



Nulls and Unknown Members

School of Information Studies
Syracuse University

Best Practices for Nulls

- The **attributes** in your **dimension** tables should not have nulls.
- Attributes **without a value** (null) should be assigned a value. Why is it null?
 - Example: no e-mail address? → “No E-mail”
- **Foreign keys** in the **fact** table should never be null; they should be assigned an **unknown member**.
- Nulls are okay for *values* in the fact tables. Null valued facts are not included in calculations.

Unknown Members

- We should not insert NULL into the FK of a fact table. We should use an unknown member instead!
- These are special coded values, which indicate why there is no value.
- Every dimension should have at least one unknown member.



Order ID	Order Date Key	Ship Date Key	Delivery Date Key
99001	20170401	20170403	20170412
99002	20170408	20170409	-3
99003	20170412	-2	-3
99004	20170415	-2	-3
9905	-1	-1	-1

Date Key	Date	Date Name
-3	0000-00-00	Not Delivered
-2	0000-00-00	Not Shipped
-1	0000-00-00	Unknown Date
20100101	2010-01-01	1/1/2010
20100102	2010-01-02	1/2/2010