

DavisBase Nano

File Format Guide

Storage Definition Language (SDL)

Version 1.0

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1. Introduction

DavisBase is a relational database management system (DBMS) that implements a subset of the SQL specification. DavisBase is not intended for commercial industrial applications—but instead, for use in an academic setting for use by students to gain an understanding of relational database internals. This document assumes that the reader already possess a basic understanding of relational database theory and of SQL.

This File Format Guide describes only the Storage Definition Language (SDL) of DavisBase. It is intended to be a subsection of the overall DavisBase Specification, which also includes a data query language (DQL), data definition language (DDL), data control language (DCL), and data manipulation language (DML). Additionally, an API will be included in a later version that is based on a subset of the JDBC specification.

DavisBase file architecture borrows liberally from that of several open-source databases including SQLite, MySQL, and PostgreSQL. In fact, one of the primary goals of DavisBase is to be an educational platform for learning the internals of relational databases. Implementing file structures that mimic those of widely known DBMSs provides insight into the mechanics of relational databases in general.

We note that DavisBase is not fully ACID¹ compliant! There is neither a system log nor a formal mechanism for rollback or recovery of failed transactions.

2. Files

The term “file” has been defined in various ways since it may be considered either as a logical construct or a physical construct. A file may be a virtual construct in volatile storage (i.e. main memory or RAM). It may also be a construct that is physically stored in non-volatile memory like a hard disk, SSD, or thumb drive.

DavisBase uses two kinds of files: **table files** and **index files**. We note that fully-featured commercial databases utilize additional file types—e.g. view files, script files, macro files, etc. These additional file types are not included in v1.0 of DavisBase.

DavisBase uses a *file-per-table* approach. That is, every table and every index are each stored in a single, separate OS file. Each table file is stored in an OS file whose name is `<tablename>.tbl`, and each Index File is stored in a file whose name is `<tablename_columnname>.ndx`. Both Table Files and Index

All DavisBase files are implemented as page-based files. That is, files are subdivided into logical sections called *pages*. DavisBase supports page sizes of 2^n bytes, where n is an integer in the range 9-15. All pages of a given file are required to be the same size. All files within the same table space must share the same page size. Once a table space has been initialized, the page size of all of its constituent files is fixed static.

Page size is represented in bytes. In this project, all pages are 0.5KB (512 bytes).

¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ACID_\(computer_science\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ACID_(computer_science))

2.1. Offsets

Offsets are the mechanism used to locate elements within a file.² Offsets are expressed as non-negative integers that represent the number of bytes from a given point of reference. There are two kinds of offsets used by DavisBase, **file offsets** and **page offsets**.

File offsets indicate the location of an element expressed as the number of bytes from the beginning of a file. These are most commonly used to identify the location of a page within a file—by multiplying page number time page size.

Page offsets indicate the location of an element expressed as the number of bytes from the beginning of a page.

Therefore the location of a specific page within a file may be determined by the simple calculation `page_number * page_size`.

For example, a file with a page size of 512 bytes, page 7 will begin at $512 * 7 = 3584$ bytes from the beginning of the file.

2.2. Table Files

Table files store the tuples of a relation (rows of a table) in a file.

Table files are implemented as Bplus-trees where each node of the tree is a page of the file. Table Files store all record data for a given table. Table records reside solely in leaf pages of the B+ tree.

Table Files are not required to have any Index Files, i.e. they may have zero-to-many indexes. However, every Index File must have exactly one Table File that it indexes.

Each record in a Table File has an automatically generated unique identifier that is used by DavisBase for internal housekeeping. This is like a hidden extra column that is included in every table. Various databases use different names for this unique identifier: **rowid**, **row_id**, and **uid** are all common.

DavisBase uses the name **rowid**.

If a table schema is created without an explicit PRIMARY KEY, users may insert records that contain duplicate values for all user-defined columns. This would seem to violate relational theory, as all tuples (records) must be unique. However, each record may still be uniquely identified by its **rowid**. Most relational databases use this strategy.

When a table file is created with a CREATE TABLE command it does not by default have any associated Index Files. However, if a column has been explicitly designated as a PRIMARY KEY, then an Index File shall be automatically created that indexes this column.

2.3. Index Files

Index files provide efficient access paths to records within table files. All DavisBase indexes provide access paths to records based only on *single columns*. That is, multi-column indexes are not supported.

Index Files are implemented as B-trees where each node a tree is a page of the file. Index Files store indexing information that provide an access path to a related Table File.

² Offsets are the mechanism used by almost *all* relational databases to locate elements within a file.

2.4. Database Catalog

The database catalog (i.e. meta-data) for DavisBase is stored in specially designated tables. These are also referred to as **system tables**.³ The Table Files associated with these are structured exactly the same as Table Files generated with user-defined tables.

³ MySQL groups these system tables together in what it calls the INFORMATION_SCHEMA.

3. Page Formats

All pages use the basic format of a fixed size header of 9-bytes followed immediately by an array of 2-byte integers that indicate the location of cells within the page. Cells contained in the cell area are written from high address upward.

9-byte header
Array of 2-byte cell locations
Available space
Cell content area

3.1. Page Headers

Page Offset	Element Size	Description
0x00	1	<p>The one-byte flag at page offset 0 indicates the b-tree page type.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A value of 2 (0x02) means the page is an index b-tree interior page.• A value of 5 (0x05) means the page is an table b-tree interior page.• A value of 10 (0x0a) means the page is an index b-tree leaf page.• A value of 13 (0x0d) means the page is a table b-tree leaf page. <p>Any other value for the b-tree page type is an error.</p>
0x01	2	The two-byte integer at offset 1 designates the number of cells on the page.
0x03	2	The two-byte integer at offset 3 designates the page offset for the start of the cell content area. A zero value for this integer is interpreted as 65536.
0x05	4	<p>The four-byte integer page pointer at offset 4 has a different role depending on the b-tree page type:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Table or Index interior page - page number of rightmost child• Table or Index leaf page - page number of sibling to the right
0x09	2 x number	<p>An array of 2-byte integers that indicate the page offset location of each data cell. The array size is $2n$, where n is the number of cells on the page. The array is maintained in key-sorted order.</p>

Table 1 - Page Header Format

The number of cells on any type of page is represented by a 2-byte two's complement integer. Therefore, no page may contain more than $2^{15}-1$ (32767) cells.

Each rowid is represented by a 4-byte two's complement integer. Therefore, no table may contain more than $2^{31}-1$ (2147483647) unique records total over the lifetime of the table.

Page numbers in any type of file is represented by a 4-byte two's complement integer. Therefore, no file may contain more than $2^{31}-1$ (2147483647) pages.

3.2. Cell Formats

The **cell** is the basic unit of content for all types of pages. The cell content area of each page is located at the high offset values, i.e. cell content grows from the end of each page upwards.

The array of cell locations in the page header is an array whose order is maintained to be sorted according to criteria within the cells, depending upon file type. Table file cells are maintained in rowid sorted order.

File Type	Page Type	Cell Header			Cell Body
		4-byte int	2-byte int	4-byte int	N-byte array
		Left Child Page#	Bytes of Cell Payload	Rowid	Payload
Table	Leaf		✓	✓	✓
	Interior	✓		✓	
Index	Leaf		✓		✓
	Interior	✓	✓		✓

Figure 1: Cell Formats

Note that only interior pages have child pointers, since leaf pages don't have children.

Record Header		Record Body
1-byte int	N-byte array	N-byte array
Number of Columns	List of Column Data Types	List of Column Data Values

Figure 2: Record Format (i.e. Cell Body of Table Leaf)

Index Header			Index Body
1-byte int	1-byte int	N-byte array	N-byte array
Number of rowids associated with index value	Index Data Type	Index Value	List of rowids associated with index value

Figure 3: Index Entry Format (i.e. Cell Body of Index Cells)

3.3. Data Types

All data types supported by DavisBase have a 1-byte integer that designates their type.

Serial TypeCode	Database Data Type Name	Content Size (bytes)	Description
0x00	NULL	0	Value is a NULL (i.e. it takes no memory in the record body)
0x01	TINYINT	1	Value is an 8-bit twos-complement integer.
0x02	SMALLINT	2	Value is a big-endian 16-bit twos-complement integer.
0x03	INT	4	Value is a big-endian 32-bit twos-complement integer.
0x04	BIGINT, LONG	8	Value is a big-endian 64-bit twos-complement integer.
0x05	FLOAT, REAL	8	Value is a big-endian IEEE 754-2008 64-bit floating point number.
0x06	YEAR	1	Value is an 8-bit twos-complement integer. Both positive and negative numbers are supported in the range -128 to 127. This indicates a year with respect to the year 2000.
0x08	TIME	4	Value is a big-endian 32-bit twos-complement integer. Indicates time of day in millisecond since midnight.
0x09			Not used
0x0A	DATETIME	8	A big-endian unsigned LONG integer that represents the specified number of milliseconds since the standard base time known as "the epoch". It should display as a formatted string string: YYYY-MM-DD_hh:mm:ss, e.g. 2016-03-23_13:52:23.
0x0B	DATE	8	A datetime whose time component is 00:00:00, but does not display.
0x0C + <i>n</i>	TEXT		Value is an ASCII string of length <i>n</i> . C-style string null terminators are not used or needed.

Table 2 - Data Types and Their Implementation

Note that only strings of size 0-115 ASCII characters are supported. Any value 0x0C or above represents an ASCII string data type. Each length string 0-115 has its own unique data type. For example, 0x41 data type is a string of length 53 characters.

4. Database Catalog (meta-data)

The DavisBase Catalog consists of two tables containing meta-data about each of the user table. You may optionally choose to include meta-data about the two catalog files in the catalog itself. These two tables (and their associated implmentation files) have the following table schema, as if they had been created via the normal **CREATE** command.

```
CREATE davisbase_tables (  
  rowid INT,  
  table_name TEXT,  
  record_count INT,    -- optional field, may help your implementation  
  avg_length SMALLINT -- optional field, may help your implementation  
  root_page SMALLINT  -- optional field, may help your implementation  
);
```

```
CREATE davisbase_columns (  
  rowid          INT,  
  table_name     TEXT, -- optionally table_rowid INT  
  column_name    TEXT,  
  data_type      TEXT,  
  ordinal_position TINYINT,  
  is_nullable    TEXT  
);
```

If you choose to include these two tables in the catalog itself, their content would intially be:

```
SELECT * FROM davisbase_tables;
```

```
rowid  table_name  
-----  
1      davisbase_tables  
2      davisbase_columns
```

```
SELECT * FROM davisbase_columns;
```

rowid	table_name	column_name	data_type	ordinal_position	is_nullable
1	davisbase_tables	rowid	INT	1	NO
2	davisbase_tables	table_name	TEXT	2	NO
3	davisbase_columns	rowid	INT	1	NO
4	davisbase_columns	table_name	TEXT	2	NO
5	davisbase_columns	column_name	TEXT	3	NO
6	davisbase_columns	data_type	TEXT	4	NO
7	davisbase_columns	ordinal_position	TINYINT	5	NO
8	davisbase_columns	is_nullable	TEXT	6	NO