MySQL Functions

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Module 5.2 MySQL Functions

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The ABS (Absolute Value) Function

The ABS(x) function returns the absolute value of a number. It has a single argument and it returns a datatype derived from the datatype of the argument. One implication of this is that if using a signed BIGINT value as x then the minimum number that could be used is -263 -1 even though the BIGINT datatype allows for -263. This is because the sign takes up one bit of the signed BIGINT datatype, so the positive limit (or returned value) is the limiting magnitude. If the argument is null, the function returns null.

The ABS function is a straightforward math function that has equivalents in every programming language. It can be very useful in a wide variety of applications. At the core though the function returns the positive number equivalent of the argument as in Figure 1 (Oracle, 2025).

A black screen with white text

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Figure 1 Example of ABS() Function Usage

The STRCMP (String Compare) Function

The STRCMP(expr1, expr2) has two arguments of datatype string, or something that can be interpreted as datatype string. The function compares the two strings and returns “0” if the arguments are the same. As in Figure 2, if according to the current sort order the first argument is smaller than the second the function returns “-1”. Conversely, if the second argument is smaller the function returns “1” (Oracle, 2025).

A screenshot of a computer program

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Figure 2 Example of STRCMP() usage

The COUNT Function

The COUNT(expr) is an aggregating function that must be used in conjunction with a grouping clause expression unless the special case of COUNT(\*) is used. In the case of usage with grouping caluse. Count() will return the number of non-null rows applicable to each group (Oracle, 2025). Figure 3 shows an example of the number of actors that starred per movie category in the Sakira database

A screenshot of a computer

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Figure 3 Demonstration of COUNT() Function

# Works Cited

Oracle. (2025). *MySQL 8.4 Reference Manual*. Retrieved from MySQL: https://dev.mysql.com/doc/refman/8.4/en/