Introduction

While there are four types of database objects in Access, **tables** are arguably the most important. Even when you're using forms, queries, and reports, you're still working with tables because that's where all of your **data** is stored. Tables are at the heart of any database, so it's important to understand how to use them.

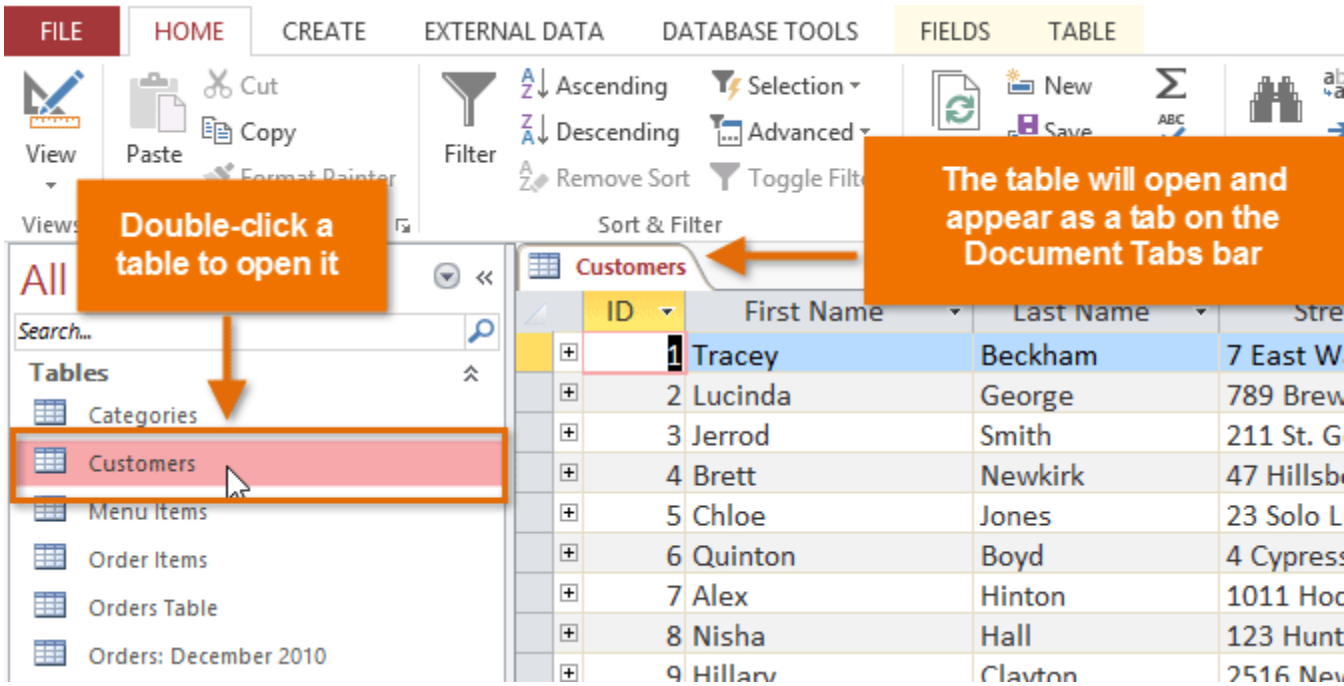
In this lesson, you will learn how to **open tables**, **create** and **edit records**, and **modify the appearance** of your table to make it easier to view and work with.

Throughout this tutorial, we will be using a sample database. If you would like to follow along, you'll need to download our “Tables.accdb”. You will need to have Access 2013 installed on your computer in order to open the example.

Table basics

To open an existing table:

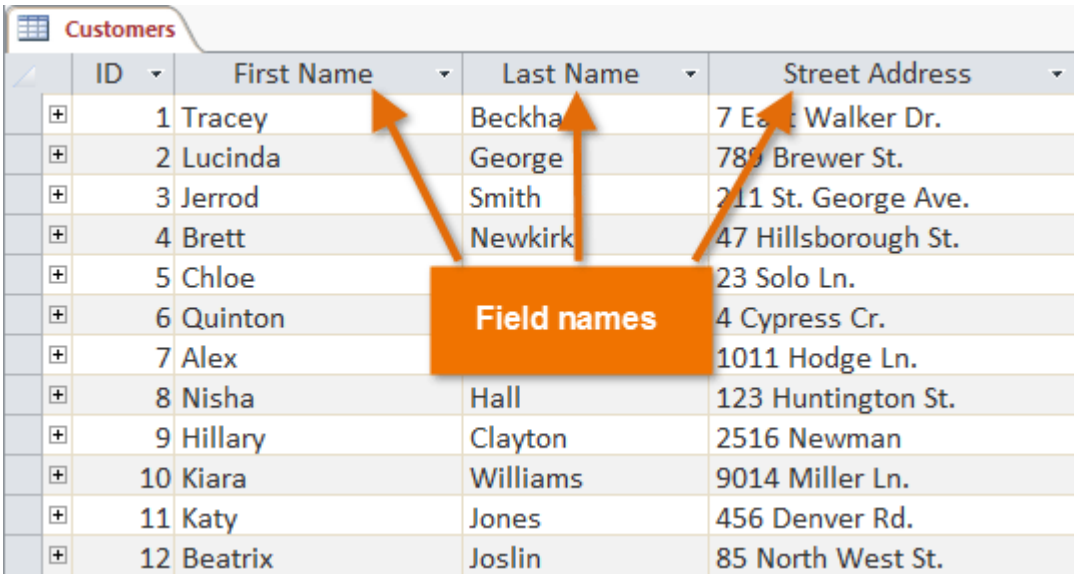
1. Open your database, and locate the **Navigation pane**.
2. In the Navigation pane, locate the table you want to open. Tables are marked with the icon.
3. Double-click the desired table. It will open and appear as a **tab** in the **Document Tabs bar**.



