Designing Forms in Access

This document provides basic techniques for designing, creating, and using forms in Microsoft Access.

Opening Comments about Forms

A form is a database object that you can use to enter, edit, or display data from a table or a query. You can use forms to control access to data, such as which fields of data are displayed. For example, certain users may not need to see all of the fields in a table. Providing those users with a form that contains just the necessary fields makes it easier for them to use the database.

Think of forms as windows through which people see and reach the database. An effective form speeds the use of the database, because people don't have to search for what they need. A visually attractive form makes working with the database more pleasant and more efficient, and it can also help prevent incorrect data from being entered. While data can be entered directly into a table, the larger the table, the harder it is to be sure that the data is in the right field and record.

Getting Started

Access gives you three main ways to create a form: with a single mouse click, with the Form Wizard, or in Design view. Once you understand all three ways, you can choose the method or methods that will be best for your purposes.
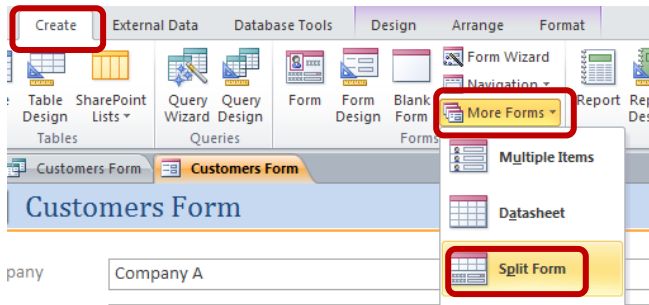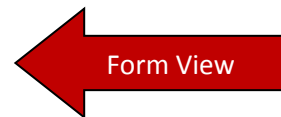
There are three types of forms that can be created with a single mouse click: Simple Form, Split Form, and Multiple Items Form. You can begin using the new form immediately, or you can modify it in Layout view or Design view to better suit your needs.

To create a form with a single click,

1. Open the table or query upon which you want to base the form.
2. To create a form on which all fields from the underlying table or query are placed, displaying one record at a time, on the **Create** tab, click **Form**.
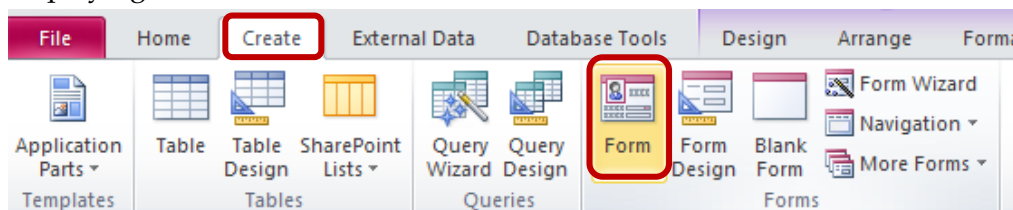
3. To create a split form on the **Create** tab, click **More Forms,** and then **Split Form**. The two views are connected to the same data source and are synchronized with each other at all times. Selecting a field in one part of the form selects the same field in the other part of the form. You can add, edit, or delete data from either part.


4. To create a form on which all fields from the underlying table or query are placed, displaying multiple records at a time, on the **Create** tab, click **More Forms,** then **Multiple Items**. The form that Access creates resembles a datasheet. The data is

