

# CSV values and retrieving nth item

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<http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/Excel/microsoft.public.excel.worksheet.functions/2006-01/msg03402.html>

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I have a set of data in a cell that is comma delimited (more specifically – a range of cells).

I want to select the nth item in each string (where  $n \leq 4$ ).

I can do this with nested if statements together with various find/mid/left/right functions – however, by the time I format it for readability it's 411 characters long – and I know that users will look at it and scratch their heads each time – even with clear comments.

I'm looking to confirm that there is no function in Excel (2003) that could do this in a more transparent manner – such as index – which won't work because I want the nth item in a delimited string – rather than a range or an array.

For transparency, probably the best thing is to use functions to parse the string into the next 4 columns and then use index functions on those columns.

oh – just found Harlan's (or is Frank Kabel's) trick of parsing a CSV string (in cell A1) to an array via an array formula:

```
=--MID(A1,SMALL(IF(MID(","&A1,seq,1)=",",seq),  
ROW(INDIRECT("1:"&COUNT(1,1/(MID(A1,seq,1)=",",))),  
SMALL(IF(MID(A1&","&seq,1)=",",seq),ROW(INDIRECT("1:"&  
COUNT(1,1/(MID(A1,seq,1)=",",))),--SMALL(IF(MID(","&A1,  
seq,1)=",",seq),ROW(INDIRECT("1:"&COUNT(1,1/(MID(A1,  
seq,1)=",",))))))
```

where seq is a named formula "`=ROW(INDIRECT("1:1024"))`" ... 1024 can be reduced if you know the maximum number of characters is less than 1024.

(And it's 285 characters and not formatted for readability :-(

So presumably the answer to the question is – parsing comma separated strings via worksheet functions can only be done with 'hard to audit' formulas!

thanks,  
Christopher

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