

MS Access Problem Resolution

Following are the things most likely to go wrong with a typical MS Access database along with the problem category and likely resolution that each error or glitch belongs to:

	Symptom	Resolution
Database corrupting	Database will not open with the error "Unrecognised database format" or "Microsoft Access has detected corruption in this file" or similar	For 2-layer systems (front-end and back-end databases linked) get everyone out of the database, Backup both front and back-end databases Run Compact and Repair on back-end database then front-end database Try opening the database again Note: Corruptions can cause data loss so check data to ensure none has been lost
Data missing	Data known to be in the database disappears	If this is a one-off occurrence with no other symptoms (e.g. database corruption) then it is probably user error, even if they don't admit it. Other than this data loss can be caused by database corruption. If data tends to be lost within the same area of the system, it can also be caused by incorrect table relationships causing the data to link to the wrong parent object so the underlying tables should be checked to ensure correct implementation of Primary and Foreign keys
Form showing incorrect data	Data on a form is linking to the wrong parent record	This can occur if the table relationships are set up incorrectly or the Link Parent Fields/Link Child Fields are set up incorrectly on subforms. For subforms the Primary Key of the table should be used as this should appear in both the parent and child tables if they have been created correctly
Crashing or Error Message when loading form or report	An error message is displayed when opening a form. Sometimes this will not impact the running of the form and other times it will heavily impact or prevent the form being used at all	Most often this is caused by an event (Code or macro) running on the Form Load, Form Open or Form Current event which encounters an error. If this happens you can try holding down Ctrl+Break (Pause on some keyboards) which should allow you to view the offending code. Note: This is only for users happy to dive into the code and if not, we are always here to help if required

<p>Error message appearing when performing specific task</p>	<p>An error occurs or the form closes when updating specific fields or clicking buttons</p>	<p>Macros/code is usually the fault here. If error trapping is properly implemented in code, then this should not happen because the error should be handled without detriment to the form. The only way to check is to see what event is attached to the control or button and step through the event(s) in code while performing the same tasks.</p> <p>Note: This should only be performed by a person with coding experience as it is easy to make matters worse by changing things in the code. If in doubt we are always here to help if required</p>
<p>Slow Form Loading</p>	<p>When opening a form hangs for a long time before displaying data or is unresponsive for a period of time after opening</p>	<p>This can be due to several factors some of which being: PC Hardware - The client PC will be used for the brunt of the processing with an MS Access database so the hardware can play a large factor in performance. Having 8GB of RAM or more and having a Solid-State Disk drive can help improve speed of the database as well as everything else on the PC Slow network speeds - A poor network connection can slow the performance of an Access database because Access pulls a lot of data across then network to find the data it needs. A poor network can also cause database corruptions in an Access database Form Design - If there are a lot of drop-down lists on the form each with many items then this can also slow down form loading. If there are lots of call-backs to the database or other processing in the code behind the form this can also cause slow loading forms</p>
<p>Data Not Saving</p>	<p>When closing a form or navigating to a new record the data changes made on the previous form are not saved</p>	<p>This will usually be due to a silent error occurring which means an error is occurring in code but is not being handled by the application therefore preventing the record from being saved. Another reason may be that the database is beginning to corrupt so backing up the data then Repairing and Compacting may fix this</p>
<p>Database issues after upgrading Microsoft Access</p>	<p>Access will not open or throws errors when opening after an update to Microsoft Office/Access</p>	<p>This behaviour is usually because the references within the code are no longer valid. Within the code window select the "Tools - References" and see if any of the ticked items is flagged as "Missing". This would indicate that MS Access cannot find a necessary file which can happen if an older database is used on a newer version of MS Access but can also happen if required files are moved or removed from the client PC</p>

Other considerations

Table Structure: It can be tempting when first creating a database to store all your data in a single table. While this may be ok for very small databases it can soon get out of hand. Before creating too much of your database it may be worth learning the basics of database normalisation as this knowledge will serve you well as your database expands.

Naming: Although naming will not break the database (Outside of using invalid names and characters for objects) they are important for future maintenance of the database; it is much easier to locate a field named "FirstName" on a form than a field named "Field12" and when looking through code this makes it easier to understand what data is being passed to or manipulated by code.

Form Design: Another important factor is the way your forms are designed. All data should be easy to locate within the form without having to search for it. Breaking the form into specific areas where related data can be grouped can help with this. It is a fine line between maximising the amount of data available to the user in a single place with avoiding clutter on the screen. Having well aligned, similarly sized controls can help with this and setting the Tab Order of controls to make sure the navigation of the form when using the tab is sensible practice.

Although not exhaustive, this list will hopefully help with identifying some of the most common issues faced by MS Access database users.

If you still require assistance, we would be happy assist where possible. You can contact us by either entering a short message in the contact form below or alternatively we offer a free database appraisal service where you fill out a brief Google Form giving an overview of your database and any issues you have with it. On receiving this form, we will produce a report detailing any issues you may have and how you could improve your database system therefore restoring it to the valuable asset it once was.

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