

# Lesson 9: Python Database Integration

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**Duration:** 20 minutes

**Deliverable:** `lesson9_database.py`

## Learning Objectives

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By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Connect to SQLite databases from Python
- Execute SQL queries programmatically
- Fetch and process query results
- Use parameterised queries to prevent SQL injection
- Handle database errors gracefully
- Close connections properly



## Why Use Python with Databases?

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Writing SQL queries in `.sql` files is great for learning, but real applications need to:

- Accept user input
- Process data dynamically
- Display results in custom formats
- Integrate databases with other systems
- Automate database operations

**Python's `sqlite3` module** lets you do all of this!

# Part 1: Connecting to a Database (8 minutes)

## Step 1: Create Your Python File

1. Navigate to `lessons/` folder
2. Create: `lesson9_database.py`
3. Add header:

```
"""
Lesson 9: Python Database Integration
Student Name: [Your Name]
Date: [Today's Date]

This script demonstrates SQLite database operations in Python
"""

import sqlite3
import sys
from pathlib import Path
```

## Step 2: Connect to the Database

```
# Best Practice: Use context managers for database connections
def query_characters():
    """
        Query characters using context manager
        Context managers automatically handle connection closing and commits
    """
    try:
        with sqlite3.connect('database/starwars.db') as conn:
            print(f"✓ Connected to database")
            cursor = conn.cursor()
            cursor.execute("SELECT * FROM characters LIMIT 5")
            results = cursor.fetchall()
            for row in results:
                print(row)
        # Connection automatically closes here
    except sqlite3.Error as e:
        print(f"x Error: {e}")
        # Rollback happens automatically with context manager
```

## Explanation:

- `with sqlite3.connect()` creates a context manager
- Connection automatically closes when exiting the `with` block
- Commits happen automatically on success
- Rollbacks happen automatically on error
- No need to manually call `conn.close()` or `conn.commit()`

## Step 3: Test the Connection

```
# Test the connection
def test_connection():
    """Test database connection using context manager"""
    try:
        with sqlite3.connect('database/starwars.db') as conn:
            print("✓ Connection successful!")
            print(f"✓ SQLite version: {sqlite3.sqlite_version}")
            print("✓ Connection automatically closed")
    except sqlite3.Error as e:
        print(f"✗ Connection failed: {e}")

# Run the test
if __name__ == "__main__":
    test_connection()
```

### Execute your script:

```
python lessons/lesson9_database.py
```

You should see: "✓ Connection successful!" and "✓ Connection automatically closed"



## Part 2: Executing Queries (8 minutes)

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### Step 4: Create a Cursor

A **cursor** is used to execute SQL commands and fetch results.

```
def get_all_characters():
    """Retrieve all characters from the database"""
    try:
        with sqlite3.connect('database/starwars.db') as conn:
            # Create cursor
            cursor = conn.cursor()

            # Execute query
            cursor.execute("SELECT id, name, species, homeworld FROM characters")

            # Fetch all results
            characters = cursor.fetchall()

            # Display results
            print("\n==== All Characters ===")
            for char in characters:
                print(f"ID: {char[0]}, Name: {char[1]}, Species: {char[2]}, Homeworld: {char[3]}")

            print(f"\nTotal characters: {len(characters)}")
            # Connection automatically closes here

    except sqlite3.Error as e:
        print(f"x Error executing query: {e}")
```

### Key Concepts:

- `cursor.execute()` runs SQL query
- `cursor.fetchall()` gets all rows as list of tuples
- Each tuple is one row
- Context manager ensures connection closes even if error occurs

