

## Making a basic database in AppleWorks by Cindy O'Hora

Before you start a new database from scratch, look at the prefab ones in Assistants / Stationery. There is one for names and addresses that will get you through the Christmas card crunch! You could save a lot of time if one of them fits your needs. I'm assuming you had no such luck.

**Database** allows you to document a collection of items. Some examples are: names and addresses, a collection of books or CDs, a box of dog eared recipes, or a collection of computer tips. More importantly, it allows you to search for individual or groups of items, to sort them, and to add data from them (Mail Merge) into certificates, letters, envelopes. Making address labels starts here! Best of all, you can calculate with numeric data fields! Every leader should have a database of their group!

Whatever you are organizing, there are some vocabulary words you need to learn.

- **Record:** A record refers to the data you enter for an individual item. For books a record might include: the author, title, publisher, etc.
- **Field:** the individual pieces of data you enter singly for each record. So "author" would be a field.
- **Browse:** Look at the data as records
- **List:** view the database in a column appearance like a spreadsheet
- **Layout:** accesses the background of a record. It permits you to revise the placement of the fields and other attributes of the records. A change here appears in **all** the records.

To begin you must create the first blank record. What you separate into individual fields can make a big difference in the functionality of your database. Make distinct fields for items like last name and first name or street address. Once you get the swing of entering info, the separate fields will be easy to handle.

- ★ It is definitely to your advantage to have a field for prefixes like, Ms., Mrs., and Mr. if you plan to use the database in a professional setting.
- ★ Yes, you should separate the City, State, and Zip in unique fields. I just worked with a women who had 123 records. She certainly wished she had done that. The flexibility and powerful features of database lies in these separate fields for your data!
- ★ Summary and calculation fields will let you calculate numeric data within a single record and for all records. Enter numbers as numbers like grade - 3 not 3rd or third.

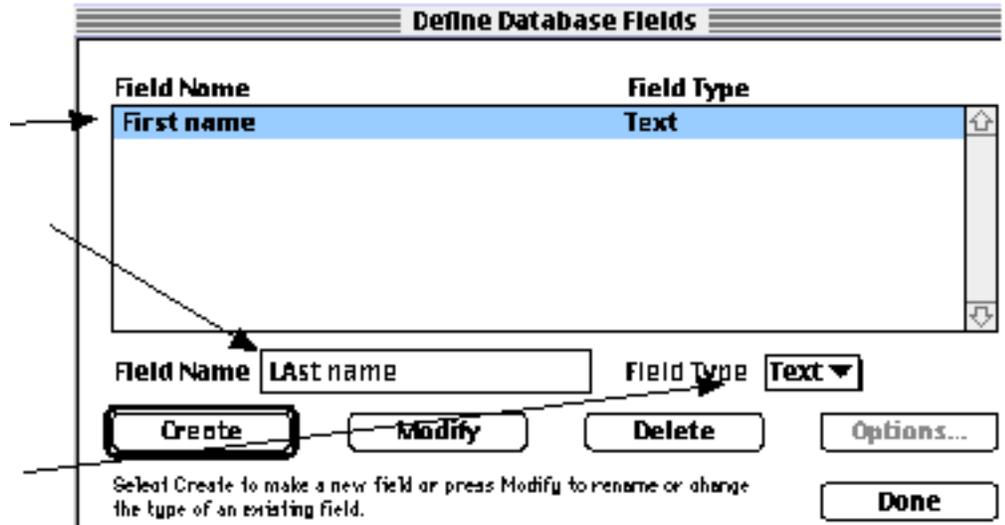
**Open a new database.** You see the Define Database Fields box.

**Enter the first field's name.** I have entered First name.

**Click Create.** You'll now see the "First name" field is entered in the top box.

Continue entering your individual fields here until you have created all the desired fields.

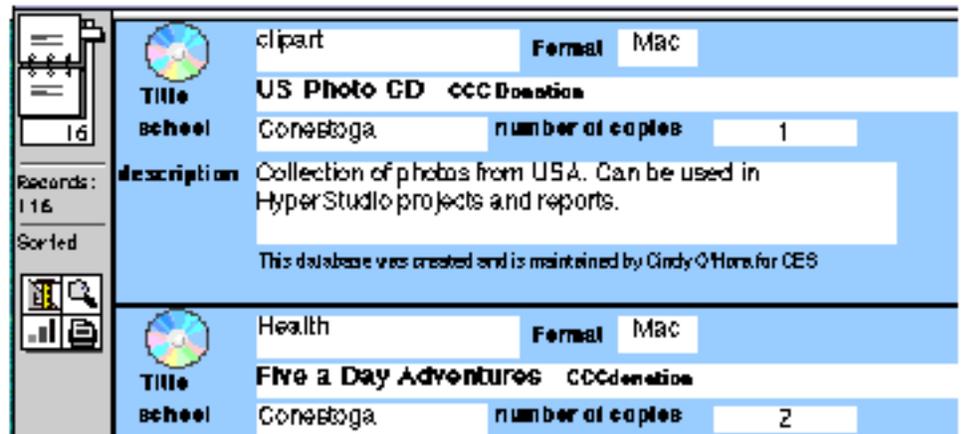
**Field Type:** This pop up menu has many settings that increase the flexibility of your database. I'll explore this more in the [fancy field stuff](#) lesson.



**Rule of thumb: Numbers:** If you are entering numbers that you might want to calculate with later, be sure to change the setting in Field Type to Number. On the other hand, DO NOT make a zip code field a number field. (see later in lesson)

When I created this database for the school's CD software I created a field for the number of copies of each title we had. I set it as a text field.

I planned to track of the total CDs in the **Records:** area on the left side of the database.



Unfortunately, I did not foresee that we might purchase many CDs in multiple copies to facilitate use. The 116 records does reflect how many titles we have, but not the total number of CD's.

If I had made the "number of copies" field a number field, I could have made a summary formula that would calculate the total number of CDs in the collection. If I change the "number of copies" to numbers

now, I could lose all the non convertible data. :-(

The good news is that I entered the info as number characters like 2 rather than two. So wonder of wonders, it converted painlessly. :-)

Word to the wise: when in doubt, enter numbers as numbers and not text.

## **Every good rule has exceptions:**

**Zip Codes:** One exception to the "number" field type rule is zip codes. If you enter zip codes as numbers, AppleWorks will remove the leading zero from zips like 09876. This will be most unsatisfactory when you try to address envelopes or make mailing labels. So leave zip codes, membership numbers & social security numbers as text.

**Layout...Layout** - it is all in how you look at it or "Making it look nice".

As you build the database, you will find the fields are presented in the order of creation - top down. I suggest you get all your fields created and then go to Layout...Layout. This is where you can change the appearance of your database. Layout is where I added the [CD picture and the colored background](#) to the example shown earlier. Settings made in Layout will appear in every record in Browse. [See index for more on tweaking the layout.](#)

FAQ - Can you add fields after you have started entering info? Sure, you can. The bugger is that you will have to go back and add it to the records you have already created. But it won't kill you. As I have grown as a database creator I have gotten wiser about fields. But I still find as I use it that the occasional add is necessary and certainly worth the trouble.

## **Get entering!**

To make a new record go command ⌘... R or Edit ... New Record. Keep in mind, that you do not have to enter you records in a particular order. Using the [sort function](#) we can alphabetize/prioritize your database later!

Use the tab key to move through the fields entering data. When you have finished one record, just go ⌘.. R and start entering the next. I make a point of saving regularly because I would just hate to lose data.

## Adjust the tab order

You may find, after you work with your database a while, that you want to **adjust the tab order**. To adjust it **Go Layout...Tab Order**. Create your new order by selecting the fields in the left hand box and "Moving" them to the right hand one in the tab order you desire. This will NOT change the appearance of the record. It will change the order of fields as you tab.

[Database tips index](#)

"The doors of wisdom are never shut." ~Benjamin Franklin

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