Excel 365 with JAWS Changing Column Width

Often, you will need to change the width of a column in order to display all of the text in a given cell. You have two methods of adjusting the width of a column, these are to manually specify a column width or to use the AutoFit column width feature. For completeness, both methods are outlined below.

Manually Specifying a Column Width

To specify the width of a column, follow these suggested steps:

1. Move the cursor to the cell which contains the longest entry in that column. Alternatively, you can select the entire column by pressing **CTRL and SPACEBAR**.

Note 1: If the cell to the right of the cell which contains data is empty, then the text will overflow into that cell and others to the right, depending on the length of the entry. However, if the cell to the right contains data, only the first 8 characters of the entry will be displayed. This is known as "truncated data". JAWS will read the entire cell contents, regardless of whether or not the text is truncated. Fortunately, there is a way of getting JAWS to inform you of when a cell's contents are truncated, which will be discussed later.

2. Press **ALT** to move focus to the upper part of the **Office Ribbon**. Upon doing this, JAWS will announce the name of the currently selected Tab.

3. Press **RIGHT ARROW** or **LEFT ARROW** until the Home tab is selected and then press **TAB** to move focus to the lower part of the **Office Ribbon**. Upon doing this, JAWS will announce the name of the currently selected control. This should be the "Comments" button.

4. Press **TAB** until the Cells sub-menu is selected and press **ENTER**. Upon doing this, a toolbar, consisting of 3 options, will be displayed. The currently selected option will be the "Insert split button".

5. Press TAB until the Format sub-menu button is selected and press **ENTER**. Upon doing this, a dropdown menu will be displayed. JAWS will announce the name of the currently selected option. This should be "Row Height…".

An alternative method of choosing an option from the **Office Ribbon** is to press a sequence of keys. The sequence of keys to press to quickly display the **Format** dropdown menu are as follows:

ALT followed by **H** then **o**

6. Press **DOWN ARROW** or **UP ARROW** until the **Column Width...** option is selected and press **ENTER**. Upon doing this, the **Column Width** dialog box will be displayed.

7. In the **Column Width** dialog box, focus will be in an edit box labelled Column Width. This will contain the existing width of the column, measured in characters. Overtype this value with the value you require and press **ENTER**.

That's it, you have successfully changed the column width!

Note 2: When manually specifying a column width, you might have to try out a few different width settings before the data fits correctly.

Automatically Adjusting Column Width

To automatically change the column width so that all data in the column is visible, follow these suggested steps:

1. Select all cells in the column. Alternatively, you can select the entire column by pressing **CTRL and SPACEBAR**.

2. Press **ALT** to move focus to the **Office Ribbon**. Upon doing this, JAWS will announce the name of the currently selected Tab.

3.   Press **RIGHT ARROW** or **LEFT ARROW** until the **Home t**ab is selected and then press **TAB** to move focus to the lower part of the **Office Ribbon**.

4.   Press **TAB** until the Cells sub-menu is selected and press **ENTER**. Upon doing this, a toolbar, consisting of 3 options, will be displayed. The currently selected option will be the "Insert split button".

5.   Press TAB until the Format sub-menu button is selected and press **ENTER**. Upon doing this, a dropdown menu will be displayed. JAWS will announce the name of the currently selected option. This should be "Row Height…".

An alternative method of choosing an option from the **Office Ribbon** is to press a sequence of keys. The sequence of keys to press to quickly display the **Format** dropdown menu are as follows:

ALT followed by **H** then **o**

6.   Press **DOWN ARROW** or **UP ARROW** until the AutoFit Column Width option is selected and press **ENTER**. Upon doing this, all cells in the column which contain data will be adjusted to match the width of the longest entry in the column.

7.   Finally, press **UP ARROW** to deselect the selected cells.

That's it, you have successfully changed all of the cells you selected to be visible!

Applying Cell Text Visibility Detection

JAWS includes a feature called Cell Text Visibility. This feature, when turned on, informs you when the data in the current cell, which is adjacent to the cell to the right which also contains data, is cropped (truncated). The ability of JAWS to do this really makes creating and amending worksheets easier and can help ensure accuracy at all times.

To turn on the Cell Text Visibility Detection feature, follow these suggested steps:

1.   From anywhere in your workbook, press **INSERT and V**. Upon doing this, the **Quick Settings** dialog box for Microsoft Excel will be displayed. This dialog box contains a list of options that can be configured to meet your needs.

2.   In the Quick Settings dialog box, focus will be in an edit box labelled Search. Here, you can type the first few characters of the setting you are looking for. All matches will then be displayed just below the **Search** edit box. Although this is very useful, it does rely on you knowing what you are looking for and how it is spelt. Therefore, it is recommended to ignore this option.

3.   Press **TAB** once to move focus into a long list of settings. JAWS should say "Tree view", followed by the name of the currently selected item in the list. This should be "Excel Settings", and JAWS should report it to be "Open". If JAWS announces that this option is "Closed", press **ALT and X** to check the "Expand Tree View" check box. Then, press **TAB** until focus is back in the Tree view.

4.   Press the letter **C** until the setting called **Cell Text Visibility Detection** is selected in the list. This is a check box and JAWS will inform you that it is turned Off by saying "not checked".

5.   Press **SPACEBAR** to turn the **Cell Text Visibility Detection** option on. Upon doing this, JAWS will say "checked".

6.   Finally, press **ENTER** to choose the OK button and close the dialog box.

Now, when you navigate to a cell which contains data which is truncated, JAWS will alert you to this by saying "Cropped right at"

followed by the cell reference of the adjacent cell to the right. You can then change the column width accordingly!