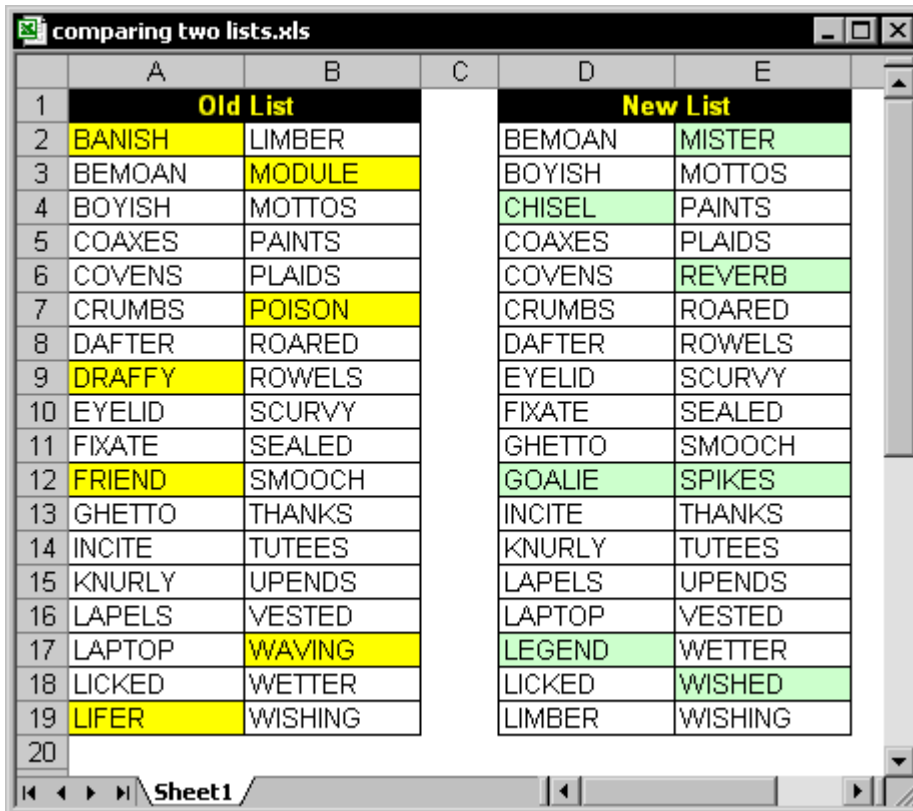


## Comparing Two Lists with Conditional Formatting

Excel's Conditional Formatting feature has many uses. Suppose you need to compare two lists, and identify the items that are different. The figure below shows an example. These lists happen to contain text, but this technique also works with numeric data.



	A	B	C	D	E
1	<b>Old List</b>			<b>New List</b>	
2	BANISH	LIMBER		BEMOAN	MISTER
3	BEMOAN	MODULE		BOYISH	MOTTOS
4	BOYISH	MOTTOS		CHISEL	PAINTS
5	COAXES	PAINTS		COAXES	PLAIDS
6	COVENS	PLAIDS		COVENS	REVERB
7	CRUMBS	POISON		CRUMBS	ROARED
8	DAFTER	ROARED		DAFTER	ROWELS
9	DRAFFY	ROWELS		EYELID	SCURVY
10	EYELID	SCURVY		FIXATE	SEALED
11	FIXATE	SEALED		GHETTO	SMOOCH
12	FRIEND	SMOOCH		GOALIE	SPIKES
13	GHETTO	THANKS		INCITE	THANKS
14	INCITE	TUTEES		KNURLY	TUTEES
15	KNURLY	UPENDS		LAPELS	UPENDS
16	LAPELS	VESTED		LAPTOP	VESTED
17	LAPTOP	WAVING		LEGEND	WETTER
18	LICKED	WETTER		LICKED	WISHED
19	LIFER	WISHING		LIMBER	WISHING
20					

The first list is in A2:B19, and this range is named *OldList*. The second list is in D2:E19, and the range is named *NewList*. The ranges were named using the Insert - Name - Define command. Naming the ranges is not necessary, but it makes them easier to work with.

As you can see, items in *OldList* that do not appear in *NewList* are highlighted with a yellow background. Items in *NewList* that do not appear in *OldList* are highlighted with a green background. These colors are the result of Conditional Formatting.

## How to do it

1. Start by selecting the *OldList* range.

Choose Format - Conditional Formatting

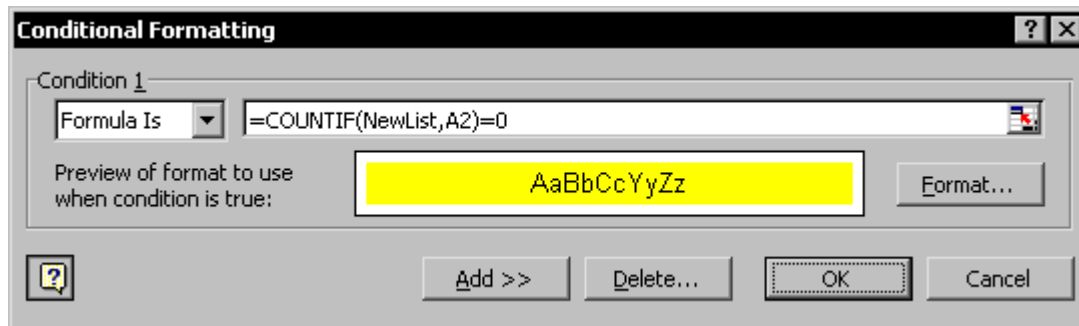
2. In the Conditional Formatting dialog box, use the drop-down list to choose **Formula is**.

Enter this formula:

```
=COUNTIF(NewList,A2)=0
```

3. Click the **Format** button and specify the formatting to apply when the condition is true (a yellow background in this example).

Click OK



The cells in the *NewList* range will use a similar conditional formatting formula.

1. Select the *NewList* range.

Choose Format - Conditional Formatting

2. In the Conditional Formatting dialog box, use the drop-down list to choose **Formula is**.

Enter this formula:

```
=COUNTIF(OldList,D2)=0
```

3. Click the **Format** button and specify the formatting to apply when the condition is true (a green background in this example).

Click OK

Both of these conditional formatting formulas use the COUNTIF function. This function counts the number of times a particular value appears in a range. If the formula returns 0, it means that the item does not appear in the range. Therefore, the conditional formatting kicks in and the cell's background color is changed.

The cell reference in the COUNTIF function should always be the upper left cell of the selected range.