Timesaver Guide: MySQL Workbench

A collection of tips on how you can save time using MySQL Workbench

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Timesaver Guide: MySQL Workbench

You likely spend a lot of time in your IDE. Any time you can save while using it is a good thing.

In this guide, you'll learn a few tips on how to save time using MySQL Workbench

Here's the summary:

- Create a new editor tab using Ctrl + T (Windows) or Cmd + T (Mac).
- Execute All and Execute Current Statement behave differently and it's good to know how.
- Use the Beautify option to quickly clean up messy queries.
- Open the Preferences window with Ctrl + , (Windows) or Cmd + , (Mac).
- Use the Object Info panel on the bottom left to easily see the columns of the selected table.
- View the full error message of an error by using Copy Response and pasting it into the editor.
- Learn to use the Snippet panel to save, insert, and copy common pieces of SQL code.
- Auto-complete parts of your SQL query by using the code completion feature.

Let's get into the details.

Shortcut for New File

In many programs, the keyboard shortcut for a new file is Ctrl + N (or Cmd + N on Mac).

However, in MySQL, using this shortcut will open a New Model.

This opens a new tab and offers you the ability to create a new database model.

I've done this accidentally so many times. It takes a few seconds to wait for the tab to load, then close it, then use the right shortcut.

The right shortcut to open a new SQL tab or editor window is **Ctrl + T** (Windows) or **Cmd + T** (Mac).

It may take some time to remember, but just know it's different to what you may expect.

To close a tab, the shortcut is Ctrl + W (Windows) or Cmd + W (Mac).

Difference between Run All and Run Current Statement

There are two ways to run a query in MySQL Workbench:

- Execute All (Ctrl + Shift + Enter for Windows, Cmd + Shift + Enter for Mac)
- Execute Current Statement (Ctrl + Enter for Windows, Cmd + Enter for Mac)

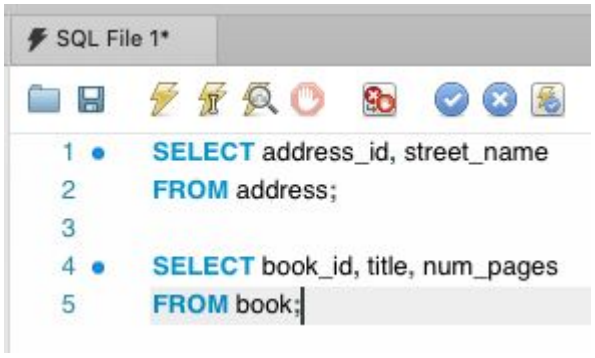
The first two lightning bolt buttons on the toolbar represent these options.

So what's the difference?

It depends on how many queries are in your tab and how you've selected them.

In short, the Execute All command runs all queries, and Execute Current Statement runs only the statement where your cursor is.

Let's say you have multiple queries, like this:



Here are the scenarios:

Scenario	Execute All	Execute Current Statement
Cursor inside one query	Executes all queries	Executes the query where the cursor is
Select one query	Executes only the selected query	Executes only the selected query
Select two queries	Executes the two selected queries	Executes a single query (the one where the cursor ended)
Select all queries	Executes all queries	Executes a single query (the one where the cursor ended)

Most of the time I'm using Execute Current Statement by using Ctrl + Enter or Cmd + Enter.

Use Beautify on Messy Queries

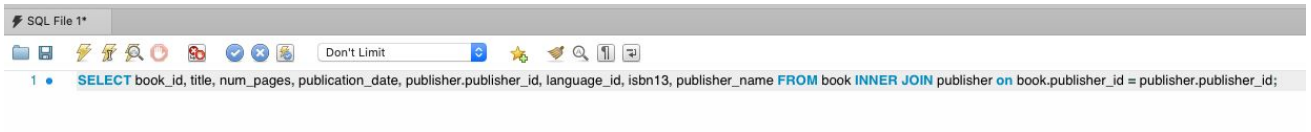
Sometimes you'll need to open a query that isn't well formatted. This could be something you copy and pasted from another file or from your application code.

To make it easier to work with the query in MySQL Workbench, it can be helpful to Beautify it first. This is a feature that quickly formats the query to make it easier to read.

