JSON, or JavaScript Object Notation, is a data format that’s popular due to fact that it is easy to read and understand for humans while also being lightweight. It’s very commonly used for sending information across internet.

BSON, or Binary JavaScript Object Notation, is a binary encoded JSON file. They are both data formats, but BSON is nowhere near as human readable as JSON is. Instead, BSON focuses on being fast to build and scan making data quires faster. It is also even more lightweight than JSON and so is able to store more data more data more efficiently. Finally, BSON is able to store more datatypes than JSON, for example, JSON doesn’t support the ObjectId type, but BSON does.

Because BSON is not human-readable, it must be parsed, both when the data is written to the file, and when it is read from the file by a human. It is generally parsed to and from JSON. When writing to a BSON file, it feels very similar to writing to a JSON file. When working with MongoDB you can tell you are writing to a BSON file because of the addition of the ObjectId field.

When using databases that utilize BSON like MongoDB, you don’t actually have to know much about BSON because everything you write will initially be in JSON and then be encoded into BSON. At first, I was a bit worried that I would have to know how to write my documents in the BSON format so the automatic encoding was a relief.