

teach yourself...

Access 97

FOR WINDOWS

Charles Siegel





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Access 97 for Windows

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Dedication

To my son, Beni

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Is This Book for You?

Access is such a rich and powerful application that most people do not know where to begin when they start using it.

Access makes it easy for users—even beginners—to work with databases. You can create tables, edit data, and use queries to find the data you want with very little effort, and Access includes wizards that can do the work of designing data entry forms, reports, and mailing labels for you.

Access also makes it easy for developers to create applications. It includes an entire programming language, Visual Basic for Applications, and its interface is so powerful that developers can create many custom applications without programming. Access' queries, forms, reports, and macros are powerful enough to do most of the work that used to require programming.

This book is aimed at people who want to use Access to manage their own data. It does not cover designing or programming applications. Visual Basic and the theory of computer programming require books of their own.

When users learn Access, they often find they have to wade through long discussions of power features to learn about the simple features they need to work with on their own data. The Help system is so extensive and complex that it is hard to use it just to get started. Many books make you read complex discussions of properties, expressions, and other advanced features along with instructions on the basics of creating tables, queries, simple forms, reports, and mailing labels, which the average user actually needs.

This book is designed for people who want to get started with Access quickly, and also for people who want to learn the power features of Access.

The book is divided into two parts, and it is unique because it begins with a section called *Access The Easy Way*, which introduces all the basic features of Access. It teaches how to create databases and tables, add and edit data, and do basic queries to find the data you want. It covers Form Wizards and Report Wizards, which you can use to produce all your forms and reports.

Part I concludes with a chapter on relational databases which teaches you to use these basic features of Access to deal with more complex data. Even if a database program is very simple, the data that it is managing can be complex. This is when knowing how to manipulate relational databases come in handy. By using Access's basic features and the introduction to relational databases in this book, you can deal with almost any complex practical application.

After you have learned the necessary basics of Access, you can go on to the second part of this book, Power Features. Part II teaches you how to use action queries to update your data with less effort, use Access expressions to calculate values, create custom forms and reports, use simple but powerful macros to automate tasks that you do repeatedly, and convert Access objects into HTML documents that you can publish on the World Wide Web. These are all features that can increase your power and save you time.

The features of Access covered in this book take you to the edge of being a developer, because Access makes it easy even for nonprogrammers to create turn-key applications that anyone can use.



CHAPTER 1

A Quick Tour of Access

Access has become the best-selling database-management program because of its combination of power and ease of use. It is powerful enough that developers can use it to create entire applications with little or no programming, and it contains an entire programming language, Visual Basic for Applications, that can be used to develop more advanced applications. Yet it is easy enough to use that in a short time, beginners can learn to manage their own data with Access.

It is easy to get started with Access by taking a quick look at how it is organized. This chapter gives a quick tour of Access. It covers:

- ♦ starting Access
- ♦ opening a database file
- ♦ using the Database window to view different types of Access objects
- ♦ opening a table in Datasheet View and Design View
- ♦ opening a query in Datasheet View and Design View
- ♦ opening a form in Form View, Datasheet View, and Design View
- ♦ opening a report in the Print Preview window
- ♦ creating new objects
- ♦ understanding when multitable databases are needed
- ♦ using the Access help system
- ♦ quitting Access

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This chapter includes a few exercises to give you a feel for the basic features of Access. To do them, you must have Access installed on your computer and you must know the basic ways of using Windows applications.

This book assumes that you know only the most basic Windows techniques, such as how to use the mouse, make selections from menus, and scroll through a window. If you have ever used a Windows program, you should have no trouble doing the exercises in this book.

THE ACCESS DATABASE AND ITS OBJECTS

In other database-management programs, the term *database* is sometimes used to refer to tables that hold data. Access uses the term more broadly. An Access database consists of the tables that hold the data and all the related objects, such as queries, forms, and reports, that are used to manage the data.

In this chapter, you'll take a quick tour of a sample database distributed with Access so you can see the types of objects it includes. You'll learn how to create and use these objects in the rest of Part I of this book.