**What is staging area?**

The staging area is a temporary holding zone within the data warehouse where raw data from source systems is first loaded and prepared before transforming into the structured business layers. It is usually implemented as a set of raw and external tables that mirror the incoming data format.

**Why can't we load data directly into the 3NF layer?**

It has several reasons. The source data may contain duplicates and invalid formats, or NA’s that will violate 3rd normal form constraints. Also 3rd normal form usually requires joining or spilitting data which can’t be done using raw data. The staging is required to remove redundant records and ensure consistency, also it allows us to trace back to steps we did before transforming data.