arranged in rows and columns, and you see more than one record at a time. However, a Multiple Items form gives you more customization options than a datasheet, such as the ability to add graphical elements, buttons, and other controls.
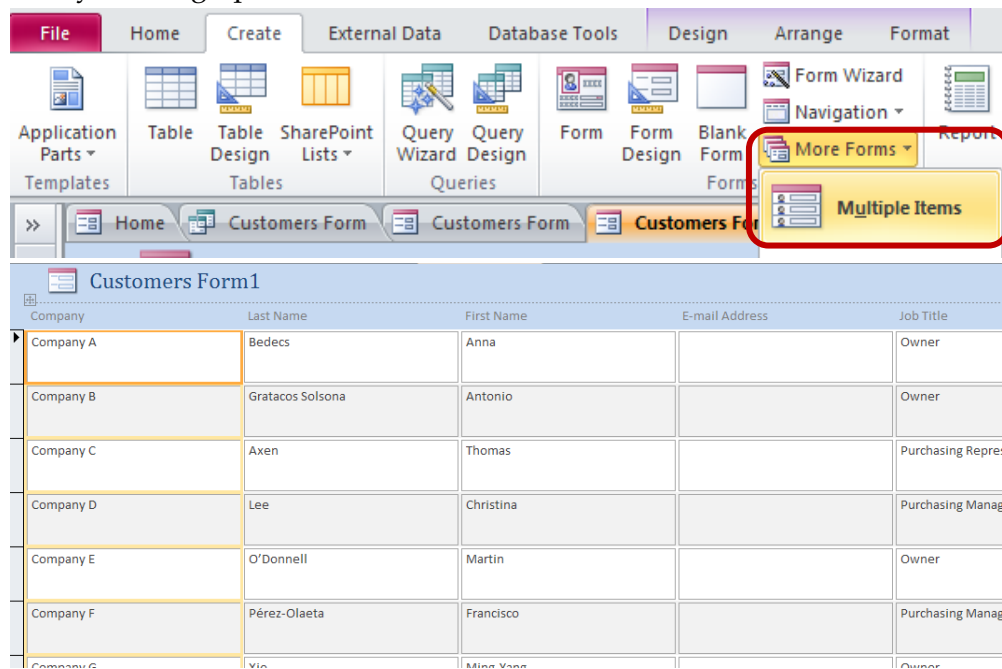

To be more selective about which fields appear on your form, you can use the Form Wizard. You can also use fields from more than one table or query, provided that you specified the relationships between the tables and queries beforehand. You will need to tell the wizard:

- The table or query on which to base the form
- Which fields to use on the form
- Which form layout to apply
- Which visual style to apply

To use the Form Wizard,

1. On the **Create** tab, click **Form Wizard**.
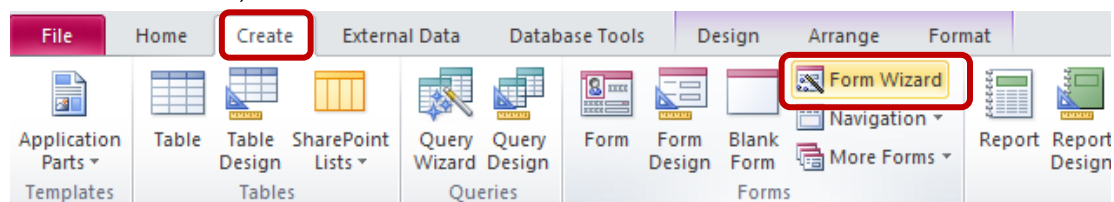
2. Follow the onscreen steps.
3. Additional customization can be done in Design view.

Design view is the best way to create a form when you want full control and complete freedom. The challenge is that you are on your own, without the prearrangements of the Form Wizard.
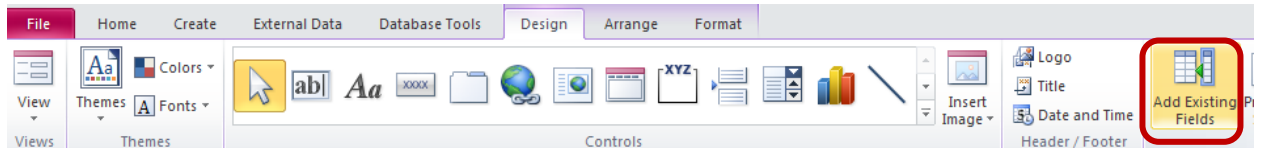
However, you can also create a form by other methods, and then change its details in Design view.
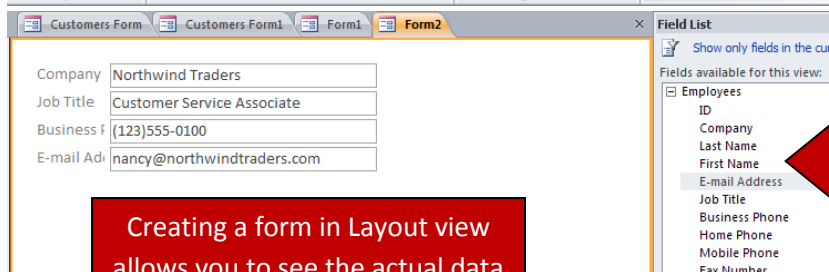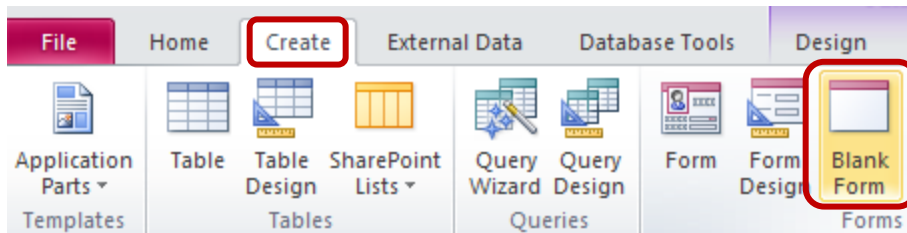
To create a form in Design view,

