

```

    TRADITIONAL
  | JSON
  | TREE
}

explainable_stmt: {
    SELECT statement
  | TABLE statement
  | DELETE statement
  | INSERT statement
  | REPLACE statement
  | UPDATE statement
}

```

The `DESCRIBE` and `EXPLAIN` statements are synonyms. In practice, the `DESCRIBE` keyword is more often used to obtain information about table structure, whereas `EXPLAIN` is used to obtain a query execution plan (that is, an explanation of how MySQL would execute a query).

The following discussion uses the `DESCRIBE` and `EXPLAIN` keywords in accordance with those uses, but the MySQL parser treats them as completely synonymous.

- [Obtaining Table Structure Information](#)
- [Obtaining Execution Plan Information](#)
- [Obtaining Information with EXPLAIN ANALYZE](#)

Obtaining Table Structure Information

`DESCRIBE` provides information about the columns in a table:

```
mysql> DESCRIBE City;
```

Field	Type	Null	Key	Default	Extra
Id	int(11)	NO	PRI	NULL	auto_increment
Name	char(35)	NO			
Country	char(3)	NO	UNI		
District	char(20)	YES	MUL		
Population	int(11)	NO		0	

`DESCRIBE` is a shortcut for `SHOW COLUMNS`. These statements also display information for views. The description for `SHOW COLUMNS` provides more information about the output columns. See [Section 13.7.7.5, “SHOW COLUMNS Statement”](#).

By default, `DESCRIBE` displays information about all columns in the table. *col_name*, if given, is the name of a column in the table. In this case, the statement displays information only for the named column. *wild*, if given, is a pattern string. It can contain the SQL `%` and `_` wildcard characters. In this case, the statement displays output only for the columns with names matching the string. There is no need to enclose the string within quotation marks unless it contains spaces or other special characters.

The `DESCRIBE` statement is provided for compatibility with Oracle.

The `SHOW CREATE TABLE`, `SHOW TABLE STATUS`, and `SHOW INDEX` statements also provide information about tables. See [Section 13.7.7, “SHOW Statements”](#).

Obtaining Execution Plan Information

The `EXPLAIN` statement provides information about how MySQL executes statements: