

CHAPTER 4: BASIC FORMS

“Pay attention only to the form; emotion will come spontaneously to inhabit it. A perfect dwelling always finds an inhabitant.”

– André Gide, “Portraits and Aphorisms,” *Pretexts*

Forms are used to display data from tables and queries on your screen. A form is the principal user interface in Access.

ADVANTAGES OVER DATASHEETS

Both Tables and Queries allow you to see and edit data in a Datasheet View. In practice, though, users use Forms to view and edit data. Forms enjoy several advantages:


- Forms can display one record at a time.
- Data can be displayed that *cannot* be edited, along with data that *can* be edited.
- Forms can mirror their paper counterparts, displaying only the necessary data.
- Through the use of queries, forms can display data from multiple tables simultaneously.
- Forms can display OLE objects, such as graphs and images; tables can't.

CREATE A FORM

To create a form:

Step 1: Click the Forms tab in the Database window.

Step 2: Click .

Step 3: Click the  to the right of the drop-down box in Figure 82 to expand the list of tables and queries.

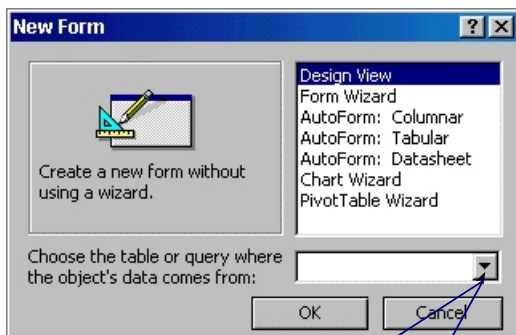



Figure 82

Step 4: Select a table or query from the list.

Step 5: Click  to close the dialog and open a new form in Design view, as shown in Figure 83.

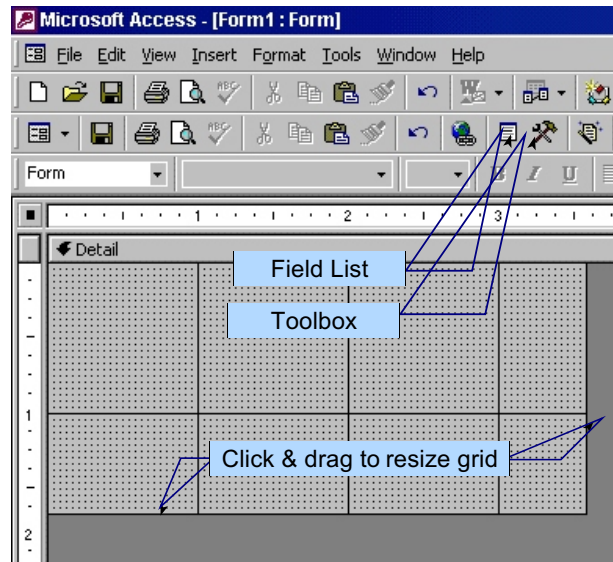




Figure 83


Step 6: Resize the grid so that is *just less than* the size of the screen.


POPULATE THE FORM

Familiarize yourself with two icons on the Form Design toolbar:

- The Toolbox icon, , toggles the Toolbox.
- The Field List icon, , toggles the Field list.

To add fields to the form:

Step 1: Click the Toolbox icon, , so the Toolbox is out of the way.

Step 2: Click the Field List icon, , to display the Field List.

Step 3: Click and drag a field from the Field List box to the Form.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT-LABEL DYAD

A bound object is an element—such as a text box, a drop-down list, a check box or an option button—that is linked to a value in a table or query. Most forms contain arrangements of bound objects. After placing a field on the form, you will get a pair of objects: a label and a text box, as seen in Figure 88.

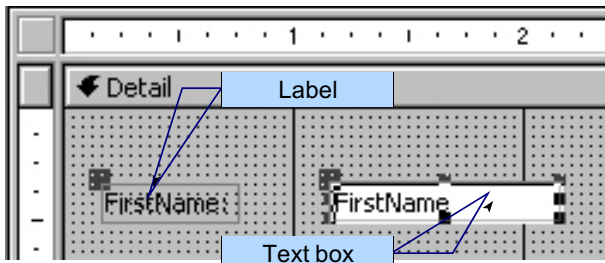



Figure 88

To understand the role of this pair, click the Form view icon, . As you can see in ?, the label stays the same; it just sits there. The text box, though, is bound to the FirstName field. It contains the FirstName field for this record. If you type a new name in this text box, it ripples back, changing the record in underlying table.

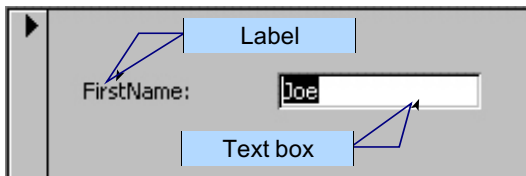



Figure 90

To return to Design view, click the Design view icon, .

RESIZE OBJECTS

You can resize objects with either the mouse or the keyboard:

- Note that both boxes have sizing handles around their perimeters. When you pass the pointer over a sizing handle, it turns into two-headed arrow, . Click and drag the sizing handles to resize the object.
- Select an object and press **Shift** **→** (or **Shift** **←**) to widen (or narrow) the object; press **Shift** **↑** (or **Shift** **↓**) to lengthen (or shorten) the object.

As you resize a text box in Design view, the status bar, seen in Figure 92, displays the number of characters

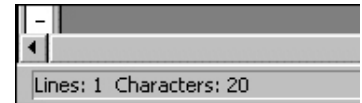


Figure 92

the box can display at run time. Access adjusts this number for changes in Font and Font Size.

AUTOSIZE LABELS


Labels are created large enough to accommodate their contents. If you later delete text, the label does not resize. You can make the label automatically resize to its contents by double-clicking any of the label's sizing handles in Design View.

THE SECOND CLICK

When working with objects in the Design view, the first click *selects* the object, the second click *opens* the object.


REPOSITION THE DYAD

To move the label-text box dyad, either:

- pass the mouse over the object until the pointer turns into a little hand, . When you see the hand, click and drag. Both the text box and its label will move to where you drop it.
- select the object and press **Ctrl** **→**, **Ctrl** **←**, **Ctrl** **↑**, or **Ctrl** **↓** to move it right, left, up, or down.

INDEPENDENT BOXES

You can move the boxes of the dyad independently. Notice that each object has a sizing handle in the upper left that is larger than the others. Pass the mouse over these over-sized boxes, and the pointer will turn into a small

black finger, . Click and drag with the finger to move the box, independent of its dyad.

SNAP TO GRID

To help you align objects on a form, Access has a snap-to-grid feature. To activate it:

- From the pull-down menu, select **Format**, **Snap to Grid**.

You can temporarily suspend the Snap To Grid feature by holding down the **Ctrl** key as you move the controls, either with your mouse or with the arrow keys.

TAB ORDER

When the insertion point (sometimes called the “cursor”), is in an object, we say that this object “has focus.” Not all objects can get focus. Labels, forms, and graphics—objects that just sit there—generally do not get focus.

The Tab Order specifies which object gets focus as you press **Tab**. To change the Tab Order:

Step 1: Right-click the form and select **Tab Order** from the pop-up menu, seen in Figure 95.

Step 2: A list of the form’s objects will appear in the right of the dialog, seen in Figure 96, reflecting the current Tab Order.

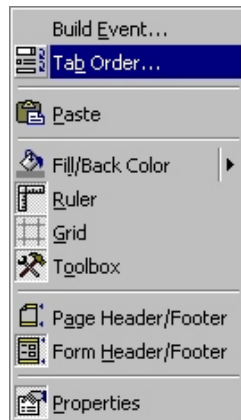


Figure 95

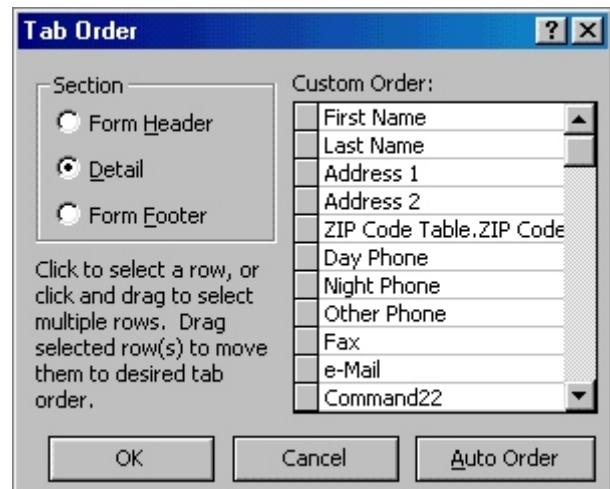


Figure 96

Step 3: Select the errant field by clicking the gray box to the left of its name.

Step 4: Drag that box up or down to its proper position.

Step 5: Repeat the last two steps until all is in order.

Step 6: When finished, click **OK** to apply your changes and close the dialog.

UNBOUND OBJECTS

An unbound object is one that appears on a form but is not linked to a particular field. For example, you might want the corporate logo to appear on the form, regardless of which record you are viewing.

ADDING OBJECTS IN DESIGN

To add an unbound object to a form in Design View:

Step 1: Click the Toolbox icon, .

- This toggles the toolbox on and off.

Step 2: Move the pointer to the body of the form and click and drag to “paint” the control.


- Do not **drag** the control from the toolbox.

Access will assign it a default name, consisting of the object type and a consecutive number, starting with 0. If the control has an attached label, Access assigns an odd number to the label and an even number to the control.

For example, if you were to add a text box to your form, its default name will be “Text0,” and its label, “Label1.”

ADD MULTIPLE CONTROLS

To add multiple controls of a single type, double-click its icon in the toolbox. This frees you from the need to reselect it each time you want another control.

To reset the current tool selection, click another control button or the Selection arrow, , in the Toolbox.

SELECT MULTIPLE CONTROLS

If you want to change the properties of several controls, you must select them and then apply the change. To select multiple controls:

- hold down **Shift** as you click each item to be selected; or,
- “paint” a fence around them: click above and to the left of one object, and then drag down and to the right, until you have them all. When you raise your mouse finger, all the objects touched by the fence—they need not be totally enclosed by it—will be selected.

If you modify the properties of one, you will modify the properties of all that are selected.

Access allows you to group multiple controls permanently. To create such a group:


Step 1: Hold down **Shift**, as you click multiple objects.

Step 2: From the pull-down menu, select **Format, Group**.

Now, when you act upon one object, you act upon them all, until you select **Format, Ungroup**.

UNDO & REVERT

While editing a form, if you make a mistake, you can undo your most recent change by:

- pressing **Ctrl Z**; or,
- clicking the Undo icon, .

You may be surprised that you can only undo the last operation, and you can’t even do that if you saved the form in the interim.

Access allows you to undo all changes since the last save. With the form open in Design view:

- From the pull-down menu, select **File, Revert**, as shown in Figure 99.

INSERT SYMBOLS

You can use a Windows® utility called Character Map to insert symbols and special characters into a field.

INSTALLING CHARACTER MAP

If CharacterMap is not installed:

Step 1: Insert your Windows® installation CD.

Step 2: From the Desktop, open My Computer, Control Panel, Add/Remove Programs.

Step 3: On the Windows Setup tab, click the words “System Tools”—*not the check box*.

Step 4: Click **Details**.

Step 5: Select the Character Map check box.

Step 6: Click **OK** twice to close the dialogs.

INSERT A SPECIAL CHARACTER

To insert a special character with Character Map:

Step 1: From the Desktop, click **Start** and select **Programs, Accessories, Character Map**.

Step 2: Select a font from the drop-down list.

- The dialog displays numerous characters in microscopic size.
- To see an individual symbol better, click it.

Step 3: When you find the desired symbol, note the series of numbers in the lower right, shown in Figure 101.

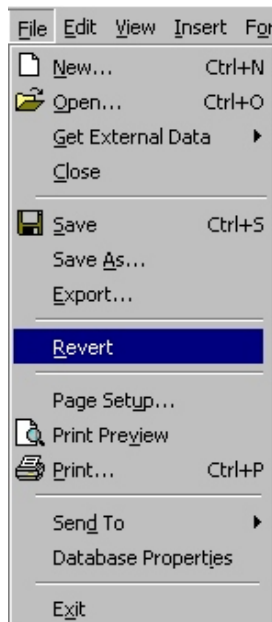


Figure 99

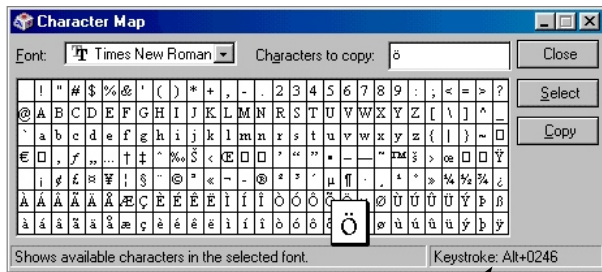
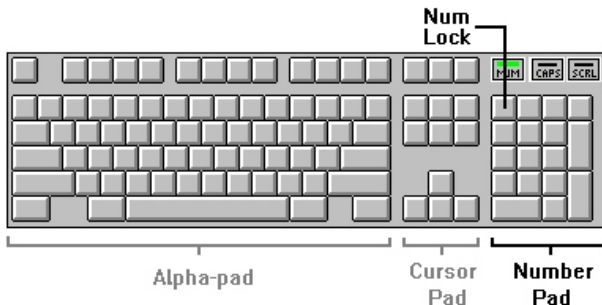


Figure 101

Alt + 0246

Step 4: Make sure NumLock is on.

