

Excel Tables — Quick Reference Card

Structured References · Limitations ·
Decision Table · TechFitFlow.com

Convert every dataset to a named Excel Table before writing a single formula against it. Rename the Table immediately — Table1 is not a name.

STRUCTURED REFERENCE SYNTAX

Reference	What it points to	Plain range equivalent	Key advantage
TestLog[Status]	All data cells in Status column (no header)	C2:C500	Auto-expands; readable by column name
[@Status]	Status cell in the same row as the formula	C2 (relative)	No row reference needed; self-documents column
TestLog[#All],[Status]	Status column including header row	C1:C500	Rarely needed; dynamic array spill scenarios
TestLog[#Headers]	Entire header row of the Table	C1:H1	Validation and dynamic label references
TestLog[#Totals]	Total Row values (only if Total Row is enabled)	C501	Reference total without knowing row number
TestLog	Entire Table data area (excludes header and total)	C2:H500	VLOOKUP/XLOOKUP array — always current

TABLE VS NAMED RANGE VS PLAIN RANGE — DECISION TABLE

Situation	Plain Range	Named Range	Excel Table
Multi-column dataset that grows over time	X	X	✓ Best
Single fixed value (threshold, rate, date)	Use \$B\$1	✓ Best	Unnecessary overhead
Lookup table used in XLOOKUP / SUMIFS	X Static	Static — better than range	✓ Best — expands
Pivot table or Power Query source	X Must update range	X Same problem	✓ Dynamic refresh
Small static reference — never changes	✓ Fine	✓ Fine	Unnecessary for truly static data

EXCEL TABLE LIMITATIONS AND WORKAROUNDS

Limitation	Detail	Workaround
No merged cells inside Table	Merged cells prevent creation and break structured refs	Unmerge before converting. Use "Centre Across Selection" for visual centering.

Cannot span multiple sheets	A Table exists entirely on one sheet	Use Power Query to combine multi-sheet data into one Table on one sheet.
Dynamic arrays cannot spill into Table columns	FILTER/SORT/UNIQUE cannot spill results inside a Table	Place dynamic array formulas outside the Table in a plain range.
Mixed calculated column formulas cause warnings	Green triangle if any row has a different formula from others	Keep columns uniform. Use IF inside the formula for row-specific logic.
Legacy Share Workbook incompatible	Old "Share Workbook" feature conflicts with Tables in some versions	Use co-authoring via SharePoint or OneDrive instead.

PRE-DISTRIBUTION WORKBOOK CHECKLIST

✓	Check	What to verify
■	All Tables renamed	No Table1 or Table2 defaults. Every Table has a descriptive noun name.
■	All column headers unique and descriptive	No Column1 or blank headers. Use PascalCase with no spaces.
■	No merged cells inside any Table	Merged cells break structured references and calculated columns.
■	Calculated columns use uniform formulas	Every row has the same formula. Inconsistency warnings investigated.
■	Cross-sheet formulas use structured references	No C2:C500 hardcoded ranges that will become stale when data grows.