1. On the **Create** tab, click **Form Design**.
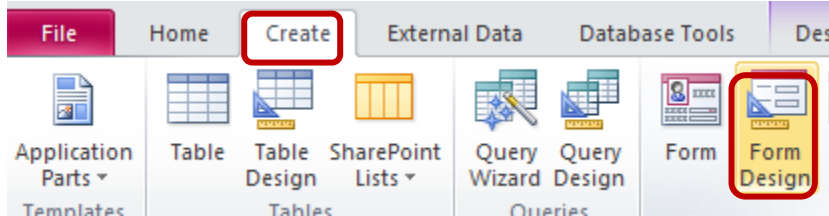
2. Click the **Add Existing Fields** button on the **Design** tab, if necessary, to see a list of tables and their fields. Then simply drag the desired fields onto the form.

3. You can also create a form from scratch in Layout view instead of Design view. From the **Create** tab, click **Blank Form**.

Creating a form in Layout view allows you to see the actual data as the fields are added.

Drag the desired fields from the Field List onto the form.

Customizing the Form

Once you know how to create forms, it is time to start making those forms look and act the way you want. To do that, you need to know your way around the parts of a form.

Controls are the parts of forms that most users see and work with. They are objects that display data, perform actions, and let you view and work with information. Controls make forms easier and more interesting to use.

Some controls are **bound**. A bound control is attached directly to a specific field in a selected table or query. When someone enters or changes data in a bound form control, that new data or changed data is immediately updated in the table. Similarly, data viewed in a bound control will change in the form whenever it changes in the table.

A control that doesn't have a source of data is called an **unbound** control. Unbound controls are used to display information, lines, rectangles, and pictures.

A control whose source of data is an expression, rather than a field, is called a **calculated** control. For example, if a table contains fields for unit price and quantity sold, a calculated control can be created to determine total price (unit price * quantity sold).

Controls can be added through the Controls group on the Design tab.
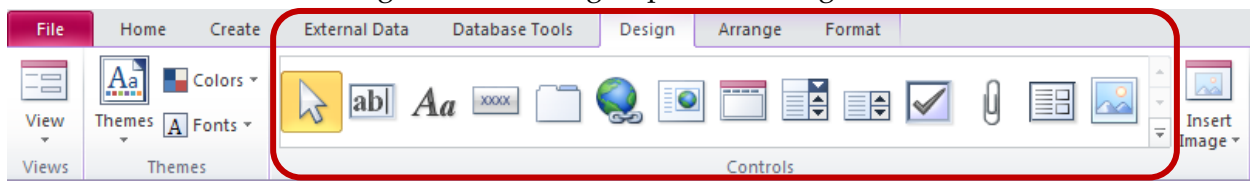
Calculated controls are created by writing an expression. For example, we will calculate the order total based on the unit price and quantity ordered fields.

Add a text box to the form by using the **Text Box** control on the **Design** tab.
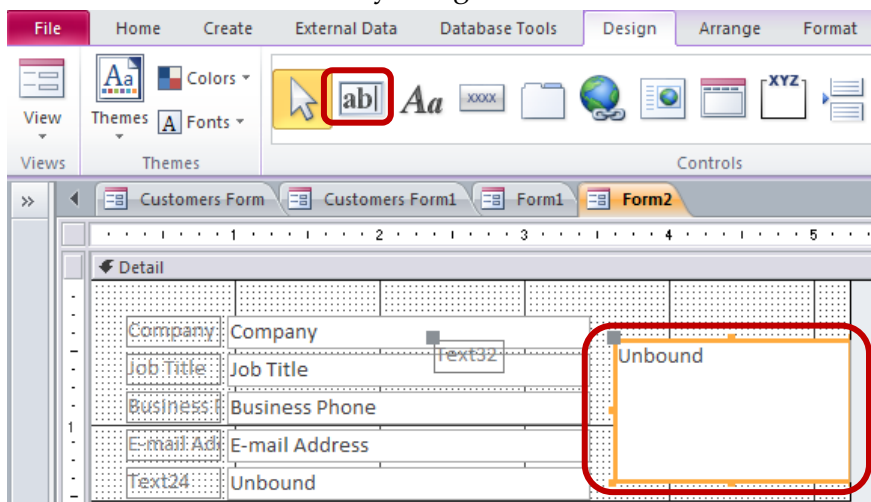
1. Click the **Property Sheet** button to display the properties, if necessary.
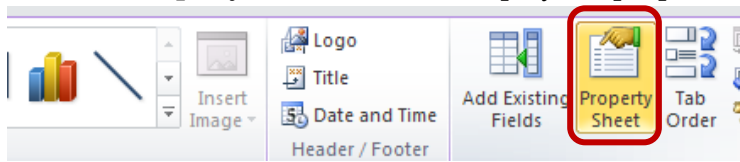
To select a control, click it with your mouse. You can then use the selection handles to move or resize it. Multiple controls can be selected in several ways:

- Hold Shift while you click them
- Draw a lasso around them with your mouse
- Click in the ruler to select all intersecting controls

Controls can also be resized and/or moved.

- To resize a control, point the mouse at a handle. The mouse will look like a two-headed arrow.
- To move a control, point the mouse to the box surrounding the control. The mouse will look like a four-headed arrow.
- To move a bound control without its label (or vice versa), point the mouse to the larger selection handle in the upper left corner.
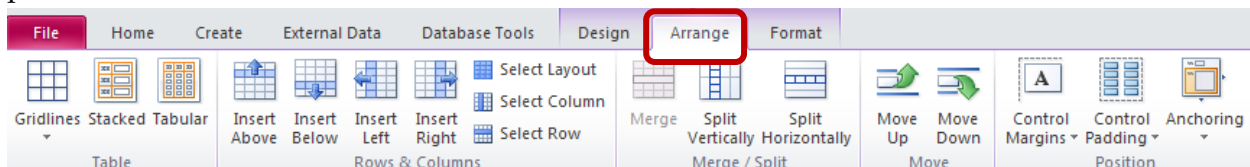

- Controls can also be moved by using the arrow keys on the keyboard.

Text formatting can be applied to the controls using the features available in **Themes group** on the **Design** tab.
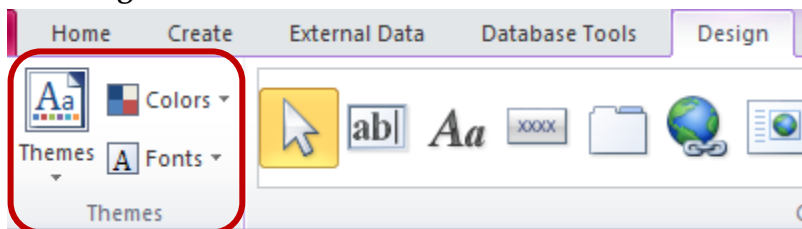
The tools available on the **Arrange tab** are especially helpful for arranging controls with a precise look.

Sections of the Form

If any of these sections are not visible, you can add them by clicking on the appropriate buttons on the **Show/Hide** group of the **Arrange** tab.
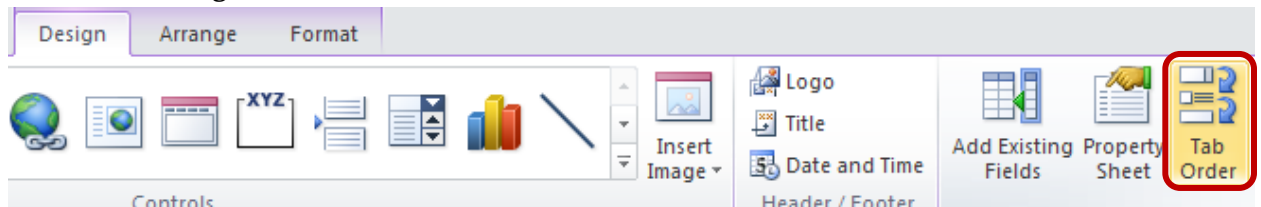
Sections can be resized by clicking and dragging the edge of the section bar.

Adjusting Tab Order

Some people use the **Tab** key to move through a form, from one control to another, as they enter or view data. It is important that the tab order be logical and easy to work with.

