

Speaker 1: Hello and welcome to the CPA Australia podcast. In this mini episode, we welcome back Excel expert Neale Blackwood CPA, who's had more than 20 years experience using and writing about Excel for accountants. Neale will discuss important and time saving features that have been added to Microsoft Excel over the years that may help you out in every day Excel use. We hope you enjoy this mini episode. Over to you Neale.

Neale Blackwood: In this podcast I'd like to talk about the F4 function key. Now it leads a double life. So normally it repeats what you've last done. So if you apply a format to a cell, you can go and select another cell and then press F4 to repeat that format. And it applies to a lot of different areas within Excel. So for example you could change the ... Let's say the font size on a chart axis, and then select another axis, and press the F4 key and the font would be changed on that one as well. So it basically repeats what you last did. Now it is the last thing that you did. For example, if you made something bold and then used the yellow fill colour, and then pressed F4, it would be repeating the yellow fill colour. So it's the last operation that you've done that it will repeat. Some formats might take a few clicks to achieve, so you can do that on one cell and then just select another cell and press F4 and you can repeat that particular format.

One of the other things that you can use the F4 repeat key to do is pasting. So for example you might copy something and then paste it and do a special type of paste. So you might do a say paste values, or paste formats, and you can do that once, and then you can repeat that by selecting another cell and pressing the F4 key. And that will do the same type of paste. So a paste values or whatever you've done. Some of the type of pastes you do, you might have to go to the paste special dialogue, and it might take a couple clicks to actually achieve. But once you've done that once if you wanted to repeat that you just select another cell and press F4 and that will repeat the same type of paste. Okay so, in the normal course of operations the F4 function repeats what you last did. By the way that also works in Word, and PowerPoint if you use it there.

Now the second thing it does is when you're editing a formula, either in the cell or in the formula bar. Now that's when it works by putting the dollar signs in. It's actually easy to remember the F4 for this because the dollar sign on a keyboard is above the number four. So the function key F4, when you press it once, it puts both dollar signs in. So it's a fixed reference. So it's a dollar sign in front of the column, and a dollar sign in front of the row number. So a fixed reference doesn't change as you copy it across and down. Basically whatever the dollar sign is in front of, that reference won't change.

So dollar A, dollar one won't change no matter where you copy that to. So if you've got A, dollar one, then you copy it across, then the A will change to B, C et cetera. And the same with the row number, if you have dollar A, and then one, and copy it down, then the row number of one will change to 2, 3, 4. So the dollar sign fixes whichever reference it's in front of. If you press it again, it actually changes where the dollar signs go. So, on the second press it puts the dollar sign in front of the row number. Press it one more time and it puts the

dollar sign in front of the column reference, and press it once more and it goes back to what's called a relative reference where there's no dollar signs.

Now it does work slightly differently if you're creating a formula compared to editing a formula. So if you're creating a formula from scratch and you select a range and then press F4, it will put the fixed references on the first reference and the second reference. So the whole reference is fixed. If you're editing, it actually only works on the reference that you're next to. So in a case of being on the end of a range reference, it'll only put the fixed reference on the last cell reference in the range reference.

So in the formula bar what you can do is if you want to make a whole lot of references fixed and you're editing, you just select them all in the formula barrel in the cell if you're editing in the cell, and then press the F4 key. So all of the references that you had selected will be converted into a fixed reference. So the F4 key can save you a lot of time both for formatting and it can also speed up the formula creation process by putting in the dollar signs for you, and also moving the dollar signs around with just a click of one button.

I hope you found this useful. Thanks for listening.

Speaker 1:

We hope you enjoyed this mini episode of the CPA Australia podcast. To learn more about Neale and to listen to more podcast episodes on Excel, you can visit our show notes at www.cpaustralia.com.au/podcast. Never miss an episode by subscribing to our podcast on iTunes, Spotify, or Stitcher. Thanks for listening.