

Codd's 12 Rules

Dr Edgar F. Codd did some extensive research in Relational Model of database systems and came up with twelve rules of his own which according to him, a database must obey in order to be a true relational database.

These rules can be applied on a database system that is capable of managing is stored data using only its relational capabilities. This is a foundation rule, which provides a base to imply other rules on it.

Rule 1: Information rule

This rule states that all information (data), which is stored in the database, must be a value of some table cell. Everything in a database must be stored in table formats. This information can be user data or meta-data.

Rule 2: Guaranteed Access rule

This rule states that every single data element (value) is guaranteed to be accessible logically with combination of table-name, primary-key (row value) and attribute-name (column value). No other means, such as pointers, can be used to access data.

Rule 3: Systematic Treatment of NULL values

This rule states the NULL values in the database must be given a systematic treatment. As a NULL may have several meanings, i.e. NULL can be interpreted as one the following: data is missing, data is not known, data is not applicable etc.

Rule 4: Active online catalog

This rule states that the structure description of whole database must be stored in an online catalog, i.e. data dictionary, which can be accessed by the authorized users. Users can use the same query language to access the catalog which they use to access the database itself.

Rule 5: Comprehensive data sub-language rule

This rule states that a database must have a support for a language which has linear syntax which is capable of data definition, data manipulation and transaction management operations. Database can be accessed by means of this language only, either directly or by means of some application. If the database can be accessed or manipulated in some way without any help of this language, it is then a violation.

Rule 6: View updating rule

This rule states that all views of database, which can theoretically be updated, must also be updatable by the system.

Rule 7: High-level insert, update and delete rule

This rule states the database must employ support high-level insertion, updation and deletion. This must not be limited to a single row that is, it must also support union, intersection and minus operations to yield sets of data records.

Rule 8: Physical data independence

This rule states that the application should not have any concern about how the data is physically stored. Also, any change in its physical structure must not have any impact on application.

Rule 9: Logical data independence

This rule states that the logical data must be independent of its user's view (application). Any change in logical data must not imply any change in the application using it. For example, if two tables are merged or one is split into two different tables, there should be no impact the change on user application. This is one of the most difficult rule to apply.

Rule 10: Integrity independence

This rule states that the database must be independent of the application using it. All its integrity constraints can be independently modified without the need of any change in the application. This rule makes database independent of the front-end application and its interface.

Rule 11: Distribution independence

This rule states that the end user must not be able to see that the data is distributed over various locations. User must also see that data is located at one site only. This rule has been proven as a foundation of distributed database systems.

Rule 12: Non-subversion rule

This rule states that if a system has an interface that provides access to low level records, this interface then must not be able to subvert the system and bypass security and integrity constraints.