

Data validation gives you the ability to set “rules” pertaining to data entered on a worksheet. For example, you might want to insure that a column labeled DATE contains only dates or that another column contains only numbers. You could even insure that a column labeled DATE contains only dates during a certain period. With Data Validation, you can control what is entered on the worksheet.

NOTE: While Data Validation is a useful and effective tool, please note that pasting data into a cell or selecting Edit, Clear All from the Excel menu will override the Data Validation rules that you set.

While there are many ways you can use Data Validation, the following exercise will set up a simple rule requiring the user to input a date within a certain range.

Creating a Data Validation Rule

The worksheet below contains a list of tasks. Due dates need to be entered. The date entered in column B must fall between 4/1/03 and 5/1/03.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Task	Due						
2	Task 1							
3	Task 2							
4	Task 3							
5	Task 4							
6	Task 5							
7	Task 6							
8	Task 7							
9	Task 8							
10	Task 9							
11	Task 10							
12	Task 11							
13	Task 12							
14	Task 13							
15								

Select the cells to which you want to apply the Data Validation (in this case, cells B2:B14), then select Data, Validation from the Excel menu. Click the Settings tab and complete the dialog box as shown below, but do **NOT** click OK when you are done.

Data Validation

Settings | Input Message | Error Alert

Validation criteria

Allow:
Date Ignore blank

Data:
between

Start date:
4/1/03

End date:
5/1/03

Apply these changes to all other cells with the same settings

Clear All OK Cancel

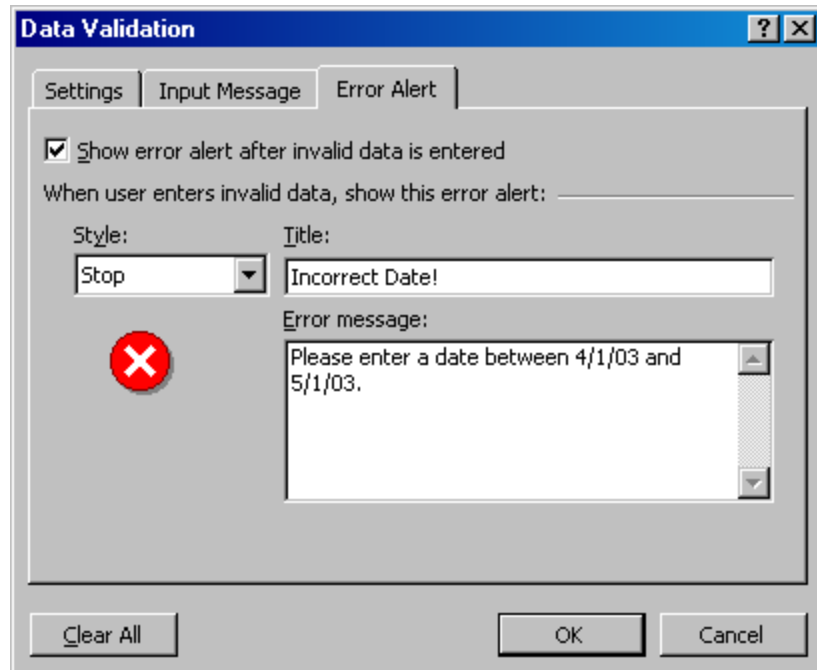
Click the Error Alert tab. For the error alert, you have three options “Stop”, “Warning” and “Information”. The option you select determines what occurs when if incorrect data is entered into the cell.

Stop: The user is blocked from entering any data in the cell except for the data required.

Warning: The user is warned that the data being entered is incorrect, and is asked if he or she wishes to proceed with the entry.

Information: The incorrect data is entered into the cell but the user is notified that it is incorrect.

Complete the dialog box as indicated below, then click OK.

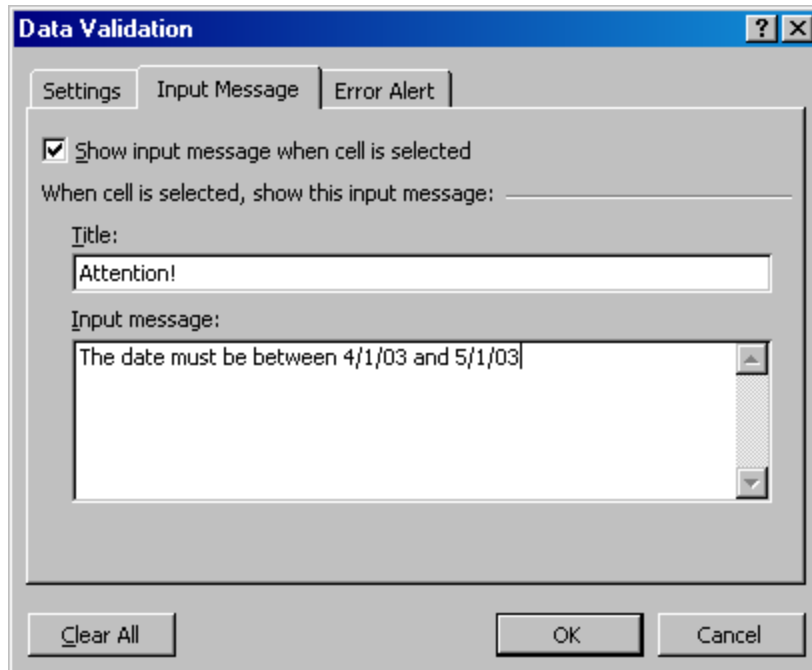


Once you are returned to your worksheet, type a date outside of the 4/1/03-5/1/03 range into one of the cells in column B and see the error message display.

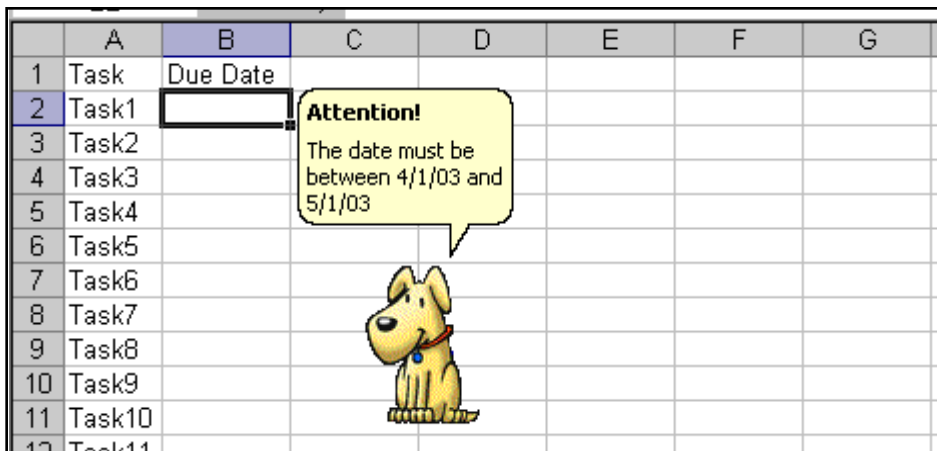
Tip: Using Input Messages with Data Validation

To make things clearer for people who might be entering data on a worksheet with data validation rules, you might want to include an Input Message. The Input Message will display whenever the user clicks in a cell requiring data validation.

When setting the data validation criteria, click the Input Message tab of the dialog box. Type your message, then click OK.



When the user clicks in the appropriate cell:



or, if the Office Assistant is not being used:

