

# Empty strings (null values)

- Empty strings **should not be used** within calculations. A blank custom function named "Null" should be created and used for empty values (\*see note below)  
Within solution code this increases code readability and distinguishes literal values and escaped text from empty values.

<pre> Case (   If ( PatternCount ( Table::fieldName ; Tab &amp; Tab ) 1 ;     "Awesome use of indentation!";     Null   );   If ( PatternCount ( Table::fieldName ; Tab ) 1 ;     "Good code should be easy to read";     Null   );   Null ) // Note the above function uses another custom function // which simply returns a tab character in order to improve // readability </pre>	good
<pre> Case (   If ( PatternCount ( Table::fieldName ; " " &amp; " " ) 1 ;     "Awesome use of indentation!";     " "   );   If ( PatternCount ( Table::fieldName ; " " ) 1 ;     "Good code should be easy to read";     " "   );   " " ) </pre>	bad

- Here's a series of test cases for clarification - the subtle differences in FM between Null, reserved word False and "" (literal empty string):

Expression	Result	Notes
Null		Result is empty.
GetAsBoolean ( Null )	0	GetAsBoolean returns 0/1 for expression results.
not Null	1	The boolean inverse of Null, or 1.
Null = 0	0	False: This is boolean false because FM does not evaluate empty to reserved word False (0).
GetAsBoolean ( Null ) = 0	1	True: The explicit FM boolean interpretation of Null is 0.
GetAsBoolean ( Null ) = False	1	True: A different adaptation - FM reserved words True and False are evaluated to the boolean 0/1 values, so 0 = 0.
Null = False	0	False: This is the most interesting case of all. Null is technically empty and False evaluates to boolean 0, so they are not equal.
Null = ""	1	True: The literal empty string "" evaluates the same in FM as the empty return of Null.,

## Exception Note

Code within a custom function can and should use double quotes for empty values `""`. This decreases custom function dependencies on the `"null"` function - making them more portable for copy-pasting.