

# Overview of Tables

A **table** is the basic unit of data organization in an Oracle database.

A table describes an **entity**, which is something of significance about which information must be recorded. For example, an employee could be an entity.

Oracle Database tables fall into the following basic categories:

- Relational tables

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Relational tables have simple columns and are the most common table type. Example 2-1 shows a `CREATE TABLE` statement for a relational table.

- Object tables

The columns correspond to the top-level attributes of an [object type](#). See "Overview of Object Tables".

You can create a relational table with the following organizational characteristics:

- A [heap-organized table](#) does not store rows in any particular order. The `CREATE TABLE` statement creates a heap-organized table by default.
- An [index-organized table](#) orders rows according to the primary key values. For some applications, index-organized tables enhance performance and use disk space more efficiently. See "Overview of Index-Organized Tables".
- An [external table](#) is a read-only table whose metadata is stored in the database but whose data is stored outside the database. See "Overview of External Tables".

A table is either permanent or temporary. A permanent table definition and data persist across sessions. A [temporary table](#) definition persists in the same way as a permanent table definition, but the data exists only for the duration of a [transaction](#) or [session](#). Temporary tables are useful in applications where a result set must be held temporarily, perhaps because the result is constructed by running multiple operations.

This topic contains the following topics:

- Columns
- Rows
- Example: CREATE TABLE and ALTER TABLE Statements
- Oracle Data Types
- Integrity Constraints
- Table Storage
- Table Compression



## See Also:

*Oracle Database Administrator's Guide* to learn how to manage tables