

Question: I use validation lists, but I would like to add a second list, where the contents change based on the value chosen in the first list. How do I do this?

Answer: Create a contingent validation list and the INDIRECT function.

Process (Excel 2003 and 2007):

Validation lists are very useful tools in Excel - a drop down option allows you to select a value from a pre-defined range of values. But what if you want two lists - the first could be a product category and the second list only showing you products from the category that you select? In this example we'll be using the following values:

| D | E | F |
|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Beverages | Cereals | Dairy |
| Cola | Krispies | Milk |
| Juice | Oats | Eggs |
| Bottled Water | Museli | |
| | | |

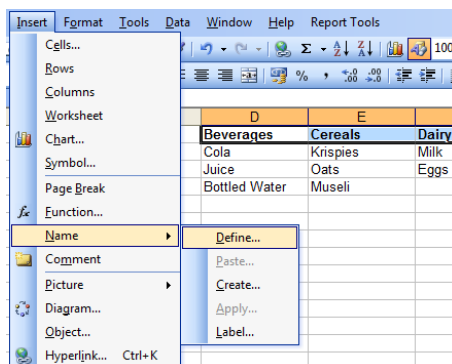
Steps described below relate to the data you see above. Thank you to Mike Perks from Port Elizabeth, South Africa for this Tips & Tricks topic suggestion.

Excel 2003

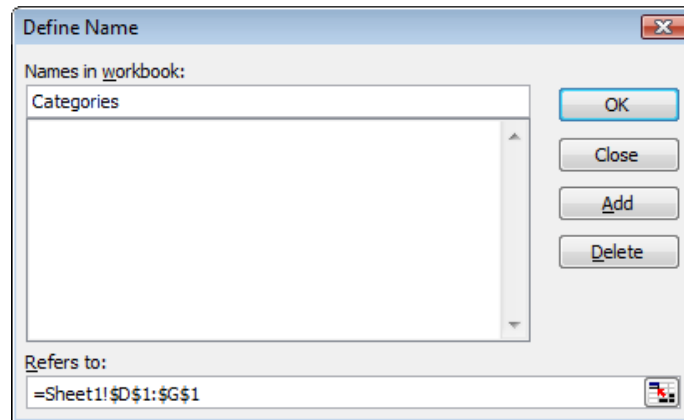
1. Select cells D1 to F1

| D | E | F |
|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Beverages | Cereals | Dairy |
| Cola | Krispies | Milk |
| Juice | Oats | Eggs |
| Bottled Water | Museli | |
| | | |

2. From the Menu bar, select **Insert ... Name ... Define**



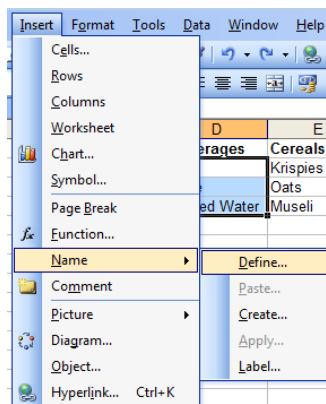
- In the 'Names in Workbook' field, type in the word **Categories**. Note that in the 'Refers To' box, the cells you highlighted are listed in absolute reference format. Click **OK**.



- Select cells D2 to D4. These are the products that are in the **Beverages** category

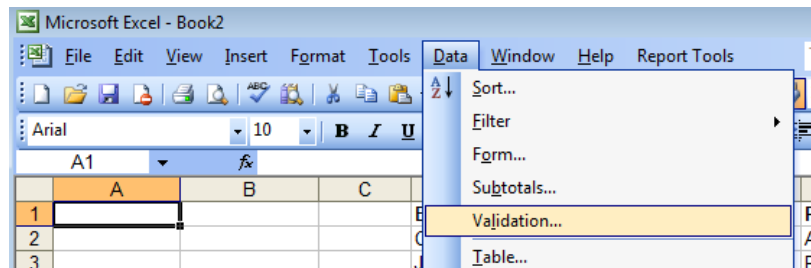
| D | E | F |
|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Beverages | Cereals | Dairy |
| Cola | Krispies | Milk |
| Juice | Oats | Eggs |
| Bottled Water | Museli | |

- From the Menu bar, select **Insert ... Name ... Define**

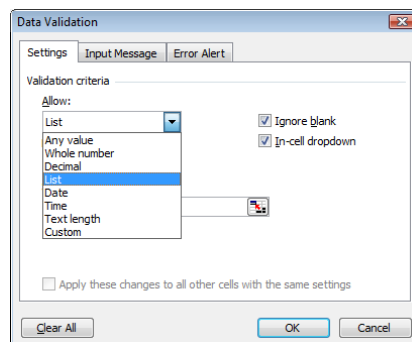


- In the 'Names in Workbook' field, type in **Beverages** (i.e. the heading name of this category). Click **OK**.
- Repeat this process for each of the categories:

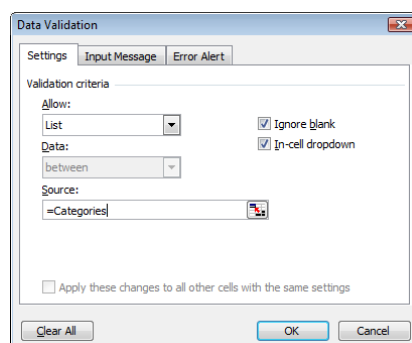
- a. Cells E2 to E4 will be named **Cereals**.
 - b. Cells F2 to F3 will be named **Dairy**.
8. Select cell A1, then from the menu bar, select **Data ... Validation**.



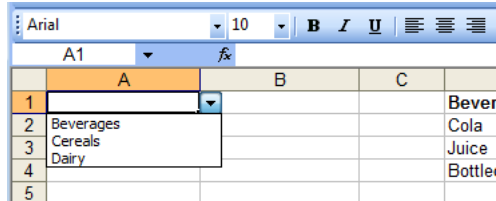
9. In the 'Data Validation' box, make sure you are on the 'Settings' tab. In the 'Allow' field, select **List**



10. In the 'Source' field, type in **=Categories**. This is the named range that will return all category headings. Click **OK**.

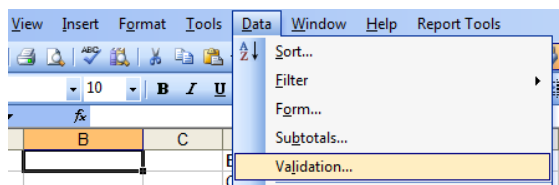


11. Cell A1 will now have a drop down arrow that will allow you to select any of the category headings.

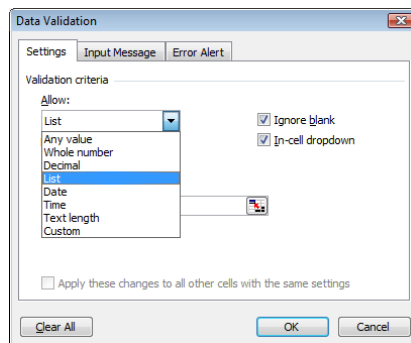


| | A | B | C |
|---|-----------|---|--------|
| 1 | | | Bever |
| 2 | Beverages | | Cola |
| 3 | Cereals | | Juice |
| 4 | Dairy | | Bottle |
| 5 | | | |

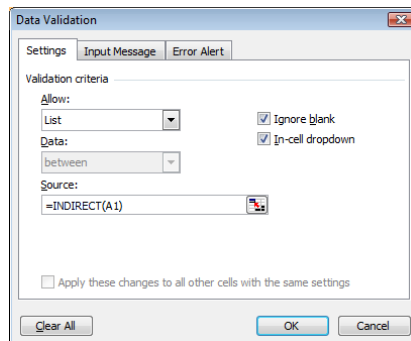
12. Select cell A2, then from the menu bar, select **Data ... Validation**.



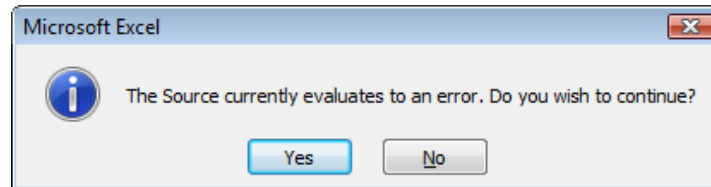
13. In the 'Data Validation' box, make sure you are on the 'Settings' tab. In the 'Allow' field, select **List**



14. In the 'Source' field, type **=INDIRECT(A1)**. The INDIRECT function will bring back the value of cell A1, which happens to be the name of the named range that you want to use. Click OK.

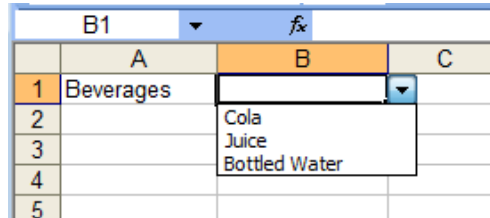


15. When you click OK, you may receive this error message:



This error will occur if nothing has been selected from the drop down list in cell A1. If you receive this message, simply click **Yes**.

16. Cell B1 will now return a list based on the selection made in cell A1.

A screenshot of an Excel spreadsheet. The active cell is B1, which is highlighted in orange. The formula bar above B1 shows a function symbol (fx). The spreadsheet has columns A, B, and C, and rows 1 through 5. Cell A1 contains the text "Beverages". Cell B1 has a dropdown menu open, showing a list of options: "Cola", "Juice", and "Bottled Water".

| | A | B | C |
|---|-----------|-----------------|---|
| 1 | Beverages | [Dropdown Menu] | |
| 2 | | Cola | |
| 3 | | Juice | |
| 4 | | Bottled Water | |
| 5 | | | |

This tip has been recorded and is available on our website at: <http://alchemex.ning.com/exceltipsticks>

If you have any suggestions for an Excel Tips & Tricks topic, or you would like help with a particular function, please email enablement@alchemex.com and yours could be the next Tip Of The Week.

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