## External Data Connections

SpreadsheetML allows for the definition of top level data [connection](connection.docx) objects that describe how to retrieve data from external sources. These [connection](connection.docx) objects are independent of the constructs in the spreadsheet application that display data such as [tables](tables.docx), PivotTables, etc.

Some information about a [connection](connection.docx) is considered part of the connection's definition. Other information is not inherently part of the [connection](connection.docx), but it describes the way the [connection](connection.docx) is to be used by the containing workbook. Note that in many cases, the spreadsheet application does not need knowledge of the command syntax for the external data source (e.g., database [query](query.docx) language), and simply stores a command string that was created by a data provider API (e.g., an ODBC driver).

A connection's definition can be established in a standalone [connection](connection.docx) file for easier sharing and reuse, but this [reference](reference.docx) documentation deals with the XML representation for external data [connections](connections.docx) that is directly embedded within a SpreadsheetML document. This embedded representation is expected whenever external data is used, and ensures portability of the document and continued operation of the external [query](query.docx) in the most cases.