A Visual Step-by-step Approach to Converting an RTF File to an Excel File

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Abstract

Rich Text Format (RTF) files incorporate basic typographical styling and word processing features in a standardized document that many programs and applications are able to read. In today's high-tech arena sometimes the contents of an RTF file needs to be viewed as, and even converted to, an Excel file. You would think that since both RTF and Excel are Microsoft standards that this would be a simple process to achieve, but you may be surprised to find out that is not the case. Learn about several "free" web-based and online applications as well as traditional SAS®-based programming techniques that can be used to convert an RTF file to an Excel file.

Introduction

A file's format determines what you can do with it and which programs can open it. Essentially a file's format is composed of its own language where the format is understood by a specific application and/or platform. In today's vast dialect of file formats, technology offers users with an assortment of different file formats to use and choose from. Popular file formats include PDF, HTML, RTF, Word, CSV, Excel, image formats like JPG and PNG, video formats like AVI and MOV, and audio formats like MP3 and MP4, to name a few. The popularity and variety of file formats provides users with unique and powerful capabilities, but can also make sharing between one software vendor's file format and another file format more complicated. This paper highlights several "free" online web-based conversion tools, as well as SAS-based programming techniques, for converting an RTF file to an Excel file.
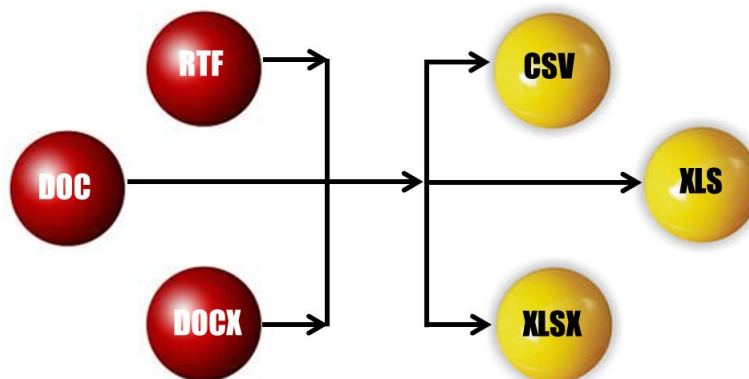
Exploring Rich Text Format (RTF) Files

Rich Text Format (RTF) files were first developed by Microsoft in 1987. RTF lets users exchange text files between different word processors in different operating systems. Saving files in RTF ensures that documents can be opened regardless of the type of word processor being used. When saving an RTF file, it's processed by an RTF writer that converts the word processor's markup to the RTF language; and when reading an RTF file, the RTF reader converts the RTF language into the word processor format that will display the document.

Exploring Excel (XLSX) Files

The Excel (XLSX) extension is an open source XML-based filename format developed by Microsoft in 2005 for Office Excel 2007 SP2 and above. XLSX files can be opened and edited with Excel (version 2007 and above), Google Sheets, Zoho Docs, Kingsoft Spreadsheets, OpenOffice Calc, and other software.

Converting RTF Files to Excel (XLSX) Files

I'll show you several "free" online conversion websites that are adept at converting RTF files (and other extensions) to XLSX files (and other extensions), shown below. The bonus associated with using these web-based tools is that you won't be inundated with unwanted adware (or advertisements).

Using Watermark-Images.com to Convert RTF (or Word) Files to Excel Files

The "free" online converter offered by Watermark-Images.com provides users with not only a very "friendly" user interface, but makes converting an RTF file to an Excel file as easy as 1-2-3. The Watermark-Images.com online app is shown below.
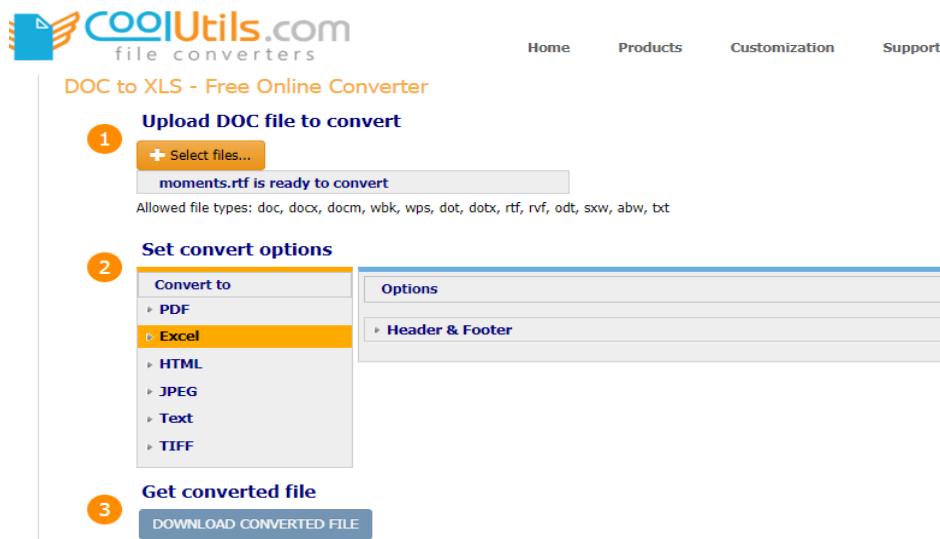

