

VLOOKUP vs XLOOKUP

Pulling Order Status by Order ID

GENERIC FORMULA

=VLOOKUP(lookup_value, table_array, col_index_num, [range_lookup])

| VLOOKUP

=VLOOKUP(A2, Lookup!A:C, 3, FALSE)

- **A2**
The Order ID you're searching for, this row's own ID.
- **Lookup!A:C**
The table to search across, Order ID through Order Status.
- **3**
Column position, counted from Order ID as 1. Order Status is the 3rd column, so this is 3, not 2.
- **FALSE**
Exact match only. Without it, VLOOKUP can quietly return the wrong row.

Use VLOOKUP when...

You're in an older file, or a teammate or company standard still expects it. It's the formula most people already recognize.

GENERIC FORMULA

=XLOOKUP(lookup_value, lookup_array, return_array, [if_not_found])

| XLOOKUP

=XLOOKUP(A2, Lookup!A:A, Lookup!C:C, "Not found")

- **A2**
Same search value, this row's own Order ID.
- **Lookup!A:A**
The exact column to search, just Order ID.
- **Lookup!C:C**
The exact column to return. No counting, no position number to get wrong.
- **"Not found"**
Shown only if the Order ID itself doesn't exist, not if the matched cell is blank.

Use XLOOKUP when...

You have the choice. It survives columns being inserted or moved, needs no counting, and gives cleaner errors. The safer default whenever it's available.

| Copy → Paste Special → Values Only

What it does

Turns a live formula into a fixed, plain value. The link to its source is gone.

Use it when

The result is verified correct and won't need to update again.

Avoid it when

The source data might still change, or you're still checking your work.

Real-life example:

Once XLOOKUP proves it survived the column insert, lock the result in as a value, so a later edit to the Lookup tab can't quietly change your finished slide again.