

Tips on Designing a Database

General

1. Define the aims and objectives of the database
2. List all the functions you want it to perform

e.g. list all management committee members, list all contacts (some of which are management committee members), produce mailing labels off all forum members

3. Think about how you are going to use the information, this will help you
4. Break down information into its smallest manageable part
5. When entering data use established conventions, e.g. Mrs, not Mrs. Or MRS
6. Look at a good sample of the 'records' you are going to include, get a feel for your data, what will the most appropriate structure be?

For Mailing Lists

1. Have several lines for the address (if the address is stored on one line it will not print out correctly on a mailing label)
2. Split the surname and first name
3. Make sure you enter the same type of values in the same fields across the database, e.g. the Town/City should always contain that information, even if the address is very long
4. Don't use capitals

Suggested Fields

Field Name	Field Type	Notes/Comments
Title	Text	Do you need this field, will you be writing to Mrs McNamara or do you write to Jean McNamara?
Fname	Text	
Sname	Text	
Organisation	Text	Do you need this?
JobTitle	Text	Do you need this?
Add1	Text	First line of the address, e.g. 23 New Mount Street
Add2	Text	Option for second
Town/City	Text	
Postcode	Text	
Tel	Text	You need to format these fields as text. If you think along the lines of, am I doing any calculations on this field, do I need phone numbers that are bigger than 0161 953 4049. Also specifying this field as text means you can put spaces in between groups of numbers to they can be read easier
Fax	Text	
Email	Text	
Website	Hypertext	
MC	Yes/No	True or False fields are useful when a person is either a member or not and there are no in between categories. In your example you need one for each category because one person may be in the Management Committee and in Volunteer Network Forum
VNF	Yes/No	
NWVF	Yes/No	

Other questions

- Are any of the fields required? i.e. to enter a contact do you need a surname and a first name or just a surname
- Could an individual be a member of more than 1 organisation?

Other issues

Most databases will have some what are called anomalies, i.e. duplications, problems, situations where a small about of your records don't fit your design exactly. The role of a database is not to accommodate every eventuality, but to accommodate the most common and the most important.