- If the NumLock light is off, press



Step 5: Hold down as you type this number on the number keypad on the right of your keyboard.

SYMBOL SHORTCUT

Here's a faster way to create many common characters. Follow this rule:

- Press and then the associated letter.

For example, to get the é character in José:

Step 1: Depress and then tap .

Step 2: Lift your fingers from the keyboard.

Step 3: Type the letter .

Similarly, we can get the grave character in déjà vu:

Step 1: Depress and then tap (it's located in the upper left, under .

Step 2: Lift your fingers from the keys.

Step 3: Type the letter .

Now, using this logic, can you guess how to create the ç character in façade? What on your keyboard resembles the cedilla (the little extension under the letter c)? The comma! Press:

and then the letter

How about ç? Press:

and then the letter

Similarly, you can apply these same shortcuts to capital letters:

- to get the É character in NESTLÉ, press:
 and then
- to get the Ç character in FRANÇOIS, press:
 and then

Note that to obtain some diacritical marks you must press . For instance, to type a colon you must press .

- To get the umlaut (ä) in Häagen-Dazs, press:
 and then the letter
- To get the tilde (ñ) in El Niño, press:
 and then the letter
- To get the ê in *raison d'être*, press:
 and then the letter

AUTOCORRECT

AutoCorrect maintains a list of words and their replacements. Then, when you type a word on the AutoCorrect list, it is automatically “corrected” with the replacement word. Thus, if you type:

don ; t

Access replaces it with:

don' t

as soon as you go on.

To see how this works, consider the name José. AutoCorrect can add the diacritical mark for you. To add a word to the AutoCorrect list:

Step 1: From the pull-down menu, select Tools, AutoCorrect.

Step 2: On the AutoCorrect tab, type:

jose

in the Replace text box, and type:

José

in the With box, as shown in Figure 103.

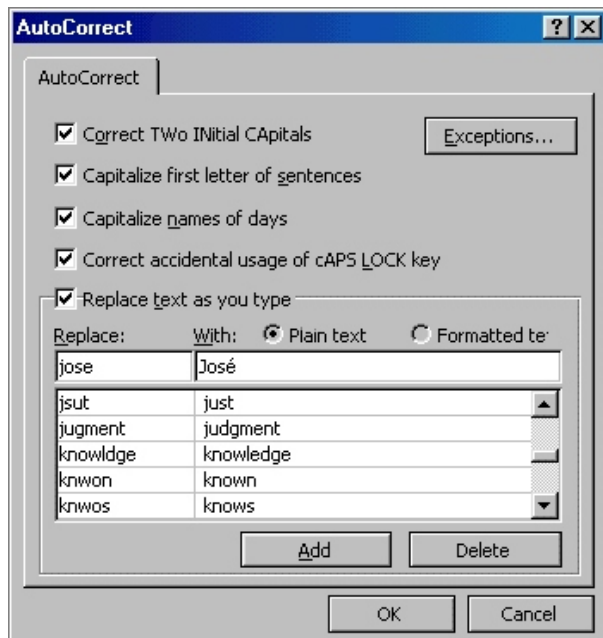


Figure 103

Step 3: Click **Add**.

Step 4: At this point you can add other words by repeating **Step 2** and **3**.

Step 5: When you are finished, click **OK**.

Step 6: Now that you are back in your document, type:

jose

followed by a space. AutoCorrect will replace it with José.

You never will spell José incorrectly again, on this PC, at least. After you type a word from the AutoCorrect Replace list, Access waits until you show that you are done with the word, by typing a punctuation mark (e.g., a comma, period, parenthesis, quotation mark), or pressing **Tab**, **Enter**, or **Space**. That way, it doesn't turn "Josephine" into "Joséphine."

DELETE FROM AUTOCORRECT

When you see the hundreds of words in the AutoCorrect Replace list, you may be tempted to add every word you misspell to the AutoCorrect Replace list. Don't. These words, along with their replacements, are all loaded into your PC's memory when Access launches. The longer the list, the less memory you have.

There are three types of words that should be in the Replace list:

- physical errors, idiosyncratic typing errors. For example, many people type "don;t" instead of "don't." It's fairly common for people to transpose letters in small words, such as "of" or "the," turning them into "fo" or "teh."
- foreign terms and proper nouns; and,
- expansions.

Simple misspellings should be deleted from the Replace list. After all, you will catch them when you run Spell Check, anyway. To delete words:

Step 1: From the pull-down menu, select Tools, AutoCorrect.

Step 2: On the AutoCorrect tab, select the word from the Replace list to be deleted.

Step 3: Click **Delete**.

Step 4: Remove as many words as you want and press **OK** when you are finished.

NULLIFY AUTOCORRECT

If you wanted to turn AutoCorrect off, you could click Tools, AutoCorrect, and deselect the "Replace text as you type" check box. Sometimes you don't want to apply AutoCorrect, but you don't want to turn it off, either. To nullify AutoCorrect, press **Back Space** or **Ctrl Z** immediately after typing the item. For example, if AutoCorrect converts :) into ☺, but you actually wanted :), type:

:)

and press **Back Space**. Then you can continue typing.

SELECTIVE USE OF AUTOCORRECT

People who enter data will amaze you with their creativity. For example, a simple street address may become:

123 Apple Avenue	123 Apple Av.
123 Apple Ave.	123 Apple av
123 Appel Av.	123 Apple ave

AutoCorrect helps you standardize data entry:

- av, av., Ave, or ave. becomes Avenue;
- dr, Dr., or dr. becomes Drive;
- st, str, St., or str. becomes Street;

and so on. Still, this presents a problem. If you use AutoCorrect to convert “st.” to “Street,” what happens if you enter St. Louis in the City field? It becomes Street Louis.

To prevent AutoCorrect from operating on some fields:

Step 1: Open the form in Design view.

Step 2: Right-click the field that you want to exclude from AutoCorrect and select Properties from the pop-up menu.

Step 3: Set the “Allow AutoCorrect” property, shown in Figure 104, to No.

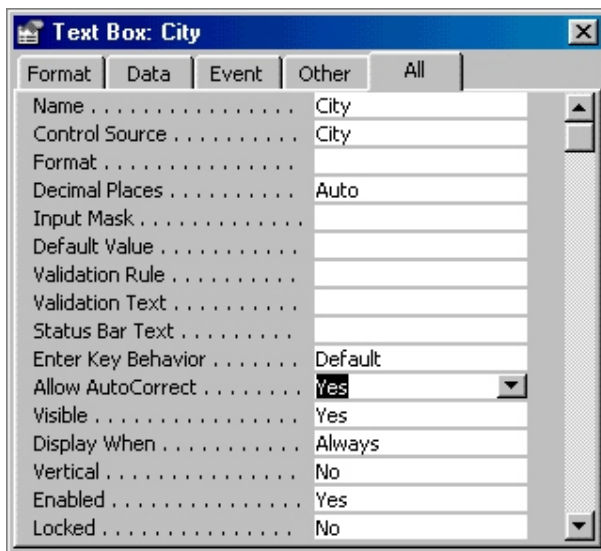


Figure 104

Step 4: Repeat this process for each field that you want to exclude from AutoCorrect.

NOTES

LAB 3: CREATING FORMS

This is one of those labs where we must train your finger more than we train your brain. That's a polite way of saying that you have to practice this; merely reading is not enough.

CREATE THE FORM

The Form itself is the only thing that most users will ever see of your database. To create a form:

Step 1: From the Database window, select Forms in the Object Bar.

Step 2: Click the New Form icon, .

Step 3: Select a table or query that contains the fields that this Form is to display—in this case, tblClients—from the drop-down list, as shown in Figure 106.

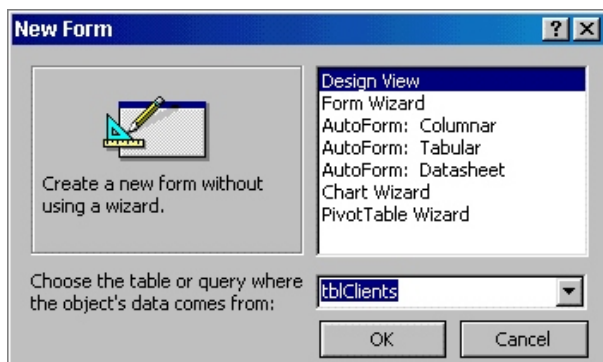




Figure 106

Step 4: Click  to open in Design view.

Step 5: Resize the gray grid so that it is slightly less than the size of your screen.

POPULATE THE FORM








Step 1: If the Field List does *not* appear, click the Field List icon, .

- If the Field List icon, , is grayed out, you did not select a valid table or query in Figure 106; if this happens, close the form and start again from the beginning.





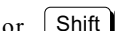

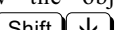
Step 2: Click and drag these fields from the Field List box to the Form:


- FirstName
- LastName
- Address
- ZIPCode

Step 3: Reposition each label-text box dyad; try both of these methods:

-  Pass the mouse over the text box. When the pointer turns into a little hand, , click and drag the dyad to its new position.
-  Select the object and press , , , or  to move it right, left, up, or down.

Step 4: Resize the objects; again, try both methods:

-  Pass your mouse over a sizing handle. When it turns into two headed arrow, , click and drag the sizing handle to resize the object.
-  Select an object and press  to widen or  or narrow the object; press  to lengthen or  to shorten the object.

Step 5: Pass the mouse over the over-sized handles in the object's upper left. When the pointer turns into a small black finger, , click and drag the one object, independently of its corresponding partner.

See if you can position the objects as in Figure 111:

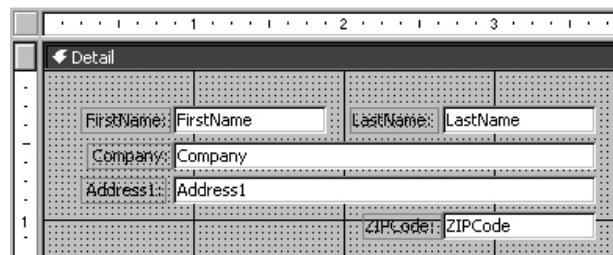





Figure 111

To see the results, either:

-  press **F5**; or
-  click the Form view icon, .

SELECTING MULTIPLE OBJECTS

You are not limited to adjusting your form object-by-object. You can select multiple objects and then whatever you do to one, you will do to all.

One way to select multiple objects is to hold down **Shift** as you click an object. When you use this method, clicking a text box will not select its label dyad, and vice versa.

If the objects you want to select are altogether in a block, you can use another method, called roping the objects. To rope multiple objects, click and drag from above and to the left of the upper left object to the lower right object, as shown in Figure 113.

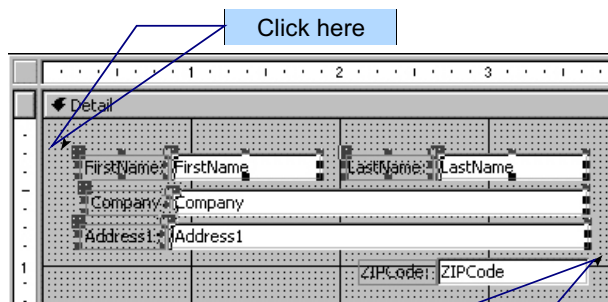


Figure 113

When you lift your finger, sizing handles will appear around each object you enclosed in the “rope.”

Actually, that last statement is slightly misleading. As seen in Figure 113, you do not have to fully enclose the objects with the rope. By default, Access will select any object that you even partially cover with the selection rope. You can change this behavior:

Step 1: From the pull-down menu, select **T**ools, **O**ptions.

Step 2: On the Forms/Reports tab, select the Fully Enclosed option button.

Step 3: Click  to save your changes and close the dialog.

Now, the selection rope must completely enclose a control for it to be selected.

REFINE THE FORM

When you get the objects close to the right position, let Access achieve perfection:

Step 1: Hold down **Shift** as you click the FirstName and LastName text boxes and labels.

- You should see sizing handles around the objects, as seen in Figure 114.

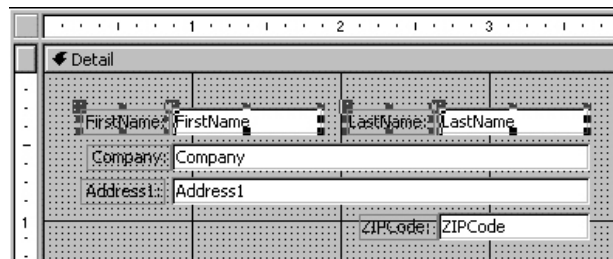


Figure 114

Step 2: From the pull-down menu, select **F**ormat, **A**lign, **T**op, as seen in Figure 115.

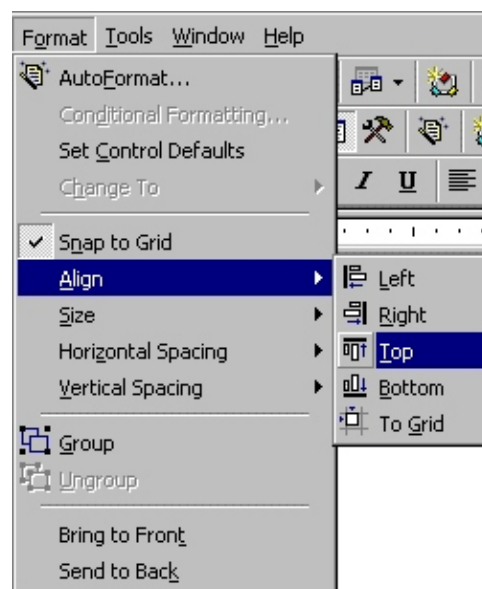



Figure 115


Step 3: Click on the form and drag down and slightly to the right so that you have “roped” the FirstName, Company, and Address1 dyads.

Step 4: From the pull-down menu, select **F**ormat, **V**ertical Spacing, **M**ake **E**qual.

ADD LINES

To add a line:

Step 1: Click the Toolbox icon, , to turn on the Toolbox toolbar.

Step 2: Click the Line icon, .

Step 3: Move over to the form (do *not* drag it from the toolbox!).

Step 4: Click and drag to “paint” the line on the form.

- Hold down **Shift** *before* you click-and-drag to create a perfectly horizontal or vertical line.

DELETE A LINE

To delete a line, simply click it and press **Delete**. If it’s hard to select the line, try dragging a rope around it.

OLE OBJECTS

To add an unbound picture to a form, open the form in Design View.

Step 1: Click the Unbound Object Frame button in the Toolbox.

Step 2: Move the pointer to the form and then click and drag to create the area where the image should appear.

- The Insert Object dialog will appear.

Step 3: Select Microsoft Clip Gallery.


Step 4: Select a picture, and click **Insert**.

Step 5: To make the picture fit the frame, right-click the graphic and select Size To Fit.

CENTER A TITLE

If you want to center a title on your form, you might do it with the mouse. When you start out, positioning and sizing objects with your mouse is fun, but it gets old fast. This manual approach leaves a lot to be desired:

- it is slow;
- it is inaccurate;
- using the mouse more than necessary is a bad idea.

You might try clicking the Center alignment icon, , on the Formatting toolbar. Unfortunately, that centers the caption within its box. The solution is to make the box the


width of the grid, and then center the title within the control.

USING AUTOFORM

The AutoForm Wizards are tools that you can use to create a Form quickly. AutoForm comes in three flavors: Columnar, Tabular, and Datasheet. To create an AutoReport:

Step 1: Except for the Database window, close all windows.

Step 2: In the Objects list, select Forms.

Step 3: Click the New Form icon, .

Step 4: In the options list, select:

- AutoForm: Columnar;
- AutoForm: Tabular; or,
- AutoForm: Datasheet.

Step 5: Select the object on which the form is to be built, as shown in Figure 120.

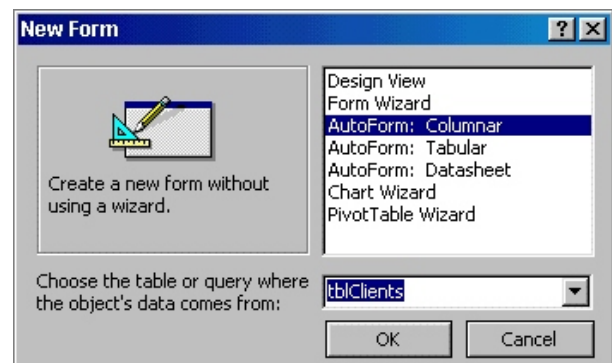


Figure 120

Step 6: Click **OK**.

The machine will whirl for a moment, and the results will appear. As shown in Figure 121, a Columnar AutoForm places each field in one long column, one record to a screen.

Id number	0094329
Last name	Spies
First name	Wayne
Middle Initial	D
Phone number	203-555-1212
First Topic choice	Electrical Engineering
Second choice	Computer Science

Figure 121

A Tabular AutoForm, shown in Figure 122, places each field in its own column, and displays multiple records on a screen, in table form.

Id no	Last name	First name	Middle Initial	Phone	First Topic choice	Second choice	TI
009	Spies	Wayne	D	203-5	Electrical En	Computer Sc	M
098	Grape	Susan	M	203-1	Cats	Macular Dise	R
116	Walsh	Fave	A	203-4	Sports	Back Proble	C
123	Knave	B		203-6	Medicine	Patient Right	M


Figure 122

Finally, a Datasheet AutoForm creates a form that resembles a datasheet, as shown in Figure 123.

Id num	Last name	First name	Mid	Phone number
0094329	Spies	Wayne	D	203-555-1212
0982348	Grape	Susan	M	203-113-9955
1167832	Walsh	Fred	A	203-447-9296

Figure 123

EDITING AN AUTOFORM

You edit an AutoForm just like you would edit a Form created by hand. To go to the Design view, click the Design view icon, .

LIMITATIONS


The AutoForms are quick and easy, but they have several limitations that make them unsuitable for most uses:

- All fields will appear.
- Fields appear in the order in which they appear in the underlying object.
- The results, particularly for the Tabular AutoForm, may require significant editing.


FORM WIZARD


Step 1: Except for the Database window, close all windows.

Step 2: In the Objects list, select Forms.

Step 3: Click the New Form icon, .

Step 4: In the options list, select Form Wizard.

Step 5: Select the object on which the form is to be built and click .

Step 6: From the list of Available Fields, select a field to display in the form and click .



- To select all of the fields, click .
- To deselect a field, select it from the list of Selected Fields, and click .
- Add the fields in the order you want them to appear in your form.



Figure 126

Step 7: When you have selected all of the fields that you want to appear, click **Next >**.

Step 8: Select a layout from the list in Figure 129 and click **Next >**.

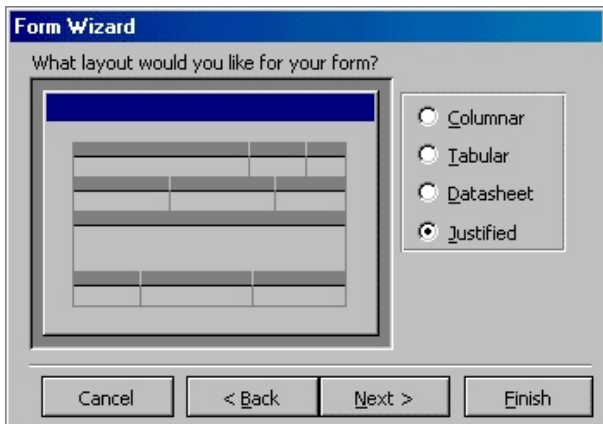


Figure 129

Step 9: Select a style from the list in Figure 131, and click **Next >**.

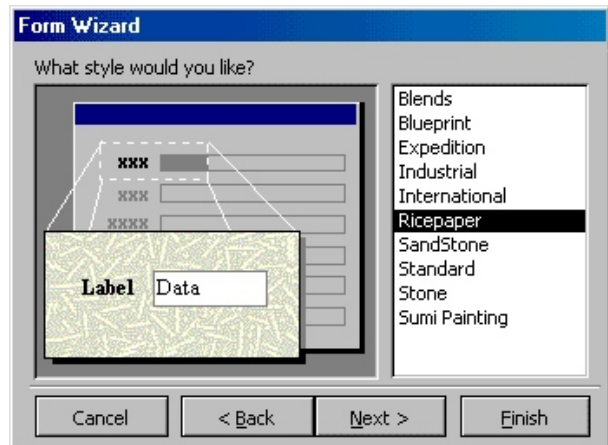


Figure 131

Step 10: Name the form in accordance with the naming convention, as shown in Figure 132, and click **Finish**.

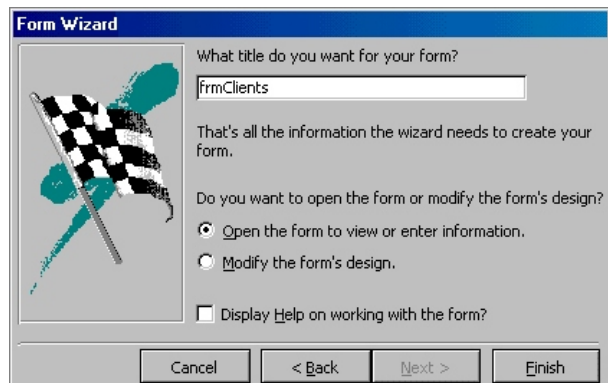


Figure 132

NOTES