Converting an RTF (or Word) file to an Excel file with Watermark-Images.com is accomplished in three easy steps.

1. Click the "Select DOC File" button and navigate to the location of the desired RTF (or Word) file.
2. Click either the "xlsx" or "xls" radio button for the version of Excel file you want to create.
3. Click the "Convert to XLS" button to initiate the conversion process and download the converted Excel file to your download location.

Using CoolUtils.com to Convert RTF (or Word) Files to Excel Files

The "free" online converter offered by CoolUtils.com provides users with not only a very "friendly" user interface, but makes converting an RTF file to an Excel file as easy as 1-2-3. The CoolUtils.com online app is shown below.
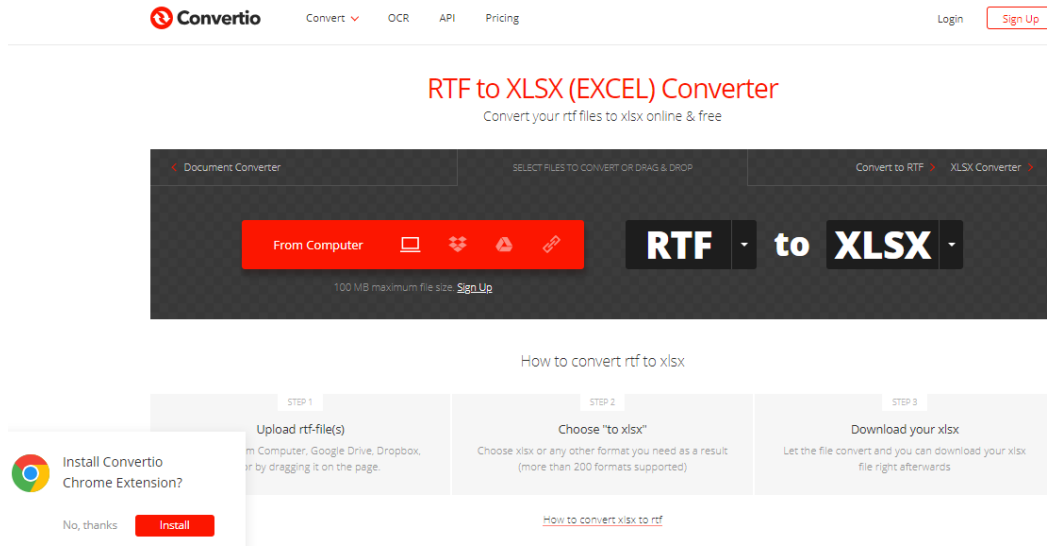

Converting an RTF (or Word) file to an Excel file with CoolUtils.com is accomplished in three easy steps.

1. Click the "Select files…" button and navigate to the location of the desired RTF (or Word) file.
2. Click the "Excel" radio box from the list of filetypes to set the conversion option along with the type of file you want to create.
3. Click the "Download Converted File" button to initiate the conversion process and download the converted Excel file to your download folder.

