

Introduction

A **find duplicates query** allows you to search for and identify **duplicate records** within a table or tables. A duplicate record is a record that refers to the **same thing** or **person** as another record.

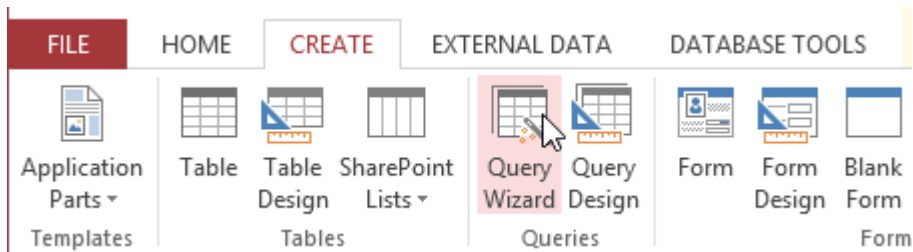
Not all records containing similar information are duplicates. For instance, records of two orders that were placed on different dates but that contained identical items would **not** be duplicate records. Likewise, not all duplicate records contain completely identical information. For example, two customer records could refer to the same person but include different addresses. The record with the out-of-date address would be the duplicate record.

Why is getting rid of duplicate records so important? Consider the example above. If we had multiple records for one customer, it would be difficult to view an order history for him because the information would be spread across several unlinked records. We might even deliver his order to the wrong address if the person entering the order information selects an outdated record. It's easy to see how having duplicate records can undermine the integrity and usefulness of your database.

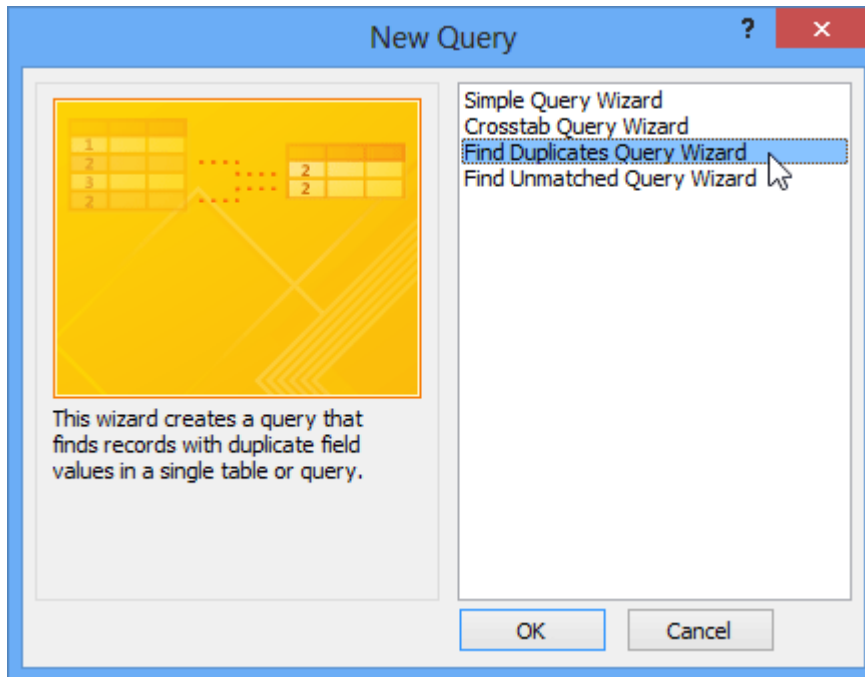
Fortunately, Access makes it easy to search for and locate potential duplicate records. Note that Access won't delete the records for you or help you figure out which one is current—you'll have to do those things for yourself. If you're familiar with the data in your database, though, getting rid of duplicate records will be a manageable task.

To create a find duplicates query:

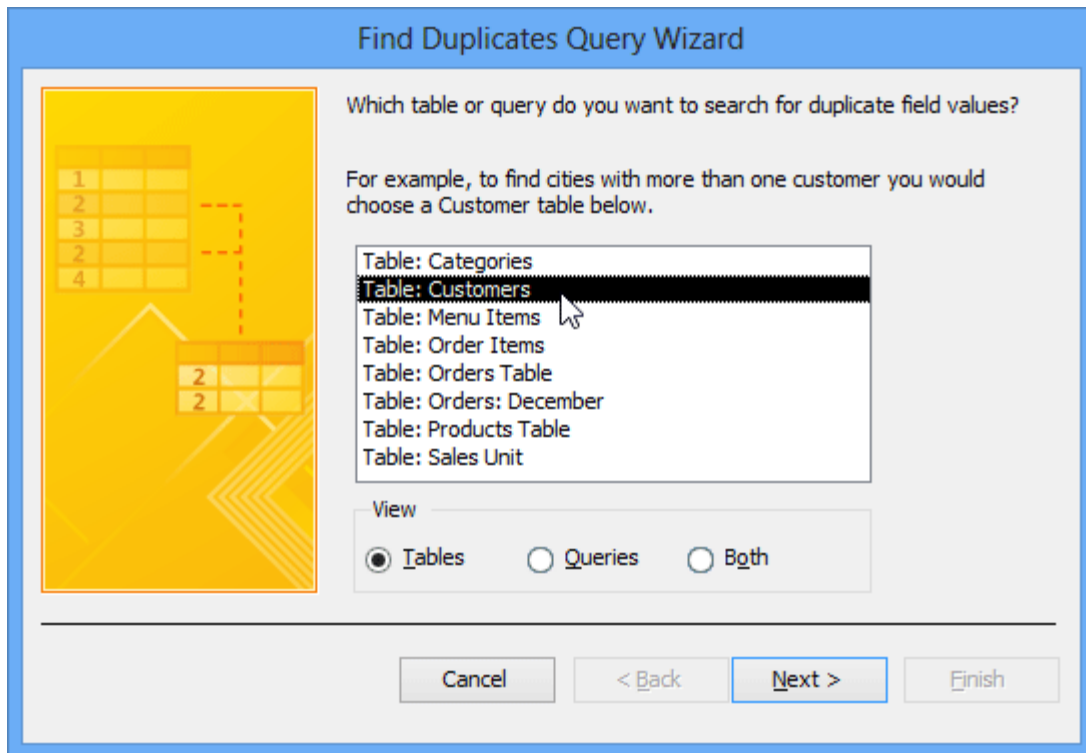
1. Select the **Create** tab on the Ribbon, locate the **Queries** group, and click the **Query Wizard** command.



