

BIRT Tutorial

Building a Table








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Report Layout

Our customer listing report will display customer information in the form of a table: just like an HTML table, with the added ability to iterate over report data. The Grouped Listing template we chose earlier created the table for us, we just need to fill in the details. Before we do, let's introduce the various BIRT report items.

Report Items

BIRT provides a variety of report items for use when creating your report. Report items appear in the Palette view. Report items include:

-  Label – Displays a simple piece of text such as "Customer Name".
-  Data – Displays a database column or a computed value. Provides formatting.
-  Text – Text that can include HTML formatting and computed values. Used to create headings, form letters, "mail-merge" effects, etc.
-  Image – Any kind of image supported by a web browser. Images can be embedded in the report, or links to a file on your web server.
-  Grid – Provides a tabular arrangement of report items, much like an HTML table.
-  Table – Presents data from a data set in the form of a table. Can contain grouping levels. Like an HTML table that has a table row for each data set row.
-  List – Presents data from a data set in any kind of format. Used when the layout for each row is more sophisticated than a simple table row.

This tutorial will use all the elements except for List.

Create the Table Detail

The New Report dialog created a starter report that contains a table item with one level of grouping. If we'd chosen a blank report, we could create the table simply by dragging it from the palette.

The next step is to add some content to the table. We'll start with the detail band which repeats to display each row from our data set. Here's how:

- Display the Data Explorer if it's not already visible.

- Expand the Data Sets node of the tree.
- Expand the entry for the Customers data set that we created. This will display the columns available from the data set.
- Select the customName column.
- Locate the detail band within the table. (It has a gray "Detail" label.)
- Drag the customName column into the detail band cell second from the left. Notice that the designer automatically adds the corresponding column header.
- Drag the phone column into the last cell in the detail band.

Create the State Group

We want our customer listing to be grouped by US state, then city. Using a group causes all rows within the same state to appear together. Let's create the group heading for states:

- Locate the group header row in your table. It has a light gray "Group Header" label.
- Drag the state column into the leftmost cell within the Group Header row.
- Hover your cursor over the table to display the table tab. The table tab appears just below the table.
- Click on the table tab to display a set of column and row headings in the form of shaded boxes much like those in Microsoft Excel. (We'll call this the "table scaffolding.")
- The shaded box to the left of each row is the "row header." Open the context menu for the row header for the Group Header row.
- Choose Edit Group. The Group Properties dialog appears.
- In the Group On field, choose the state column.
- Click OK.

Creating Groups on your Own

We are using the group created for us by the New Report dialog. If we'd started by dragging the table from the palette, we'd create this first group as we'll explain in the next section.

You must bind (associate) the table to a data set before you can create a group. The binding happened automatically when we dropped the first data set column into the table. However, if you build a table on your own, you can use the Binding tab in the Property Editor to bind the table to a data set.

Create the City Group

Next, we'll create a city group within the state. This groups customers first by state, then by city.

- Click on the table tab (as described above) to display the table scaffolding.
- Choose Insert Group from the context menu for the row heading for the state group header row. The Group Properties dialog again appears.
- Chose the city column in the Group On field.
- Click OK.

Add a Table Column

We need another table column to display our group heading:

- Ensure the table scaffolding appears. Click on the shaded column header for the first column.
- Choose Insert→Column to the Right from the context menu. A new column appears.
- Drag the city column from the Data Explorer into the second column of the second group header.

Create Column Headings

We're almost done with the basic setup of our table. We just need to refine our column headings. BIRT added headings for us for each column we added to the table.

- Double-click on the first column header text to change it. Type "State" and press Enter.
- Repeat to change the second column header to "City".
- Change the third column header to "Name".
- Change the last column header to "Phone".

Adding Labels

In this case, BIRT created our labels automatically. However, we can add our own labels as follows:

- Make the Palette visible if it is not already.
- Drag a Label item from the Palette into the first cell of the Header row in table.
- Type your label text and press Enter.