Step-by-Step VLOOKUP Instructions

What is VLOOKUP?

According to Excel's formula description, VLOOKUP "looks for a value in the leftmost column of a table, and then returns a value in the same row from a column you specify." In simpler terms, VLOOKUP lets you pull information about selected cells from another excel document, into your current excel document.

The VLOOKUP Formula

The formula for VLOOKUP looks like this (color coded for readability): *=VLOOKUP(lookup_value,table_array,col_index_num,[range_lookup])*
As you can see, the formula is made up of four different parts, separated by commas. Each of the four parts will be explained in detail as we work through an example.

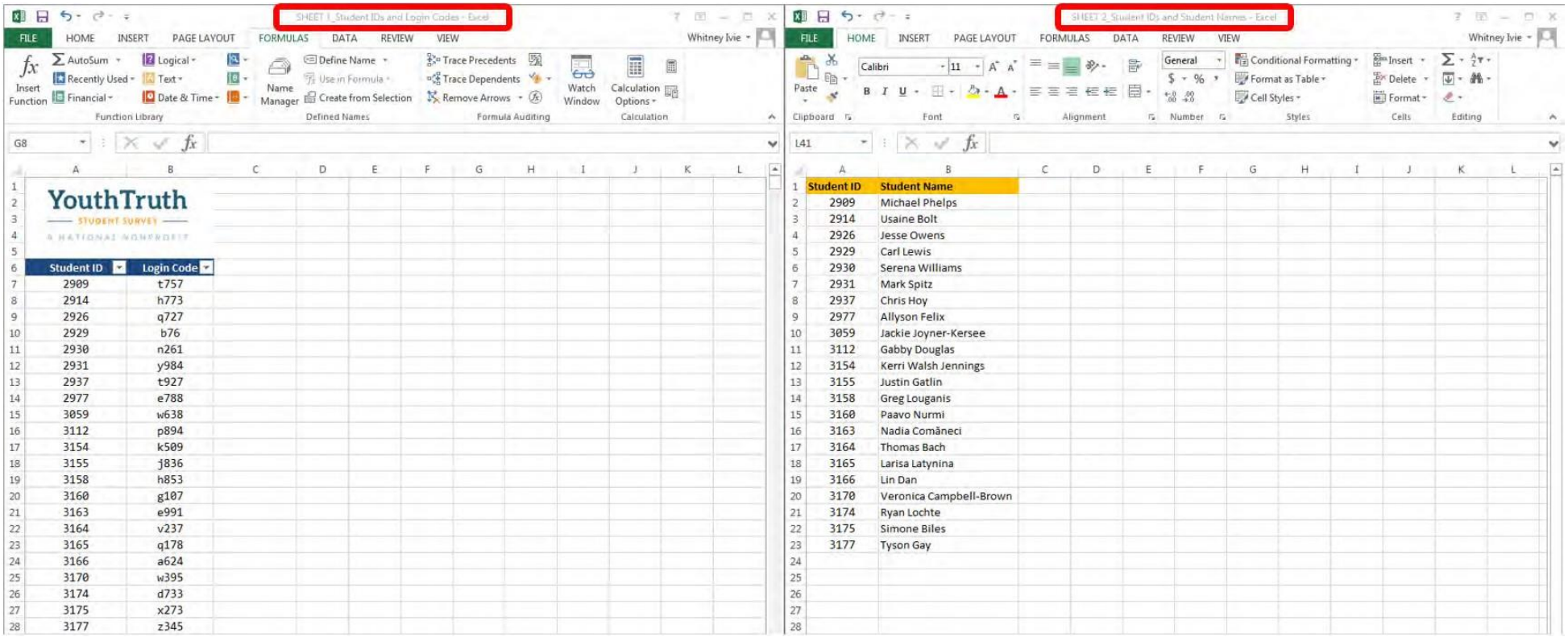
Using VLOOKUP to Match Student IDs & Login Codes to Student Names

This step-by-step tutorial will demonstrate how to match student IDs and login codes to student names. To get started, you will need the following two excel documents:

1) The document provided by YouthTruth that contains student IDs and login codes (we'll call this sheet 1).
2) A document you've put together that contains student IDs in the leftmost column, and student names (sheet 2).

Sheet 1 contains student IDs and login codes, but is missing student names, which survey proctors will need in order to easily distribute login codes to the correct students. Instead of spending hours manually matching student names to student IDs, we'll use VLOOKUP to pull student names from sheet 2, and automatically populate them in sheet 1.