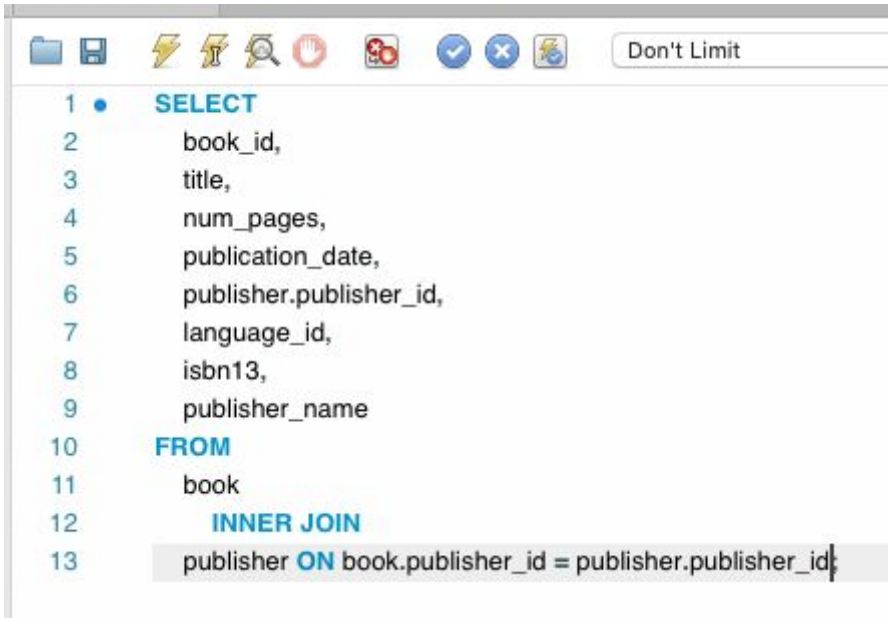
The Beautify feature is a paintbrush icon on the toolbar:

Here's what a query can look like before and after beautifying.

Before:



After:



It may not be in the style you prefer, but it's often a lot easier to work with than a messy query.

Open Preferences with Keyboard

If you need to change the preferences in MySQL Workbench, you can use the mouse to go to the menu and select Preferences.

Or, you can open it faster with the keyboard: Ctrl + , (Windows) or Cmd + , (Mac).

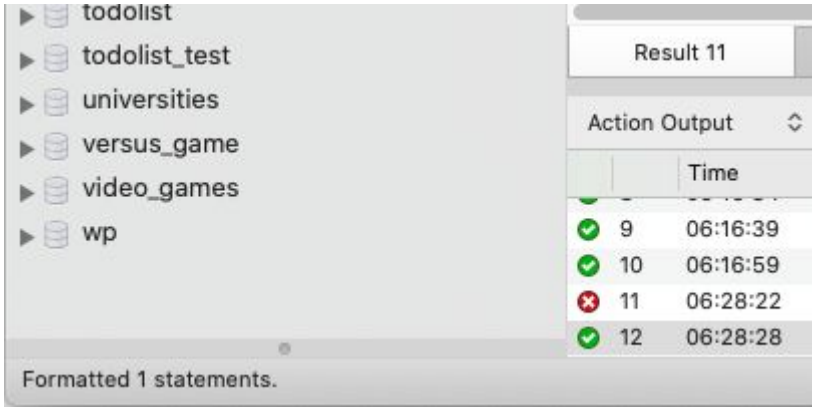
This can save you time if it's something you do often.

Use the Object Info Tab to See Table Details

When you view the tables in your database in the Schema List on the left, you can easily see what columns they contain. This is helpful for writing queries as you can see the column names.

To see this, go to the Schema list on the left and drag the panel up from the bottom of the screen.

This is what it looks like before:



After you drag it up, this is what you'll see:

I've selected a table called "publisher" in the database, and this shows the column names and data types.

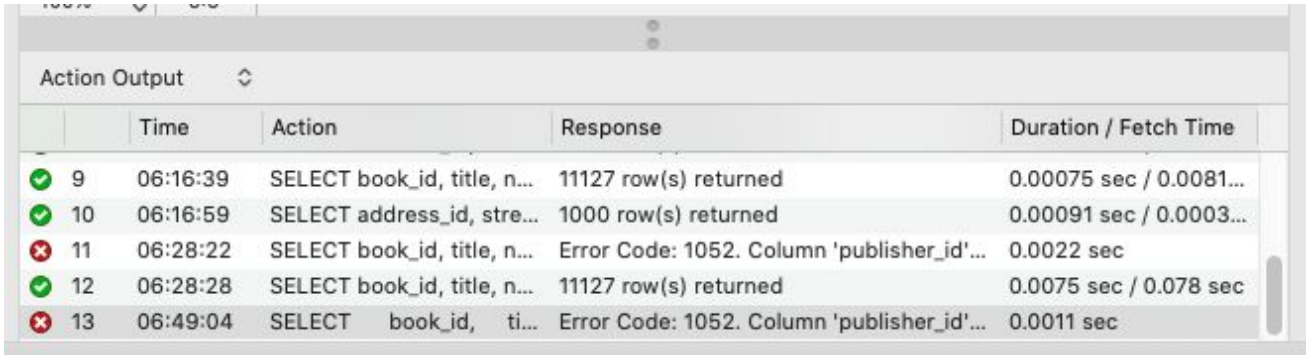
It's very helpful for knowing which columns are in the table.

