

Excel: Apply Conditional Formatting if Between Two Values

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In the realm of [Microsoft Excel](#), the ability to dynamically highlight data based on specific criteria is invaluable for robust data analysis and visualization. One cornerstone feature that facilitates this automated highlighting is [Conditional Formatting](#). It grants users the power to apply precise formats--such as colors, custom fonts, or intuitive icons--to cells that satisfy predefined logical conditions.

This comprehensive guide focuses specifically on one of the most common and powerful applications of this tool: automatically highlighting cells whose numerical values fall **between two specific boundaries**. This technique is immensely beneficial when the objective is to quickly identify data points clustered within a critical threshold or acceptable range, instantly revealing performance anomalies, trends, or outliers within large datasets. Whether you are tracking inventory, managing financial reports, or monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs), mastering this skill significantly elevates your capacity for effective [data analysis](#).

We will walk through a clear, practical, and step-by-step example designed to ensure you can confidently implement the "Between" rule, providing immediate visual feedback on your spreadsheet data.

Defining the "Between" Rule for Numerical Ranges

The "Between" rule is a fundamental and frequently used feature within Excel's suite of **Conditional Formatting** options, tailored specifically for quantitative or numerical data. This rule requires the user to define two crucial parameters: a lower boundary (the minimum value) and an upper boundary (the maximum value). Any cell value that falls inclusively within these two defined points will instantly receive the specified visual format.

The versatility of this rule is its greatest strength. For instance, a financial analyst might use it to spot transactions ranging from \$500 to \$2,000, or a human resources manager might identify employee satisfaction scores between 70 and 90. By visually isolating these specific data points, you circumvent the need for tedious manual scanning through extensive [datasets](#), allowing for rapid insight generation and informed decision-making.

Crucially, it is essential to understand that Excel's default "Between" rule operates inclusively. This means if a cell value is exactly equal to the lower limit or exactly equal to the upper limit, the formatting will still be applied. If you require strict exclusivity (i.e., greater than X AND less than Y), you would need to utilize a custom formula rule instead. However, for most common use cases, the inclusive definition provided by the built-in "Between" rule is the most appropriate starting point.

Practical Implementation: Step-by-Step Guide to Highlighting Values

To fully grasp this process, let's work through a concrete example. We will use a sample [dataset](#)

that tracks the points scored by various basketball teams. Our goal is to apply visual formatting to the "Points" column to highlight teams performing within a specific scoring bracket.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Team	Points				
2	Mavs	9				
3	Rockets	12				
4	Spurs	13				
5	Hornets	13				
6	Mavs	16				
7	Nets	19				
8	Lakers	20				
9	Mavs	21				
10	Rockets	28				
11	Spurs	31				
12	Cavs	34				
13	Nets	18				
14	Cavs	7				
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						

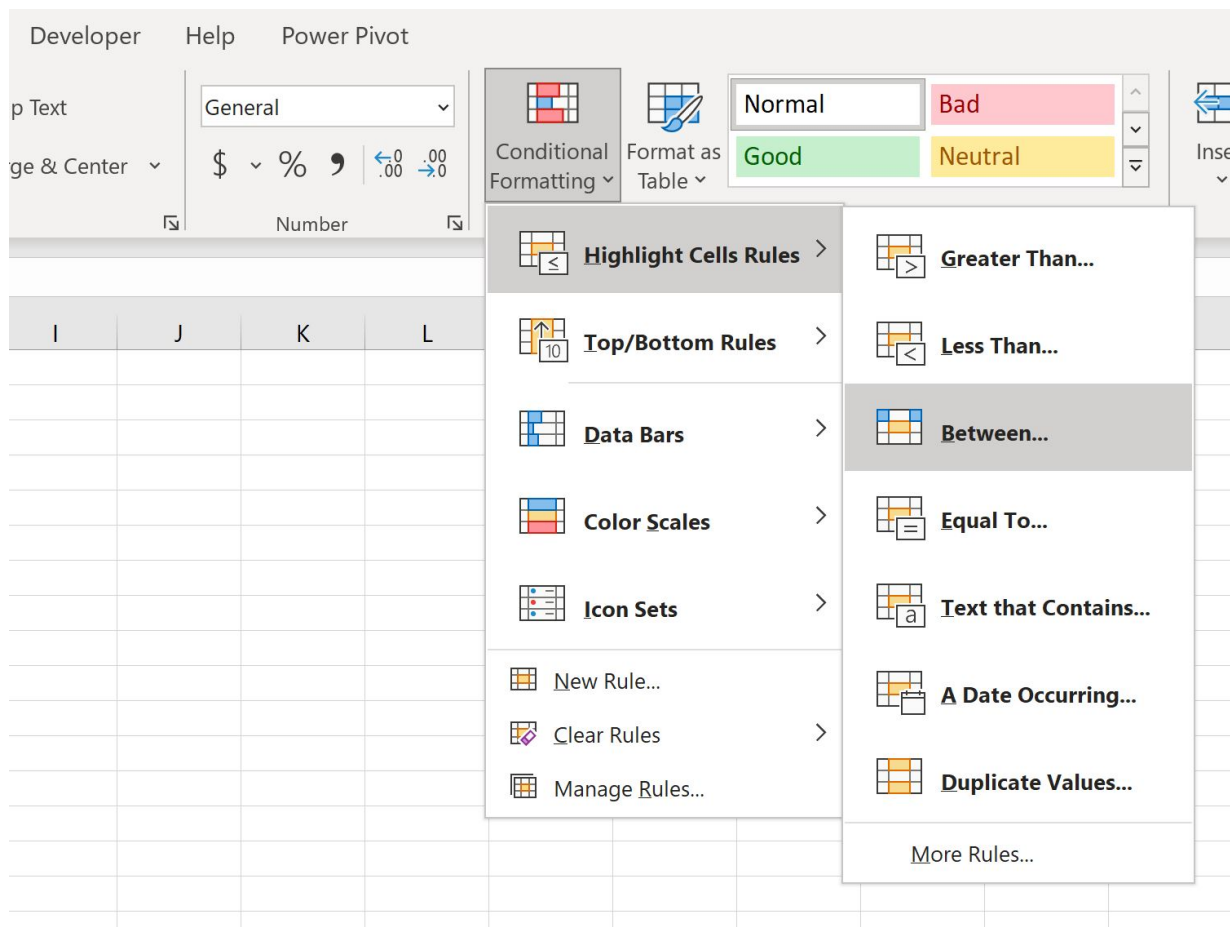
Specifically, we aim to highlight all values in the "Points" column that are inclusively between 10 and 20. This exercise instantly identifies the subset of teams whose scores fall within this critical performance [range](#).