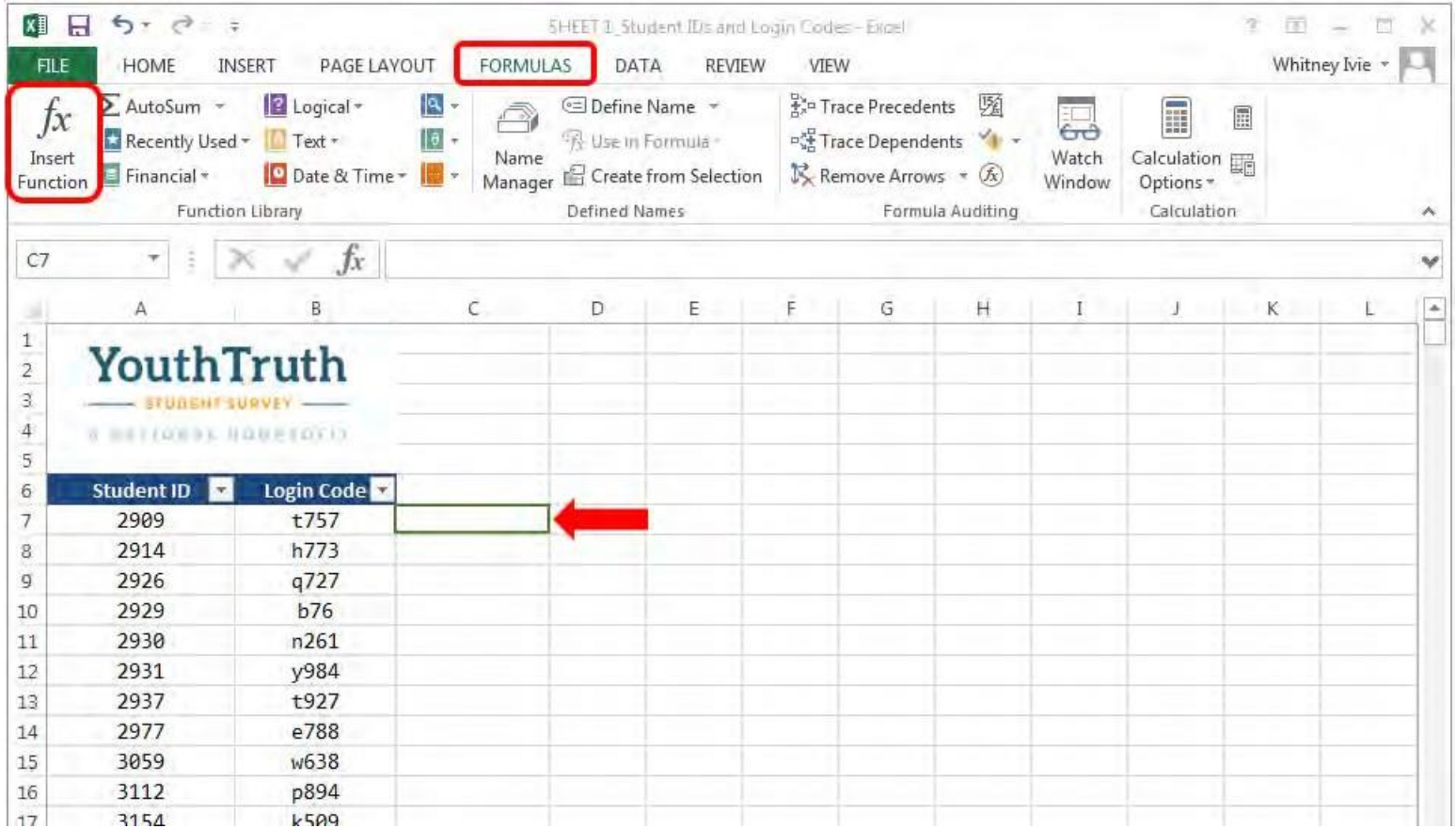
Open both sheet 1 (the YouthTruth excel document that contains student IDs and login codes) and sheet 2 (your excel document that contains student IDs and student names).



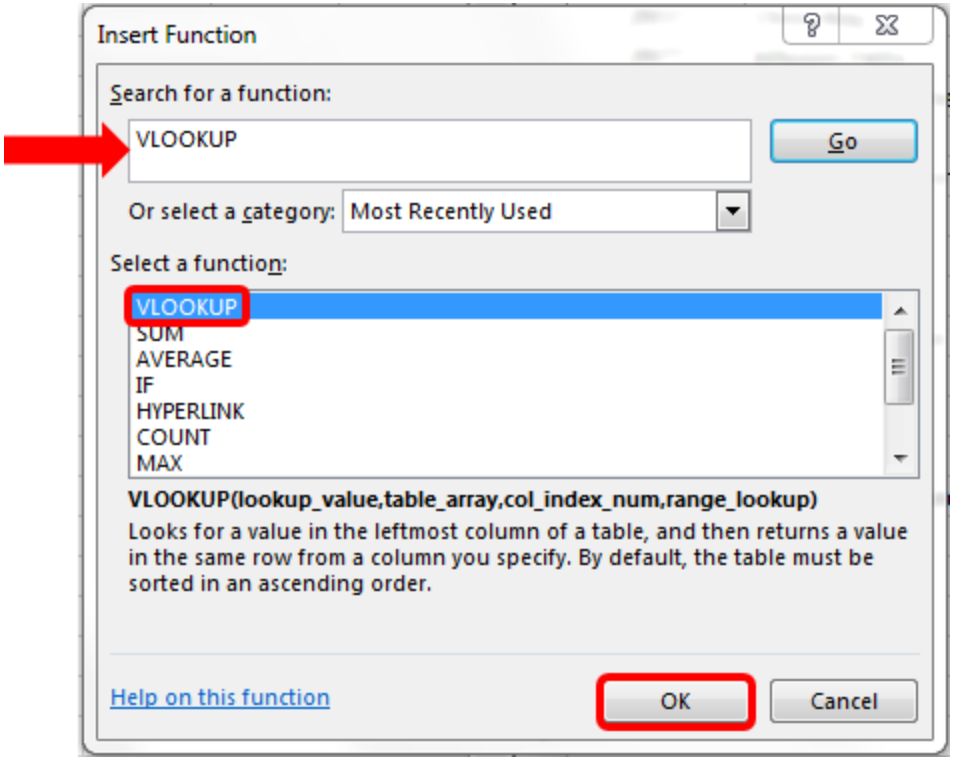
Student ID	Login Code
2909	t757
2914	h773
2926	q727
2929	b76
2930	n261
2931	y984
2937	t927
2977	e788
3059	w638
3112	p894
3154	k509
3155	j836
3158	h853
3160	g107
3163	e991
3164	v237
3165	q178
3166	a624
3170	w395
3174	d733
3175	x273
3177	z345

Student ID	Student Name
2909	Michael Phelps
2914	Usaine Bolt
2926	Jesse Owens
2929	Carl Lewis
2930	Serena Williams
2931	Mark Spitz
2937	Chris Hoy
2977	Allyson Felix
3059	Jackie Joyner-Kersee
3112	Gabby Douglas
3154	Kerri Walsh Jennings
3155	Justin Gatlin
3158	Greg Louganis
3160	Paavo Nurmi
3163	Nadia Comăneci
3164	Thomas Bach
3165	Larisa Latynina
3166	Lin Dan
3170	Veronica Campbell-Brown
3174	Ryan Lochte
3175	Simone Biles
3177	Tyson Gay

From within sheet 1, click the cell that you ultimately would like student names to be stored in (in this case it's C7). Next, select the 'Formulas' tab from the ribbon, and click 'Insert Function'.



From the Insert Function window that pops up, type ‘VLOOKUP’ in the ‘Search for a function’ text box, then click ‘Go’. Once VLOOKUP appears in the ‘Select a function’ text box, select it, then press ‘OK’.

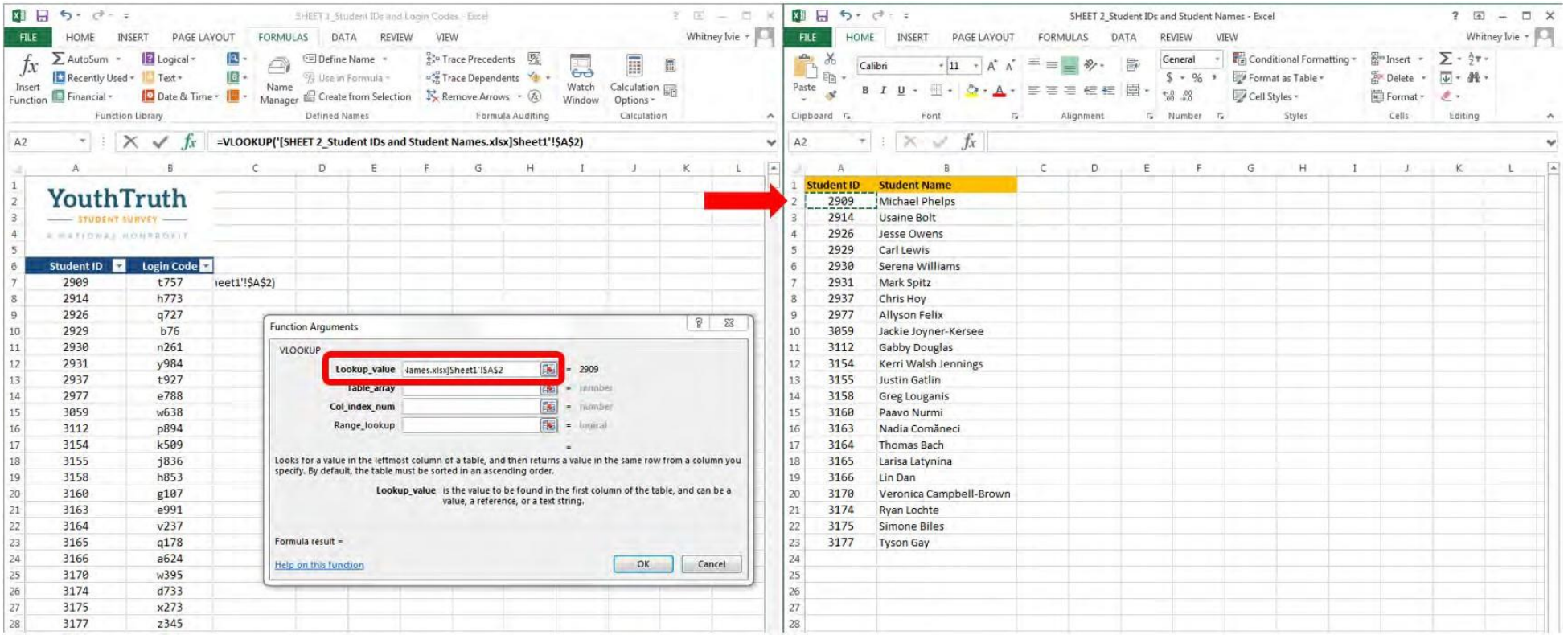


Now we’ll begin to construct the formula…

Lookup_value

The lookup_value portion of the formula is the information you want to look up somewhere else. In this case, the lookup value is the student ID. The student ID is the common denominator between the two sheets, and is what the function will look to as a guide as we populate sheet 1 with student names from sheet 2.

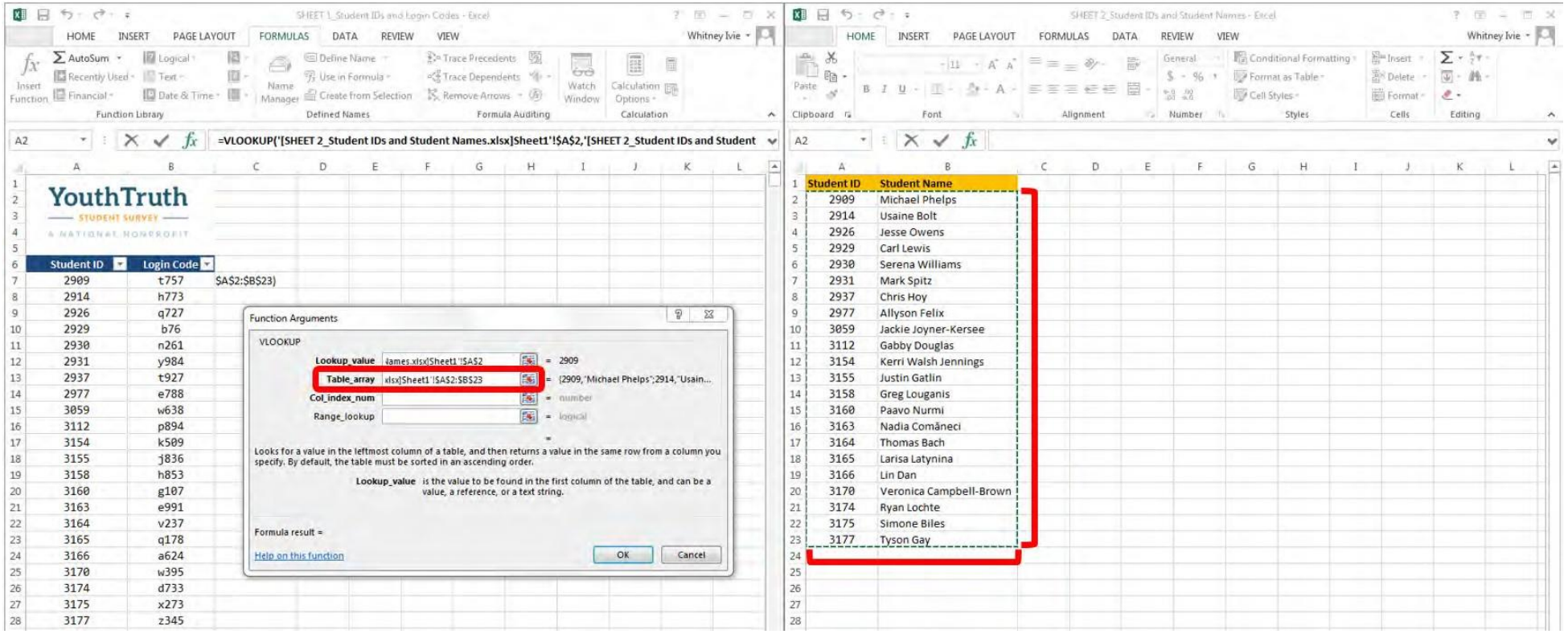
Click into the 'Lookup_value' text box from the Function Arguments window. Then, in sheet 2, click into the cell containing the first student ID in the list. In this case the cell is A2.



Table_array

The table_array is the array of cells you want to search within for your lookup value. To select your table array, click into the 'table_array' text box from the Function Arguments window. Then, in sheet 2, simply highlight, or drag through whichever portion of data you would like to retrieve data from. Do not include column heads in your selection.

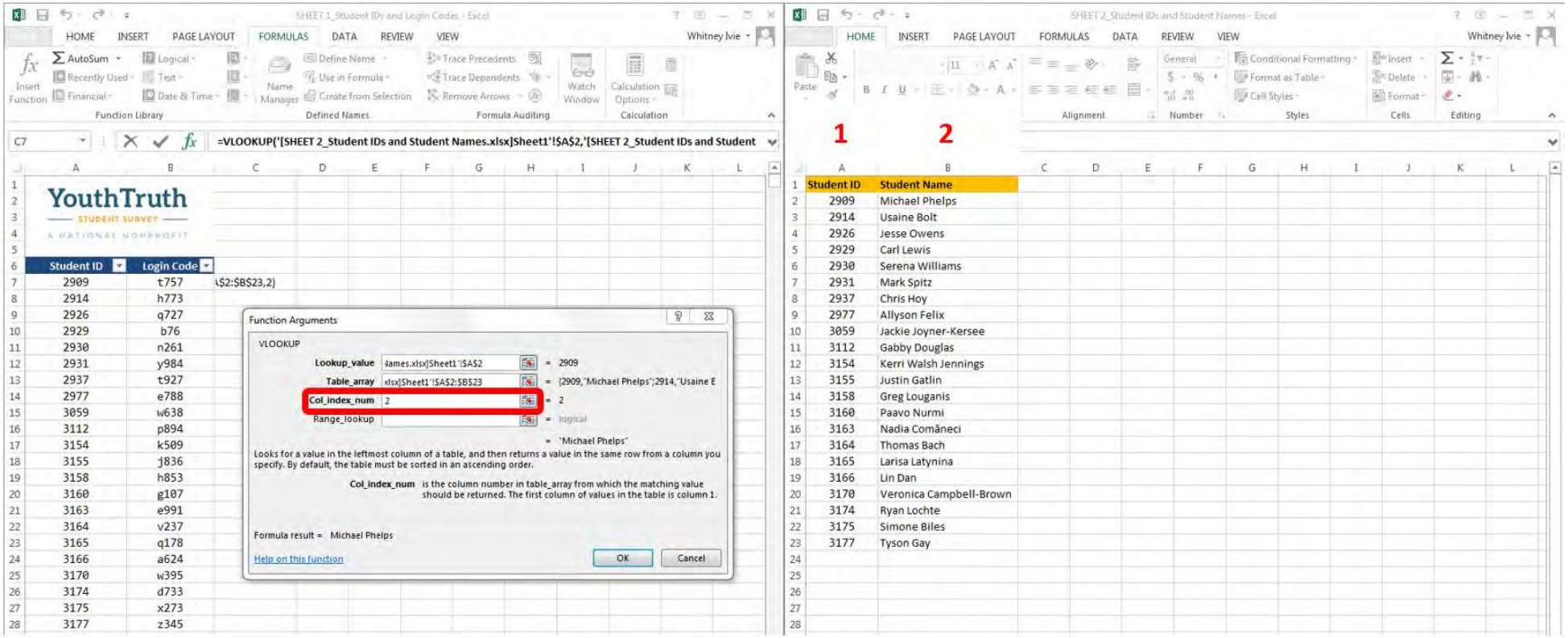
Important note about the table_array: The column in which you are looking must always be the first column in the array. So in this case, in order for VLOOKUP to work, the student ID column must be positioned to the left of the student name column.



Col_index_num

The col_index_num, is simply the column of data that you would like to be reflected in your returned value. In our example, we are trying to return student names from sheet 2 to sheet 1, so the col_index_num – the column that contains student names – is column number 2.

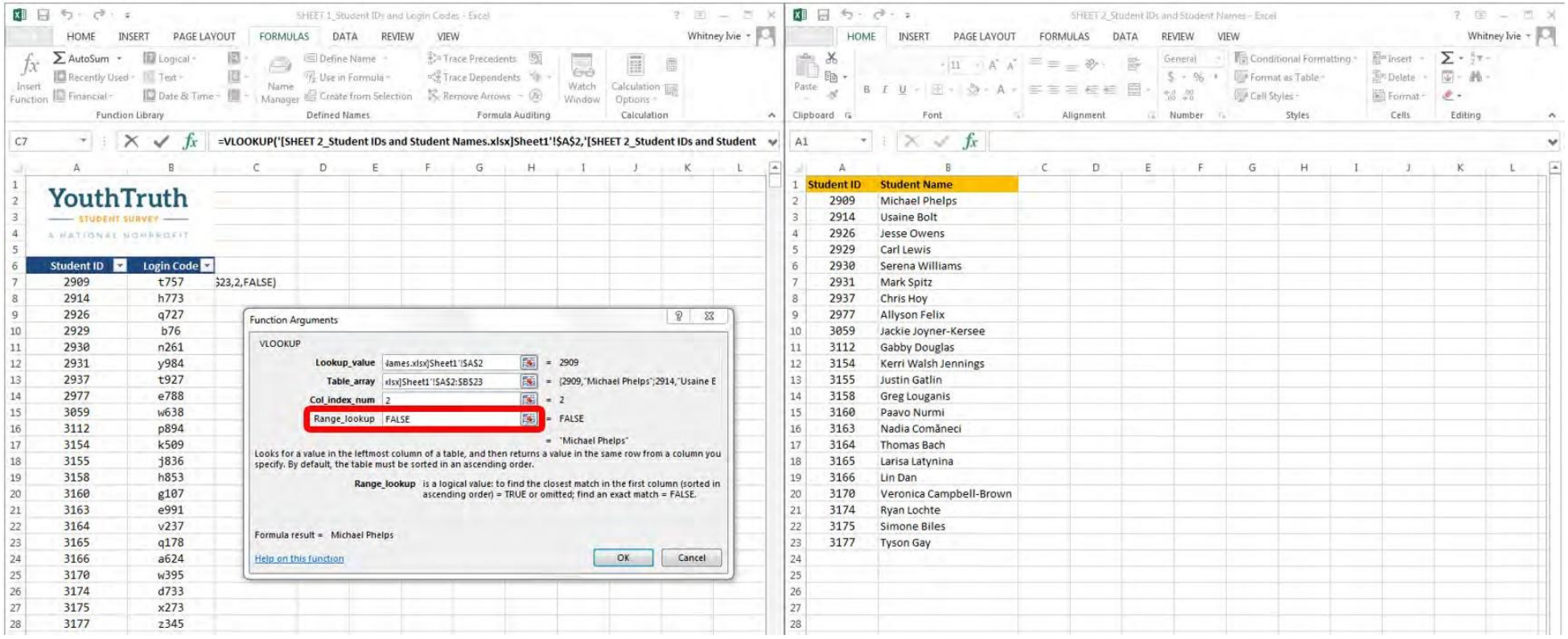
From the Function Arguments window, click into the 'Col_index-num' text box and type the number '2'.



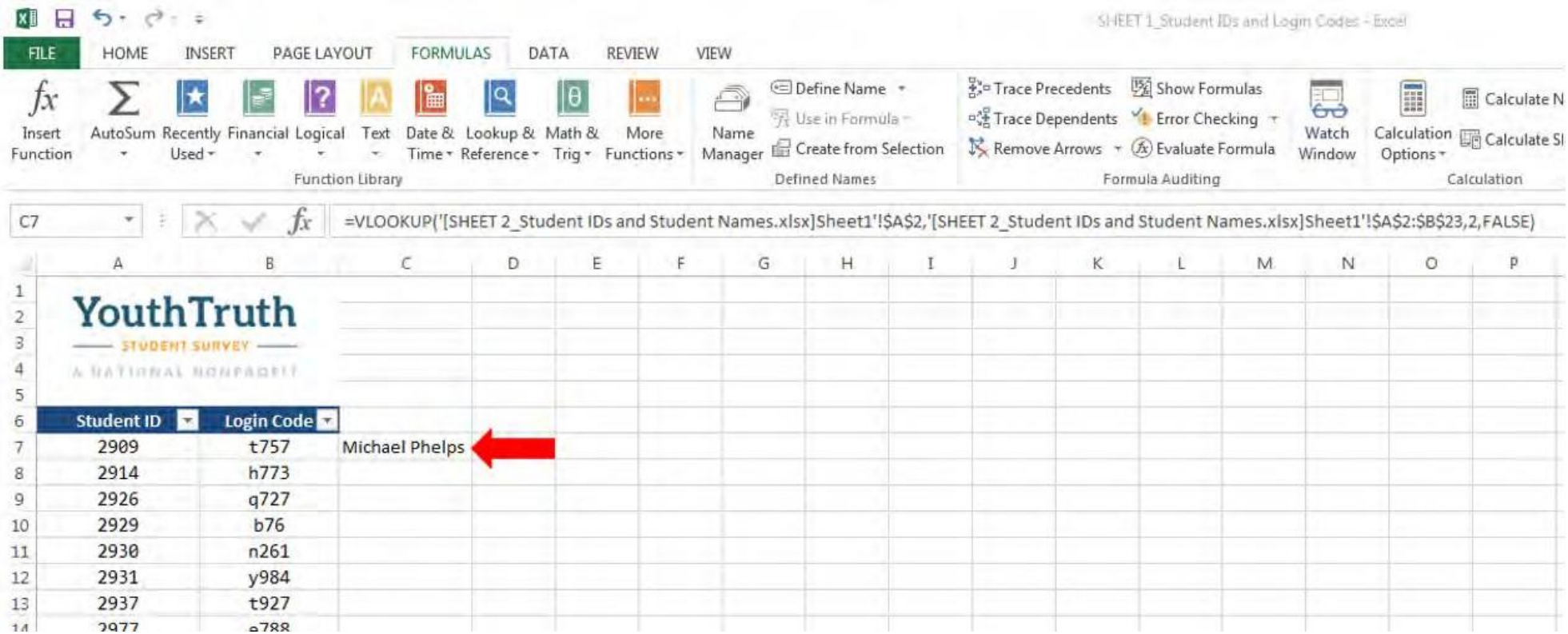
Range_lookup

Range_lookup has two possible values: TRUE or FALSE. By typing in TRUE, you are allowing values to be returned for approximate matches. This is not what we want to use here. Entering FALSE assures that data will only be returned for the exact value of the lookup_value.

From the Function Arguments window, click into the 'Range_lookup' text box and type 'FALSE'. Then click 'OK'.

