

## When to use Access

In very general terms, Access is the best choice when you have to track and record data regularly, and then display, export, or print subsets of that data. Access forms provide a more convenient interface than an Excel worksheet for working with your data. You can use Access to automate frequently performed actions, and Access reports let you summarize data in printed or electronic form. Access provides more structure for your data; for example, you can control what types of data can be entered, what values can be entered, and you can specify how data in one table is related to data in other tables. This structure helps you ensure that only the correct types of data are entered.

Access stores data in tables that look much the same as worksheets — but Access tables are designed for complex querying in relation to data stored in other tables.

Use Access when you:

- Anticipate many people working in the database and you want robust options that safely handle updates to your data, such as record locking and conflict resolution.
- Anticipate the need to add more tables to a data set that originated as a flat or nonrelational table.
- Want to run complex queries.
- Want to produce a variety of reports or mailing labels.

## Common scenarios for using Access

- **Managing contacts** You can manage your contacts and mailing addresses, and then create reports in Access or merge the data with Microsoft Office Word to print form letters, envelopes, or mailing labels.
- **Inventory and Asset tracking** You can create an inventory of items in your home or business, and store photos or other related documents along with the data.
- **Order tracking** You can enter information about products, customers, and orders, and then create reports that show sales by employee, region, time period, or some other value.
- **Task tracking** You can track tasks for a group of people, and enter new tasks at the same time others are updating their existing tasks in the same database.
- **Organizing lending libraries** You can use Access to store data about your books and CDs, and keep track of whom you have lent them to.
- **Event Planning** You can enter information about event dates, locations, and participants, and then print schedules or summaries about the events.
- **Nutrition tracking** Keep track of recipes, and log diet and exercise activities.

## When to use Excel

As a spreadsheet program, Excel can store large amounts of data in workbooks that contain one or more worksheets. However, instead of serving as a database management system, such as Access, Excel is optimized for data analysis and calculation. You can use this flexible program to build models for analyzing data, write simple and complex formulas to perform calculation on

that data, pivot the data any way that you want, and present data in a variety of professional looking charts.

Use Excel when you:

- Require a flat or nonrelational view of your data instead of a relational database (relational database: A type of database that stores information in tables).
- Frequently run calculations and statistical comparisons on your data.
- Want to use PivotTable reports to view hierarchical data in a compact and flexible layout.
- Plan to create charts regularly and want to use the new charting formats that are available in Office Excel 2007.
- Want to emphasize your data by using conditional formatting icons, data bars, and color scales.
- Want to perform sophisticated what-if analysis operations on your data, such as statistical, engineering, and regression analysis.
- Want to keep track of items in a simple list, either for personal use or for limited collaboration purposes.

### Common scenarios for using Excel

- **Accounting** You can use the powerful calculation features of Excel in many financial accounting statements — for example, a cash flow statement, income statement, or profit and loss statement.
- **Budgeting** Whether your needs are personal or business related, you can create any type of budget in Excel — for example, a marketing budget plan, an event budget, or a retirement budget.
- **Billing and sales** Excel is also useful for managing billing and sales data, and you can easily create the forms that you need — for example, sales invoices, packing slips, or purchase orders.
- **Reporting** You can create various types of reports in Excel that reflect your data analysis or summarize your data — for example, reports that measure project performance, forecast data, summarize data, or present variance data.
- **Planning** Excel is a great tool for creating professional plans or useful planners — for example, a weekly class plan, a marketing research plan, a year-end tax plan, or planners that help you plan weekly meals, parties, or vacations.
- **Tracking** You can use Excel to keep track of data in a time sheet or list — for example, a time sheet for tracking work, or an inventory list that keeps track of equipment.
- **Using calendars** Because of its grid-like nature, Excel lends itself well to creating any type of calendar — for example, an academic calendar to keep track of activities during the school year, or a fiscal year calendar to track business events and milestones

Taken from: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/access-help/using-access-or-excel-to-manage-your-data-HA010210195.aspx#BM4>