Follow these five precise steps to implement the conditional rule:

Define the Target Range: The first step is always to select the specific cells where the formatting rule should be evaluated. In this example, select the [range B2:B14](#), which contains all the numerical point values.

Access Conditional Formatting: Navigate to the [Home tab](#) located on the Excel ribbon. Within the "Styles" group, click on the [Conditional Formatting](#) icon.

Select the "Between" Rule: From the dropdown menu that appears, hover your mouse over **Highlight Cells Rules**. A secondary menu will open; select **Between...** This action will launch the dedicated dialog box for setting your range criteria.



Specify the Boundaries: In the "Between" dialog box, input the numerical limits. Enter **10** into the first field (the lower boundary) and **20** into the second field (the upper boundary). These entries define the inclusive performance bracket you wish to highlight.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Team	Points							
2	Mavs	9							
3	Rockets	12							
4	Spurs	13							
5	Hornets	13							
6	Mavs	16							
7	Nets	19							
8	Lakers	20							
9	Mavs	21							
10	Rockets	28							
11	Spurs	31							
12	Cavs	34							
13	Nets	18							
14	Cavs	7							
15									
16									
17									
18									
19									
20									
21									

Between ? X

Format cells that are BETWEEN:

10 ↑ and 20 ↑ with Light Red Fill with Dark Red Text ▾

OK Cancel

Finalize and Apply: Click **OK** to confirm the settings. Excel will immediately execute the rule, applying the default "Light Red Fill with Dark Red Text" format to every cell within the selected [range](#) whose value is 10, 20, or any number between them.

The resulting visual output clearly distinguishes the data points that meet your defined condition, streamlining the interpretation of your [dataset](#):

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Team	Points				
2	Mavs	9				
3	Rockets	12				
4	Spurs	13				
5	Hornets	13				
6	Mavs	16				
7	Nets	19				
8	Lakers	20				
9	Mavs	21				
10	Rockets	28				
11	Spurs	31				
12	Cavs	34				
13	Nets	18				
14	Cavs	7				
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						

Advanced Customization: Tailoring Your Conditional Format

While the default formatting (Light Red Fill) serves as an effective visual indicator, **Conditional Formatting** provides significant flexibility for users who need a specific aesthetic or reporting requirement. You are encouraged to customize the visual appearance of the highlighted cells to better align with your organization's branding or the context of your data visualization goals.

When you are setting the boundary values in the "Between" dialog box (Step 4), look for the dropdown menu designed for format selection. This menu offers a variety of convenient preset options. For example, you might choose "Green Fill with Dark Green Text" to indicate acceptable or positive ranges, or perhaps "Yellow Fill with Dark Yellow Text" to flag cautionary or borderline data points. Selecting a different preset format, such as the green option shown below, instantly updates the visual feedback on your data.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Team	Points							
2	Mavs	9							
3	Rockets	12							
4	Spurs	13							
5	Hornets	13							
6	Mavs	16							
7	Nets	19							
8	Lakers	20							
9	Mavs	21							
10	Rockets	28							
11	Spurs	31							
12	Cavs	34							
13	Nets	18							
14	Cavs	7							
15									
16									
17									
18									
19									
20									
21									

