Surrogate Key's

A surrogate key is a key with virtual or no actual reason, and it is used for representing the existence for data analysis. Thus, a surrogate key is used for representing existence for data analysis. It is the unique identifier in a database. It represents an outside entity as a database object but is not visible to the user and application. A surrogate key is also known by various other names, which are *pseudo key, technical key, synthetic key, arbitrary unique identifier, entity identifier and database sequence number*.

Example 1

<ProductPrice>

Key	ProductID	Price
505_92	1987	200
698_56	1256	170
304_57	1898	250
458_66	1666	110

Above, the surrogate key is Key in the <ProductPrice> table.

Example 2

Consider an example of **Tracking_System**, where we have the following attributes:

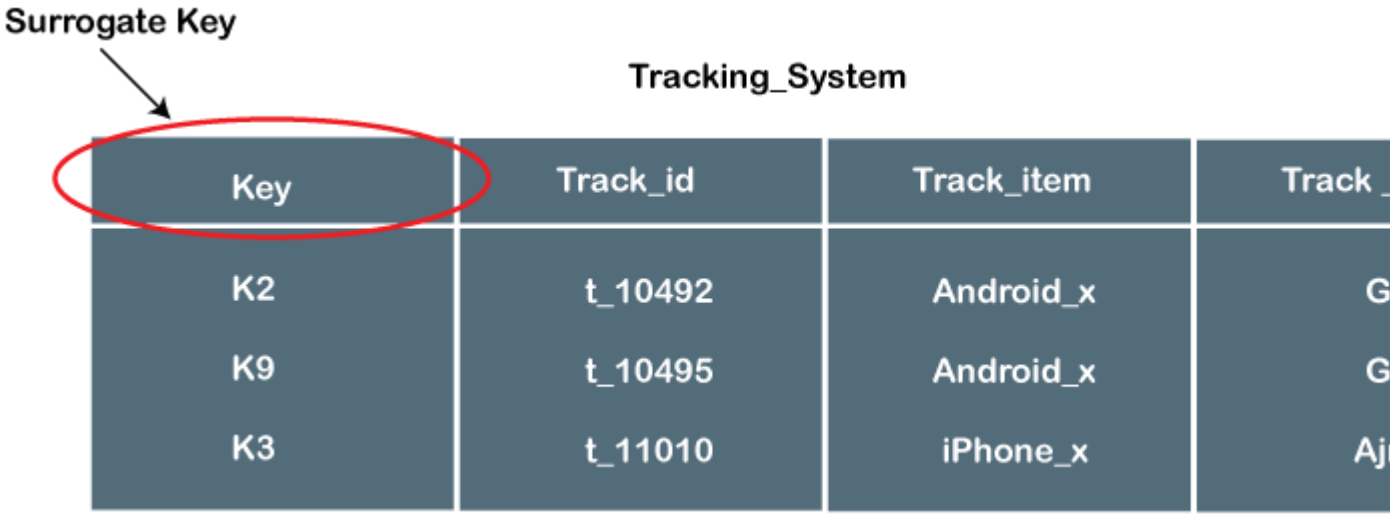
Key: An attribute holding the key for each tracking id.

Track_id: An attribute holding the tracking id of the item.

Track_item: An attribute holding the name of the item that is being tracked.

Track_loc: An attribute holding the location of the tracking item.

The below diagram represents the above described Tracking_system table:



Point to be noted:

From the above table, we can see that the Key attribute of the Tracking_System table is the Surrogate key because the value of the Key column is different for different locations and id of the item.

Other Examples

Some other examples of a Surrogate Key −

- Counter can also be shown as Surrogate Key.
- System date/time stamp
- Random alphanumeric string.