Using Convertio.co to Convert RTF (or Word) Files to Excel Files

The "free" online converter offered by Convertio.co provides a very "friendly" user interface and makes converting an RTF file to an Excel file easy and quick. The Convertio.co online app is shown below.
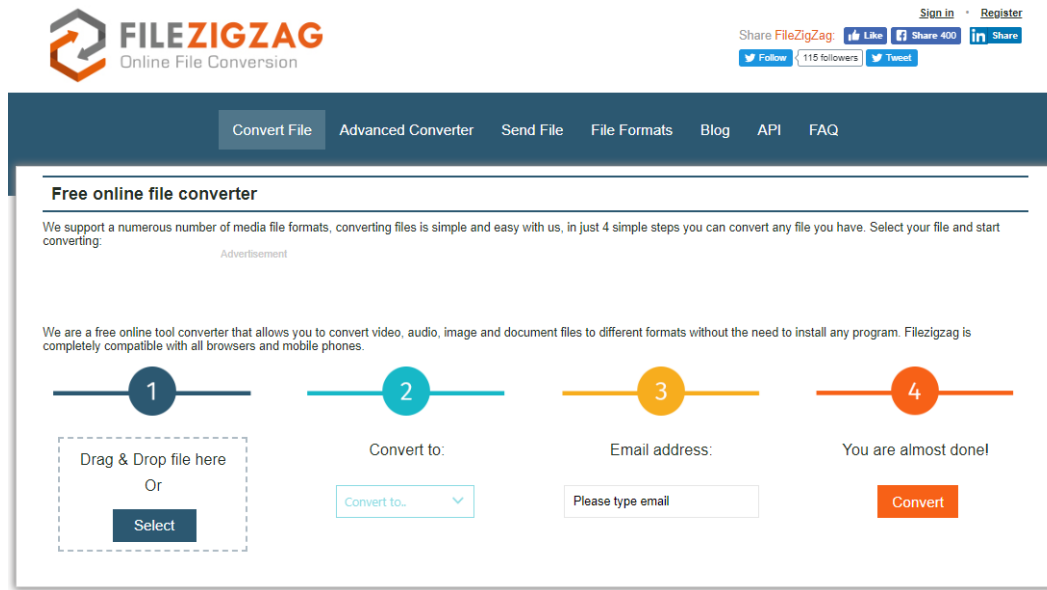

Converting an RTF (or Word) file to an Excel file with Convertio.co is accomplished in three easy steps.

1. Click the "Upload RTF file(s)" button and navigate to the location of the desired RTF (or Word) file.
2. Click the "to XLSX" radio box from the list of filetypes to set the conversion option along with the type of file you want to create.
3. Click the "Download your XLSX" file button to initiate the conversion process and download the converted Excel file to your download folder.

Using FileZigZag.com to Convert RTF (or Word) Files to Excel Files

The "free" online converter offered by FileZigZag.com provides a very "friendly" user interface and makes converting an RTF file to an Excel file easy and quick. The Convertio.co online app is shown below.

Converting an RTF (or Word) file to an Excel file with FileZigZag.com is accomplished in four easy steps.

1. Drag & Drop your RTF file, or Click the "Select" button and navigate to the location of the desired RTF file.
2. Click the "Convert to" selection box from the list of filetypes to set the conversion option along with the type of file you want to create.
3. Enter your Email address.
4. Click the "Convert" button to initiate the conversion process and download the converted Excel file to your download folder.

Using Traditional SAS Programming Methods to Convert RTF Files to Excel Files

A final approach often used by SAS users to convert an RTF file to an Excel file is provided below.

1. Use MS-Word to open an existing RTF file.
2. Click "File" and select "Save As" then select type "Plain Text".
3. In the File Conversion Dialog window, select "Windows (Default)" for the Text Encoding and also select "CR / LF" for insert line breaks.
4. Assign and save "Plain Text" with a file name.
5. Using SAS software, import the "Plain Text" file to create a SAS dataset.
6. As necessary, modify dataset structure using PROC SORT, Arrays, DATA step Merge, PROC SQL joins, PROC TRANSPOSE, metadata, Hash objects, etc.
7. Use the ODS Excel destination to save contents of SAS dataset / output / results to an Excel file.
8. Open and verify the successful conversion of the RTF file to an Excel file.

Conclusion

Because of the abundance of file formats being used by different software applications and platforms, SAS users are often faced with the need to convert one file format to another. This paper highlights several web-based approaches along with step-by-step instructions to help SAS users convert an RTF file to an Excel file without the need to write SAS programs and/or process data sets. The ability to accomplish this becomes particularly important for reducing processing requirements as the size of input SAS data sets or the input data sources grow in size.

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