Getting the Most Out of Ranges

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Other than performing data-entry chores, you probably spend most of your Excel life working with ranges in some way. Whether you're copying, moving, formatting, naming, or filling them, ranges are a big part of Excel's day-to-day operations. And why not? After all, working with a range of cells is a lot easier than working with each cell individually. For example, suppose that you want to know the average of a column of numbers running from B1 to B30. You *could* enter all 30 cells as arguments in the AVERAGE function, but I'm assuming that you have a life to lead away from your computer screen. Typing =AVERAGE(B1:B30) is decidedly quicker (and probably more accurate).

In other words, ranges save time and they save wear and tear on your typing fingers. But there's more to ranges than that. Ranges are powerful tools that can unlock the hidden power of Excel. So, the more you know about ranges, the more you'll get out of your Excel investment. This chapter reviews some range basics and then takes you beyond the range routine and shows you some techniques for taking full advantage of Excel's range capabilities.

A Review of Excel's Range-Selection Techniques

As you work with Excel, you'll come across three situations in which you'll select a cell range:

- When a dialog box field requires a range input
- While entering a function argument
- Before selecting a command that uses a range input