

A quick fill handle trick for Microsoft Excel

By Susan Harkins

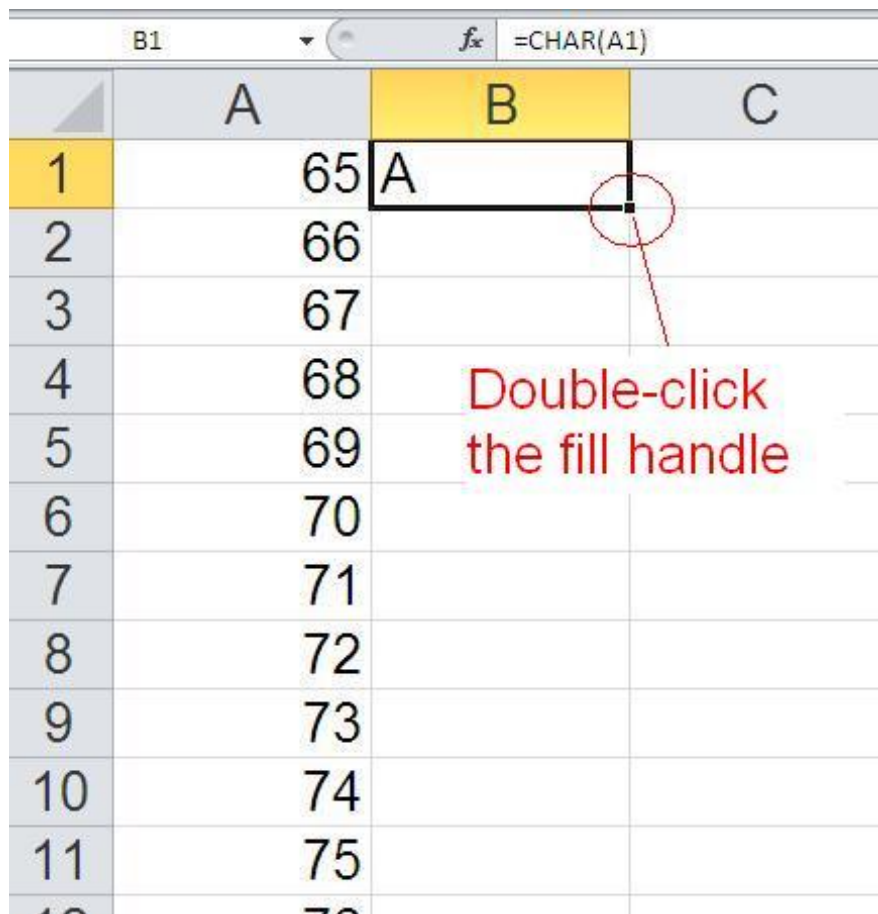
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Takeaway: If you think you know every fill handle trick in the book, there just might be one more you don't know about. Susan Harkins explains.

Excel's fill handle is a big favorite with most users. You enter a single value or formula and the fill handle does all the work. Once you get use to the tool, the tool handle becomes invaluable. As much as users appreciate it, there's still a trick or two not everybody knows. For example, you might not know that double-clicking the handle will automatically complete the task *if* you're filling a column or row that's based on an adjacent column or row. Fortunately, the actual trick is simpler than its description! Let's work through a quick example so you can see just how easy this trick is.

Column A in the following sheet contains a list of consecutive values. I've also entered the following formula in B1, which returns the letter A:

=CHAR(A1)



The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet with the following data:

	A	B	C
1	65	A	
2	66		
3	67		
4	68		
5	69		
6	70		
7	71		
8	72		
9	73		
10	74		
11	75		

A red circle highlights the fill handle of cell B1, with a red arrow pointing to it. The text "Double-click the fill handle" is written in red next to the arrow.

At this point, I could drag the fill handle down to create an alphabetic list (based on the values in column A), but I don't have to drag it at all. A simple double-click to the fill handle will automatically fill in the rest of the series. Excel knows where to stop, so don't worry about that - just double-click! It's an easy trick, but one still not well known.

	A	B	C
1	65	A	
2	66	B	
3	67	C	
4	68	D	
5	69	E	
6	70	F	
7	71	G	
8	72	H	
9	73	I	
10	74	J	
11	75	K	
12	76	L	
13	77	M	