

Search for questions, people, and topics

Sign In

NoSQL MySQL Database Systems

Should a newbie learn SQL or NoSQL?

Promoted by SlamData

Native analytics for MongoDB. Try it today.

SlamData is plug-and-play BI on live Mongo data. There's no ETL or mapping.

Free trial at slamdata.com

8 Answers



Joe Emison, Certified MySQL 5 DBA & Developer

Updated Sep 2, 2015

I am loathe to disagree with [Jeremy Zawodny](#) (as I am past and current user and consumer of many things he has done), but I'll do it just a little here.

I would spend more than a few days learning SQL (through MySQL)--I would use it exclusively for your first few projects. You should do this for a number of reasons:

1. At the end of the day, less than 1% of all web apps are difficult to scale using MySQL, so the arguable core benefit of NoSQL is irrelevant
2. You will appreciate the limitations of NoSQL much more if you learn SQL and how to exploit and tune relational database structures. I view learning NoSQL first as equivalent to learning Perl before you've learned any kind of structured language or any language with a strong OO setting (yes, Perl has OO support now... which is not very widely used). That is to say that you can make a huge mess in a NoSQL database and not know that it doesn't have to be that way.
3. So much data is relational and therefore better suited for SQL databases than NoSQL databases. There's a crazy question here on Quora--[Am I making a big mistake by choosing MongoDB for my e-commerce website? Is it better to go with RDMBS or NoSQL?](#) (Answer: Yes!)--that promotes a terrible idea (e-commerce data is classic relational data, and is not appropriate for NoSQL), but because NoSQL is so hot, developers just have to try it
4. NoSQL is evolving incredibly quickly. There is no standard engine, interface, or company delivering solutions. If you pick a NoSQL engine now, you can guarantee that in 1-2 years there will be something better, and it's possible (even likely) that whichever engine+version you picked has been deprecated. On the other hand, MySQL 5.0 was released in 2003 and is still the core of the MySQL experience.
5. It's going to be easier to learn SQL comprehensively than NoSQL. MySQL has a really nice certification program. You don't actually have to go through the certification program to get the benefits, though--just buy a used copy of the certification book (you can use the 5.0 one or the 5.1 one) for \$25 and read through it. You'll have a comprehensive knowledge of SQL and the MySQL engine.

Master relational databases in the same way you would master Java to understand basic programming, and then check out whichever NoSQL engine seems the most dominant when you're able to appreciate the benefits and limitations.

Edit: I am returning to this answer 4 years later, because I think that the world has changed just a little bit. I stand by what I said above, but I would add that hosted data-store/search services like Firebase, Parse, and Algolia make me want to recommend that all engineers learn and understand JSON and how JSON-based datastores work. The user experience that it is possible to deliver with Firebase + Algolia is astounding, especially given the cost (low) and the speed with which you can deploy (blazingly fast). So I still think SQL over NoSQL (although what *is* NoSQL these days anyhow?), but I think we may be

Related Questions

[Should I learn SQL or NoSQL? MySQL or MongoDB? And why?](#)

[How hard is NoSQL to learn?](#)

[Which is easier to learn from scratch: SQL or NoSQL?](#)

[Do you really need learn SQL to learn noSQL?](#)

[Which NOSQL database should I learn?](#)

[Why should I learn NoSQL?](#)

[How can SQL users learn NoSQL quickly?](#)

[How do I gain experience in SQL/NoSQL?](#)

[How hard is it to learn SQL?](#)

[What is a NoSQL database and why is it important?](#)

[+ Ask New Question](#)

Help us improve Quora:
Is this answer up to date?

YesNo

28.3k Views · 79 Upvotes

Related Questions

More Answers Below

Should I learn SQL or NoSQL? MySQL or MongoDB? And why?


How hard is NoSQL to learn?

Which is easier to learn from scratch: SQL or NoSQL?

Do you really need learn SQL to learn noSQL?

Which NOSQL database should I learn?

+ Ask New Question

Peter O'Kelly, Conceptual data modeling is your friend
Answered Dec 20, 2011

There is no single "NoSQL" to learn; it's a collection of technologies, many proprietary, that are all over the map at this point.

If you gain a solid understanding of SQL by exploring a relational DBMS such as MySQL or Postgres, you'll develop skills that will be applicable to several NoSQL systems as well ("NoSQL" means "Not Only SQL" these days, not "No SQL" as in "Just say 'no' to SQL"), so I'd definitely start with SQL and then determine if a flavor of NoSQL is likely to be advantageous for the Web apps you're working on.

Help us improve Quora:
Is this answer up to date?

YesNo

6.5k Views · 8 Upvotes · Answer requested by George Gilbert

Jeremy Zawodny, craigslist engineer: perl, mysql, sphinx, redis, mongodb, etc.
Answered Jul 25, 2011

You will ultimately want to learn both so that you understand their strengths and weaknesses and can choose the right tool for the job.

My advice is to spend a few days learning SQL basics and MySQL. And then spend a few days learning MongoDB (or your favorite NoSQL engine). See which feels more natural for a "first project" (you should really have a first project in mind if you're just learning Rails anyway).

Over time you'll start to get a sense of what works where.

6k Views · 13 Upvotes · Answer requested by Ralph Wintle

Erle Czar Mantos, programmer geek
Answered Dec 12, 2014

Everytime I have to choose a data storage mechanism, I would always default to a SQL database, with its solid foundation, many years of battle-tested performance and ACID compliance. It is only when a traditional SQL database doesn't meet my needs that I consider a NoSQL database.

With that said, I would say learn SQL first. You will learn a lot about database design, normalization and you'll learn the importance of ACID-compliance. Then go learn NoSQL if you think you really need to.

NoSQL was created because people who ALREADY knew SQL (and the theory behind them) felt it doesn't meet their performance criteria and they don't really need all the cruft that comes with a traditional SQL database.

If you are still on the learning stage, I feel that you really need to learn the theory behind RDBMS and SQL, before you start venturing to systems that don't hold your hand as much.

Should I learn SQL or NoSQL? MySQL or MongoDB? And why?

How hard is NoSQL to learn?

Which is easier to learn from scratch: SQL or NoSQL?

Do you really need learn SQL to learn noSQL?

Which NOSQL database should I learn?

Why should I learn NoSQL?

How can SQL users learn NoSQL quickly?

How do I gain experience in SQL/NoSQL?

How hard is it to learn SQL?

What is a NoSQL database and why is it important?

Ask New Question

teacher used to say.

5k Views · 5 Upvotes

Related Questions

Why should I learn NoSQL?

How can SQL users learn NoSQL quickly?

How do I gain experience in SQL/NoSQL?

How hard is it to learn SQL?

What is a NoSQL database and why is it important?

Should I learn SQL?

What do big websites like Facebook, Google, Twitter, and LinkedIn use for their database? What would be the pros and cons of what they use and...

Whether to go for SQL or noSQL?

Why is it important to learn SQL?

How do I learn NoSQL database on Windows OS?

[+ Ask New Question](#)

[Should I learn SQL or NoSQL? MySQL or MongoDB? And why?](#)

[How hard is NoSQL to learn?](#)

[Which is easier to learn from scratch: SQL or NoSQL?](#)

[Do you really need learn SQL to learn noSQL?](#)

[Which NOSQL database should I learn?](#)

[Why should I learn NoSQL?](#)

[How can SQL users learn NoSQL quickly?](#)

[How do I gain experience in SQL/NoSQL?](#)

[How hard is it to learn SQL?](#)

[What is a NoSQL database and why is it important?](#)

[Ask New Question](#)