

Speaker 1: Hello and welcome to the CPA Australia podcast. In this mini episode we welcome back Excel expert, Neale Blackwood CPA who has 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: What I wanted to cover in today's short podcast are grid lines. Now, there's three different types of grid lines in Excel. The first type is the light grey grid lines that you'll see on the grid on your normal sheet which is standard that they're turned on. You can turn them off. Typically I do if I'm doing a presentation or if I'm doing any type of training, I typically turn the grid lines on the sheets off.

Now, we're very visual creatures so anything that's on there that you don't really need can be distracting and grid lines, in the most cases, you don't really need them, you can pretty much figure out what cell you're in without the grid lines there but they're easy to turn back on again.

Sort of related to the sheet grid line is the ability to turn those grid lines on or off when you print as well. Now, they are handled differently, they are pretty much independent so just because you have the grid lines off on a sheet it doesn't mean you've turned them off when you're printing and vice versa, you can turn them off for printing but still leave them on the sheet so that they are handled independently.

The easiest way to access both controls is on the page layout ribbon so pretty much in the middle of that ribbon there is a view tick box and a print tick box so view means on the grid, on the screen and print is when your print it out so they're handled independently. Sometimes when you're printing having the grid lines on there can be handy if you do need to line things up across the page there.

The other type of grid line is the grid lines that appear on charts. Now, when you create charts in Excel pretty much the standard operation is to have the grid lines turned on and pretty much the first thing I do is turn them off. Grid lines sort of add noise if you like, visual noise to a chart. Now, a chart is a visual thing, it's something you're looking at to see trends and to look at comparisons and those type of things so anything that's on the chart that doesn't really add to that is distracting and grid lines are probably the worst offender when it comes to that.

Even though they might only be light grey on the actual chart when you turn them off it's amazing how clean the charts look when you turn off grid lines so I recommend that when you are building charts at least turn them off to have a look at it. Just remember when you're creating a chart, a chart is there to show trends, to show relationships, it's not there to actually give you an exact figure so you're not supposed to look at a chart and see that something is exactly some figure and when you put grid lines on it you're sort of giving that affect, that you're trying to get the, figure out what that value is where in reality you're probably just looking at how the column chart for example, how one column compares to another, you're not necessarily looking at where the grid lines line up.

The grid lines sort of give that idea of accuracy that charts don't really have. If you did need the exact values there all you do is you can turn on what's called data labels and that will put the exact value say above or within the column chart. Give grid lines a miss or try giving them a miss on your charts and see if the chart looks a little bit better. The less things that you can have on a chart in general the better and as I said grid lines tend to be the first thing that I take off.

I hope you've found this, my little rant on grid lines useful.

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.cpaaustralia.au/podcast](http://www.cpaaustralia.au/podcast). Never miss an episode by subscribing to our podcast on iTunes, Spotify or Stitcher. Thanks for listening.