Interactive - 46 - NULL - differences between databases

By now you have noticed that if a column allows you can have NULL values in it. This is a non-data value.

The handling of NULL differers just enough between different databases to make code non-portable from database to database (At least it requires a lot of effort to port).

First thing to no about NULL is that NULL data is not indexed. So if you go looking for NULL it will result in a full table scan.

Also NULL is not equal to anything. There is a special pair of operators, `IS NULL` and `IS NOT NULL` for checking if a column or value is null.

```
SELECT 'found' where NULL = NULL;
```

will return 0 rows because NULL is not equal to anything, even itself.

```
SELECT 'found' where NULL is NULL;
```

PostgreSQL provides 2 functions for dealing with nulls. The first is `nullif`.

If the 2 arguments are equal then NULL is returned.

```
SELECT nullif(1,1);
```

```
SELECT nullif(1,2);
```

If the 2 arguments are NOT equal then the first argument is returned.

```
SELECT nullif(1,2);
```

The second function is `coalesce`. This function substitutes a default value when the first argument is NULL.

```
SELECT coalesce(NULL,2);
```

If the first argument is NULL then the defalut, in this case 2, is returned.

If the first argument is not NULL then the non-null first argument is returned.

```
SELECT coalesce(5,2);
```

Note: In the Oracle database you use the 'nvl' function and a special table with 1 row in it called 'dual';

Tags: "NULL"

Validate: SQL-Select,"select 'PASS' as x"