

How can I extract text before a specific character using Excel?

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The process of extracting text before a specific character in Excel involves using the built-in formula or function called "LEFT". This function allows you to specify the number of characters you want to extract from a cell, starting from the left side. By identifying the specific character as the stopping point, the function will return the desired text before that character. This can be useful for organizing data and extracting specific information from a larger string of text. It is a simple and efficient method for manipulating data in Excel.

Excel: Extract Text Before a Character

You can use the **TEXTBEFORE** function in Excel to extract all text in a cell before a specific character or substring.

This function uses the following syntax:

TEXTBEFORE(text, delimiter, , , ,)

where:

text: Text to search
delimiter: Character or substring to extract text before
instance_num (optional): Instance of delimiter before which to extract text (default is 1)
match_mode (optional): 0 = case-sensitive (default), 1 = case-insensitive
match_end (optional): Treat end of text as delimiter (disabled by default)
if_not_found (optional): Value to return if delimiter is not found

The following examples show the most common ways

to use this function with the following dataset in Excel:

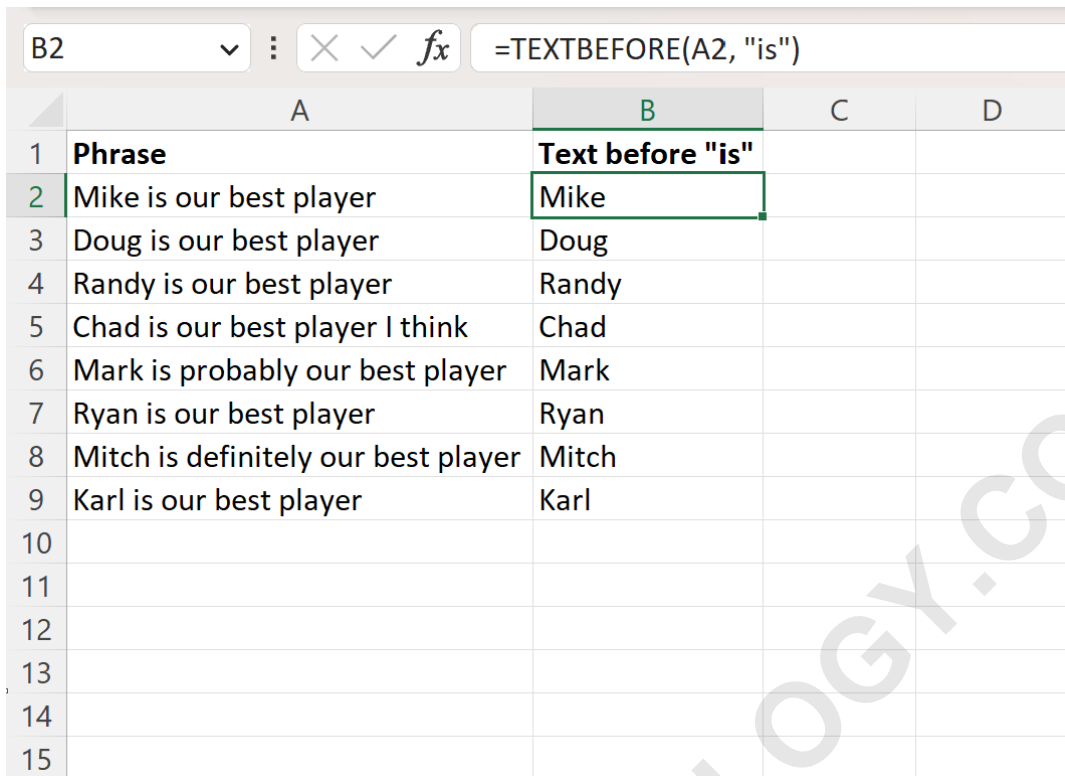
	A	B	C	D
1	Phrase			
2	Mike is our best player			
3	Doug is our best player			
4	Randy is our best player			
5	Chad is our best player I think			
6	Mark is probably our best player			
7	Ryan is our best player			
8	Mitch is definitely our best player			
9	Karl is our best player			
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				

Example 1: Extract Text Before Substring

We can type the following formula into cell B2 to extract the text in cell A2 before the substring "is" is encountered:

=TEXTBEFORE(A2, "is")

We can then click and drag this formula down to each remaining cell in column B:



	A	B	C	D
1	Phrase	Text before "is"		
2	Mike is our best player	Mike		
3	Doug is our best player	Doug		
4	Randy is our best player	Randy		
5	Chad is our best player I think	Chad		
6	Mark is probably our best player	Mark		
7	Ryan is our best player	Ryan		
8	Mitch is definitely our best player	Mitch		
9	Karl is our best player	Karl		
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				

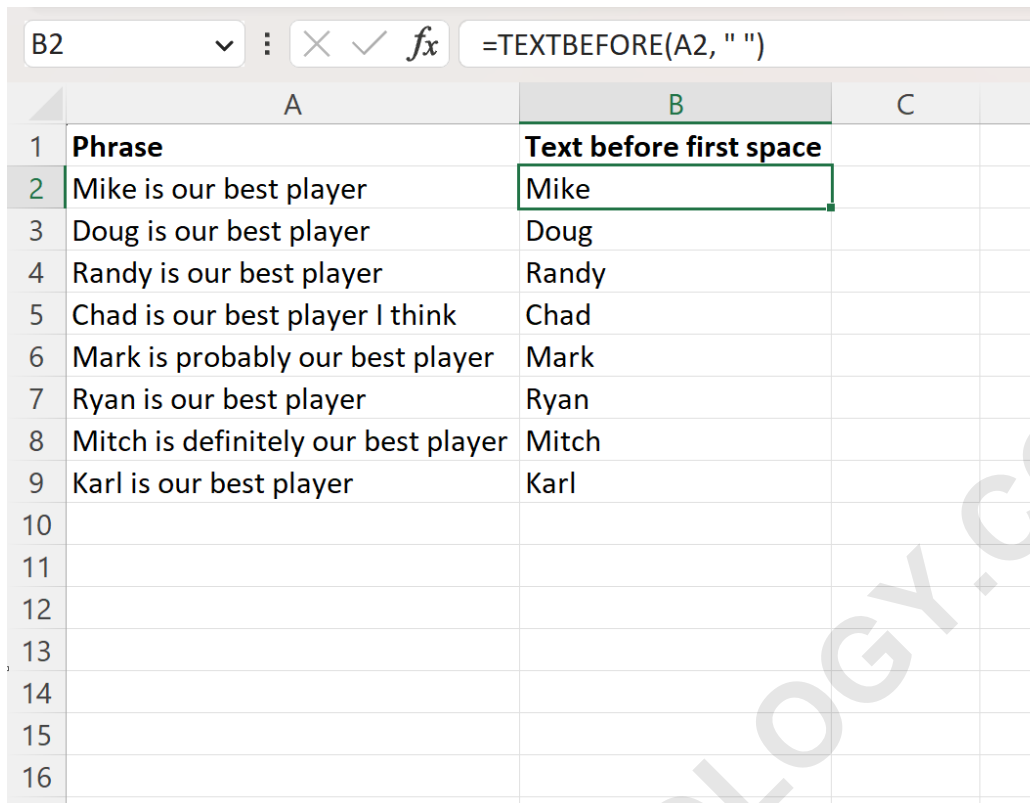
Column B contains the text in column A before the substring "is" is encountered.

Example 2: Extract Text Before First Space

We can type the following formula into cell B2 to extract the text in cell A2 before the first space is encountered:

=TEXTBEFORE(A2, " ")

We can then click and drag this formula down to each remaining cell in column B:



	A	B	C
1	Phrase	Text before first space	
2	Mike is our best player	Mike	
3	Doug is our best player	Doug	
4	Randy is our best player	Randy	
5	Chad is our best player I think	Chad	
6	Mark is probably our best player	Mark	
7	Ryan is our best player	Ryan	
8	Mitch is definitely our best player	Mitch	
9	Karl is our best player	Karl	
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			

Column B contains the text in column A before the first space is encountered.

Example 3: Extract Text Before Nth Space

We can type the following formula into cell B2 to extract the text in cell A2 before the third space is encountered:

=TEXTBEFORE(A2, " ", 3)

We can then click and drag this formula down to each remaining cell in column B:

	A	B	C	D
1	Phrase	Text before third space		
2	Mike is our best player	Mike is our		
3	Doug is our best player	Doug is our		
4	Randy is our best player	Randy is our		
5	Chad is our best player I think	Chad is our		
6	Mark is probably our best player	Mark is probably		
7	Ryan is our best player	Ryan is our		
8	Mitch is definitely our best player	Mitch is definitely		
9	Karl is our best player	Karl is our		
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				

Column B contains all of the text in column A before the third space is encountered.

Note: You can find the complete documentation for the TEXTBEFORE function in Excel .

The following tutorials explain how to perform other common tasks in Excel: