Data management do’s and don’ts

1. **Column names**
   a. Don’t use spaces.
   b. Don’t use special characters.
   c. Always include units of measurement.
   d. Abbreviations are ok! But maintain a key for collaborators (and future you!).

   *e.g., diameter increment (cm/yr) -> diam_inc_cmyr*

2. **Are notes, shaded cells, or colored text a good idea? NO WAY!**
   1. Don’t use notes – make a new column!
   2. Don’t use text colors – make a new column!
   3. Don’t use cell shading – make a new column!

3. **Handling 0s and Nas**
   1. 0 and NA are very different! Record them as such.
   2. Use a consistent value for NA values (eg., “NA”, “.”, “”, “…” “-”, “--”).

4. **Other recommendations**
   1. Only use lower case text – both in column names and data
   2. Your data spreadsheet is for ONLY one data table – don’t include analysis or other tables with your data sheet. Do that work elsewhere.
An example of bad data formatting...
An example of good data formatting...