



Bespoke Excel Training Module – Absolute and relative references

Most formulae used in Excel spreadsheets contain references to other cells or ranges of cells. There are three types of references that can be used: Relative, Absolute or Mixed.

The type of reference is only important when you copy the formula from one cell to another.

Relative

Both the row and column references are free to change when the formula is copied to another cell.

Example: =A1

Absolute

Both the row and column references are fixed and do not change when the formula is copied to another cell.

Example: =\$A\$1

Note the dollar symbol \$ before both the column and row labels

Mixed

Either the row or column reference is fixed and does not change when the formula is copied to another cell.

Example of fixed column: =\$A1

Note the dollar symbol \$ before the column label

Example of fixed row: =A\$1

Note the dollar symbol \$ before the row label

A comparison of how the different types react when copied

Type	Original in A10	When copied to C10	When copied to A12	When copied to C12
Relative	=A1	=C1	=A3	=C3
Absolute	=\$A\$1	=\$A\$1	=\$A\$1	=\$A\$1
Fixed row	=A\$1	=C\$1	=A\$1	=C\$1
Fixed column	=\$A1	=\$A1	=\$A3	=\$A3

TIP

Use F4 to toggle through the reference types whilst creating the formula