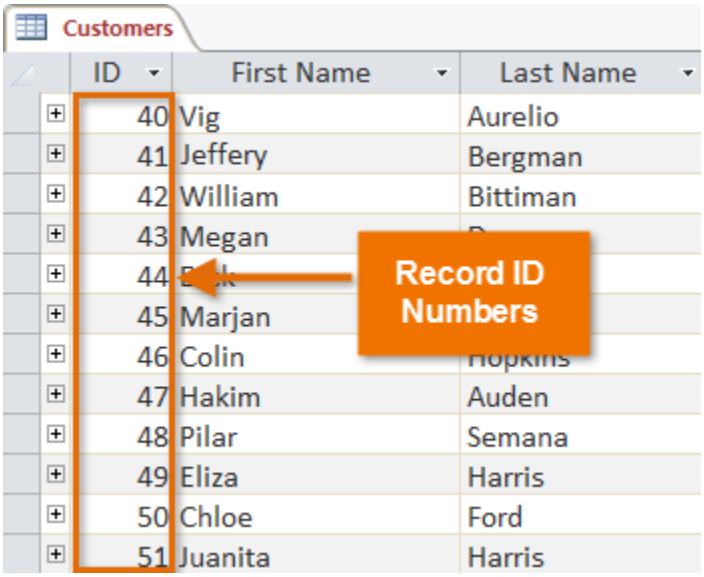
Understanding tables

All tables are composed of horizontal **rows** and vertical **columns**, with small rectangles called **cells** in the places where rows and columns intersect. In Access, rows and columns are referred to as **records** and **fields**.

A **field** is a way of organizing information by type. Think of the **field name** as a question and every cell within that field as a response to that question.



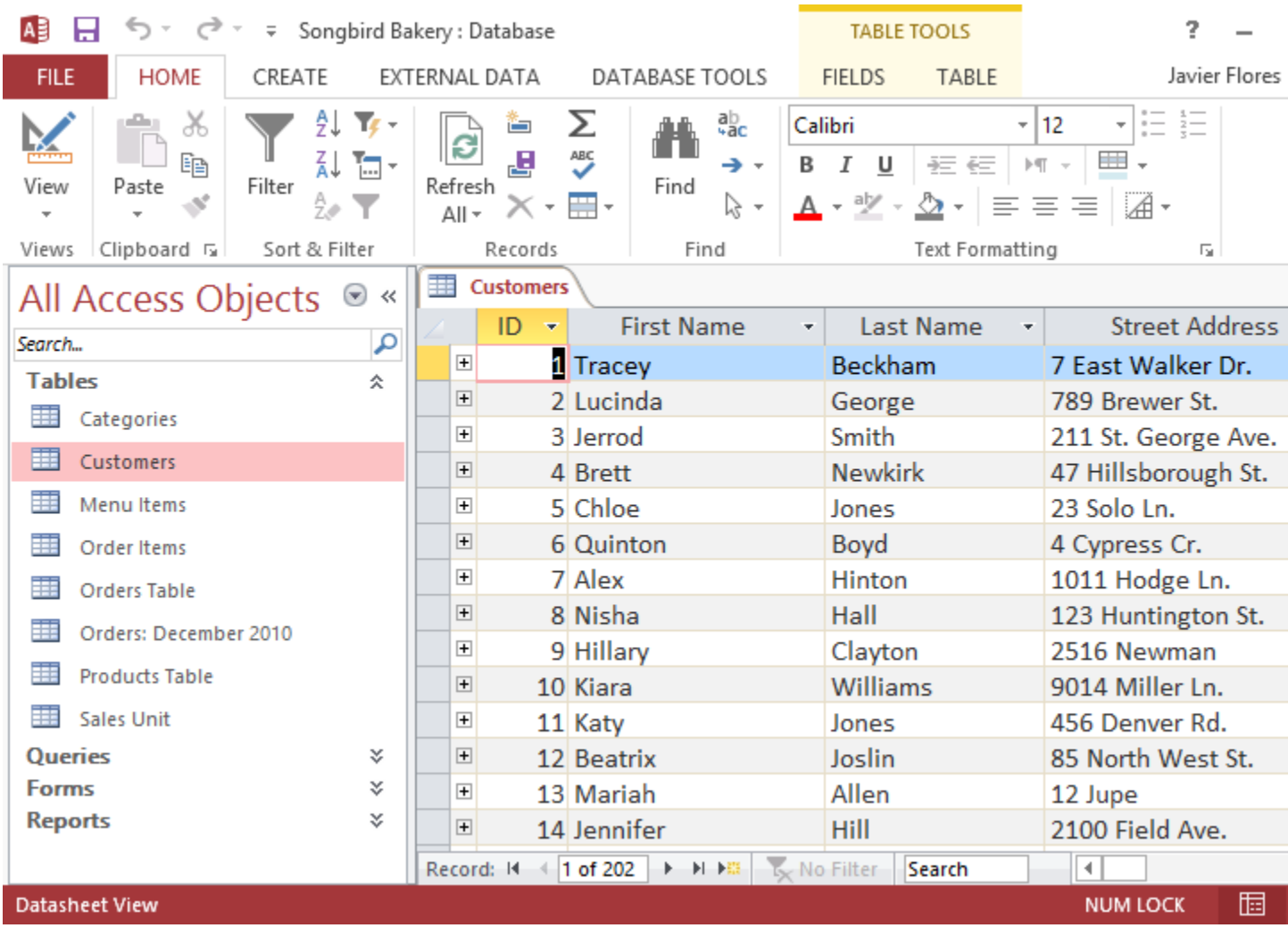
A **record** is one unit of information. Every cell on a given row is part of that row's record. Each record has its own **ID number**. Within a table, each ID number is unique to its record and refers to all of the information within that record. The ID number for a record cannot be changed.



