

# How can I prevent Excel from changing numbers to dates?

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## RECOMMENDED CITATION

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Excel is a widely used spreadsheet software that automatically converts numbers to dates if they are entered in a specific format. This can cause inconvenience and errors for users who want to keep their numbers as numbers and not dates. To prevent this automatic conversion, users can change the formatting of the cells to "Number" or "General" before entering the numbers. Additionally, users can also use a single quote (') before the numbers to force Excel to recognize them as text and not dates. By following these steps, users can prevent Excel from changing numbers to dates and ensure accurate data entry in their spreadsheets.

## **Prevent Excel from Changing Numbers to Dates**

**If you type a numeric value into Excel that looks like a date, Excel will automatically convert the value to a date.**

**For example, if you type 1-6 or 1/6 then Excel will automatically display this value as 6-Jan because it assumes you meant for the value to be a date.**

**In most cases, this is a helpful correction by Excel.**

**However, sometimes you actually want the cell to display 1-6 or 1/6.**

**There are two ways to prevent Excel from changing numbers to dates:**

**Method 1: Specify Text as the Format**

**Method 2: Use an Apostrophe Before the Number**

The following examples show how to use each method in practice.

### Example 1: Specify Text as the Format

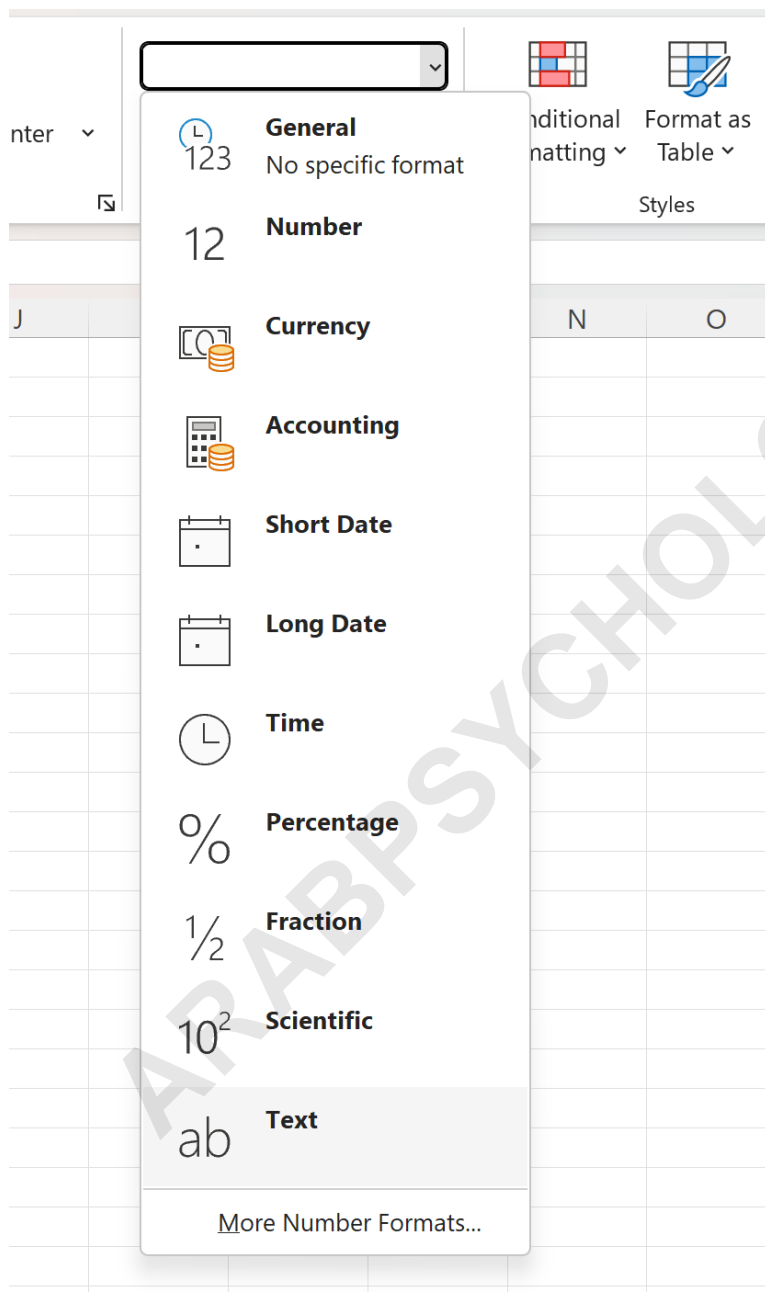
Suppose I attempt to enter the values 1/6, 1/16, 1/19, 2/20 ... into Excel:

	A	B	C	D	E
1	6-Jan				
2	16-Jan				
3	19-Jan				
4	20-Feb				
5	15-Mar				
6	19-Apr				
7	10-May				
8	11-Jun				
9	13-Jul				
10	3-Aug				
11	15-Sep				
12	31-Oct				
13	10-Nov				
14	26-Dec				
15					
16					
17					
18					

By default, Excel converts these values into dates.

To prevent Excel from converting these values into dates, I can first highlight the range A1:A14 where I

want to enter these values, then click the **Number Format** dropdown menu from the **Home** tab, then click **Text**:



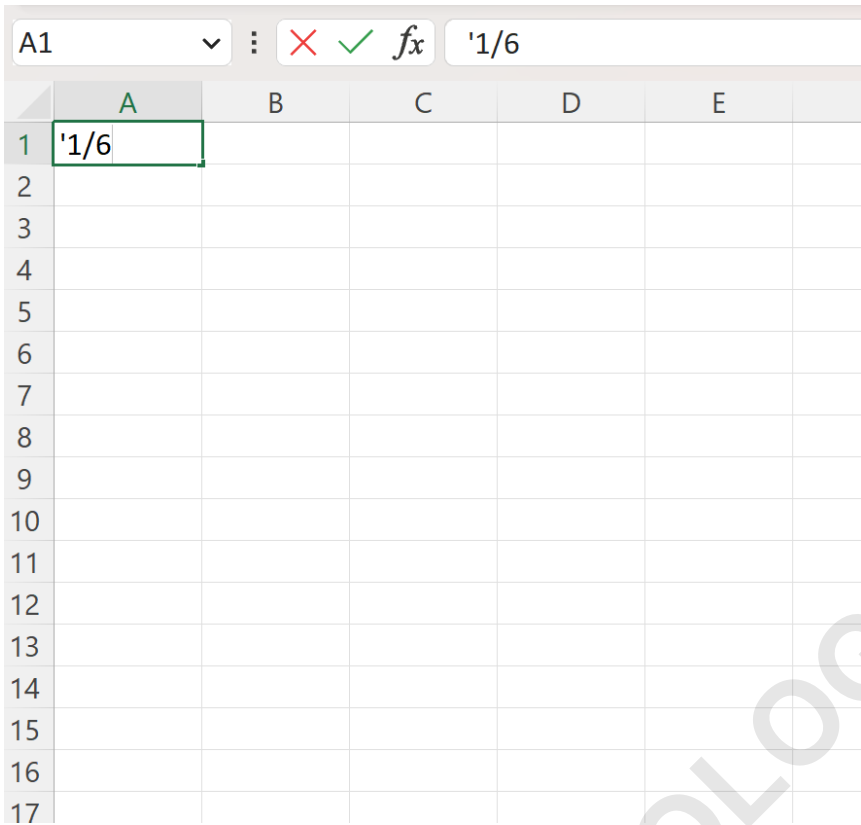
Now when I enter the values 1/6, 1/16, 1/19, 2/20 ... into column A the values will appear as text instead of

## dates:

	A	B	C	D	E
1	1/6				
2	1/16				
3	1/19				
4	2/20				
5	3/15				
6	4/19				
7	5/10				
8	6/11				
9	7/13				
10	8/3				
11	9/15				
12	10/31				
13	11/10				
14	12/26				
15					
16					
17					

### Example 2: Use an Apostrophe Before the Number

For example, instead of typing 1/6 I would type '1/6 into cell A1:



**I can repeat this for each value in column A:**

	A	B	C	D	E
1	1/6				
2	1/16				
3	1/19				
4	2/20				
5	3/15				
6	4/19				
7	5/10				
8	6/11				
9	7/13				
10	8/3				
11	9/15				
12	10/31				
13	11/10				
14	12/26				
15					
16					
17					

**Each value in column A now appears exactly how I entered it instead of being shown as dates.**

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