

Number Formatting in Excel

I was in Shannon’s office, sitting in her visitor’s chair across from her desk. She had requested a one-on-one Excel training session and I was waiting for her to finish up whatever she was working on currently.

“I just need to get these last few numbers entered into our department budget,” she announced as I waited.

“No worries, I will just sit here and watch you work,” I said half-jokingly.

As I sat there her hand movement caught my attention. The index finger of her left hand was tracking the information on the paper in front of her. Her right hand was flying over the 10-key on the keyboard. I also noticed her double tap on the zero key. I realized for every number, she manually entered .00 or if there was a needed comma, she was manually entering the comma.

“Shannon, I think I know the first thing I want to cover in our training session,” I said.

Here is what we covered:

Don’t put those commas in yourself.

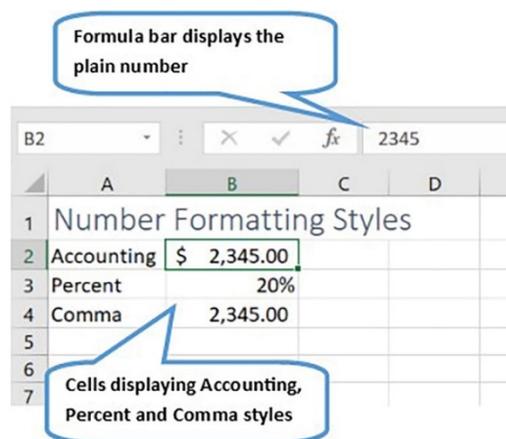
Number formatting is used to change the appearance of a number or value in a cell. Formatting numbers does not change the actual number that you enter, just the way it appears in the spreadsheet.

Commonly used number formats include:

percent symbols (%),

commas (,),

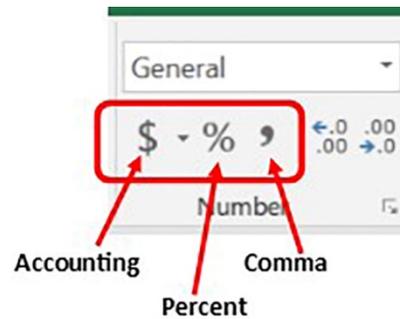
decimal places, and dollar signs(\$)



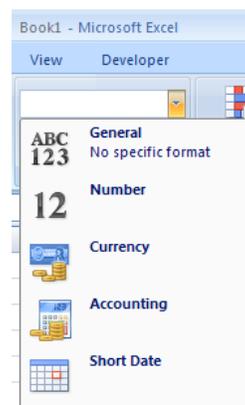
Number formatting can be applied to a single cell, entire columns or rows, a select range of cells, or the whole worksheet.

The default format for cells containing a value is the General style. This style has no specific format and displays values as plain numbers – no dollar signs, commas etc. Just a plain number.

To change a cell's format, you can use one of the buttons on the Ribbon, such as comma, percent or currency which apply preset styles to the selected cells.



Another option is to click the drop-down arrow next to General on the Ribbon. This will give you additional formatting options.



After Shannon applied the Currency style to her columns, all she had to do was enter the number. The dollar sign and .00 were automatically added.

Currency Style and Accounting Style – What's the difference?

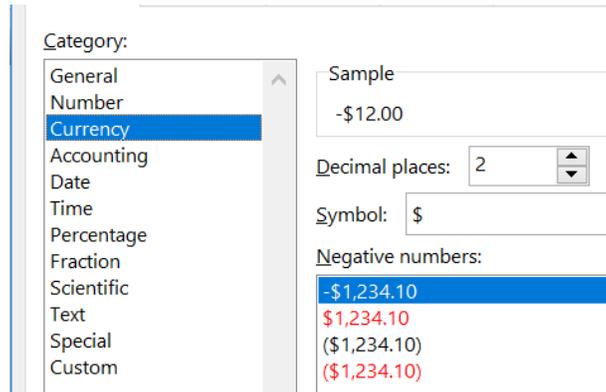
They do look similar to each other.

The Accounting style aligns the dollar sign at the left edge of the cell and displays a dash for zero values.

The Currency style places the dollar sign right next to the number.

	A	B	C	D
1	\$ 23.00	\$ -	\$ (12.00)	Accounting
2	\$23.00	\$0.00	-\$12.00	Currency
3				

Note: The Currency format can display negative numbers with a minus sign, in red, with parentheses, or in red with parentheses.



The Accounting format displays negative numbers in parentheses.

	A	E
1	\$(345.00)	
2		

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