Each cell of data in your table is part of both a **field** and a **record**. For instance, if you had a table of names and contact information, each person would be

represented by a record, and each piece of information about each person—name, phone number, address, and so on—would be contained within a distinct field on that record's row.

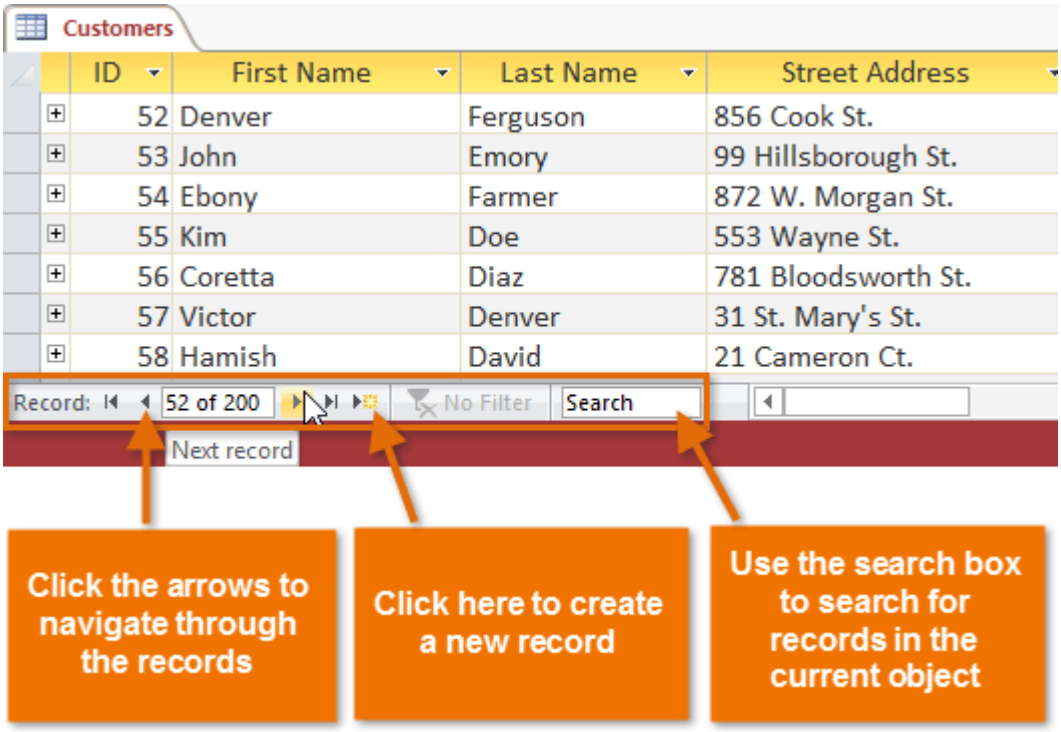
Click the buttons in the interactive below to learn how to navigate a table.