To change the tab order,

1. Switch to **Design** view, if necessary.
2. From the **Arrange** tab, click **Tab Order**.

3. Under **Section**, click the name of the form section for which you want to change the tab order.
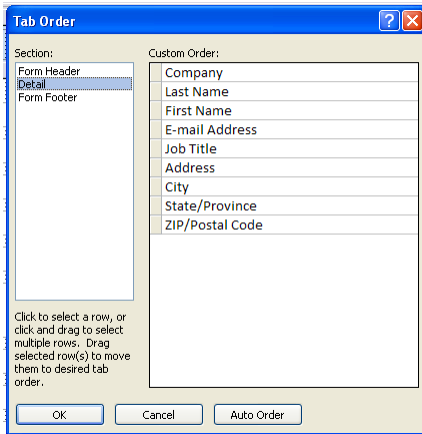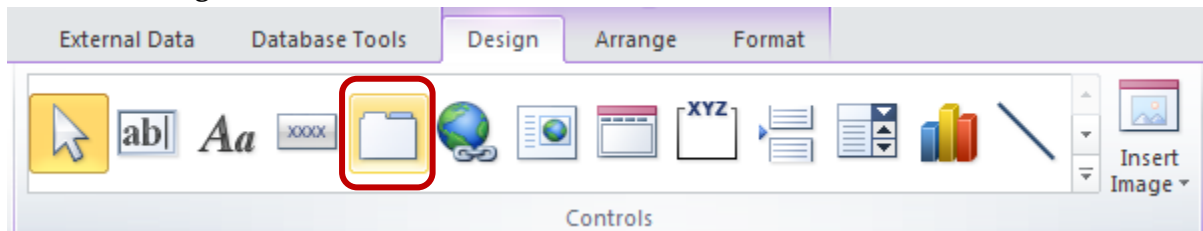

4. Drag the control names up or down in the **Custom Order** list.
5. The **Auto Order** button will set the tab order to a left-to-right, top-to-bottom order.

Using Tab Control

Tab controls are the easiest way to create a multi-page form. They are also useful if you want to avoid scrolling.

To add a tab control to the form,

1. From the **Design** tab, click the **Tab Control** button.

2. Click the form at the desired location of the tab control. The form will automatically adjust its size to accommodate the tab control.
3. Drag fields onto the tab control. Format the controls as desired.
4. To rename the tab, modify the **Caption** on the property sheet.
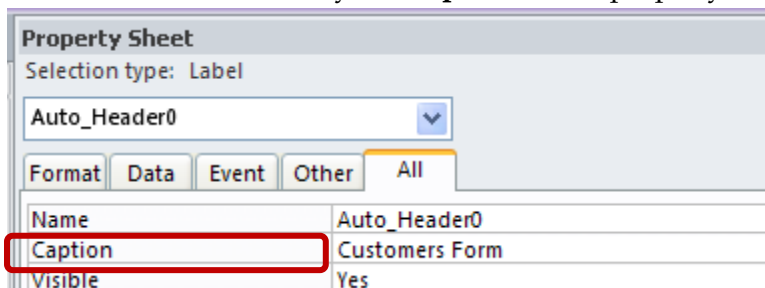
5. To add more tabs, **right-click** and choose **Insert** and then the location.
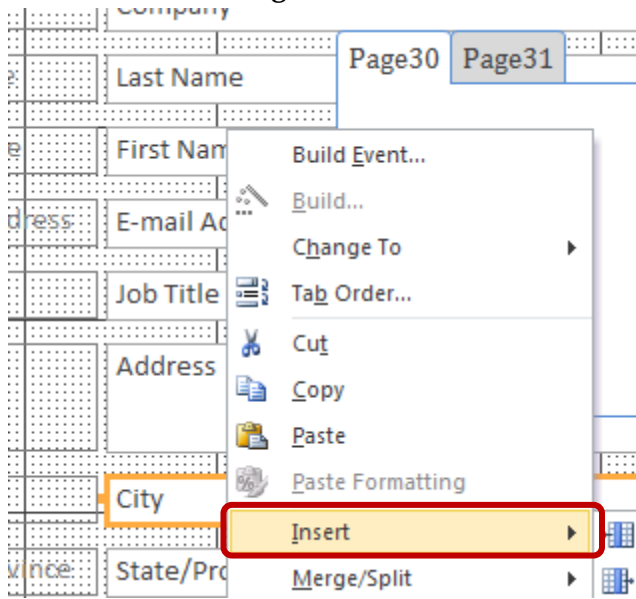
6. The completed tab control looks like this: