

## Top 5 Excel Tips for Contractors

**Executive Summary:** Microsoft Excel is probably the most common tool in the construction industry. Most people use it daily. Here are five simple, everyday things to make you better with Microsoft Excel.

**Right to the tips!** To some this list will be elementary, to some it will be lifechanging! Feel free to go to this quick video [QR] of our tips, or just simply read below:



- **Find and Replace** Ever have a group of data that needed to have the same piece of data changed? For example, say that you had "Footing Drain" in 25 cells within a 10 x 10 matrix of data. But, you wanted the cells to each read "Footer Drain". Select all of the data in your matrix (even items that you don't want changed) and click on Find & Select from the Home tab (it's way out to the right). Then click on Replace. Put "Footing" in the Find cell and "Footer" in the Replace cell.
- **& vs. @concatenate** If you have two pieces of data in two cells and want to combine them – most people use @concatenate. Instead, use the "&" key. As an example, say you have "42" in cell A1 and "J" in cell B1. You can combine these two pieces of data and create "42J". The more common way is @concatenate(A1,B1). Alternately, you can put this in the cell: "+A1&B1". If you wanted to produce "42 J" (notice the space between the pieces of data now), you could do either of the following: @concatenate(A1," ",B1) or +A1&" "&B1.
- **Alt + =** There are numerous ways to sum a column of numbers. You can use "@sum" or the AutoSum button from the Home tab, to name a couple. Staying off of your mouse is quicker, this is a super timesaver!
- **Ctrl + T** If you have group of data on the worksheet, you can go anywhere in that matrix of data and immediately create headers with filter dropdowns. Also notice that when you're in the table after you've typed Ctrl + T, you'll see a "Table Tools" tab pop up at the top of the screen with Design under it. This will allow you to do additional things to the table you've now created. To get out of this table, click on Table Tools | Design and click on Convert to Range at the far left.
- **The Basics**
  - **Ctrl + C** Keep your hands off the mouse and use this to copy.
  - **Ctrl + X** Keep your hands off the mouse and use this to cut.
  - **Ctrl + V** Keep your hands off the mouse and use this to paste.
  - **Ctrl + Z** Keep your hands off the mouse and use this to undo.

**My story.** I got no problem walking up to someone at a bar and talking Excel for hours. It's just fun. But, more specifically to the list above, when I'm on site with a client and we inevitably end up having to work in Excel, these are the things that clients usually appreciate most.