Navigating within tables

To navigate through records in a table, you can use the **up and down arrow keys**, **scroll up and down**, or use the arrows in the **Record Navigation bar** located at the bottom of your table. You can also find any record in the currently open table by **searching** for it using the **record search box**. Simply place your cursor in the search box, type any word that appears in the record

you want to find, and press the **Enter** key. To view additional records that match your search, press Enter again.



To navigate between fields, you can use the **left and right arrow keys** or **scroll left and right**.

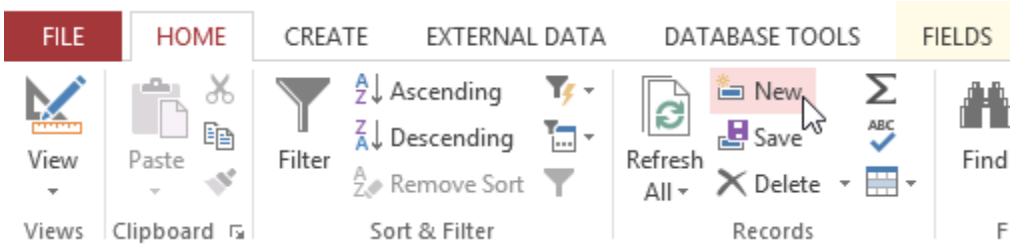
Adding records and entering data

Entering data into tables in Access is similar to entering data in Excel. To work with records, you'll have to enter data into **cells**. If you need help entering data into records, you might want to review our **Cell Basics** lesson from our **Excel 2013** tutorial.

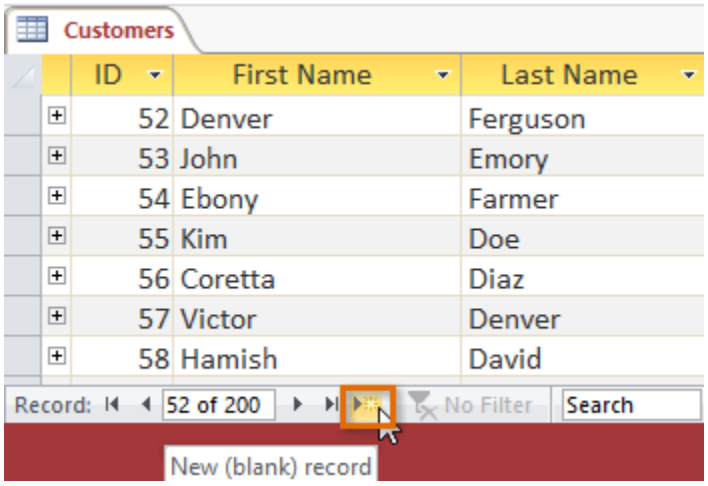
To add a new record:

There are three ways to add a new record to a table:

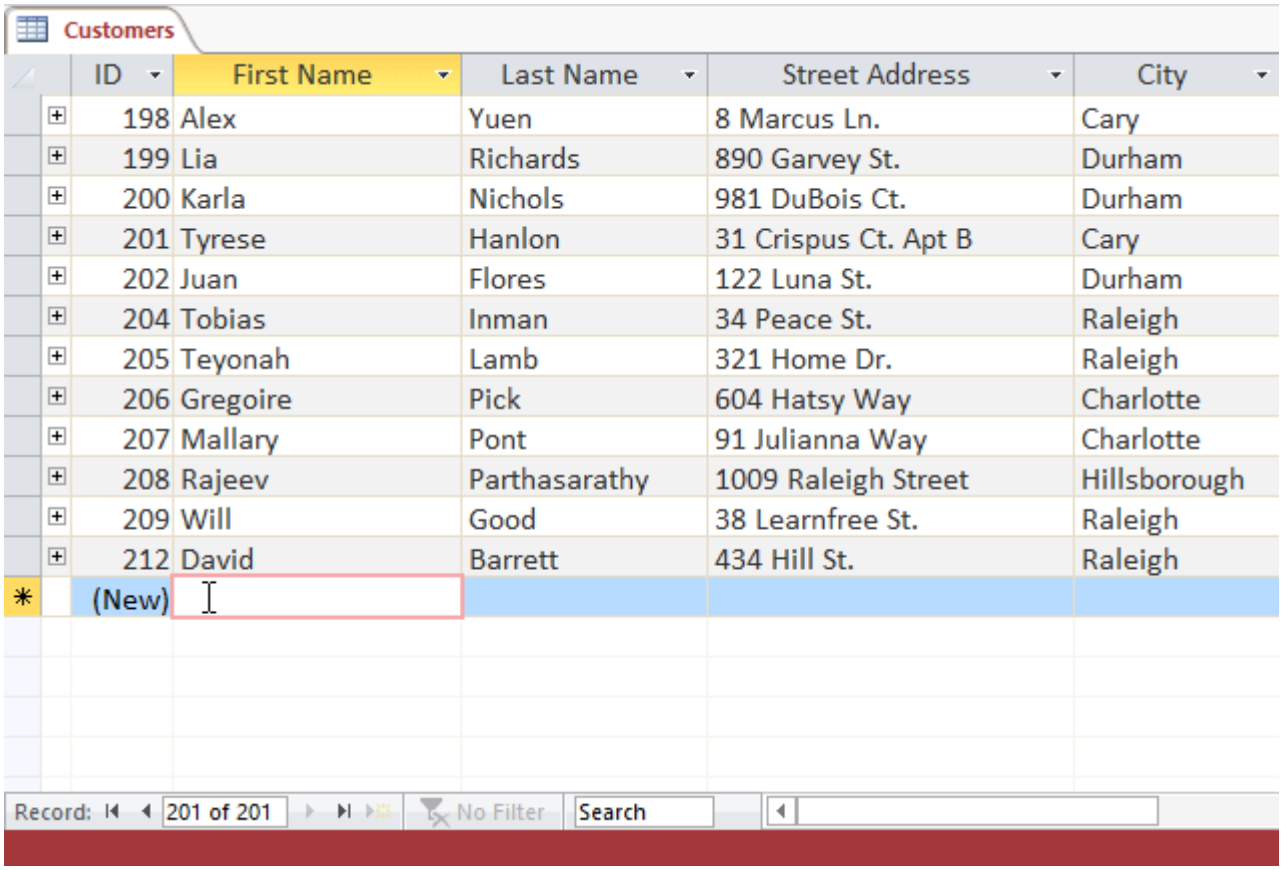
- In the **Records** group on the **Home** tab, click the **New** command.



