

# INDIRECT function

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This article describes the formula syntax and usage of the **INDIRECT function** in Microsoft Excel.

## Description

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Returns the reference specified by a text string. References are immediately evaluated to display their contents. Use INDIRECT when you want to change the reference to a cell within a formula without changing the formula itself.

## Syntax

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```
INDIRECT(ref_text, [a1])
```

The INDIRECT function syntax has the following **arguments**:

- **Ref\_text** Required. A reference to a cell that contains an A1-style reference, an R1C1-style reference, a name defined as a reference, or a reference to a cell as a text string. If ref\_text is not a valid cell reference, INDIRECT returns the #REF! error value.
  - If ref\_text refers to another workbook (an external reference), the other workbook must be open. If the source workbook is not open, INDIRECT returns the #REF! error value.
  - If ref\_text refers to a cell range outside the row limit of 1,048,576 or the column limit of 16,384 (XFD), INDIRECT returns a #REF! error.  
  
NOTE This behavior is different from Excel versions earlier than Microsoft Office Excel 2007, which ignore the exceeded limit and return a value.
- **A1** Optional. A logical value that specifies what type of reference is contained in the cell ref\_text.
  - If a1 is TRUE or omitted, ref\_text is interpreted as an A1-style reference.
  - If a1 is FALSE, ref\_text is interpreted as an R1C1-style reference.

## Example

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The example may be easier to understand if you copy it to a blank worksheet.

[+ How do I copy an example?](#)

**A****B**

1	Data	Data
2	B2	1.333
3	B3	45
4	George	10
5	5	62
6	Formula	Description (Result)
	=INDIRECT(\$A\$2)	Value of the reference in cell A2 (1.333)
7	=INDIRECT(\$A\$3)	Value of the reference in cell A3 (45)
8	=INDIRECT(\$A\$4)	If the cell B4 has the defined name "George," the value of the defined name is returned (10)
9	=INDIRECT ("B"&\$A\$5)	Value of a reference in cell A5 (62)
10		

When you create a formula that refers to a cell, the reference to the cell will be updated if: (1) the cell is moved by using the **Cut** command to delete the cell or (2) the cell is moved because rows or columns are inserted or deleted. If you always want the formula to refer to the same cell regardless of whether the row above the cell is deleted or the cell is moved, use the INDIRECT worksheet function. For example, if you always want to refer to cell A10, use the following syntax:

```
=INDIRECT("A10")
```

#### See Also

- [Lookup and reference functions \(reference\)](#)