Sort with one option forced to top of list

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I have a PHP application that displays a list of options to a user. The list is generated from a simple query against SQL 2000. What I would like to do is have a specific option at the top of the list, and then have the remaining options sorted alphabetically.

For example, here's the options if sorted alphabetically:

```
Calgary
Edmonton
Halifax
Montreal
Toronto
```

What I would like the list to be is more like this:

```
**Montreal**
Calgary
Edmonton
Halifax
Toronto
```

Is there a way that I can do this using a single query? Or am I stuck running the query twice and appending the results?

`sql` `sorting`

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5 Answers

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```sql
SELECT name
FROM locations
ORDER BY
    CASE
        WHEN name = 'Montreal'
        THEN 0
```

```
        ELSE 1
    END, name
```

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```sql
SELECT name FROM options ORDER BY name = "Montreal", name;
```

Note: This works with MySQL, not SQL 2000 like the OP requested.

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I attempted your solution but it threw a SQL syntax error on the = in the Order By. Thanks for the idea though. – Wally Lawless Sep 17, 2008 at 13:14

Ah yes, I must have been thinking of MySQL syntax :D – mercutio Sep 17, 2008 at 13:16

0

```sql
create table Places (
    add Name varchar(30),
    add Priority bit
)

select   Name
from     Places
order by Priority desc,
         Name
```

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I had a similar problem on a website I built full of case reports. I wanted the case reports where the victim name is known to sort to the top, because they are more compelling. Conversely I wanted all the John Doe cases to be at the bottom. Since this also involved people's names, I had the firstname/lastname sorting problem as well. I didn't want to split it into two name fields because some cases aren't people at all.

My solution:

I have a "Name" field which is what is displayed. I also have a "NameSorted" field that is used in all queries but is never displayed. My input UI takes care of converting "LAST, FIRST" entered into the sorting field into the display version automatically.

Finally, to "rig" the sorting I simply put appropriate characters at the beginning of the sort field. Since I want stuff to come out at the end, I put "zzz" at the beginning. To sort at the top you could put "!" at the beginning. Again your editing UI can take care of this for you.

Yes, I admit its a bit cheezy, but it works. One advantage for me is I have to do more complex queries with joins in different places to generate pages versus RSS etc, and I don't have to keep remembering a complex expression to get the sorting right, its always just sort by the "NameSorted" field.

Click my profile to see the resulting website.

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answered Sep 17, 2008 at 13:16

Tim Farley
11.9k ● 4 ● 31 ● 30

I ended up with this

```
SELECT name
FROM locations
LEFT JOIN (VALUES ('Toronto', 1), ('Montreal', 2)) city (name, rank)
    ON locations.name = city.name
ORDER BY city.rank, locations.name;
```

Which may be overkill for this example but can be extended for more complex needs.

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answered Nov 7, 2019 at 18:49

Deepstop
3,807 ● 2 ● 11 ● 23