- On the **Record Navigation bar** at the bottom of the window, click the **New record** button.



- Begin typing in the row below your last added record.

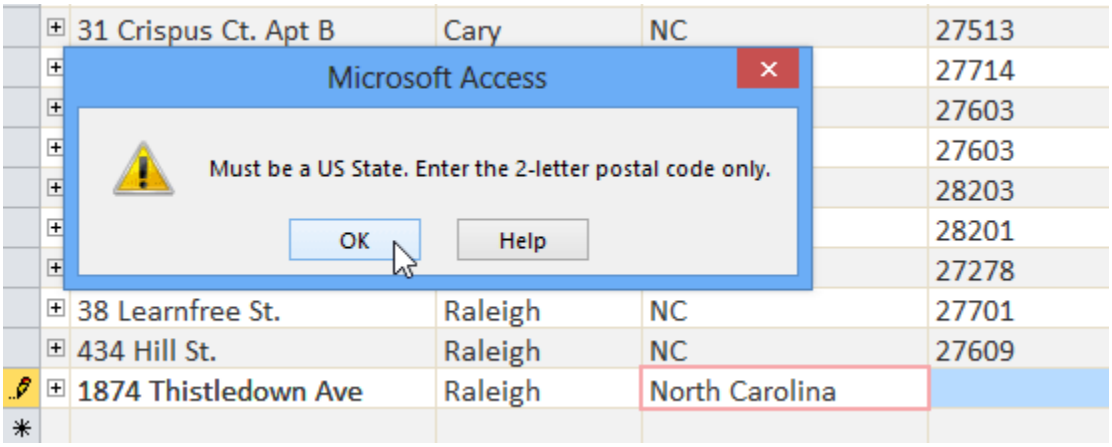


Customers

ID	First Name	Last Name	Street Address	City
198	Alex	Yuen	8 Marcus Ln.	Cary
199	Lia	Richards	890 Garvey St.	Durham
200	Karla	Nichols	981 DuBois Ct.	Durham
201	Tyrese	Hanlon	31 Crispus Ct. Apt B	Cary
202	Juan	Flores	122 Luna St.	Durham
204	Tobias	Inman	34 Peace St.	Raleigh
205	Teyonah	Lamb	321 Home Dr.	Raleigh
206	Gregoire	Pick	604 Hatsy Way	Charlotte
207	Mallary	Pont	91 Julianna Way	Charlotte
208	Rajeev	Parthasarathy	1009 Raleigh Street	Hillsborough
209	Will	Good	38 Learnfree St.	Raleigh
212	David	Barrett	434 Hill St.	Raleigh
(New)				

Record: 201 of 201 No Filter Search

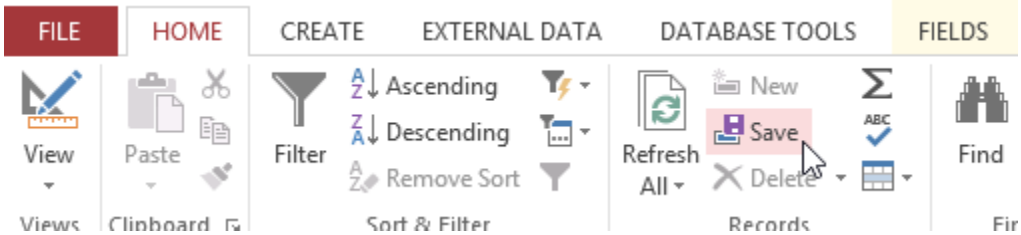
Sometimes when you enter information into a record, a window will pop up to tell you that the information you've entered is invalid. This means the field you're working with has a **validation rule**, which is a rule about the type of data that can appear in that field. Click **OK**, then follow the instructions in the pop-up window to **re-enter** your data.