Between ? X

Format cells that are BETWEEN:

10 ↑ and 20 ↑ with Green Fill with Dark Green Text ▼

OK Cancel

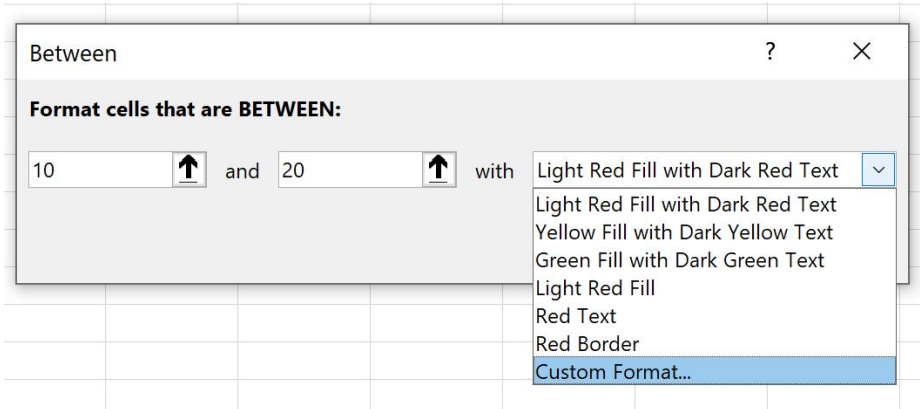
For the highest degree of control over the appearance, select the final option: **Custom Format....** This action opens the familiar "Format Cells" dialog box, granting you granular control over every visual element of the cell. You can precisely define three key aspects:

Font: Modify the typeface, size, color, and specific effects (like strikethrough or superscript) for the text within the cell.

Border: Define specific line styles, colors, and placement (top, bottom, left, right) for the cell boundary.

Fill: Select a background color, apply intricate fill effects, or choose specific pattern styles to make the cell stand out effectively.

Utilizing the **Custom Format** option ensures that your visual indicators are unique and perfectly matched to the specific requirements of your project or professional report, enhancing data interpretation without sacrificing visual quality.



Troubleshooting Common Issues and Best Practices

While [Conditional Formatting](#) is robust, users often encounter specific hurdles, particularly when managing complex [spreadsheets](#). Adhering to certain best practices can significantly improve efficiency and prevent formatting errors.

Verify Range Selection: The most frequent error involves selecting an incorrect or insufficient [range](#) before defining the rule. Always confirm that the exact cells intended for evaluation are highlighted prior to accessing the Conditional Formatting menu. If the formatting appears randomly or fails to apply to the expected area, re-check your initial range selection (e.g., B2:B14).

Managing Rule Conflicts: When multiple conditional formatting rules are active on the same cell, the order of precedence determines which format is displayed. Rules listed higher up in the "Conditional Formatting Rules Manager" take priority. If your "Between" rule seems ignored, navigate to **Home > Conditional Formatting > Manage Rules** to review the hierarchy. You may need to reorder the rules or enable the "Stop If True" option on earlier rules.

Using Dynamic References: For [spreadsheets](#) that are constantly updated, adding or deleting rows, relying on static cell references (like \$B\$2:\$B\$14) can quickly lead to outdated formatting. To ensure automatic adjustment, convert your data into an official **Excel Table** or define a **Named Range**. This practice guarantees that your conditional rules always cover the entire, expanding [dataset](#) without manual intervention.

Optimizing Performance: Be mindful that an overly large quantity of complex or volatile conditional formatting rules can degrade the performance of large workbooks. If you notice significant lag when editing or recalculating your sheet, evaluate whether simplification of formulas or reduction in the scope of formatted cells is necessary. The goal is impactful [data analysis](#) without hindering usability.

Conclusion: Leveraging Visual Data Insights

Successfully applying **Conditional Formatting** to isolate values that fall between two defined

numbers is an indispensable technique for any proficient user of [Microsoft Excel](#). This methodology instantly converts static data into dynamic, visual information, allowing for rapid identification of performance indicators, compliance checks, and boundary violations at a single glance.

By diligently following the structured, step-by-step process outlined in this guide, you gain the ability to effectively highlight crucial data points, detect subtle trends, and fundamentally streamline your [data analysis](#) workflows. Remember the power inherent in the customization options; a well-chosen custom format can significantly improve the communicative effectiveness of your report.

We encourage you to expand your proficiency by exploring other advanced conditional formatting rules, such as icon sets, data bars, and custom formula-based logic. Continuous practice with these powerful tools will make data visualization intuitive, enabling you to extract maximum strategic value from your [spreadsheets](#).

Additional Resources for Deeper Learning

For those seeking to explore further functionalities within Excel and advanced data visualization techniques, the following resources are recommended:

[How to Apply Conditional Formatting if Cell Contains Text in Excel](#)

[Official Microsoft Excel Conditional Formatting Documentation](#)

[Understanding Data Visualization Principles](#)