How can I use the MID and MIDB functions in Excel to extract specific characters from a string of text?

Authored by

stats writer

June 30, 2024

The MID and MIDB functions in Excel are useful tools for extracting specific characters from a string of text. These functions allow users to specify the starting point and number of characters they want to extract from a given string. By using the MID or MIDB function in a formula, users can easily manipulate and extract relevant information from a large amount of text data. This can be particularly helpful when working with complex data sets or when trying to isolate specific pieces of information from a larger text string. With the use of these functions, users can efficiently extract and use specific characters from a string of text in their Excel spreadsheets.

This article describes the formula syntax and usage of the **MID** and **MIDB** function in Microsoft Excel.

Description

MID returns a specific number of characters from a text string, starting at the position you specify, based on the number of characters you specify.

MIDB returns a specific number of characters from a text string, starting at the position you specify, based on the number of bytes you specify.

Important:

These functions may not be available in all languages.

MID is intended for use with languages that use the single-byte character set (SBCS), whereas MIDB is intended for use with languages that use the double-byte character set (DBCS). The default language setting on your computer affects the return value in the following way:

MID always counts each character, whether single-byte or double-byte, as 1, no matter what the default language setting is.

MIDB counts each double-byte character as 2 when you have enabled the editing of a language that supports DBCS and then set it as the default language. Otherwise, MIDB counts each character as 1.

The languages that support DBCS include Japanese, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional), and Korean.

Syntax

MID(text, start_num, num_chars)

MIDB(text, start_num, num_bytes)

The MID and MIDB function syntax has the following arguments:

Text Required. The text string containing the characters you want to extract.

Start_num Required. The position of the first character you want to extract in text. The first character in text has start_num 1, and so on.

If start_num is greater than the length of text, MID/MIDB returns "" (empty text).

If start_num is less than the length of text, but start_num plus num_chars exceeds the length of text, MID/MIDB returns the characters up to the end of text.

If start_num is less than 1, MID/MIDB returns the #VALUE! error value.

Num_chars Required for MID. Specifies the number of characters you want MID to return from text.

If num_chars is negative, MID returns the #VALUE! error value.

Num_bytes Required for MIDB. Specifies the number of characters you want MIDB to return from text, in bytes.

If num_bytes is negative, MIDB returns the #VALUE! error value.

Example

Copy the example data in the following table, and paste it in cell A1 of a new Excel worksheet. For formulas to show results, select them, press F2, and then press Enter. If you need to, you can adjust the column widths to see all the data.

Data		
Fluid Flow		
Formula	**Description**	**Result**
=MID(A2,1,5)	Returns 5 characters from the string in A2, starting at the 1st character.	Fluid
=MID(A2,7,20)	Returns 20 characters from the string in A2, starting at the 7th character. Because the number of characters to return (20) is greater than the length of the string (10), all characters, beginning with the 7th, are returned. No empty characters (spaces) are added to the end.	Flow
=MID(A2,20,5)	Because the starting point is greater than the length (10) of the string, empty text is returned.	