To save a record:

Access is designed to save records automatically. After you enter a record, you can either select a different record or close the object, and Access will save the record. However, in certain situations you may want to save a record manually. For example, if you needed to edit an existing record, you could save the record to ensure your changes are saved.

1. Select the **Home** tab, and locate the **Records** group.
2. Click the **Save** command. The record will be saved.



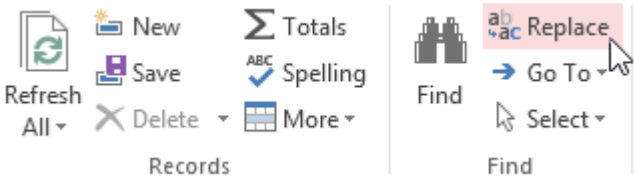
Editing records

To quickly edit any record within a table, you can click it and type your changes. However, Access offers you the ability to **find and replace** a word within multiple records and **delete** records entirely.

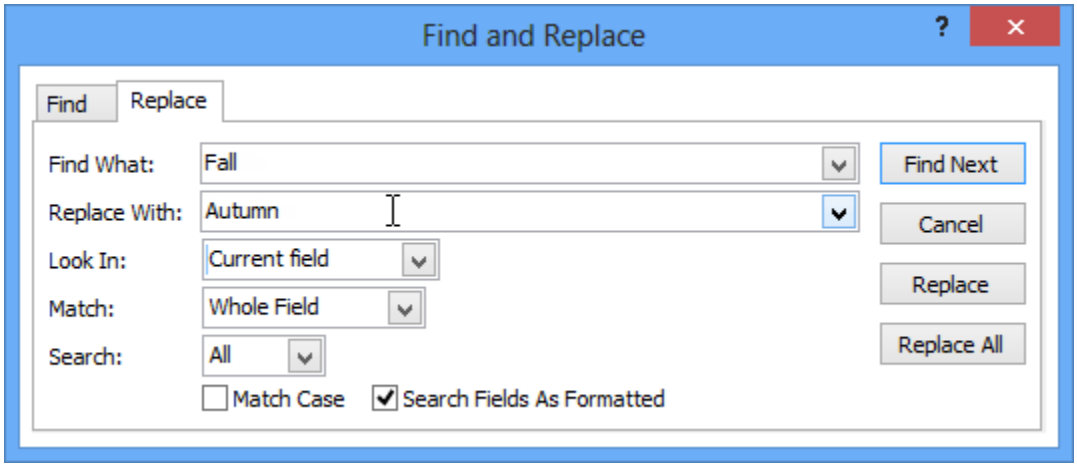
To replace a word within a record:

You can edit multiple occurrences of the same word by using **Find and Replace**, which searches for a term and replaces it with another term.

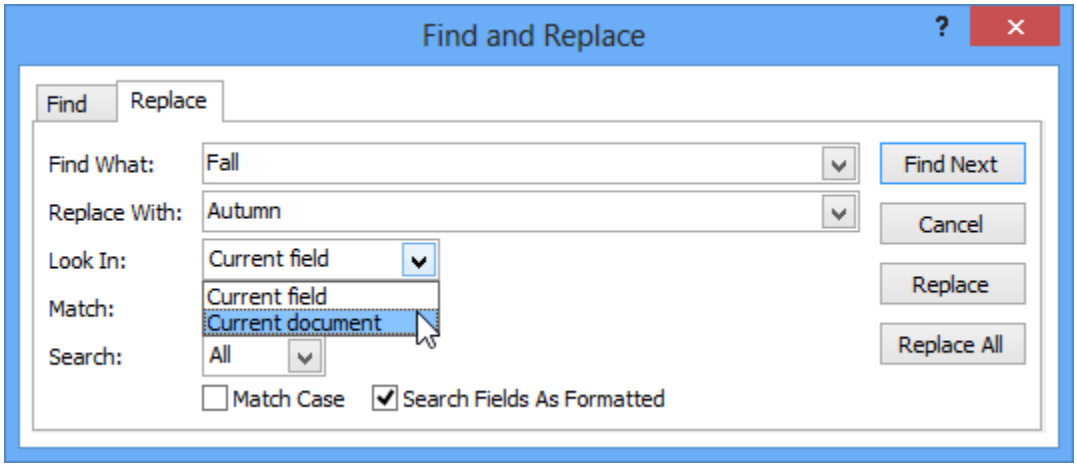
1. Select the **Home** tab, and locate the **Find** group.
2. Select the **Replace** command. The **Find and Replace** dialog box will appear.



