

Data Objects

- Data sets are made up of data objects.
- A **data object** represents an entity.
- Examples:
 - sales database: customers, store items, sales
 - medical database: patients, treatments
 - university database: students, professors, courses
- Also called *samples*, *examples*, *instances*, *data points*, *objects*, *tuples*.
- Data objects are described by **attributes**.
- Database rows -> data objects; columns -> attributes.

Attributes

- **Attribute (or dimensions, features, variables)**: a data field, representing a characteristic or feature of a data object.
 - *E.g., customer_ID, name, address*
- Types:
 - Nominal
 - Binary
 - Numeric: quantitative
 - Interval-scaled
 - Ratio-scaled

Attribute Types

- **Nominal:** categories, states, or “names of things”
 - *Hair_color* = {*auburn, black, blond, brown, grey, red, white*}
 - marital status, occupation, ID numbers, zip codes
- **Binary**
 - Nominal attribute with only 2 states (0 and 1)
 - Symmetric binary: both outcomes equally important
 - e.g., gender
 - Asymmetric binary: outcomes not equally important.
 - e.g., medical test (positive vs. negative)
 - Convention: assign 1 to most important outcome (e.g., HIV positive)
- **Ordinal**
 - Values have a meaningful order (ranking) but magnitude between successive values is not known.
 - *Size* = {*small, medium, large*}, grades, army rankings

Numeric Attribute Types

- Quantity (integer or real-valued)
- **Interval**
 - Measured on a scale of **equal-sized units**
 - Values have order
 - E.g., *temperature in C° or F°, calendar dates*
- **Ratio**
 - Inherent **zero-point**
 - We can speak of values as being an order of magnitude larger than the unit of measurement (10 K° is twice as high as 5 K°).
 - e.g., *temperature in Kelvin, length, counts*

Discrete vs. Continuous Attributes

■ Discrete Attribute

- Has only a finite or countably infinite set of values
 - E.g., zip codes, profession, or the set of words in a collection of documents
- Sometimes, represented as integer variables
- Note: Binary attributes are a special case of discrete attributes

■ Continuous Attribute

- Has real numbers as attribute values
 - E.g., temperature, height, or weight
- Practically, real values can only be measured and represented using a finite number of digits
- Continuous attributes are typically represented as floating-point variables