## Step 5: Different Fetch Methods

```
def demonstrate_fetch_methods():
    """Show different ways to fetch data"""
    try:
        with sqlite3.connect('database/starwars.db') as conn:
            cursor = conn.cursor()

            # Method 1: fetchone() - Get one row at a time
            print("\n== fetchone() Demo ==")
            cursor.execute("SELECT name, species FROM characters LIMIT 3")
            row = cursor.fetchone()
            while row:
                print(f"Name: {row[0]}, Species: {row[1]}")
                row = cursor.fetchone()

            # Method 2: fetchmany() - Get specified number of rows
            print("\n== fetchmany() Demo ==")
            cursor.execute("SELECT name, species FROM characters")
            rows = cursor.fetchmany(5) # Fetch 5 rows
            for row in rows:
                print(f"Name: {row[0]}, Species: {row[1]})

            # Method 3: fetchall() - Get all remaining rows
            print("\n== fetchall() Demo ==")
            cursor.execute("SELECT name, height FROM characters WHERE height IS NOT NULL")
            all_rows = cursor.fetchall()
            print("Top 3 Tallest Characters:")
            for row in all_rows:
                print(f"{row[0]}: {row[1]}cm")
            # Connection automatically closes here

    except sqlite3.Error as e:
        print(f"x Error: {e}")
```

## Step 6: Using Row Factory for Named Columns

```
def get_characters_as_dict():
    """Get results as dictionaries instead of tuples"""
    try:
        with sqlite3.connect('database/starwars.db') as conn:
            # Set row factory to return dictionary-like objects
            conn.row_factory = sqlite3.Row
            cursor = conn.cursor()

            cursor.execute("SELECT name, species, height FROM characters WHERE height > 200")
            characters = cursor.fetchall()

            print("\n==== Characters as Dictionaries ===")
            for char in characters:
                # Access by column name instead of index!
                print(f"{char['name']} ({char['species']}): {char['height']}cm")
            # Connection automatically closes here

    except sqlite3.Error as e:
        print(f"x Error: {e}")
```

**Benefit:** Access columns by name instead of remembering index numbers!



## Part 3: Parameterised Queries (4 minutes)

**Never** build SQL queries using string formatting! It's vulnerable to SQL injection attacks.

### ✗ DANGEROUS: String Formatting

```
# ! NEVER DO THIS!
def search_character_unsafe(name):
    """UNSAFE: Vulnerable to SQL injection"""
    conn = create_connection()
    cursor = conn.cursor()

    # This is DANGEROUS!
    query = f"SELECT * FROM characters WHERE name = '{name}'"
    cursor.execute(query)

    result = cursor.fetchall()
    conn.close()
    return result

# Malicious input could execute arbitrary SQL:
# search_character_unsafe("Luke'; DROP TABLE characters; --")
```

## ✓ SAFE: Parameterised Queries

```
def search_character_safe(name):
    """SAFE: Uses parameterised query"""
    try:
        with sqlite3.connect('database/starwars.db') as conn:
            conn.row_factory = sqlite3.Row
            cursor = conn.cursor()

            # Use ? placeholder and pass parameters as tuple
            cursor.execute("SELECT name, species, homeworld FROM characters WHERE name = ?")

            results = cursor.fetchall()
            return results
            # Connection automatically closes here

    except sqlite3.Error as e:
        print(f"\nError: {e}")
        return []

def search_by_species(species):
    """Search characters by species using parameterised query"""
    try:
        with sqlite3.connect('database/starwars.db') as conn:
            conn.row_factory = sqlite3.Row
            cursor = conn.cursor()

            # Multiple parameters
            cursor.execute("""
                SELECT name, species, height
                FROM characters
                WHERE species = ? AND height IS NOT NULL
                ORDER BY height DESC
            """, (species,))

            results = cursor.fetchall()

            print(f"\n{species} Characters ===")
            for char in results:
                print(f"{char['name']}: {char['height']}cm")
            # Connection automatically closes here

    except sqlite3.Error as e:
        print(f"\nError: {e}")
```

**Always use ? placeholders and pass values as tuple!**





## Part 4: Complete Example Functions

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### Step 7: CRUD Operations

```

def add_character(name, species, homeworld_id, height=None):
    """
    Create: Add a new character to the database
    """
    try:
        with sqlite3.connect('database/starwars.db') as conn:
            cursor = conn.cursor()
            cursor.execute("""
                INSERT INTO characters (name, species, homeworld_id, height)
                VALUES (?, ?, ?, ?)
            """, (name, species, homeworld_id, height))

        # Commit happens automatically with context manager!
        print(f"✓ Added character: {name}")
        return True

    except sqlite3.Error as e:
        print(f"x Error adding character: {e}")
        return False
        # Rollback happens automatically

def update_character_height(name, new_height):
    """
    Update: Change a character's height
    """
    try:
        with sqlite3.connect('database/starwars.db') as conn:
            cursor = conn.cursor()
            cursor.execute("""
                UPDATE characters
                SET height = ?
                WHERE name = ?
            """, (new_height, name))

        # Commit happens automatically

        if cursor.rowcount > 0:
            print(f"✓ Updated {cursor.rowcount} character(s)")
            return True
        else:
            print(f"x No character found with name: {name}")
            return False

    except sqlite3.Error as e:
        print(f"x Error updating character: {e}")
        return False
        # Rollback happens automatically

def delete_character(name):
    """
    Delete: Remove a character from the database
    """
    try:
        with sqlite3.connect('database/starwars.db') as conn:
            cursor = conn.cursor()

```

```

        cursor.execute("DELETE FROM characters WHERE name = ?", (name,))

        # Commit happens automatically

        if cursor.rowcount > 0:
            print(f"\u2713 Deleted character: {name}")
            return True
        else:
            print(f"\u2718 No character found with name: {name}")
            return False

    except sqlite3.Error as e:
        print(f"\u2718 Error deleting character: {e}")
        return False
    # Rollback happens automatically

def get_character_statistics():
    """
    Read: Get database statistics
    """
    try:
        with sqlite3.connect('database/starwars.db') as conn:
            cursor = conn.cursor()

            # Get counts
            cursor.execute("SELECT COUNT(*) FROM characters")
            total_chars = cursor.fetchone()[0]

            cursor.execute("SELECT COUNT(DISTINCT species) FROM characters")
            total_species = cursor.fetchone()[0]

            cursor.execute("SELECT AVG(height) FROM characters WHERE height IS NOT NULL")
            avg_height = cursor.fetchone()[0]

            print("\n==== Database Statistics ===")
            print(f"Total Characters: {total_chars}")
            print(f"Different Species: {total_species}")
            print(f"Average Height: {avg_height:.1f}cm")
            # Connection automatically closes here

    except sqlite3.Error as e:
        print(f"\u2718 Error: {e}")

```

## Step 8: Main Menu

```
def main():
    """Main program menu"""
    print("=" * 50)
    print("STAR WARS DATABASE - PYTHON INTERFACE")
    print("=" * 50)

    # Run demonstrations
    print("\n--- Testing Connection ---")
    test_connection()

    print("\n--- All Characters ---")
    get_all_characters()

    print("\n--- Fetch Methods ---")
    demonstrate_fetch_methods()

    print("\n--- Dictionary Access ---")
    get_characters_as_dict()

    print("\n--- Search by Species ---")
    search_by_species("Human")

    print("\n--- Database Statistics ---")
    get_character_statistics()

    print("\n--- CRUD Operations Demo ---")
    # Add a test character
    add_character("Test Character", "Test Species", 1, 175)

    # Update the character
    update_character_height("Test Character", 180)

    # Delete the character
    delete_character("Test Character")

    print("\n" + "=" * 50)
    print("Demo complete!")
    print("=" * 50)

if __name__ == "__main__":
    main()
```

## Run your complete script:

```
python lessons/lesson9_database.py
```



## Common Errors & Troubleshooting

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### Error: "unable to open database file"

**Problem:** Wrong database path or file doesn't exist.

**Solution:**

```
# Check if database exists
from pathlib import Path
db_path = Path(__file__).parent.parent / 'starwars.db'
if not db_path.exists():
    print(f"Database not found at: {db_path}")
```