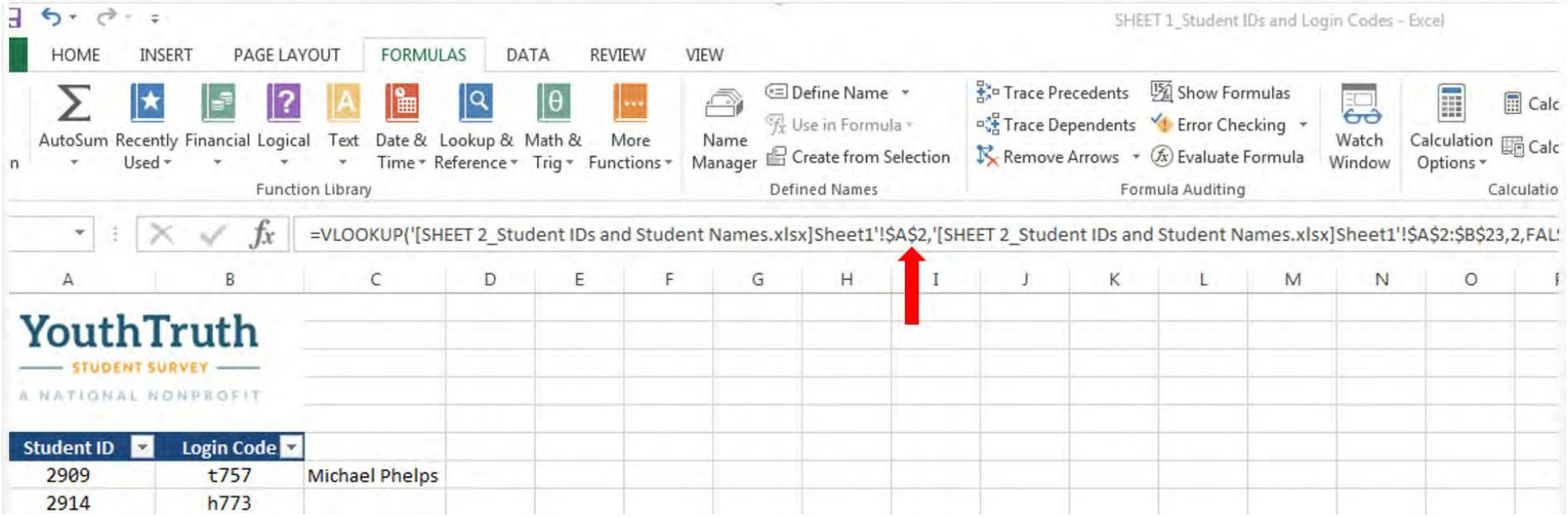


Voila! The first student name is filled into the cell you previously indicated. To copy the formula down, so that the rest of the student names appear, there are two more quick steps to follow...

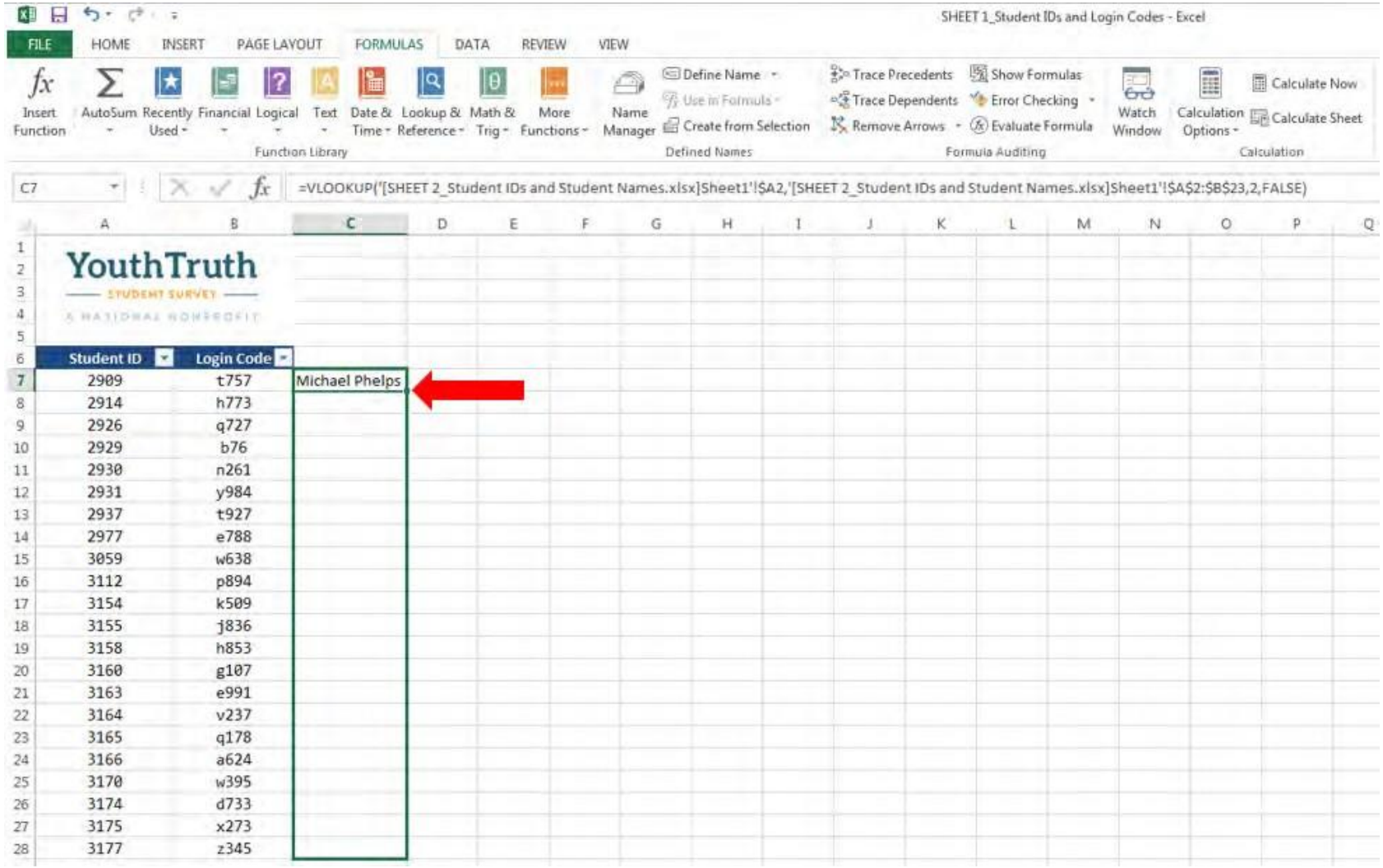


So that unique values are populated when you copy the formula down, and not the same name over and over, you must check your formula to make sure it doesn't contain an extra dollar sign in the lookup value, as mine does below.