3. In the **Find What:** field, type the word you want to find, then in the **Replace With:** field type the word you would like to replace the original word. In our example, we'll find instances of the word **Fall** and replace it with **Autumn**.

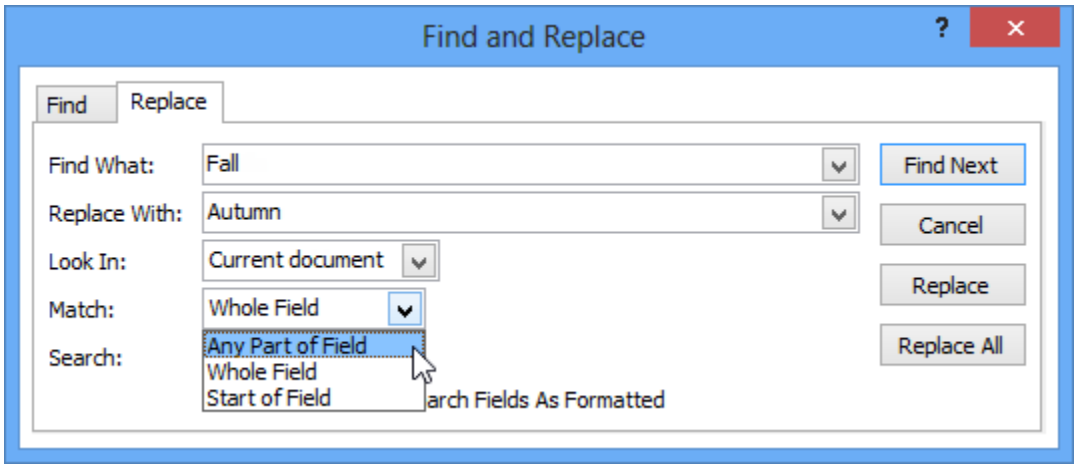


4. Click the **Look In:** drop-down arrow to select the area you want to search.
   - Select **Current Field** to limit your search to the currently selected field.
   - Select **Current Document** to search within the entire table.

