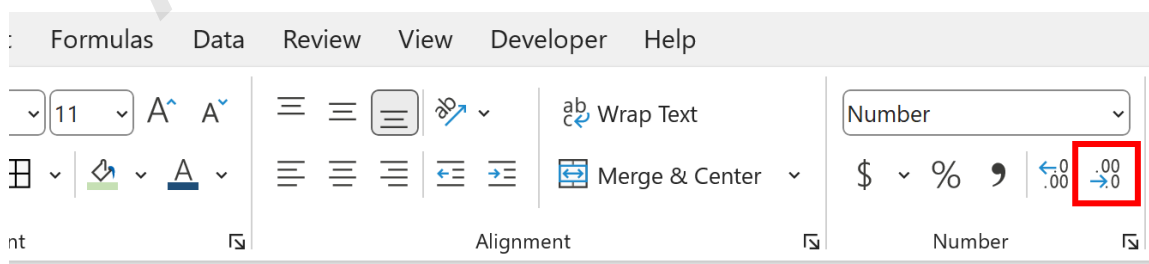
To understand how to implement this in a real-world scenario, consider a dataset containing several values with multiple decimal points. The objective is to standardize these values to two decimal places while ensuring that the underlying data is not rounded up. This process begins with

having your raw data organized in a single column, which allows for easy reference when writing your formulas. The following example demonstrates how this is executed within the spreadsheet environment to maintain **data consistency**.

Suppose we have the following list of values in Excel:

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Values				
2	12.48832				
3	15.30092				
4	16.73482				
5	20.23932				
6	21.02854				
7	15.19332				
8	12.13384				
9	10.15567				
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					

Typically, a user might attempt to use the **Decrease Decimal** shortcut found on the **Home** tab. While this button is easily accessible in the **Number** group of the top ribbon, it acts only as a visual mask. When you click this icon, Excel hides the extra digits but performs an internal rounding operation for the display. This can be misleading if you are performing a series of downstream calculations that rely on the truncated rather than the rounded values.



By repeatedly clicking the **Decrease Decimal** icon, the numbers will eventually appear with only two decimal places. However, as shown in the subsequent image, the values are modified based on the third decimal digit. For example, a value like 12.488 becomes 12.49. This is the exact outcome we are trying to avoid when strict truncation is required for **audit** or **compliance** purposes.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Values				
2	12.49				
3	15.30				
4	16.73				
5	20.24				
6	21.03				
7	15.19				
8	12.13				
9	10.16				
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					

Executing the TRUNC Formula Across Large Datasets

To achieve the desired result of two decimal places without rounding, we must apply the **TRUNC** function to our dataset. In cell **B2**, which is adjacent to our first data point, we type the formula designed to process the value in **A2**. This allows us to create a new column of data that is mathematically truncated, providing a clear comparison between the original "raw" data and the "processed" data. This approach is a hallmark of **best practices** in data management, as it preserves the original source information.

=TRUNC(A2, 2)

After entering the formula, the next step involves using the **Fill Handle**--a small square at the bottom-right corner of the cell--to drag the formula down through the rest of column B. This action utilizes Excel's relative cell referencing, automatically adjusting the formula for each row (e.g., cell B3 will point to A3, B4 to A4, and so on). This is an incredibly efficient way to process thousands of rows of **financial data** or **scientific observations** in a matter of seconds.

B2		=TRUNC(A2, 2)			
	A	B	C	D	
1	Values	Values with 2 Decimals			
2	12.48832	12.48			
3	15.30092	15.30			
4	16.73482	16.73			
5	20.23932	20.23			
6	21.02854	21.02			
7	15.19332	15.19			
8	12.13384	12.13			
9	10.15567	10.15			
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					

Upon completing this action, column B will now display each corresponding value from column A, limited to two decimal places without any rounding. This ensures that the **numerical precision** remains constant across the entire spreadsheet. This method is particularly useful when the data is being exported to other systems, such as a **database** or an external **accounting software**, where unexpected rounding could lead to balance errors or reconciliation issues.

Analyzing the Results of Truncation vs. Rounding

The impact of using **TRUNC** instead of standard rounding is most visible when examining specific values. Let us look closer at the example results. The original value **12.48832** is now displayed as **12.48**. Under standard rounding rules, this would have become 12.49 because the third decimal (8) is greater than or equal to 5. By truncating, we have successfully discarded the extra digits while keeping the **hundredths** place exactly as it appeared in the raw data.

This consistency is seen throughout the entire list of values:

The value **12.48832** is successfully shown as **12.48**.

The value **15.30092** is successfully shown as **15.30**.

The value **16.73482** is successfully shown as **16.73**.

These results demonstrate the reliability of the **TRUNC** function for tasks requiring **absolute accuracy**. In many financial contexts, such as calculating **interest rates** or **tax liabilities**,

rounding up even a fraction of a cent can lead to legal or financial discrepancies over millions of transactions. Therefore, understanding how to force Excel to truncate rather than round is a vital skill for any serious data professional.

Advanced Considerations for Data Formatting

While the **TRUNC** function is the primary tool for this task, it is also helpful to be aware of the ROUNDDOWN function. **ROUNDDOWN** behaves very similarly to **TRUNC** when dealing with positive numbers, as it always rounds towards zero. However, **TRUNC** is often preferred for its simplicity and clear intent: to shorten the number. Both functions ensure that your **decimal places** are handled with the same level of strictness, preventing the software from making "intelligent" rounding decisions on your behalf.

For those looking for more in-depth information, the official **Microsoft Support** documentation provides a wealth of knowledge on various mathematical functions. Staying updated with these resources is essential for mastering **spreadsheet automation** and ensuring that your work meets the highest standards of **technical excellence**. You can find the complete documentation for the TRUNC function in Excel to explore more complex use cases, such as truncating to the nearest ten or hundred by using negative integers in the second argument.

In conclusion, whether you choose to use the **Format Cells** method for simple visual adjustments or the **TRUNC** function for mathematical certainty, understanding the underlying logic of Excel is key. By following the steps outlined in this guide, you can confidently manage your data's appearance and **numerical accuracy**, ensuring that your information technology skills remain sharp and your reports remain error-free. The ability to control every decimal point is a small but powerful part of effective data management.