

## Re: EXCEL file corruption

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*Source:*

<http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/Excel/microsoft.public.excel.programming/2006-03/msg02636.html>

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- *From:* "Peter T" <[peter\\_t@discussions](mailto:peter_t@discussions)>
  - *Date:* Thu, 9 Mar 2006 17:50:15 -0000
- 

Hi Dean,

You've asked a lot of reasonable questions but afraid I can't answer any!  
Except perhaps to say I agree that formulas tend to consume more file size than data.

I also agree with your un-scientific remark about Excel sometimes getting confused. The only experience I have of corrupted files is after repeatedly with code applying & deleting many formats, though at all times I was under the rough 3,000 limit and didn't get a warning. Hence my suggestion to look at formats. But it's certainly not the only reason for corruption. In my case I got the distinct impression Excel doesn't always catch up with changes, retaining extinct stuff somewhere to cause problems later.

I've not read a definitive list of things that cause corruption, but many like this –

Q. Help my file is corrupted, I don't know why, what can I do?

A. Try OpenOffice or open in a different version of Excel.

With your large wb of many formulas might be worth ensuring they are arranged efficiently. Charles Williams has good info on his site [www.decisionmodels.com](http://www.decisionmodels.com)

Backup !!

Regards,  
Peter T

PS – Another possibility – temporary files not deleted after some crash.

"Dean" <[Whooshbopbang4@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:Whooshbopbang4@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote in message [news:ZsCdndhfv8a52JLZRVn-hg@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:ZsCdndhfv8a52JLZRVn-hg@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)

<< Might be credible but no guarantee it's correct!>

Yes, this is a good point, Peter, since:

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In my case, I can open a file that I saved 7 minutes earlier and I know that, in those 7 minutes, I just did a lot of minor cell formatting. When

I

went back and got that working file (after the crash), I tried to re-enact those 7 minutes of changes (might have been done slightly differently),

plus

some further stuff, and there was no problem thereafter, nor now. If I

had

been on a hairy edge of too much formatting, I should be seeing similar symptoms now, right? I don't. Or is it possible that, if you are doing

a

lot of copying and pasting, EXCEL can just get confused (for example, if

you

hit escape, or your computer is overloaded with other programs running)

and

cause the file to self corrupt? Could this have anything to do with the EXCEL program, rather than the file, being the source of that behavior, or would EXCEL not have launched into the 'repair the file" mode, if such

were

the case?

Just to belabor the point, I assume hairy equations, which I have many of, take up more MB than oodles of data (which I have little of) – is that right? Still, though a reduction in file size (after cleaning up formatting) might be a good sign, I am getting the hints that my little 10 MB file is peanuts compared to many files used 'out there' with apparent success. Is that true?

Nobody has addressed the automatic repair cycle EXCEL went into, before delivering me a file that was devoid of all formatting. Is this the expected mode if a file fails while you are in the middle of working on

it?

Is this different from the corruption that most people see where they have saved a file, but then can't even open it. My scenario did not happen in that latter manner.

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I have done pretty extensive comparisons between the repaired file and the 7-minute older file and the results are always the same, for a variety of scenarios, a virtual impossibility if EXCEL's repair actually did

compromise

the computational integrity. I suppose both files could have the same compromised integrity (which would worry me) but, if so, it could have

been

there months ago. What do you think of that possibility?

Thanks!

Dean

"Peter T" <peter\_t@discussions> wrote in message  
[news:ezxASetOGHA.1264@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:ezxASetOGHA.1264@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

Hi Dean

This is starting to sound like a credible explanation .

Might be credible but no guarantee it's correct!

If the corruption  
is of this type, is it pretty obvious that only the formats will  
be  
corrupted

Could be too late by that stage, ie not possible to re-open the file,

keep

Nick's suggestion about OpenOffice in reserve.

Might be worth deleting custom styles if you have loads. Also apply "consistent" formatting throughout. A reduction in file size after doing that would be indicative.

Regards,  
Peter T

"Dean" <Whooshbopbang4@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message  
[news:waudnXztze1ok5LZRVn-gA@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:waudnXztze1ok5LZRVn-gA@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

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I don't recall how I created some of this but it may have legacy to

other

workbooks created by another author at a different company. I am also starting to become aware that it may be best to do formats in blocks,

as

much as possible and I didn't do that, in many cases, especially having to do with borders, where I often fixed one or two cells here and there.

This is starting to sound like a credible explanation . If the corruption is of this type, is it pretty obvious that only the formats will be corrupted (a knowable disaster I could live with), not the equations

(an

unknowable disaster I could not live with)?

Thanks so much!  
Dean

"Peter T" <peter\_t@discussions> wrote in message [news:%23krZlvpOGHA.5924@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:%23krZlvpOGHA.5924@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

Hi Dean,

A possibility might be if your wb has many unique cell formats, Red +

bold

+  
font.size 12 + right border is a unique format. In your large wb,

have

sheets been copied from other wb's. If the Normal styles in source & destination wb's are not same a new bunch

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of unique formats can get

added.

The limit is about 3,000 which sounds a lot  
but it's surprisingly

easy

to

reach. Normally a warning message should  
advise but it doesn't always

and

then it's too late.

Regards,  
Peter T

"Dean"

<Whooshbopbang4@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote  
in message

[news:LvGdndbaE\\_cZ85PZ4p2dnA@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx](news:LvGdndbaE_cZ85PZ4p2dnA@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

Unless there is a remnant  
saved somewhere, before  
the automatic  
attempt  
at  
repair, I don't think I had the  
choice to save or open the  
corrupt

file.

It

automatically tried to repair  
it and, in doing so, it  
removed all  
formatting.

As I've said, I have a near  
final version, saved 7  
minutes before

the

crash

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and it 'seems' to work fine.  
So the problem is not  
recovering the

file.

It's trying to understand  
what led to its corruption  
and whether

some

of

that may exist in the prior  
version(s). I am concerned  
about latent  
corruption that could have  
been growing in the file for  
a while and

could

be

(maybe even was, before the  
crash) compromising the  
results.

I'm really trying to  
understand what usually  
corrupts EXCEL files

(e.g.,

only cosmetics, not hairy  
equations) and what the  
impact might be

(perhaps,

wiping out cosmetics only,  
not equations and/or data).

Thanks for your response.  
Please don't give up on me  
yet, everyone!

Dean

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"NickHK"

<TungCheWah@xxxxxxxxxxxx>

wrote in message

[news:eFpWugmQGHA.5036@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:eFpWugmQGHA.5036@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

Dean,  
People have  
mentioned  
success  
with  
opening the  
corrupt  
Excel file

in

OpenOffice,  
then  
resaving.

NickHK

"Dean"

<Whooshbopbang4@xxxxxxxxxxxx>

wrote in

message

[news:y\\_2dnRZcpa6hT5DZnZ2dnUVZ\\_vmdnZ2d@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:y_2dnRZcpa6hT5DZnZ2dnUVZ_vmdnZ2d@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

I have asked

this

question on

another

forum but

there was

no magic

answe

rs

for me, so I  
am trying it  
here – I am  
desperate,  
as the file in  
question  
represents  
months of  
work!

I have a 10  
MB file I  
have been

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expanding/refining  
over the last

few

months.  
Last week,  
in the  
middle of  
mere  
cosmetic  
upgrading,  
it crashed.  
Apparently,  
EXCEL  
now goes  
into a repair  
mode when  
that  
happens.

Here

is

the message  
I got:

Microsoft  
Excel File  
Repair Log.  
Errors were  
detected in  
file  
'C:\Documents  
and  
Settings\Dean\Application  
Data\Microsoft\Excel\PM  
03-02 - 4  
(version  
2).xls'. The  
following is  
a list of  
repairs:  
Lost Data  
Validation  
information  
in one or  
more  
sheets.Damage  
to the file

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was so  
extensive

that

repairs were  
not  
possible.  
Excel  
attempted to  
recover  
your

formulas

and

values, but  
some data  
may have  
been lost or  
corrupted.  
The  
"repaired"  
file looked  
like (and  
acts like) a  
version I  
had  
(fortunately)  
saved just  
seven  
minutes  
earlier,  
except that  
all

cosmetics

had been  
wiped out,  
such as  
fonts, data  
validation  
choices, etc  
—  
not  
to  
mention  
extensive  
cell

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comments.  
If I change  
a few  
inputs, both

files

still  
produce  
identical  
results.  
Unfortunately,  
if I were to  
use the  
repaired  
file and  
redo the  
cosmetics,  
it would be  
many, many  
hours of  
work.

Also,

the error  
message  
above  
suggests it  
might still  
have  
corruption  
in

it,

so

I'm not sure  
what I  
would gain.

Over the  
years, this  
happened to  
me twice  
with two  
different

files.

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The first time, my file needed to be rebuilt from scratch. By the second time, EXCEL had some sort of manual algorithm that peeled back the onion until there was no longer any evidence of corruption. As it turned out,

the

thing that seemed to fix it was the removal of some sort of cell

formatting.

Now, EXCEL tries to repair the file automatically. In this case, I guess it is telling me it cannot guarantee

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success.

Given that  
fact, it  
seems silly  
to think of  
using the  
repaired

file,

when

I  
have a  
working file  
just seven  
minutes  
earlier.  
However,

regardless

of

which file I  
would use,  
there is an  
issue of  
how such  
corruption

takes

hold.  
Is it a one  
time  
spontaneous  
event, and if  
so, is it  
likely to  
recur?

In

the past two  
times, it did  
not recur,  
which made  
it seem  
pretty

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random!

If  
it is not a  
one time  
event, but  
rather some  
sort of  
'cumulative  
corruption'  
(the straw  
broke the  
camel's  
back), what  
confidence  
can I have

that

the

results are  
correct?  
Also, how  
comfortable  
can I be in  
my strong  
belief  
that the  
corruption  
is limited to  
cosmetics,  
and that the

equations

are

not  
compromised?

Is there a  
max  
EXCEL file  
size that is  
too big to  
be stable?  
Long

ago,

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when  
this first  
happened,  
someone at  
Microsoft,  
off the  
record, gave  
me

a

file

size number  
but I forget  
it. I recall  
he said that  
EXCEL  
was not

a

programming  
language  
and people  
were asking  
too much of  
it,

sometimes,

vis-a-vis  
monstrous,  
interconnected  
logic in  
files, etc.  
The fact

that

EXCEL can  
now do so  
much it  
couldn't do  
a decade  
ago, it  
doesn't  
seem

that

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Microsoft is  
concerned,  
either that,  
or the  
architecture  
is so

much

improved.

I know  
these are  
hard  
questions  
and the last  
guy  
basically  
told me  
to

use

my  
own  
judgment,  
but if there  
is any  
research/info/experience  
out  
there,

I

would love  
to hear of it.

Thanks so  
much!

Dean

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