2. The **New Query** dialog box will appear. Select **Find Duplicates Query Wizard** from the list of queries, then click **OK**.



3. Select the table you want to search for duplicate records, then click **Next**. We're searching for duplicate customer records, so we'll select the **Customers** table.



4. Choose the fields you want to search for duplicate information by selecting them and then clicking the **right arrow button**. Only select fields that should not be identical in nonduplicate records. For instance, because we're searching for duplicate customers we'll only select the **First Name** and **Last Name** fields because it's unlikely that multiple people with the exact same first and last names would place orders at our bakery.
5. When you've added the desired fields, click **Next**.



The image shows a 'Find Duplicates Query Wizard' dialog box. It has a blue title bar and a light gray background. On the left is a yellow decorative panel with a grid of squares. The main area contains the text: 'Which fields might contain duplicate information? For example, if you are looking for cities with more than one customer, you would choose City and Region fields here.' Below this are two lists: 'Available fields:' and 'Duplicate-value fields:'. The 'Available fields:' list contains: ID, First Name (highlighted), Last Name, Street Address, State, Zip Code, Phone Number, and City. Between the lists are four buttons: '>', '>>', '<', and '<<'. The 'Duplicate-value fields:' list is currently empty. At the bottom are four buttons: 'Cancel', '< Back', 'Next >', and 'Finish'.

Find Duplicates Query Wizard

Which fields might contain duplicate information?

For example, if you are looking for cities with more than one customer, you would choose City and Region fields here.

Available fields:

- ID
- First Name
- Last Name
- Street Address
- State
- Zip Code
- Phone Number
- City

Duplicate-value fields:

Buttons: Cancel, < Back, Next >, Finish

6. Select additional fields to view in the query results. Choose fields that will help you distinguish between the duplicate records, and choose which one you want to keep. In our example, we'll add all of the fields relating to customer **addresses**, plus the **Phone Number** field because records with identical customer names might contain nonidentical information in this field. When you're satisfied, click **Next**.

Find Duplicates Query Wizard

Do you want the query to show fields in addition to those with duplicate values?

For example, if you chose to look for duplicate City values, you could choose CustomerName and Address here.

Available fields:

ID
Add to Mailing List?

>

>>

<

<<

Additional query fields:

Street Address
State
Zip Code
Phone Number
City

Cancel < Back Next > Finish

7. Access will suggest a name for your query, but you can type a different name if you want. When you're satisfied with the query name, click **Finish** to run your query.

Find Duplicates Query Wizard

What do you want to name your query?

Find duplicates for Customers

Do you want to view the query results, or modify the query design?

☒ View the results.
☐ Modify the design.

Cancel < Back Next > Finish

8. If Access found any duplicate records in your query, they will be displayed in the **query results**. Review the records and **delete** any outdated or incorrect records as needed.

Customers		Find duplicates for Customers					
First Name	Last Name	Street Address	State	Zip Code	Phone Number	City	
David	Barrett	434 Hill St.	NC	27609	919-555-0662	Raleigh	
David	Barrett	430 Hill St.	NC	27609	919-555-0662	Raleigh	
Magda	Sremski	544 Wayne St.	NC	27612	919-555-4001	Raleigh	
Magda	Sremski	98 Tyler St.	NC	27612	919-555-1024	Raleigh	
*							

Tips for resolving duplicate records

- **Save** your duplicate records queries, and run them often.
- **Investigate** potential duplicate records by looking at linked data in other tables. You can do this by searching for these records' **record ID numbers** in related tables. Is one record linked to mostly old orders while another contains recent ones? The latter is likely to be the current one.
- Once you decide which record to delete, make sure you won't be losing any information you might need. In our example, before we deleted our duplicate record we found all of the orders linked to that record's **ID number** and replaced them with the ID number of the record we decided to keep.