ExcelSuperSite

"Practical, down-to-earth, tips, tricks and advice for Excel users"

How to shade alternate rows in Microsoft Excel using Conditional Formatting

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How to shade alternate rows with Conditional Formatting

I regularly work with large sets of data. One quick and simple "trick" I use ALL the time is to shade every alternate row in the data to make it easier to read.

If you look at the example below, by itself, it is a very visually unattractive spreadsheet, full of lots of data that is hard to read.

We can significantly enhance the readability of this information by shading every alternate row via **conditional formatting.**

Order Date	Region	Agent	Make	Model
19/03/2014	East	Belinda	Toyota	Land Cruiser
19/02/2014	West	Harry	Audi	A6
12/09/2014	West	Tony	Audi	A3
22/02/2014	South	Fred	Ford	Falcon
1/12/2014	North	George	Ford	Mustang
16/01/2014	North	Brian	Holden	Commodore
19/01/2014	South	Peter	Mazda	323
8/03/2014	East	Brian	BMW	325i
24/04/2014	West	Peter	BMW	X5
5/05/2014	South	Belinda	Mazda	626
5/10/2014	South	George	Holden	Commodore
25/09/2014	North	Tony	Holden	Cruize
8/05/2014	West	Fred	BMW	325i
16/09/2014	South	Belinda	Toyota	Land Cruiser
7/11/2014	East	Brian	Toyota	Prado
30/07/2014	East	Brian	Toyota	Prado
4/11/2014	South	Tony	Audi	A4
25/03/2014	South	Harry	Mazda	323
6/08/2014	West	Tony	Audi	A6
28/10/2014	North	George	BMW	X5
25/04/2014	East	Brian	Toyota	Land Cruiser
15/05/2014	West	Peter	Ford	Falcon
24/02/2014	South	Brian	Mazda	626

Data can be hard to read without any formatting

Conditional Formatting

Simply put, **Conditional Formatting** automatically applies different formatting styles (colours, background shading etc) to your data based on criteria you select.

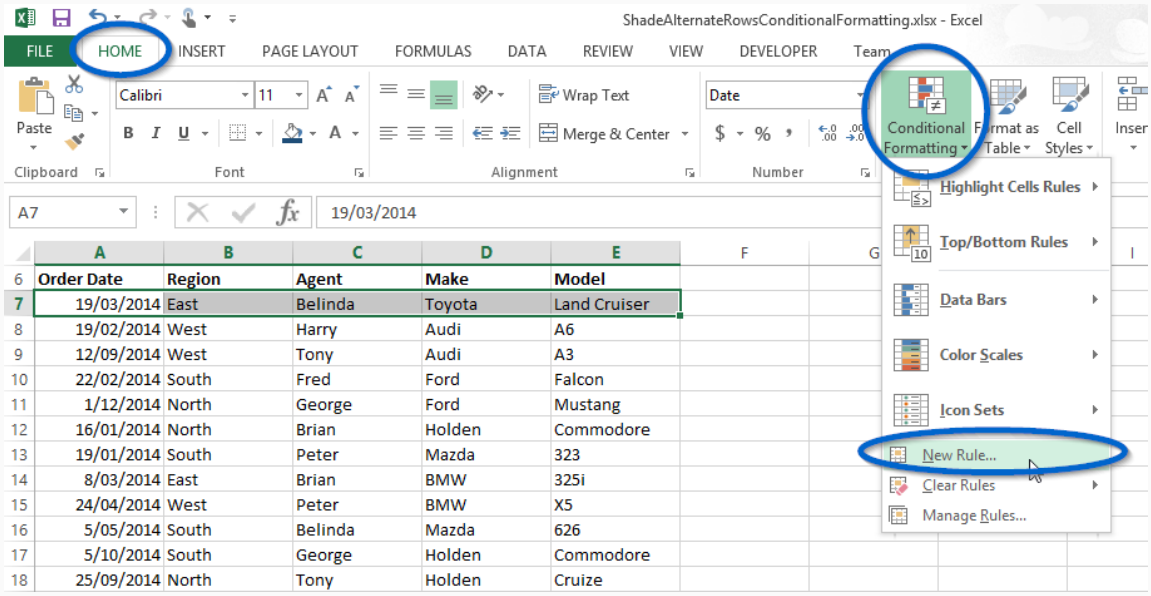
For this particular ***tip***, we use Excel row numbers to work out which row to shade (or not).

Excel Tip

Now to the tip:

Step 1 Select the first row of data (cells A7 to E7)

Step 2 On the Home tab, select Conditional Formatting, and then click New Rule…



	A	B	C	D	E
6	Order Date	Region	Agent	Make	Model
7	19/03/2014	East	Belinda	Toyota	Land Cruiser
8	19/02/2014	West	Harry	Audi	A6
9	12/09/2014	West	Tony	Audi	A3
10	22/02/2014	South	Fred	Ford	Falcon
11	1/12/2014	North	George	Ford	Mustang
12	16/01/2014	North	Brian	Holden	Commodore
13	19/01/2014	South	Peter	Mazda	323
14	8/03/2014	East	Brian	BMW	325i
15	24/04/2014	West	Peter	BMW	X5
16	5/05/2014	South	Belinda	Mazda	626
17	5/10/2014	South	George	Holden	Commodore
18	25/09/2014	North	Tony	Holden	Cruize

Add a new Conditional Formatting rule

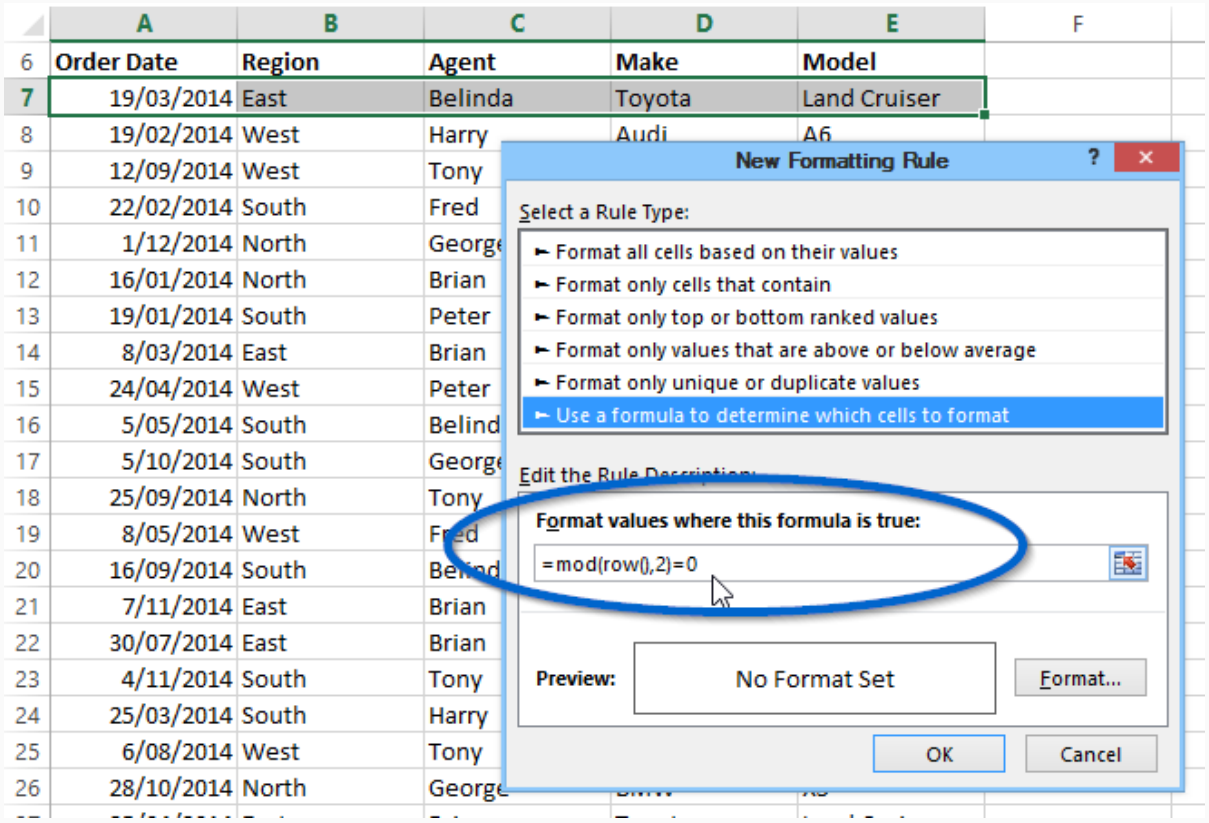
Step 3 In the *New Formatting Rule* dialogue box, select the *Use a formula to determine which cells to format*

Step 4 in the *Format values where this formula is true:* box type the following formula:

=mod(row(),2)=0

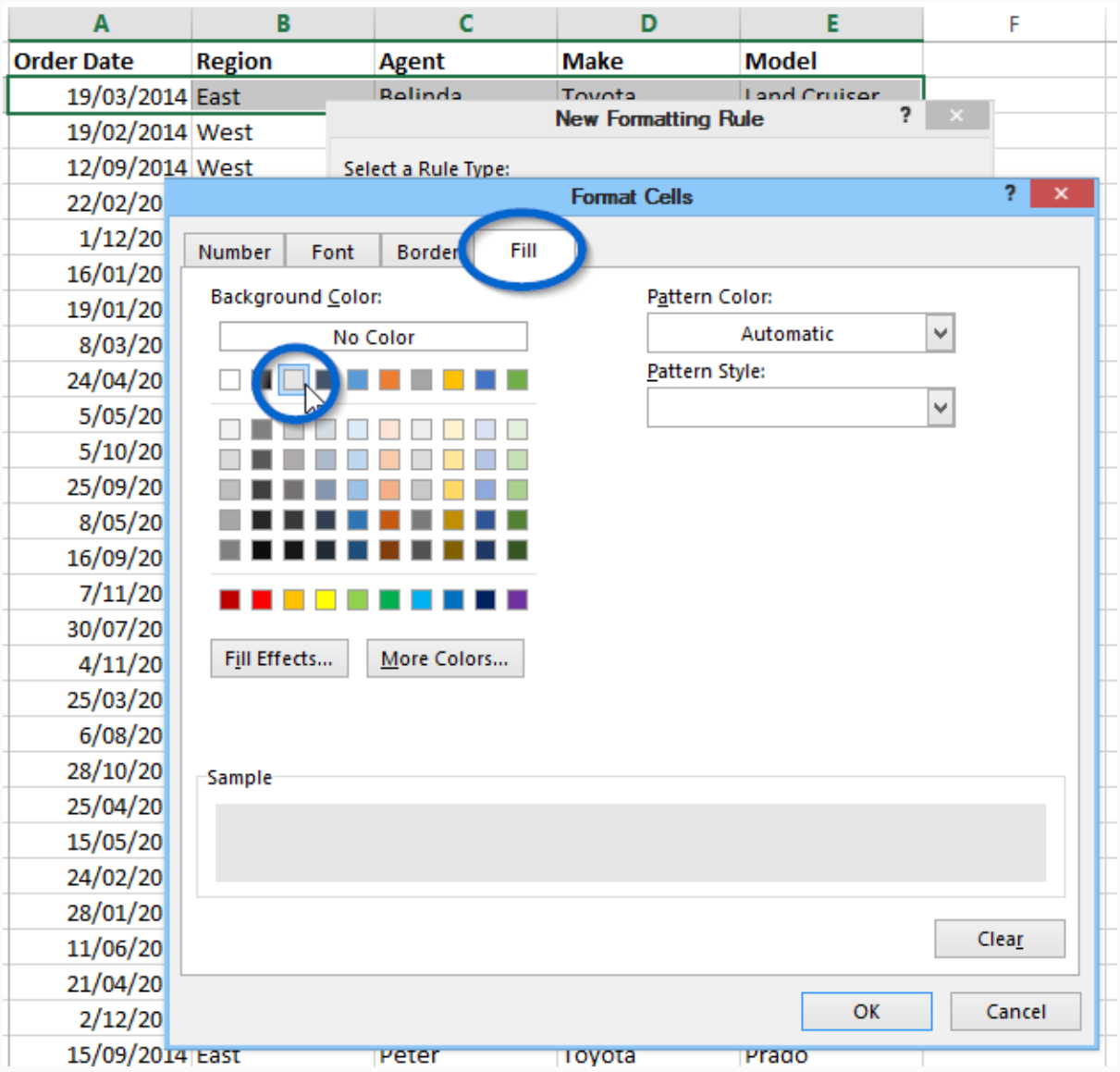
The ROW() function brings back the row number in which the formula appears, so for the highlighted row in the image shown below, row() would return the value 7.

The MOD function returns the remainder of a number after it is divided by a divisor. Hence when we use row numbers and a divisor of 2, the remainder of every 2nd sum will equal 0 – that is, the MOD (or remainder) of row 1 divided by 2 equals 0.5, the MOD (or remainder) of row 2 divided by 2 equals 0, MOD row 3 = 0.5, MOD row 4 = 0 and so on.



Conditional Formatting rule

Step 5 Next click the *Format* button and select a pale background fill. Whatever colour and you select here will be the formatting that gets applied to every alternate row.



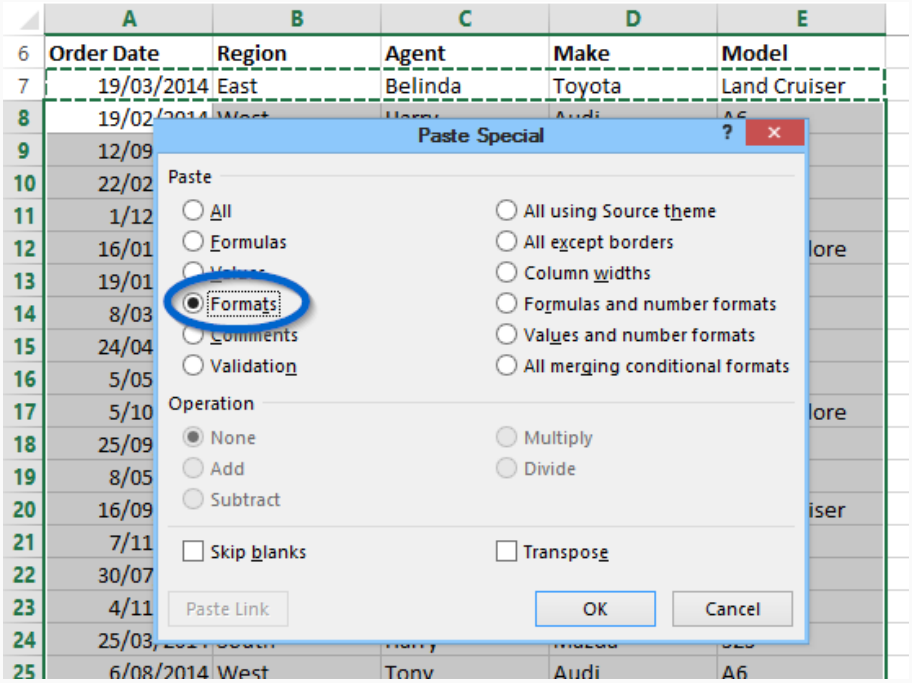
Select a pale background fill colour

Step 6 Click the *OK* button and *OK* again to apply the conditional formatting to your first row of data.

Step 7 Now that we have **Conditional Formatting** set up for your first row, we just need to copy it to your remaining rows of data.

Step 8 In our example, select cells *A7* through to *E7* and click the *Copy* button (or CTRL+C).

Step 9 Now select your remaining rows of data and use *Paste Special, Formats* to paste the **Conditional Formatting** to this information.



Paste Special Conditional Formatting Rules to remaining data

Your data will now have the **Conditional Formatting** rules applied to it and every alternate row should now be shaded making it far more readable.

	A	B	C	D	E
6	Order Date	Region	Agent	Make	Model
7	19/03/2014	East	Belinda	Toyota	Land Cruiser
8	19/02/2014	West	Harry	Audi	A6
9	12/09/2014	West	Tony	Audi	A3
10	22/02/2014	South	Fred	Ford	Falcon
11	1/12/2014	North	George	Ford	Mustang
12	16/01/2014	North	Brian	Holden	Commodore
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26	28/10/2014	North	George	BMW	X5
27	25/04/2014	East	Brian	Toyota	Land Cruiser
28	15/05/2014	West	Peter	Ford	Falcon
29	24/02/2014	South	Brian	Mazda	626

Every alternate row shaded

Nb: I "cheated" a little in the image above, as I also changed the title row to have a dark background, with a white font, to make it stand out from the rest of the data.

But wait, that's not all…

Assuming you now want to shade every third row of data in your information. Simply modify the "=mod(row(),2)=0" formula by changing the 2 to a 3. Or if you want every fourth row of data shaded, change the 2 to a 4…

Ok that's it for this tip, as always should you have any questions or queries about any information I have provided, let me know.

Till next time.

Cheers,

Brian

Please Share

If you liked this tip or know someone who could benefit from it, please feel free to share it.

Download

You can download a copy of the spreadsheet I used in this article so you can explore this tip further at: How to shade alternate rows in Excel using Conditional Formatting spreadsheet.

Youtube

Lastly, if you prefer you can watch an explanation of this tip on www.excelsupersite.com - How to Shade alternate rows with Conditional Formatting.