SHOW FULL MENUS ALL THE TIME

Problem: You are trying to learn Excel. Microsoft only shows you the most common menu choices under each menu.

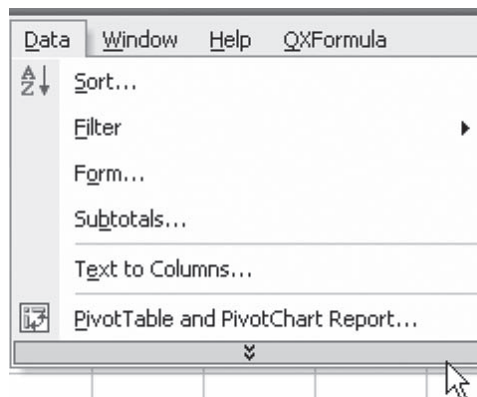Fig. 1 shows a menu from one computer on my desk.

Fig. 1

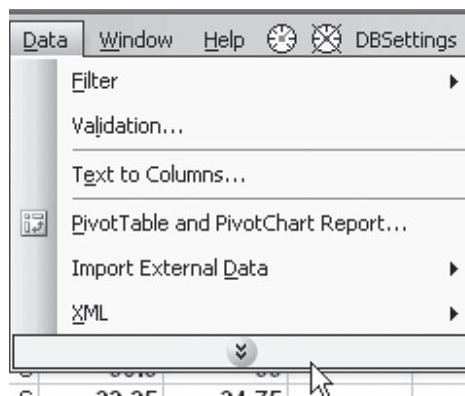Fig. 2 is a screenshot from another computer on my desk.

Fig. 2

A screenshot of the data menu of the third computer on my desk is seen here in Fig. 3.
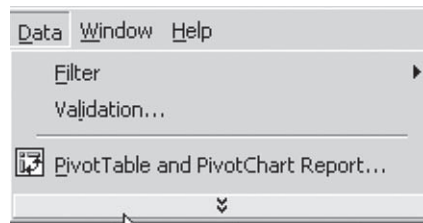

Fig. 3

This is maddening. How can you learn that there is a Sort option under the Data menu if Excel will not show you all of the options? Furthermore, Microsoft customizes the menu on the basis of items you use regularly.

First, this is insane; you cannot learn to regularly use something if you don't know it is there. Second, when you go to a new computer, one of the options that you think should be there may not show up. It is very difficult to learn Excel when the menus are not consistent across computers.

Strategy: Turn off Adaptive Menus. This will show you the complete menu every time that you access that menu. Follow these steps:
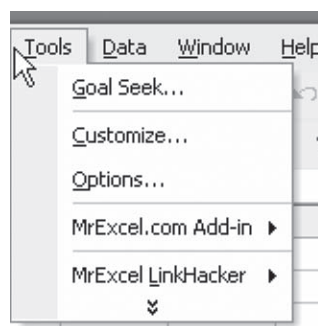
1)   Go to the Tools menu, as shown in Fig. 4.

Fig. 4

2)   If the Customize option is not shown, select the double-down arrow at the bottom of the list in order to expand the menu.

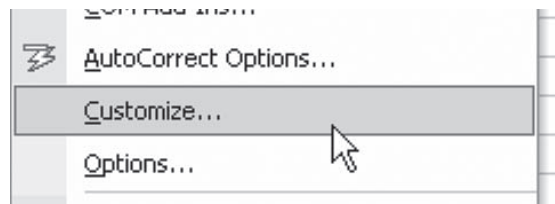3)   Select Customize… from the Tools menu, as shown in Fig. 5.

Fig. 5

4)   As you will see in Fig. 6, there are three tabs across the top of the Customize dialog. Choose the Options tab and then choose the box for Always Show Full Menus.
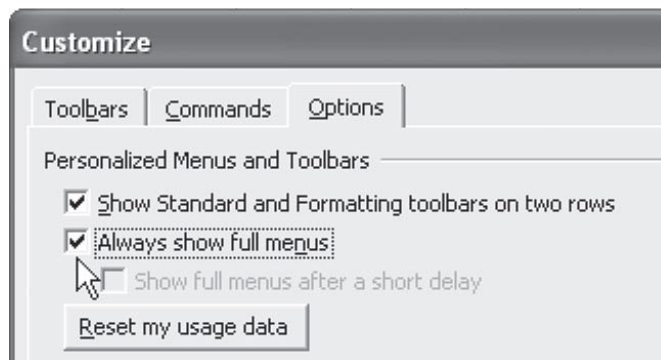
Fig. 6

Additional Details: If you are in the process of learning Excel, it also helps to choose the Show Standard and Formatting Toolbars on Two Rows option. This will enable you to see all of the icons on the important Standard and Formatting toolbars. In Excel 2000, this setting appears as Standard and Formatting Toolbars Share One Row. In that version, you will want to uncheck the option.

Gotcha: Changing this setting in Excel will also affect Word and other Office products. There is no way to have Excel show full menus while Word shows the abbreviated menus.

Summary: While learning Excel, use the Tools – Customize feature to show the complete list of commands on each menu.

Commands Discussed: Tools – Customize