# How can I use the LEFT function in Excel to extract text before a comma?

Authored by

**stats writer**

June 26, 2024

The LEFT function in Excel is a useful tool that allows users to extract specific text from a cell before a designated character, such as a comma. This function can be used in various scenarios, such as when working with large datasets or when wanting to separate data into different columns. By specifying the number of characters to be extracted, the LEFT function can quickly and accurately extract text before a comma, making data analysis and organization more efficient and streamlined. To use this function, simply enter "=LEFT(cell reference, number of characters)" into the desired cell, replacing "cell reference" with the specific cell containing the text and "number of characters" with the desired number of characters to be extracted. By utilizing the LEFT function, users can easily and effectively manipulate data in Excel.

## Excel: Use LEFT to Extract Text Before Comma

## You can use the following formula with the LEFT and FIND function to extract all of the text before a comma is encountered in some cell in Excel:

## =LEFT(A2, FIND(",", A2)-1)

## This particular formula extracts all of the text in cell A2 that occurs before the first comma is encountered.

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

### Example: Using LEFT to Extract Text Before Comma

## Suppose we have the following list in Excel that provides a brief description of different basketball players including their team, position, and ranking:

| | A | B | C | D | E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Player Description** | | | | |
| 2 | Mavs, Guard, Great | | | | |
| 3 | Hornets, Forward, Good | | | | |
| 4 | Rockets, Forward, Bad | | | | |
| 5 | Nets, Center, Good | | | | |
| 6 | Warriors, Guard, Great | | | | |
| 7 | Nuggets, Forward, Great | | | | |
| 8 | Bucks, Forward, Great | | | | |
| 9 | Kings, Guard, Bad | | | | |
| 10 | Spurs, Guard, Good | | | | |
| 11 | | | | | |
| 12 | | | | | |
| 13 | | | | | |
| 14 | | | | | |
| 15 | | | | | |
| 16 | | | | | |
| 17 | | | | | |
| 18 | | | | | |
| 19 | | | | | |
| 20 | | | | | |



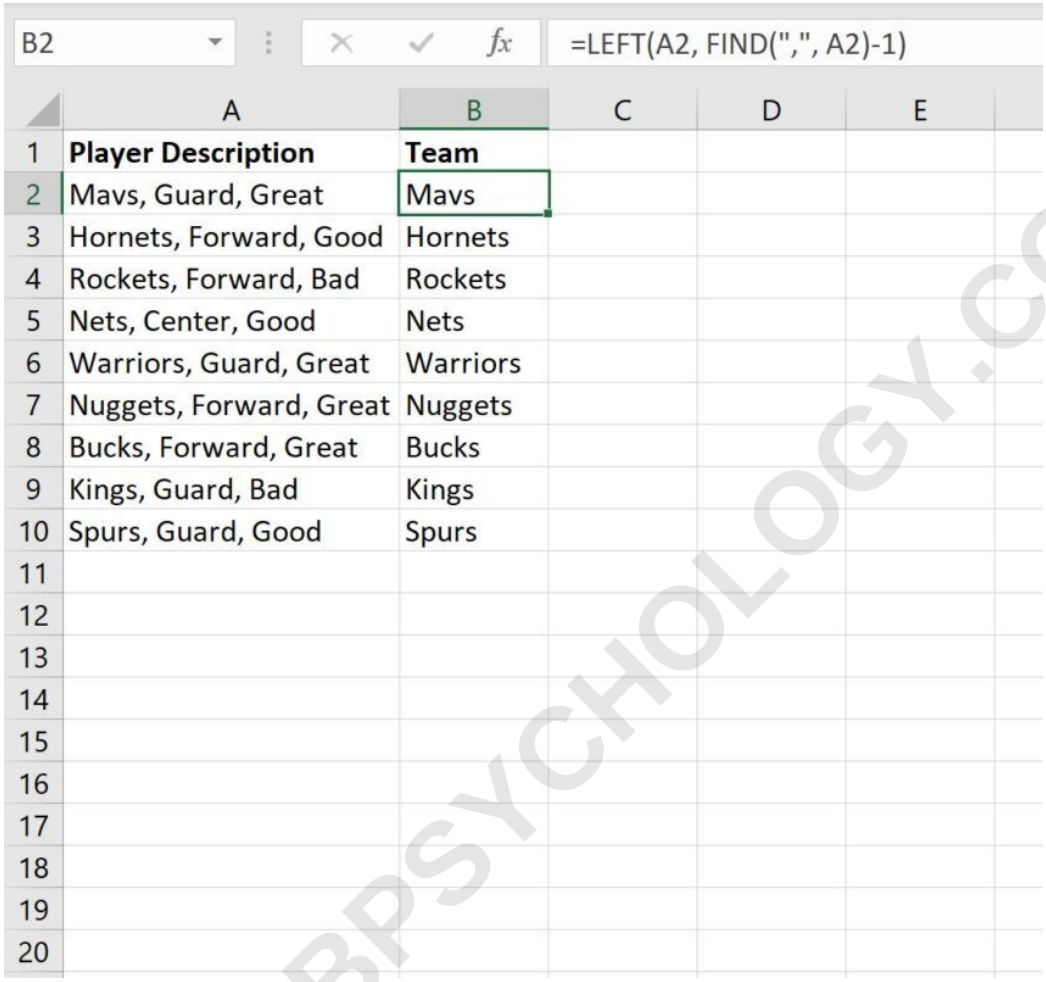
**Now suppose that we would like to extract only the team name for each player.**

**To do so, we can use the following formula with the LEFT and FIND functions in Excel to extract the text from the left side of each cell until a comma is encountered:**

