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**by Laurie Ulrich Fuller  
and Ken Cook**



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Ken is also a published author on Microsoft Excel, having contributed chapters on macros and VBA to *Special Edition: Using Excel 2000* and *Special Edition: Using Excel 2002* published by Que. Ken also contributed chapters on Microsoft Access to the book *How to Do Everything with Office XP* published by Osborne, and coauthored the previous version of this book; *Access 2007 For Dummies* published by Wiley.

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# Contents at a Glance

---

<b><i>Introduction .....</i></b>	<b><i>1</i></b>
<b><i>Part I: Basic Training.....</i></b>	<b><i>9</i></b>
Chapter 1: Getting to Know Access 2010 .....	11
Chapter 2: Finding Your Way Around Access .....	37
Chapter 3: Database Basics .....	59
<b><i>Part II: Getting It All on the Table .....</i></b>	<b><i>79</i></b>
Chapter 4: Keys, Relationships, and Indexes .....	81
Chapter 5: Remodeling Your Data .....	99
Chapter 6: What's Happening Under the Table?.....	115
<b><i>Part III: Data Mania and Management.....</i></b>	<b><i>139</i></b>
Chapter 7: Creating Data Forms.....	141
Chapter 8: Importing and Exporting Data.....	155
Chapter 9: Editing Data Automatically .....	169
Chapter 10: Gather Locally, Share Globally.....	181
<b><i>Part IV: Ask Your Data, and Ye Shall Receive Answers.....</i></b>	<b><i>201</i></b>
Chapter 11: Fast Finding, Filtering, and Sorting Data.....	203
Chapter 12: I Was Just Asking . . . for Answers .....	219
Chapter 13: I'll Take These AND Those OR Them .....	245
Chapter 14: Queries That Think Faster Than You.....	255
Chapter 15: Calculating with Your Data.....	267
Chapter 16: Flying into Action Queries .....	283
<b><i>Part V: Plain and Fancy Reporting.....</i></b>	<b><i>295</i></b>
Chapter 17: Quick and Not-So-Dirty Automatic Reporting .....	297
Chapter 18: Dazzling Report Design .....	319
Chapter 19: Headers and Footers and Groups, Oh My! .....	345
Chapter 20: Magical Mass Mailings .....	367

<b><i>Part VI: More Power to You</i></b> .....	<b>375</b>
Chapter 21: Making It All Better with the Analyzer Tools .....	377
Chapter 22: Hello! Creating an Interface to Welcome Database Users .....	389
<b><i>Part VII: The Part of Tens</i></b> .....	<b>399</b>
Chapter 23: Ten Common Problems .....	401
Chapter 24: Ten Uncommon Tips .....	413
<b><i>Index</i></b> .....	<b>421</b>

# Table of Contents

---

## ***Introduction* ..... 1**

About This Book .....	1
Conventions Used in This Book.....	2
What You Don't Have to Read.....	2
Foolish Assumptions.....	3
How This Book Is Organized .....	3
Part I: Basic Training .....	4
Part II: Getting It All on the Table .....	4
Part III: Data Mania and Management.....	4
Part IV: Ask Your Data, and Ye Shall Receive Answers.....	5
Part V: Plain and Fancy Reporting.....	5
Part VI: More Power to You.....	5
Part VII: The Part of Tens.....	5
Appendix: Getting Help .....	6
Icons Used in This Book .....	6
Where to Go from Here.....	7

## ***Part I: Basic Training* ..... 9**

### **Chapter 1: Getting to Know Access 2010 .....11**

What Is Access Good For, Anyway? .....	12
Building big databases .....	12
Creating databases with multiple tables .....	13
Databases with user forms .....	16
Databases that require special reporting.....	18
What's New in Access 2010? .....	21
New and improved features .....	21
Reach out with SharePoint .....	24
How Access Works and How You Work with It .....	26
Opening Access.....	26
Selecting a starting point .....	28
Now what?.....	34



**Chapter 2: Finding Your Way Around Access . . . . . 37**

Diving Right In.....	39
Working with On-Screen Tools in Access.....	42
Clicking tabs .....	43
Using buttons .....	44
The File tab and Quick Access tools .....	46
Accessing panes, panels, and context-sensitive tools .....	47
Customizing the Access Workspace .....	48
Repositioning the Quick Access toolbar.....	48
Adding buttons to the Quick Access toolbar .....	49
Removing buttons from the Quick Access toolbar .....	51
Minimizing the Ribbon .....	52
Working with ScreenTips .....	54
Mousing Around .....	56
Navigating Access with the Alt Key.....	57

**Chapter 3: Database Basics . . . . . 59**

Database Lingo.....	59
Data, no matter how you pronounce it.....	60
Fields of dreams (or data) .....	60
Records .....	61
Tables .....	61
The database .....	62
Field Types and Uses .....	62
Choosing Between Flat and Relational Databases .....	67
Isolationist tables.....	68
Tables that mix and mingle .....	68
Building a Database.....	69
Adding and Removing Tables .....	73
One more, please .....	74
Oops, I didn't mean to do that .....	76

***Part II: Getting It All on the Table..... 79***

**Chapter 4: Keys, Relationships, and Indexes . . . . . 81**

The Primary Key to Success .....	81
The lowdown on primary keys.....	82
Creating a primary key.....	83
Making Tables Get Along.....	85
Rules of relationships.....	85
Relationship types .....	85

Building Table Relationships .....	87
The Relationships window .....	88
Table relationships .....	89
Indexing for Faster Queries .....	93
Create your own index .....	94
Adding and removing indexes .....	95
<b>Chapter 5: Remodeling Your Data .....</b>	<b>99</b>
Opening a Table for Editing .....	100
Inserting Records and Fields .....	103
Adding a record .....	103
Inserting a field .....	105
Deleting a field .....	108
Modifying Field Content .....	109
Name-Calling .....	110
Renaming fields .....	110
Renaming a table .....	112
Turn Uh-Oh! into Yee-Hah! .....	114
<b>Chapter 6: What's Happening Under the Table? .....</b>	<b>115</b>
Access Table Settings .....	115
Field Data Formats .....	118
Text and memo fields .....	118
Number and currency fields .....	121
Date/time fields .....	123
Yes/No fields .....	125
Gaining Control of Data Entry .....	127
You really need to put a mask on those fields .....	127
To require or not to require .....	133
Making your data toe the line with validation .....	134
Give your fingers a mini vacation by default .....	136
<b><i>Part III: Data Mania and Management .....</i></b>	<b><i>139</i></b>
<b>Chapter 7: Creating Data Forms .....</b>	<b>141</b>
Generating Forms .....	141
Keeping it simple: AutoForm .....	143
Granting most wishes: The Form Wizard .....	144
Customizing Form Parts .....	148
Taking the Layout view .....	149
The theme's the thing .....	150
Managing form controls .....	150

**Chapter 8: Importing and Exporting Data . . . . .155**

Retrieving Data from Other Sources .....	156
Translating file formats .....	156
Importing and linking .....	159
Get This Data Out of Here.....	164
Export formats .....	164
Exporting table or query data .....	165

**Chapter 9: Editing Data Automatically . . . . .169**

Please Read This First! .....	169
Creating Consistent Corrections .....	172
Using Queries to Automate the Editing Process .....	174
Looking for duplicate records.....	175
Running the Find Duplicates Query Wizard .....	176

**Chapter 10: Gather Locally, Share Globally. . . . .181**

Access and the Web .....	181
Click! Using Hyperlinks in Your Access Database .....	182
Adding a hyperlink field to your table .....	183
Typing your hyperlinks.....	185
Fine tuning your hyperlinks.....	186
Testing links .....	187
Embedding Web Content into Your Access Forms .....	187
Adding hyperlinks to your form.....	188
Publishing Your Data to the Web .....	194
Publishing your Access tables .....	195

## ***Part IV: Ask Your Data, and Ye Shall Receive Answers..... 201***

**Chapter 11: Fast Finding, Filtering, and Sorting Data . . . . .203**

Using the Find Command .....	204
Finding anything fast .....	204
Shifting Find into high gear.....	206
Sorting from A to Z or Z to A.....	208
Sorting by a single field .....	209
Sorting on more than one field.....	209
Fast and Furious Filtering.....	210
Filtering by a field's content .....	210
Filter by selection .....	212
Filter by Form .....	213
Unfiltering in a form.....	216
Filter by excluding selection .....	217

<b>Chapter 12: I Was Just Asking . . . for Answers . . . . .</b>	<b>219</b>
Simple (Yet Potent) Filter and Sort Tools . . . . .	220
Filter things first . . . . .	220
Fact-finding with fun, fast filtering . . . . .	222
Here's the "advanced" part . . . . .	224
Select Queries . . . . .	229
Solid relationships are the key to getting it all (from your tables) . . . . .	230
Running the Query Wizard . . . . .	231
Getting Your Feet Wet with Ad Hoc Queries . . . . .	236
Adding the finishing touches . . . . .	240
Saving the query . . . . .	242
Running your query . . . . .	242
<b>Chapter 13: I'll Take These AND Those OR Them. . . . .</b>	<b>245</b>
Working with AND and/or OR . . . . .	246
Data from here to there . . . . .	247
Using multiple levels of AND . . . . .	249
Establishing criteria with OR . . . . .	250
Combining AND with OR and OR with AND . . . . .	252
<b>Chapter 14: Queries That Think Faster Than You . . . . .</b>	<b>255</b>
Kissing That Calculator Goodbye via the Total Row . . . . .	255
Adding the Total Row to Your Queries . . . . .	257
Giving the Total Row a Workout . . . . .	258
Organizing things with Group By . . . . .	258
Performing sums . . . . .	260
Counting, the easy way . . . . .	262
Narrowing the results with Where . . . . .	263
Creating Your Own Top-Ten List . . . . .	264
Choosing the Right Field for the Summary Instruction . . . . .	265
<b>Chapter 15: Calculating with Your Data . . . . .</b>	<b>267</b>
A Simple Calculation . . . . .	268
Complex Calculations . . . . .	270
Calculate until you need calculate no more! . . . . .	271
Using one calculation in another . . . . .	271
Using parameter queries to ask for help . . . . .	272
Daisy-chaining your words with text formulas . . . . .	275
Expression Builder (Somewhat) to the Rescue . . . . .	277
<b>Chapter 16: Flying into Action Queries . . . . .</b>	<b>283</b>
Easy Update . . . . .	284
Add Records in a Flash . . . . .	288
Quick Cleanup . . . . .	291

**Part V: Plain and Fancy Reporting ..... 295****Chapter 17: Quick and Not-So-Dirty Automatic Reporting ..... 297**

Fast and Furious Automatic Reporting .....	298
Creating a quick, one-table report .....	298
Starting the Report Wizard .....	304
Previewing Your Report .....	309
Zooming in and out and all around .....	311
Pop goes the menu .....	313
Beauty Is Only Skin (Report) Deep .....	314
The Print Options tab .....	314
The Page tab .....	316
The Columns tab .....	317

**Chapter 18: Dazzling Report Design ..... 319**

Taking Your Report In for Service .....	319
Report Organization .....	321
Structural devices .....	321
Page breaks .....	324
Formatting This, That, and the Other .....	326
Adding color .....	327
Relocation, relocation, relocation .....	329
One size does not fit all .....	331
Spaced-out controls .....	332
Borderline beauty .....	333
Tweaking your text .....	337
Sneaking a Peek .....	338
Getting a Themes Makeover .....	339
Adding More Design Elements .....	341
Drawing lines .....	341
Pretty as a picture .....	342

**Chapter 19: Headers and Footers and Groups, Oh My! ..... 345**

A Place for Everything and Everything in Its Place .....	346
Layout basics .....	346
Sections .....	348
Grouping your records .....	350
So you want more? .....	354
Customizing Properties .....	355
Controlling report and page headings .....	356
Adjusting individual sections .....	359
Itemized adjustments .....	361



<b>Chapter 20: Magical Mass Mailings. . . . .</b>	<b>367</b>
Massive Mailings with the Label Wizard . . . . .	367
 <b><i>Part VI: More Power to You . . . . .</i></b>	 <b>375</b>
<b>Chapter 21: Making It All Better with the Analyzer Tools . . . . .</b>	<b>377</b>
Convert Your Flat Files to Relational Tables with Analyzer . . . . .	378
Record Database Object Details with the Database Documenter . . . . .	382
Improve Database Performance without Steroids . . . . .	385
 <b>Chapter 22: Hello! Creating an Interface to Welcome Database Users. . . . .</b>	 <b>389</b>
The Comings and Goings of a Navigation Form . . . . .	390
Creating a Navigation form . . . . .	390
Am I in the Right Place? Testing Navigation Forms . . . . .	393
Maintaining the Navigation Form . . . . .	394
Edit a Navigation form item . . . . .	394
Delete a Navigation Form tab item . . . . .	395
Move a Navigation Form item . . . . .	395
Displaying the Navigation Form at Startup . . . . .	396
 <b><i>Part VII: The Part of Tens . . . . .</i></b>	 <b>399</b>
<b>Chapter 23: Ten Common Problems . . . . .</b>	<b>401</b>
That's Just Not Normal . . . . .	401
You Type 73.725, but it Changes to 74 . . . . .	402
The Words They Are A-Changing . . . . .	403
Was There and Now It's Gone . . . . .	404
Undo . . . . .	404
Search for the missing record . . . . .	404
Backup recovery . . . . .	405
You Run a Query, but the Results Aren't What You Expect . . . . .	405
The Validation That Never Was . . . . .	407
The Slowest Database in Town . . . . .	407
Your Database File Is as Big as a Whale . . . . .	408
You Get a Mess When Importing Your Spreadsheet . . . . .	410
We're Sorry; Your Database File Is Corrupt . . . . .	410

**Chapter 24: Ten Uncommon Tips .....413**

Document Everything as Though You'll be Questioned by the FBI.....	414
Keep Your Fields as Small as Possible.....	415
Use Number Fields for Real Numbers.....	416
Validate Your Data .....	416
Use Understandable Names to Keep Things Simple.....	416
Delete with Great Caution .....	417
Back up, Back up, Back up .....	417
Think, Think, and Think Again.....	418
Get Organized and Stay Organized.....	418
There's No Shame in Asking for Help.....	419

***Index* ..... 421**

# Introduction

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You've picked up this book and are hoping it will teach you to use Microsoft Access 2010. Of course, as the authors, we believe this was a wise decision — or that (at the very least) it was some sort of divine intervention that led you to our pages. We're quite certain that this is *The Book For You* — but not just because we wrote it. Rather, we base this conviction on the fact that both of us have been teaching and using Access for a very long time, and we know how to share what we know with our students. That's right, you're now one of our students — at least that's how we feel about you as our reader. Now, we *could* be wrong here, but that happens so infrequently that we're hardly considering it. No, the reason you picked up this book is that you want to learn Access, and this is the best book to help you do just that. Really. No kidding.

Of course, being a normal human being, you probably have work to do, and whether or not we're right about this being *The Book For You*, you need Access. You need it to organize your data. You need it to store — accessibly, of course — all the information that's currently spilling out of notebooks, file drawers, your pockets, your glove compartment, everywhere. You need it so you can print out snappy-looking reports that make you look like the genius you are. You need it so you can create cool forms that will help your staff enter all the data you've got stacked on their desks — and in a way that lets you know the data was entered properly, so it's accurate and useful. You need Access so you can find little bits of data out of the huge pool of information you need to store. You just need it.

## About This Book

With all the power that Access has (and that it therefore gives *you*), there comes a small price: complexity. Access isn't one of those applications you can just sit down and use, “right out of the box.” It's not scarily difficult or anything, but there's a lot going on — and you need some guidance, some help, some direction, to really use it and make it sing and dance. And that's where this book — a “reference for the rest of us” — comes in.

So you've picked up this book. Hang on to it. Clutch it to your chest and run gleefully from the store. (Stop and pay for it first, please; we'd never want to encourage you to embark on a life of crime.) And then start reading — whether you begin with Chapter 1 or whether you dive in on your own and start with a particular feature or area of interest that's been giving you fits. Just read, and then go put Access through its paces.

## Conventions Used in This Book

As you work with Access 2010, you're going to need to tell it to do things. You'll also find that at times, Access has questions for you, usually in response to your asking it to do something. This book will show you how to talk to Access, and how Access will talk to you. To show the difference between the two sides of that conversation, we format the commands as follows:

**This is something you type into the computer.**

`This is how the computer responds to your command.`

Because Access *is* a Windows program, you don't just type, type, type — you also mouse around quite a bit. Here are the mouse movements necessary to make Access (and any other Windows program) work:

- ✓ **Click:** Position the tip of the mouse pointer (the end of the arrow) on the menu item, button, check box, or whatever else you happen to be aiming at — and then quickly press and release the left mouse button.
- ✓ **Double-click:** Position the mouse pointer as though you're going to click, but fool it at the last minute by clicking twice in rapid succession.
- ✓ **Click and drag (highlight):** Put the tip of the mouse pointer at the place you want to start highlighting, and then press and hold the left mouse button. While holding down the mouse button, drag the pointer across whatever you want to highlight. When you reach the end of what you're highlighting, release the mouse button.
- ✓ **Right-click:** Right-clicking works just like clicking, except you're exercising the right instead of the left mouse button.

## What You Don't Have to Read

Now that we've told you that you should read the book, we're telling you that you don't have to read *all* of it. Confused? Don't be. This section of the introduction exists to put your mind at ease, so you won't worry that you have to digest every syllable of this book in order to make sense of Access. And more than just being a required section of the introduction, the heading is true. You don't have to read the whole book.

You should read the chapters that pertain to things you don't know, but you can skip the stuff you do know or that you're fairly sure you don't need to know. If the situation changes and you eventually *do* need to know something, you can go back and read that part later.

If you only use Access at work, and you're using an Access database that some über-geek in your IT department created, chances are you can't tinker with it. Therefore, if you only need to know about using an existing Access database (or unless you have designs on that IT geek's job), you can skip the chapters on designing databases.

Of course, it might be nice to know what's happening "behind the scenes," but you don't have to read those chapters if you don't want to.

## Foolish Assumptions

You need to know only a few things about your computer and Windows to get the most out of *Access 2010 For Dummies*. In the following pages, we presume that you . . .

- ✓ Know the basics of Windows — how to open programs, save your files, create folders, find your files once you've saved them, print, and do basic stuff like that.
- ✓ Have some goals that Access will help you reach. You either
  - want to build your own databases
  - and/or*
  - want to work with databases that other people have created.
- ✓ Want to use and create queries, reports, and an occasional form.
- ✓ Have either Windows Vista or Windows 7.

If your computer uses Windows 98, 2000, or XP, you can't run Office 2010.



You don't *have* to know (or even care) about table design, field types, relational databases, or any of that other database stuff to make Access work for you. Everything you need to know is right here, just waiting for you to read it. Of course, you may *want* to know what's going on under the hood (so to speak). But if you do, you'll find that information in this book's pages.

## How This Book Is Organized

Here's a breakdown of the parts in this book. Each part covers a general aspect of Access. The part's individual chapters dig into the details.

## ***Part I: Basic Training***

In this first part of the book, you'll find out what Access is, what it isn't, how it works, and how you open it up and start using it. You'll find out how to navigate and master the Access workspace — and people who've used previous versions of Access find out about all the new features and tools that are part of Access 2010.

Part I also takes you through the process of planning your database — deciding what to store, how to structure your database, and how to use some of Access 2010's very helpful tools for starting a database with templates and themes — cookie-cutters, to use a fun and accurate metaphor — for a variety of common database designs. Be prepared to pick up some helpful jargon, as you learn a bit about a few specialized terms that you really need to know.

## ***Part II: Getting It All on the Table***

Part II takes you a bit deeper, starting out with a chapter on setting up more than one table to store related data — and moving on with chapters on setting up relationships between those tables, customizing the way data is stored in your tables, and ways to control how data is entered into the tables in your database. You'll also find out about new tools that create new data in your tables — based on existing data — automatically.

## ***Part III: Data Mania and Management***

Here you find out all about *forms* — the customized interfaces you create to make it easier to enter, edit, and look at your database. You'll also discover cool ways to share your Access data with other programs and how to bring content from Word documents and Excel worksheets into Access to save time, reduce the likelihood of data-entry errors, and build consistency within all the work you do in Microsoft Office.

Speaking of saving time and building consistency, you'll also learn about the new Application Parts feature, through which you can recycle parts of your existing databases to build new ones. You'll also find out about using Access tables on the Web, and how to publish your database to the Internet. Look out, world!

## ***Part IV: Ask Your Data, and Ye Shall Receive Answers***

In Part IV, you get ready to ask questions such as, “How many customers do we have in Peoria?” and “How long has that guy in Accounting worked here?” Of course, you already know how to form and speak sentences that go up at the end (so people know you’re asking a question), but when you ask a question in Access, the pitch of your voice rarely makes any difference. You’ll need, therefore, to know how to sort, filter, and query your data to get at the information you’re storing in your Access database. You’ll also want to know more about Action Queries — and these, too, can be found in Part IV.

## ***Part V: Plain and Fancy Reporting***

Reports are compilations of data from one or more tables in your database. That statement might sound a bit scary, because “compilations” has four syllables and you might not be sure what a table is yet. Have no fear, however, because Access provides some cool automatic tools that let you pick and choose what you want in your report, and then it goes and makes the report *for you*. How neat is that?

Automatic reports weren’t good enough for you, eh? If your job relies upon reports not only being informative but also attractive and attention-grabbing, Part V will be like opening a birthday present. Well, not really, but you’ll find out about charts, printing labels, and putting everything from your logo to page numbers on your reports.

## ***Part VI: More Power to You***

Part VI gives more power in the form of the Access Analyzer, a tool that tunes up your database for better performance. It also gives you more power by showing you how to create a user interface that controls what people see, which tables they can edit, and how they work with your database overall.

## ***Part VII: The Part of Tens***

The format of these chapters is designed to give you a lot of information in a simple, digestible fashion so you can absorb it without realizing you’re actually learning something. Sneaky, huh?

## Appendix: Getting Help

This isn't really a whole part, but it's darn useful. Remember how your mom told you the only foolish question is the one you don't ask? In this appendix, accessible at [www.dummies.com/go/access2010](http://www.dummies.com/go/access2010), you find out where to go to ask — namely, the online and built-in help resources that Access offers.

**Note:** We went to the trouble of typing up a ton of records in a few sample databases that are designed to show you the tricks of the Access trade. You can find all the samples at the aforementioned Web site, [www.dummies.com/go/access2010](http://www.dummies.com/go/access2010).

## Icons Used in This Book

When something in this book is particularly valuable, we go out of our way to make sure that it stands out. We use these cool icons to mark text that (for one reason or another) *really* needs your attention. Here's a quick preview of the ones waiting for you in this book and what they mean:



Tips are incredibly helpful words of wisdom that promise to save you time, energy, and the embarrassment of being caught swearing out loud while you're alone. Whenever you see a tip, take a second to check it out.



Some things are too important to forget, so the Remember icon points them out. These items are critical steps in a process — points that you don't want to miss.



Sometimes we give in to the techno-geek lurking inside us and slip some technical babble into the book. The Technical Stuff icon protects you from obscure details by making them easy to avoid. On the other hand, you may find them interesting. (Your inner techno-geek will rejoice.)



The Warning icon says it all: *Skipping this information may be hazardous to your data's health*. Pay attention to these icons and follow their instructions to keep your databases happy and intact.



## *Where to Go from Here*

Now nothing's left to hold you back from the delights and amazing wonders of Access. Hold on tight to this copy of *Access 2010 For Dummies* and leap into Access.

- ✓ If you're brand-new to the program and don't know which way to turn, start with the general overview in Chapter 1.
- ✓ If you're about to design a database, we salute you — and recommend flipping through Chapter 4 for some helpful design and development tips.
- ✓ Looking for something specific? Try the Table of Contents or the Index.

Now, go ye forth and build a database!

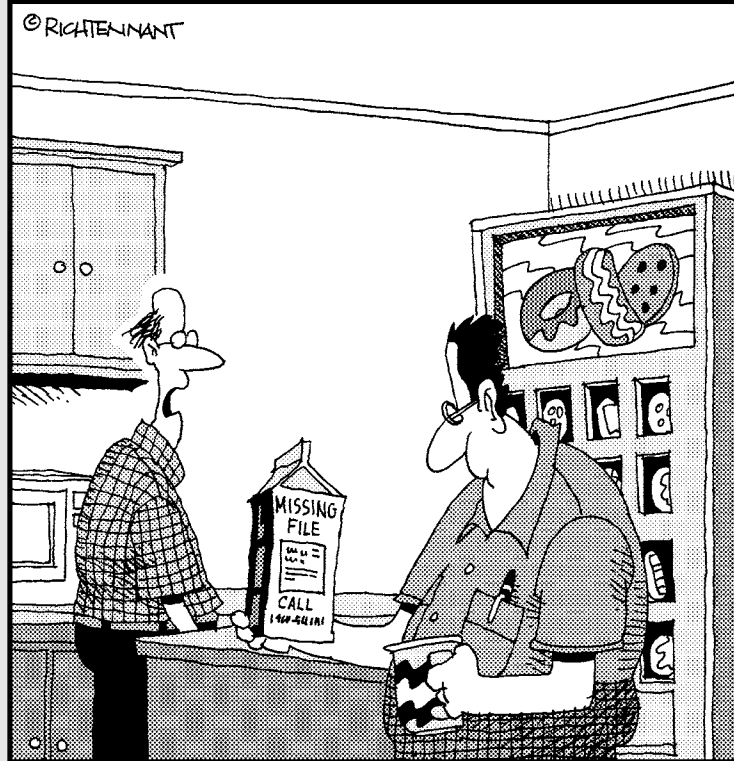


# Part I

# Basic Training

The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Don't laugh. It's faster than our  
current system."

## *In this part . . .*

**D**on't worry, even though this part of the book is called "Basic Training", nobody's going to shout at you or make you do pushups. We promise. Instead, you'll find out what Access is, what it does, and how to get started using it.

The three chapters in this part of the book introduce you to what's new in Access 2010, help you get comfortable with the Access 2010 workspace, and show you how to start building your first database. You also find out about some essential terms and concepts that will help you figure out — and talk about — your database needs at work, with clients, or if you're trying to bore people to death at a party.

Ready? Then let's get started!

## Chapter 1

# Getting to Know Access 2010

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Deciding when to use Access
- ▶ Discovering what's new in Access 2010
- ▶ Unlocking the basics of working with Access
- ▶ Figuring out how to get started

**A**ccess 2010, the most recent version of the Microsoft Office database application, is a very robust and powerful program. You probably already know that, and perhaps that power — or your perceptions of all that Access can do — is what made you reach for this book. We applaud your wise choice!

For all of its power, Access is also very — pardon the expression — *accessible*. It's pretty easy to use at the edges, where a new user will be; you don't have to venture all the way in to its core to get quite a lot out of the software. In fact, with just the basic functionality that you'll discover in this book, you'll be able to put Access through many of its most important paces, yet you'll be working with wizards and other on-screen tools that keep you at a comfortable arm's distance from the software's inner workings, the things that programmers and serious developers play with. Feel better now?



You don't have to use every feature and tool and push the edges of the Access envelope. In fact, you can use very little of everything Access has to offer and still have quite a significant solution to your needs for storing and accessing data — all because Access can really “do it all” — enabling you to set up a database quickly, build records into that database, and then use that data in several useful ways. Later on, who knows? You may become an Access guru.

In this chapter, you'll discover what Access does best (and when you might want to use another tool instead), and get a look at what's new and improved in Access 2010 (compared to Access 2007). You'll see how it does what it does, and hopefully you'll begin to understand and absorb some basic terminology. Now, don't panic — nobody's expecting you to memorize long lists

of high-tech vocabulary or anything scary like that. The goal here (and in the next two chapters) with regard to terms is to introduce you to some basic words and concepts to help you make better use of Access in general — as well as better understand later chapters in this book, if you choose to follow us all the way to its stunning conclusion.

## *What Is Access Good For, Anyway?*

What *is* Access good for? That's a good question. Well, the list of what you can do with it is a lot longer than the list of what you *can't* do with it — of course, only if you leave things like “paint your car” and “do the dishes” off the “can't do” list. When it comes to data organization, storage, and retrieval, Access is at the head of the class.

### *Building big databases*

Okay, what do I mean by *big* database? Any database with a lot of records — and by *a lot*, I mean hundreds. At least. And certainly if you have *thousands* of records, you need a tool like Access to manage them. Although you can use Microsoft Excel to store lists of records, it limits how many you can store (no more than the number of rows in a single worksheet). In addition, you can't use Excel to set up anything beyond a simple list that can be sorted and filtered. So anything with a lot of records and complex data is best done in Access.

Some reasons why Access handles big databases well:

- ✓ Typically a big database has big data-entry needs. Access offers not only forms, but also features that can create a quick form through which someone can enter all those records. This can make data entry easier and faster, and can reduce the margin of error significantly. (Check out Chapter 7 for more about building forms.)
- ✓ When you have lots and lots of records, you also have lots of opportunities for errors to creep — duplicate records, records with misspellings, records with missing information — and that's just for openers. So you need an application such as Access to ferret out those errors and fix them. (Chapter 9 lays out how you can use Access to find and replace errors and search for duplicate entries.)
- ✓ Big databases mean big needs for accurate, insightful reporting. Access has powerful reporting tools you can use to create printed and on-screen reports — and those can include as few or as many pieces of your data as you need, drawn from more than one table if need be. You can tailor your reports to your audience, from what's shown on the reports pages to the colors and fonts used.