

Question: I use formulas like VLOOKUP regularly. Is there a way to quickly work out what number a particular column is for these formulas?

Answer: Yes, by changing an Excel option.

Process (Excel 2003 and 2007):

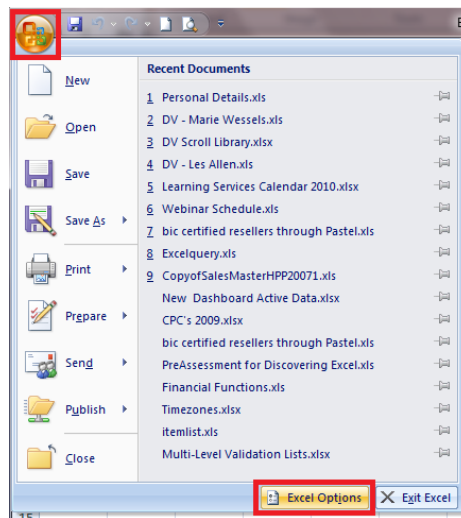
Formulas such as VLOOKUP and INDEX bring information from one table to another, and they require you to identify which column of information you would like to bring back.

=VLOOKUP(lookup_value,table_array,COL_INDEX_NUM,[range_lookup])
=INDEX(array,ROW_NUM,[column_num])

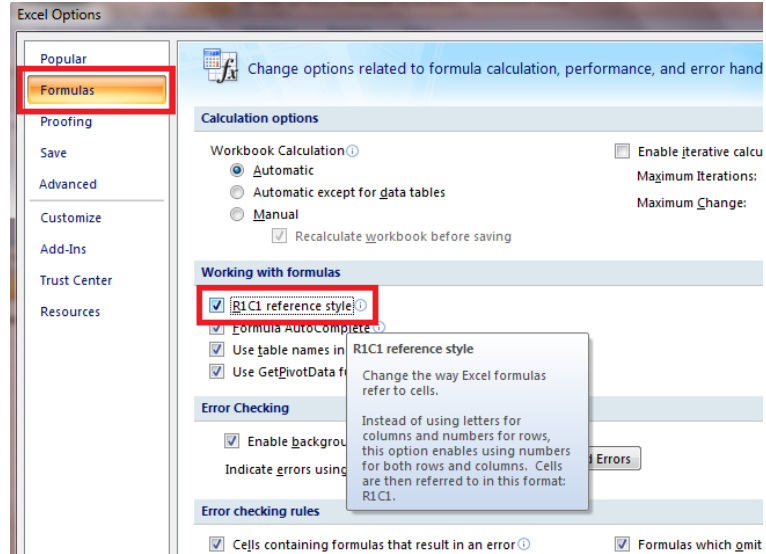
The **COL_INDEX_NUM** and the **ROW_NUM** in the above formulas will give you the number of the column rather than the letter. When you are dealing with a large number of columns, it is not always easy to see what number this column might be. This can be done by changing the R1C1 setting.

Method: Excel 2007

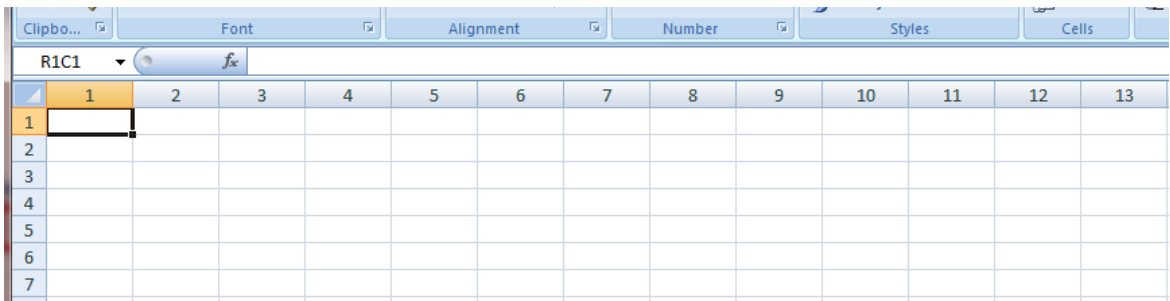
1. Click on the **MS Office Button** in the top left corner of Excel, then select Excel options



2. In the left hand pane, select the **Formulas** option, then click on the box next to **R1C1 reference style**.



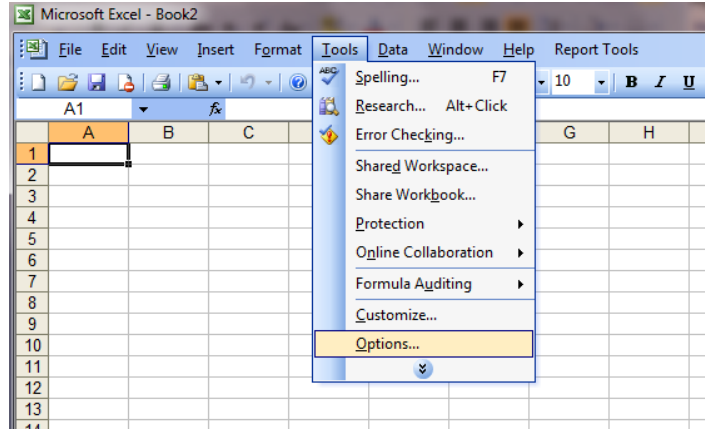
This setting changes the column headings in Excel to numbers rather than letters.



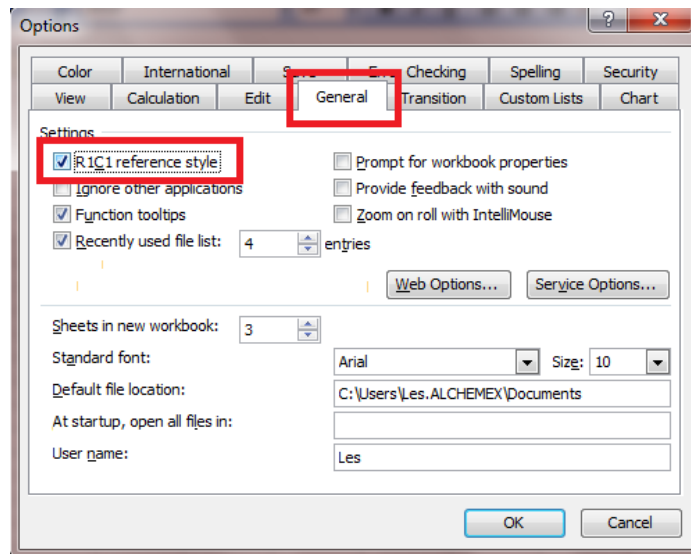
This will allow you to easily identify how many columns are in the range for formulas such as VLOOKUP.

Method: Excel 2003

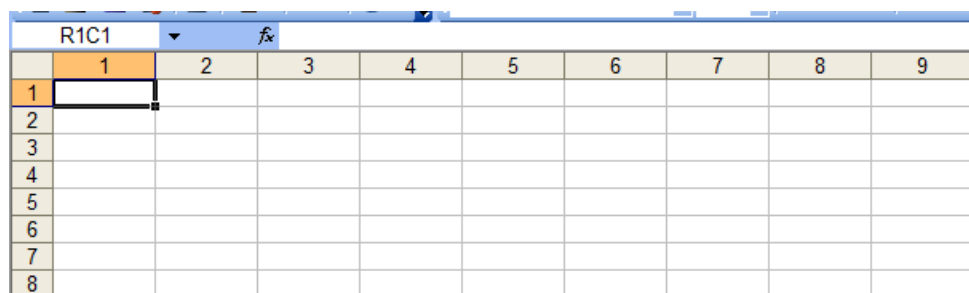
1. On the **Menu Toolbar**, select **Tools**, then **Options**



2. Select the **General** tab, then place a tick in the **R1C1 reference style**.



The column headings are now changed to number values rather than letters.





Software • Training • Support

NB: make sure that you change this setting back once you have finished building the formula.

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.

Alchemex provides examples of MS Excel procedures for illustration only, without warranty either expressed or implied, including but not limited to the implied warranties of merchantability and/or fitness for a particular purpose. The MS Excel procedures on this web site are provided "as is" cannot be guaranteed that they can be used in all situations