**=LEFT(A2, FIND(",", A2)-1)**

**We can type this formula into cell B2 and then click and**

## drag this formula down to each remaining cell in column B:




| | A | B | C | D | E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Player Description** | **Team** | | | |
| 2 | Mavs, Guard, Great | Mavs | | | |
| 3 | Hornets, Forward, Good | Hornets | | | |
| 4 | Rockets, Forward, Bad | Rockets | | | |
| 5 | Nets, Center, Good | Nets | | | |
| 6 | Warriors, Guard, Great | Warriors | | | |
| 7 | Nuggets, Forward, Great | Nuggets | | | |
| 8 | Bucks, Forward, Great | Bucks | | | |
| 9 | Kings, Guard, Bad | Kings | | | |
| 10 | Spurs, Guard, Good | Spurs | | | |
| 11 | | | | | |
| 12 | | | | | |
| 13 | | | | | |
| 14 | | | | | |
| 15 | | | | | |
| 16 | | | | | |
| 17 | | | | | |
| 18 | | | | | |
| 19 | | | | | |
| 20 | | | | | |



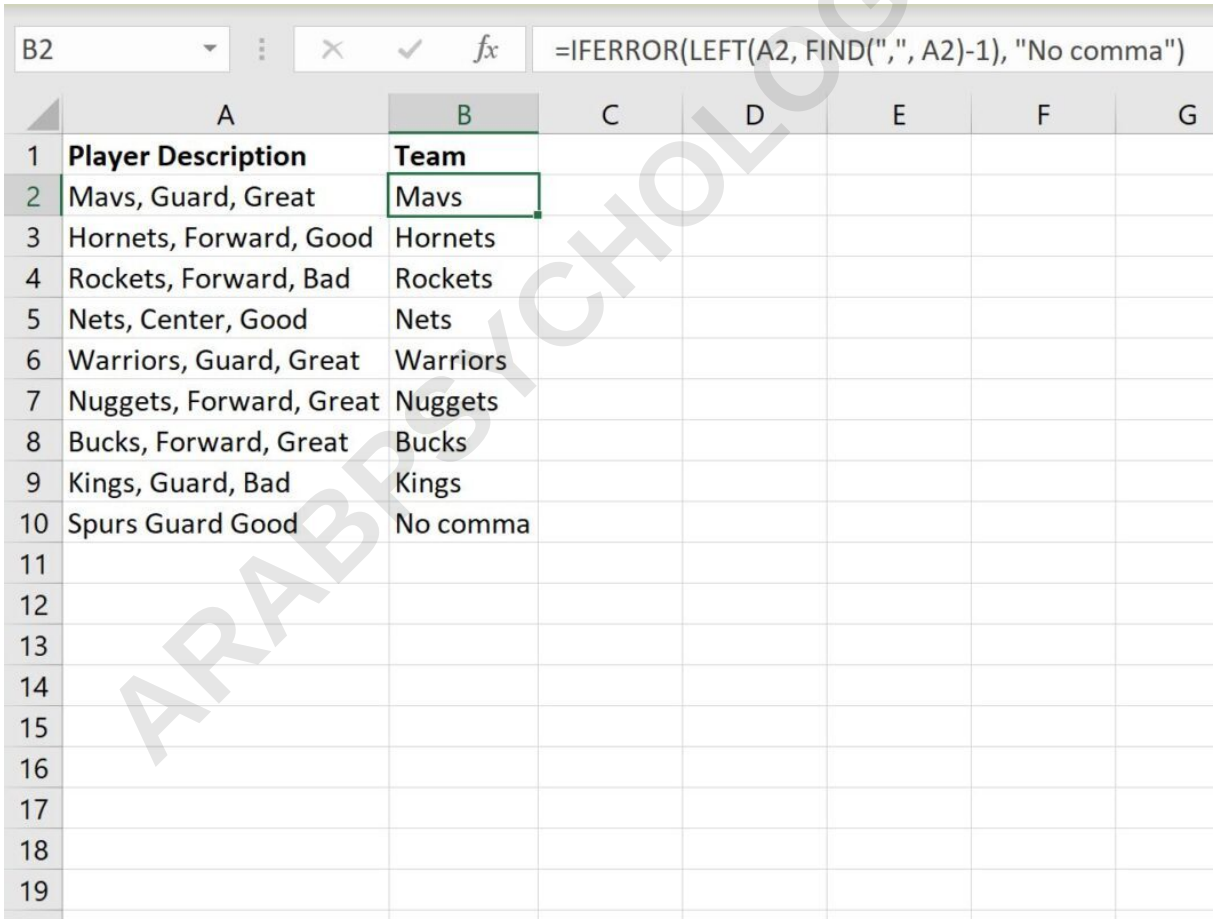
## Column B now displays only the team name for each player in column A.

## It's worth noting that if no comma is found in the Player Description column, the formula will return #VALUE! as a result.

**To return a different value, simply use the IFERROR() function.**

**For example, we can use the following IFERROR() function to return "No comma" if a comma is not found in a given player description:**

**=IFERROR(LEFT(A2, FIND(",", A2)-1), "No comma")**




| | A | B |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Player Description** | **Team** |
| 2 | Mavs, Guard, Great | Mavs |
| 3 | Hornets, Forward, Good | Hornets |
| 4 | Rockets, Forward, Bad | Rockets |
| 5 | Nets, Center, Good | Nets |
| 6 | Warriors, Guard, Great | Warriors |
| 7 | Nuggets, Forward, Great | Nuggets |
| 8 | Bucks, Forward, Great | Bucks |
| 9 | Kings, Guard, Bad | Kings |
| 10 | Spurs Guard Good | No comma |



**Note that you can also return a different value by simply replacing "No comma" with some other value in the**

## IFERROR() function.

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