### Error: "no such table"

**Problem:** Table hasn't been created yet.

**Solution:** Run your Lesson 1 SQL scripts first to create tables.

### Error: "database is locked"

**Problem:** Another process has the database open (less common with context managers).

**Solution:**

- Context managers handle this better by closing connections promptly
- Check VSCode SQLite plugin isn't holding a lock
- Ensure all `with` blocks complete properly

### IndexError when accessing results

**Problem:** Trying to access column that doesn't exist.

**Solution:** Use `row_factory` or check your query:

```
conn.row_factory = sqlite3.Row # Access by name
# or
print(len(row)) # Check how many columns returned
```

### Forgot to commit()

**Problem:** INSERT/UPDATE/DELETE doesn't save changes.

**Solution:** Context managers handle commits automatically!

```
# With context managers, commit is automatic on success
with sqlite3.connect('database/starwars.db') as conn:
    cursor = conn.cursor()
    cursor.execute("INSERT INTO...")
    # Commit happens automatically when exiting 'with' block successfully
```

## Checkpoint: What You've Learnt

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Before moving on, make sure you can:

- Connect to SQLite database from Python using context managers
- Create cursors and execute queries
- Fetch results with `fetchone()`, `fetchmany()`, `fetchall()`
- Use `row_factory` for dictionary-like access
- Write parameterised queries (prevent SQL injection)
- Perform CRUD operations (Create, Read, Update, Delete)
- Handle errors with `try/except`
- Use context managers for automatic connection/commit/rollback handling

## Challenge Problem (Optional)

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**Task:** Create a function that:

1. Accepts a planet name as input
2. Finds all characters from that planet
3. For each character, finds what vehicles they pilot
4. Displays the results in a formatted way
5. Uses parameterised queries
6. Handles errors gracefully

## Save Your Work with Git

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```
git status  
git add lessons/lesson9_database.py  
git commit -m "Completed Lesson 9: Python SQLite database integration"  
git push
```



## Key Python Concepts Learnt

Concept	Purpose	Example
<code>with sqlite3.connect():</code>	Context manager for connection	<code>with sqlite3.connect('db.db') as conn:</code>
<code>cursor()</code>	Execute SQL commands	<code>cursor = conn.cursor()</code>
<code>execute()</code>	Run SQL query	<code>cursor.execute("SELECT...")</code>
<code>fetchone()</code>	Get one row	<code>row = cursor.fetchone()</code>
<code>fetchall()</code>	Get all rows	<code>rows = cursor.fetchall()</code>
<code>row_factory</code>	Access columns by name	<code>conn.row_factory = sqlite3.Row</code>
Parameterised query	Prevent SQL injection	<code>execute("SELECT * WHERE id = ?", (id,))</code>
Context manager auto-commit	Save changes automatically	Happens when <code>with</code> block exits successfully
Context manager auto-rollback	Undo on error	Happens when exception occurs in <code>with</code> block
<code>rowcount</code>	Number of affected rows	<code>cursor.rowcount</code>



# Security Best Practices

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## 1. Always use parameterised queries

```
```python # ✓ SAFE cursor.execute("SELECT * WHERE name = ?", (name,))  
# ✗ UNSAFE cursor.execute(f"SELECT * WHERE name = '{name}'")```
```

## 1. Always use context managers

```
python # ✓ BEST PRACTICE with sqlite3.connect('db.db') as conn: cursor =  
conn.cursor() # ... operations ... # Connection closes automatically, commit/rollback  
handled
```

## 1. Handle errors appropriately

```
python try: with sqlite3.connect('db.db') as conn: # ... operations ... except sqlite3.Error as e: print(f"Error: {e}") #  
Rollback happens automatically
```



## Excellent Work!

You can now build Python applications that interact with databases! In the final lesson, you'll learn about ORMs and NoSQL databases.

**Ready to continue?** Move on to `lesson10_instructions.md`

### Need Help?

- Print variables to debug
- Check database file exists and has data
- Always close connections
- Read error messages carefully
- Ask your instructor!