

# Using Pointer Lists (Shortcuts)

**(A Shortcut that points-to another List or to a group of Lists)**

*Pointer lists, or shortcuts, are optional but useful lists you can create in excel and upload to your broadcasting account to make selecting multiple lists easier when using a touch-tone phone to launch a voice broadcast.*

## Description:

A pointer list, also called a shortcut, is very much like the shortcuts you are already familiar with when using MS windows, or “aliases” when using a MAC, in that the shortcut itself does not contain any real data or information, but simply “points” to another file that actually contains the data. Unlike those shortcuts in windows however, these shortcuts can point to more than one file at time, making them very useful in selecting groups of lists to be called all at once.

## A – CREATING SHORTCUTS :

We typically create one shortcut to help you reach all the parents lists and the teachers lists, and give it a numeric name (“255” which equals the key presses for the word “A.L.L.” on a touch-tone phone). We create another one for reaching parents, teachers and parents at work in the event of a daytime emergency, and call that one simply “911.” For the purposes of this tutorial we will create a shortcut to reach all the teams that use the school’s outdoor playing field:

Let’s assume our teams are:  
the baseball team, football team, and field-hockey team.

Let’s also assume you have already uploaded these lists individually to the ENS system for reaching each of these teams individually for game practice, delays, etc.

Let’s further assume you have given them the following names when uploaded to the system:  
Baseball-team  
Football\_team  
Field hockey team

We will now create a shortcut to notify which we can use whenever we want to reach all three teams, as in the case of dangerous field conditions or that the field is closed for servicing, etc. :

## STEPS to Create a SHORTCUT (pointer list):

1.) **Create an excel file to be uploaded.** (It can be included as a separate tab in this “Quick Start Guide & list Master” for completeness, but does not have to be. It can be any excel spreadsheet.)

- Start by creating the three required column headings: **REF, ADDR, and TYPE.**
- **In REF,** enter an identifier. Eg. Baseball team, football team, and hockey team.
- **In ADDR,** enter the exact name of the teams as each name appears in the system. Specifically in our example given the names above we must enter, “Baseball-team”, “Football\_team” and, “Field hockey team” respectively.
- **In TYPE,** enter the word “list” for each entry.

Your shortcut list, pointing to these three other lists, will now look like this:

<u>REF</u>	<u>ADDR</u>	<u>TYPE</u>
Baseball Team	baseball-team	List
Football Team	football_team	List
Hockey Team	field hockey team	List

(Note that capitalization does not matter and the system will convert any caps in a list name into lower case automatically.)

2.) **Upload this list.** When uploading give it a numeric name, e.g., “1234” or possibly “83267” which is the numeric equivalent for “T.E.A.M.S.” on every touch-tone phone. Once uploaded, the shortcut is ready to use in any voice broadcast.

3.) **Launch your broadcast.** Follow the instructions for sending a voice broadcast using a touch-tone phone and when prompted for a list enter the number of this list, e.g., 1234. By choosing this list in the broadcast launch process, the system will recognize that you have selected a shortcut that points to other lists. Specifically it directs the system to:

“Look for a list, whose ADDR is, “**Baseball-team**”, then,  
Look for a list, whose ADDR is, “**Football\_team**”, then,  
Look for a list, whose ADDR is, “**Field hockey team**, then,  
to Stop looking for more lists, and send the broadcast.” If even one of the lists called for is not found during this lookup the process will not complete and the broadcast will not be launched. (For further reference on provisos when using shortcuts. see “IMPORTANT DON'Ts” below.)

**More on the use of shortcuts:**

You may also wish to create a separate shortcut for each team list separately. E.g. :

1 = the baseball team list (or “28” short for B.T.)

2 = the football team list (or “38” short for F.T.)

3 = the field hockey list. (or “48” short for H.T.)

(Remember – use numeric names if you wish to choose these lists using a touch-tone phone to launch your broadcasts. )

In this case each of these shortcuts will contain only one entry, i.e., the ADDR (list name) for that team. The shortcut for the baseball team, for example, would look like this:

<u>REF</u>	<u>ADDR</u>	<u>TYPE</u>
Baseball Team	baseball-team	List

You would upload it with the possible name “28” (short mnemonic for “B.T.”) The baseball coach could then select this shortcut when sending messages to baseball team members for practice, etc. All he/she would need is the information on the summary tab of the QuickStart Guide we sent you, containing the numbers to call, and a listing of list names and their contents.

Similarly, upload a shortcut for each of these teams so each team can be selected separately.

The example given may seem a little trite but keep in mind it is intended to show the functioning of shortcuts. One use is the creation of groups of lists to be called as mentioned by making one, or a few selections, rather than entering list after list. An added benefit however is that any particular list containing actual data (names and numbers of parents), can be referenced in several shortcuts to be used for different purposes. If a student is in the twelfth grade and you have uploaded a list for each grade, a message can be sent regarding the graduating class rehearsal, but that list can also be included in a shortcut that includes all grades. Now if a parent changes his/her number, you will only need to update the list for that class. The shortcut will point to each list as it currently exists in the system; so only one update to the number is needed.

## **B – IMPORTANT “DONTs” WHEN USING SHORTCUTS :**

Pointer lists can be useful but if not created properly can cause your broadcast to be aborted immediately after job submission. The idea in general is this: only include list names that are already present, be sure to spell their names precisely (e.g., “hockey-team” is not the same as “hokey\_team” or “hockey team”) and never point a shortcut to another shortcut!

Checklist: review your shortcuts periodically and at the beginning of every school year when numerous changes and updates are made to your lists. Check to be certain none of the following provisos are present:

### **Important DON'T No. 1:**

**Don't point a shortcut to another shortcut.** The system will not accept the broadcast and error out AFTER giving you a broadcast job number.

### **Important DON'T No. 2:**

**Don't misspell a list name.** Check the accuracy of any list name you include in your shortcut a misspelled name will cause the system to abort the broadcast AFTER giving you a broadcast job number because it cannot find one of the underlying lists.

### **Important DON'T No. 3:**

**Don't leave a missing list included in a shortcut.** If you delete an underlying list containing data, as often happens in the beginning of a school year, be certain to delete that list name from any shortcuts that called for it because the system will abort the broadcast AFTER giving you a broadcast job number when it cannot find the deleted underlying list.