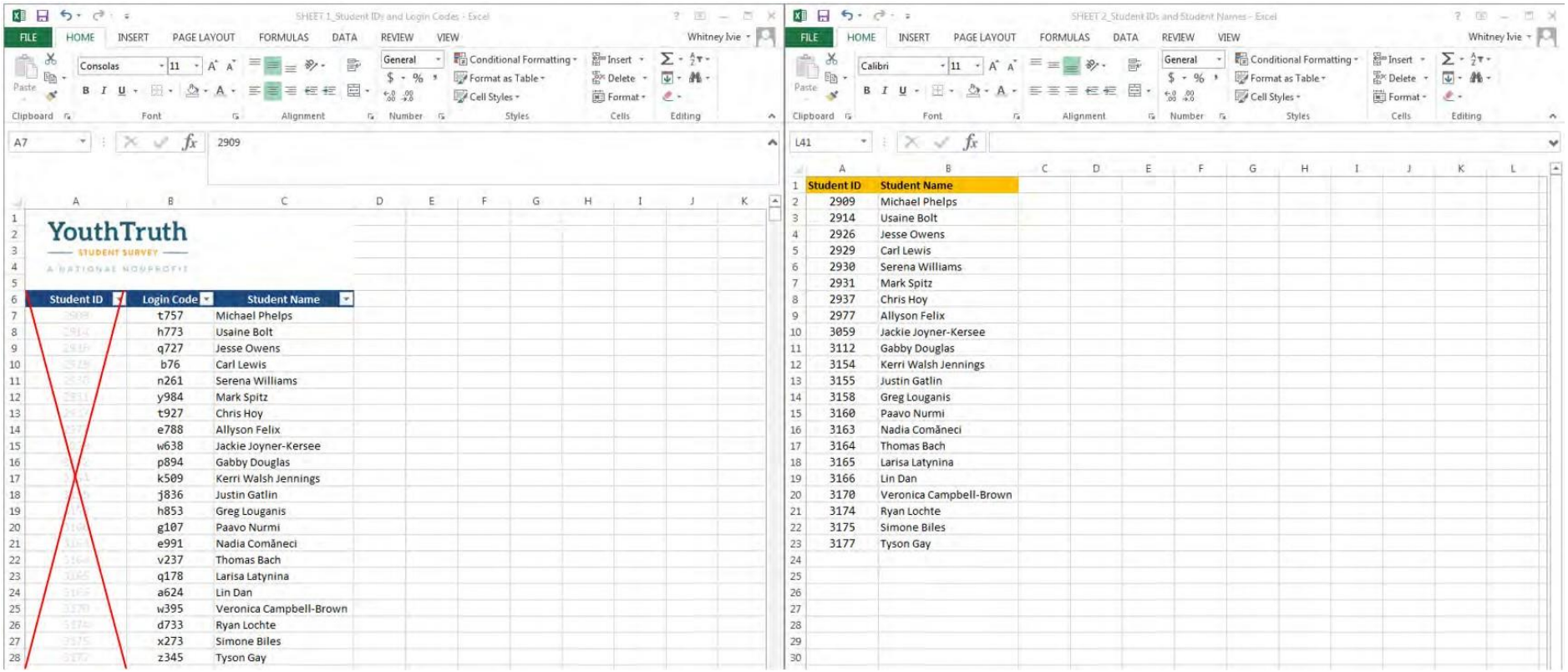
Remember, cell A2 is my lookup value from sheet 2. If it remains in its current format in the formula of 'A2', student Michael Phelps will be copied down the entire column, over and over. In order to get the formula to look for student names in A2, A3, A4, and so on, remove the dollar sign between 'A' and '2' so the lookup value reads '$A2'.



Once you've removed the extra dollar sign (if applicable), the last step is to copy the formula down, so that it is applied to your entire list. To do this, drag the bottom right hand corner of the populated cell down the length of your table.



And there you have it! Sheet 1 now contains student IDs, login codes, *and* student names. So as not to confuse the student ID with the login code, you may want to consider deleting the student ID column entirely before handing the list off to the survey proctor(s).



YouthTruth
STUDENT SURVEY
A RATIONAL NONPROFIT

Student ID	Login Code	Student Name
2909	t757	Michael Phelps
2914	h773	Usaine Bolt
2926	q727	Jesse Owens
2929	b76	Carl Lewis
2930	n261	Serena Williams
2931	y984	Mark Spitz
2937	t927	Chris Hoy
2977	e788	Allyson Felix
3059	w638	Jackie Joyner-Kersee
3112	p894	Gabby Douglas
3154	k509	Kerri Walsh Jennings
3155	j836	Justin Gatlin
3158	h853	Greg Louganis
3160	g107	Paavo Nurmi
3163	e991	Nadia Comăneci
3164	v237	Thomas Bach
3165	q178	Larisa Latynina
3166	a624	Lin Dan
3170	w395	Veronica Campbell-Brown
3174	d733	Ryan Lochte
3175	x273	Simone Biles
3177	z345	Tyson Gay

Student ID	Student Name
2909	Michael Phelps
2914	Usaine Bolt
2926	Jesse Owens
2929	Carl Lewis
2930	Serena Williams
2931	Mark Spitz
2937	Chris Hoy
2977	Allyson Felix
3059	Jackie Joyner-Kersee
3112	Gabby Douglas
3154	Kerri Walsh Jennings
3155	Justin Gatlin
3158	Greg Louganis
3160	Paavo Nurmi
3163	Nadia Comăneci
3164	Thomas Bach
3165	Larisa Latynina
3166	Lin Dan
3170	Veronica Campbell-Brown
3174	Ryan Lochte
3175	Simone Biles
3177	Tyson Gay