Excel Without Regrets

Practical Principles for Building Reliable Spreadsheets

Make Assumptions Visible	Structure and identify inputs, assumptions and outputs. Label cells and use named cell references. Describe calculations.	Menu: *Format / Styles / Cell Styles* Menu: *Formulas / Defined Names / Name Manager or <ctrl> <F3>* Function: *=FORMULATEXT(reference)*
One Fact, One Home	Enter a fact once, then reference it whenever it is needed. Duplicate data creates competing versions of the truth.	Menu: *Insert / Table or <ctrl> <T>* Function: *=XLOOKUP(lookup_value,lookup_array,return_array)* *Example: =XLOOKUP($B25,Allocation_Table[Role], XLOOKUP(C$24,Allocation_Table[#Headers], Allocation_Table))*
Prevent Input Errors	Use clean data structures and validation rather than relying on users to type consistently.	Functions: *=MIN(array1); =MAX(array1)* Menu: *Data / Data Tools / Data Validation…* *Example: =FILTER(Funds_Table[Fund],Funds_Table[Active])*
Consistency Beats Cleverness	Use predictable formula patterns. Avoid hard-coded overrides and unnecessary complexity.	*<F2> … to show formula references* *<F9> … to evaluate part of a formula* Menu: *Formulas / Formula Auditing* *<ctrl> <[> or <ctrl> <]> to show precedent / dependent cells*
Calculate and Verify	Build independent checks and reconciliations into the workbook. Make exceptions obvious.	Menu: *Home / Styles / Conditional Formatting* Function: *=ROUND(number, num_digits)*

The Successor Test: *Can another competent person tell where the data came from, what to change, what not to change, which assumptions are in use, and how to know the result is right?*