

# How do I use the LEFT and LEFTB functions in Excel?

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June 30, 2024

## RECOMMENDED CITATION

stats writer (2024). *How do I use the LEFT and LEFTB functions in Excel?*.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES. Retrieved from <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=161437>

The LEFT and LEFTB functions in Excel are used to extract a specified number of characters from the beginning of a cell's text. The LEFT function is used for regular text, while the LEFTB function is used for double-byte characters such as Chinese or Japanese. These functions are useful for manipulating and organizing large amounts of text data in a spreadsheet. To use them, you simply need to provide the cell reference and the number of characters you want to extract. This can be done by typing the function directly into a cell or by using the "Insert Function" feature in Excel. These functions are particularly helpful for tasks such as splitting names or addresses into separate columns, and can save you time and effort when working with text data in Excel.

This article describes the formula syntax and usage of the **LEFT** and **LEFTB** function in Microsoft Excel.

## Description

LEFT returns the first character or characters in a text string, based on the number of characters you specify.

LEFTB returns the first character or characters in a text string, based on the number of bytes you specify.

### Important:

These functions may not be available in all languages.

LEFTB counts 2 bytes per character only when a DBCS language is set as the default language. Otherwise LEFTB behaves the same as LEFT, counting 1 byte per character.

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

## Syntax

LEFT(text, )

LEFTB(text, )

The function syntax has the following arguments:

**Text** Required. The text string that contains the characters you want to extract.

**Num\_chars** Optional. Specifies the number of characters you want LEFT to extract.

Num\_chars must be greater than or equal to zero.

If num\_chars is greater than the length of text, LEFT returns all of text.

If num\_chars is omitted, it is assumed to be 1.

**Num\_bytes** Optional. Specifies the number of characters you want LEFTB to extract, based on bytes.

## 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		
Sale Price		
Sweden		
Formula	Description	Result
=LEFT(A2,4)	First four characters in the first string	Sale
=LEFT(A3)	First character in the second string	S