Copy the Response of an Error

Sometimes when you run a query you'll get an error.

The error appears in the bottom Output panel.

However, it can be hard to see the details of the error:

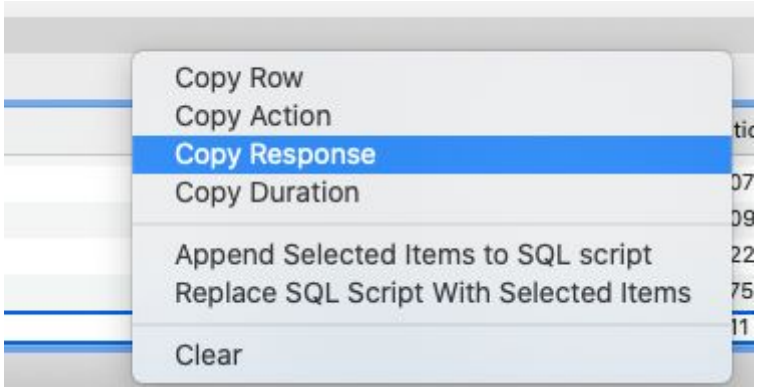


You can't even see the details if you hover over the message.

The details of the error message are in the Response column.

To see the full details of the response, you can copy the message and paste it into your worksheet. The UI a bit of a hassle with error messages, but at least you can see it.

To do this, right click on the error and select Copy Response.



Paste it into the worksheet to see it quickly.

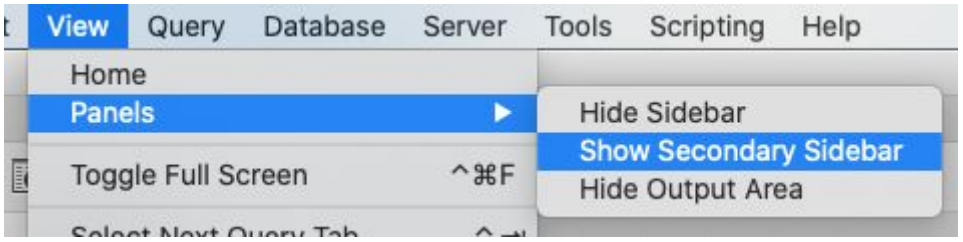
You can see the full error message. Now it's easier to investigate.

You could paste it inside a comment block, or comment it out, so it doesn't impact your query as well.

Use the SQL Snippet Panel

A helpful feature of MySQL Workbench is the Snippet Panel. You can enable this by clicking the far right button in the top right:

Or by going to View > Panels > Show Secondary Sidebar.



There are a whole range of snippets, which are predefined pieces of SQL code. They can help you write SQL statements faster for common operations.

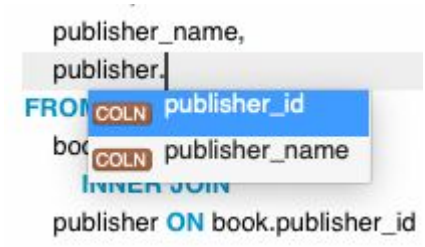
You can also define your own snippets, if there are statements or queries you run often.

You can add a selected snippet to your editor or copy it to the clipboard (to paste somewhere else if needed).

So, learn how to use this snippets section, as it can save you a lot of time with repetitive tasks.

Use Code Completion

MySQL Workbench has a code completion feature. This allows you to display a popup menu to help you complete your SQL statement.



This is especially helpful when adding columns to a query, as the code completion will automatically display a list of columns in a table.

This menu will appear after a short amount of time, but you can trigger it manually by pressing Ctrl + Space (Windows) or Cmd + Escape (Mac).

It's a helpful way to reduce the time taken to write queries.

Conclusion

Hopefully you discovered some new tips in this guide to save you time when working with MySQL Workbench.

For more timesaver tips and SQL advice, check out the other resources in Database Star Academy.

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