

OPENING COMMA-DELIMITED TEXT (.TXT) FILES IN EXCEL¹

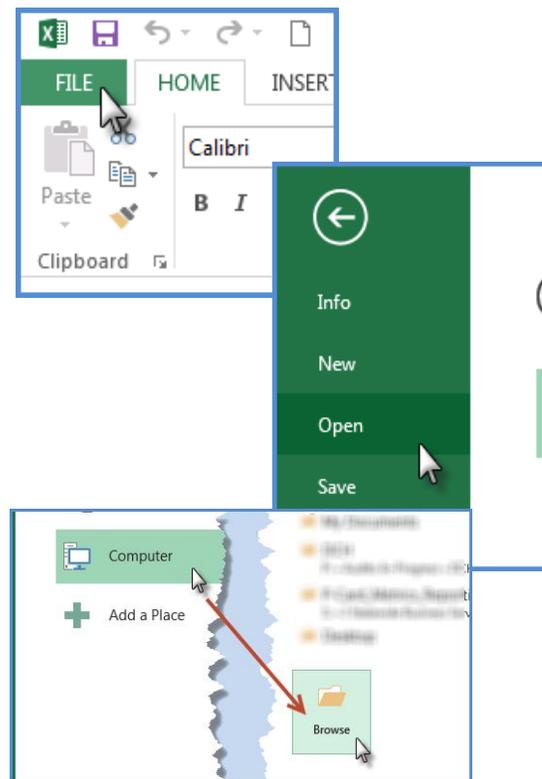
Most of the time when opening files in Excel, you open files that are already in Excel format. These files have an “xlsx”, an “xls”, or other similar file extension. However, when you download data from an original source (e.g. Works Payment Manager), there are times when you must download the data as a text file due to the number of rows. Depending on the system, these external sources might not download more than 65,535 rows. This was the maximum number of rows Excel spreadsheets prior to Excel 2007 would hold. These files have the “txt” file extension.

Since newer versions of Excel will hold up to one million rows, you can download any number of rows as a text file and then open in Excel to work with the data. This is a simple process. The screen shots below are from MS Office 365. However, the commands and ribbon tab names are the same in Excel 2007 and later.

Locating the Text File

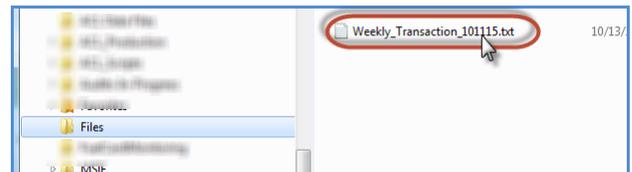
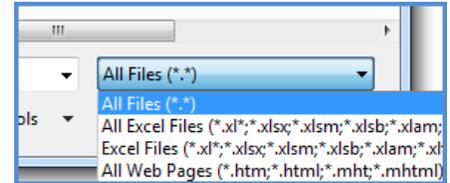
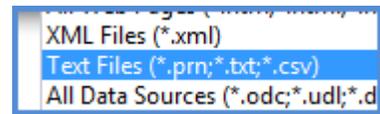
Once you obtain your text file from the original data source, open a blank Excel workbook.

- Click on the “File” tab on the ribbon (top left-hand corner).
- Click on “Open”.
- Click on the “Browse” button to navigate to the location where your text file is stored.



¹ For additional information on working with “text” in Excel, see the Additional Resource in the Processing Improvement Tools “Text to Columns” in Excel, available on the State Purchasing Division web site.

- In the lower right-hand corner, select either the option for “All Files” or the option for “Text Files” from the file type drop-down.
 - If you select “Text Files”, only files with the file extensions shown here will display.
 - If you select “All Files”, all files in the folder will display, including Word documents, PDF documents, etc.
- Double-click on the file you want to open with Excel.



The “Text Import Wizard” will open.

Opening the Text File

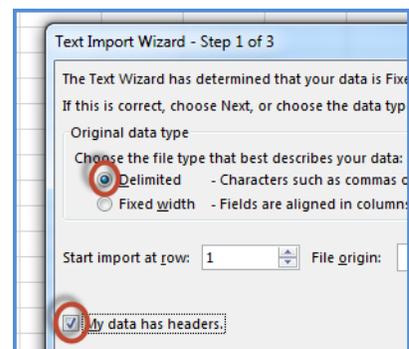
Step 1 of 3

When the “Text Import Wizard” displays, indicate the type of file in Step 1 of 3.

“Delimited” means that there is a character of some kind between the field values. Most of the time, this is a comma (,). This lets Excel know that when it comes to a comma, one field (column) ends and a new field begins.

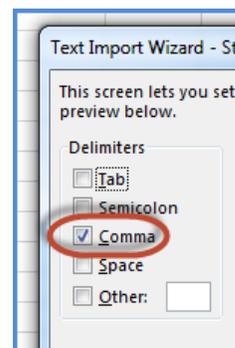
“Fixed width” means that each field has a certain width. When Excel reaches the designated space on the row, a new field (column) begins. In order to open a fixed-width file, you will need a “file layout” that shows how wide each column is.

- Click on the radio button next to “Delimited”.
- If you want Excel to use the first row as column headers, click on the “My data has headers” check box.
- Click “Next” in the lower right-hand corner (not shown here).



Step 2 of 3

- Click on the check box next to “Comma”.



Step 3 of 3

In this step, you will tell Excel know what type of data is in each of the fields, or columns. The default field type is “General”, which means that Excel will look at the data and open it as the data type it “thinks” it is (i.e. text, number, or date).

In the world of spreadsheets and data analysis, a basic rule of thumb is that if you are not going to do a calculation on the values in a column or if the column has dates, then that column needs to be formatted as “text”, even if that field is a number, such as a zip code, an NIGP code, or an MCC. Some of the numbers for these codes start with a zero. Excel will look at those values as numbers and remove leading zeroes. For example, if your MCC is 0742, and the column is formatted as “General” or as a “Number”, then Excel will display 742, not 0742. Some formulas, such as VLOOKUP, in a spreadsheet will not work properly if leading zeroes are removed.

To avoid this problem when opening the file in Excel, you will designate the data type in each column. In other words, you will tell Excel which fields to open as “Text” and which to open as “General”.

To designate column types, do the following for each column. If two or more **adjacent** columns are to be designated as the same field type, then you can click on the first column, hold down the “Shift” key, and then click on the other columns. Using the “Ctrl” key to select non-adjacent columns will not work.

1. Click on the column heading (the words “Text” and “General” in the screen shot), not the sample data displayed. Use the scroll bar below the sample data to view columns.
 - a. Hold the “Shift” key down if you are going to select more than one **adjacent** column.
2. Once all adjacent columns are selected, click on the radio button next to the appropriate data format.
 - a. You can also designate each column individually if you are not comfortable selecting multiple columns at the same time.
 - b. Note that the data type displays above the sample data once you click on the radio button.
3. Click on the “Finish” button in the lower right-hand corner.
4. You can now work with your data in Excel.