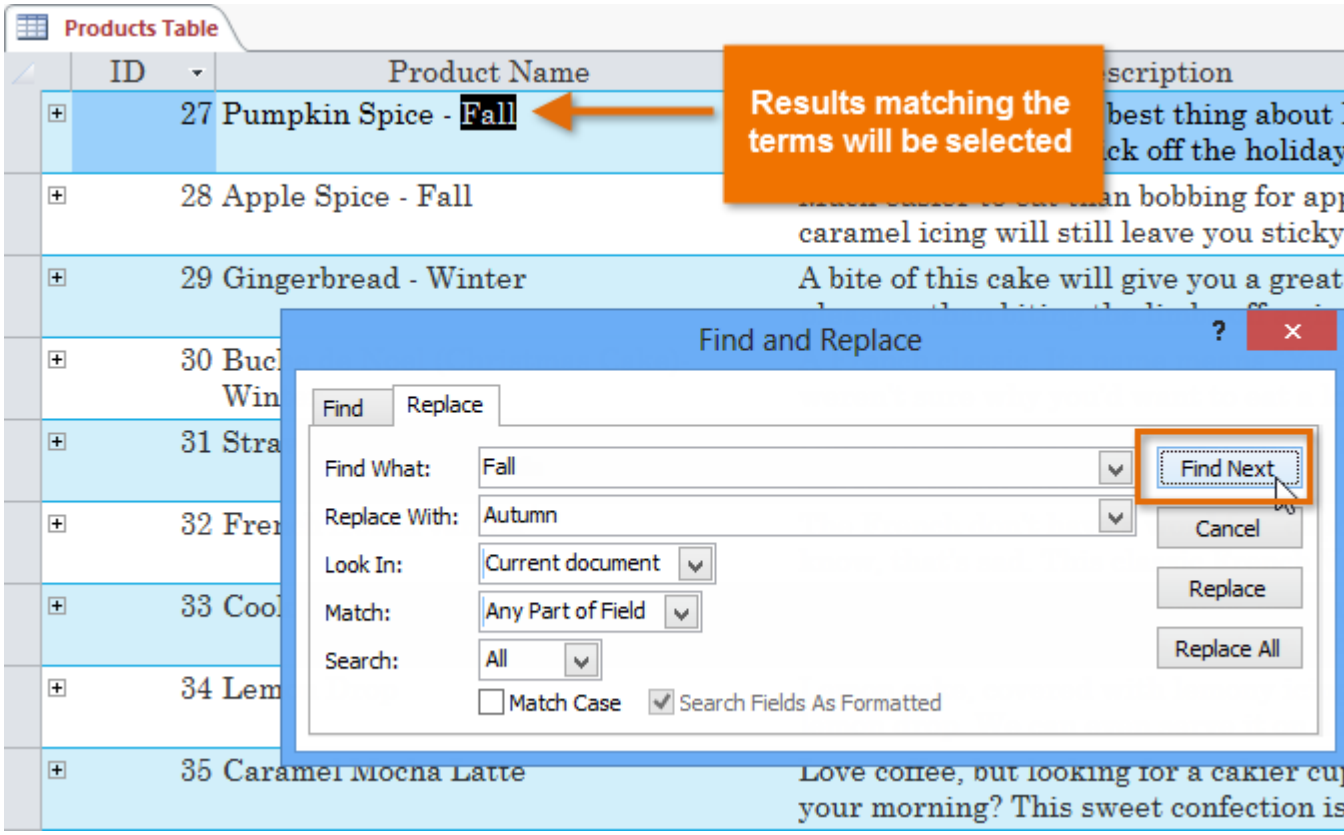


5. Click the **Match:** drop-down arrow to select how closely you'd like results to match your search.
   - Select **Any Part of Field** to search for your search term in any part of a cell.

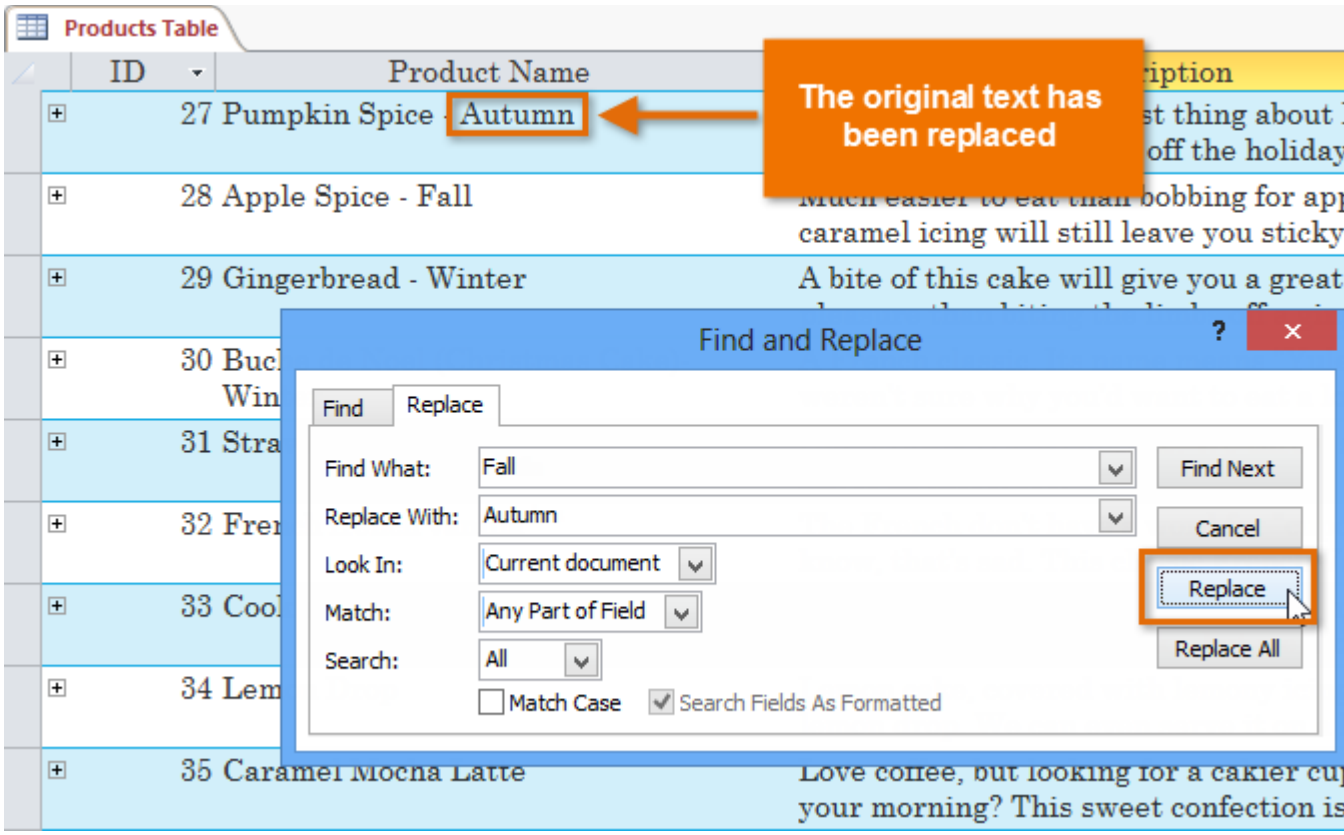
- Select **Whole Field** to search only for cells that match your search term exactly.
- Select **Beginning of Field** to search only for cells that start with your search term.



6. Click **Find Next**. If the text is found, it will be **selected**.

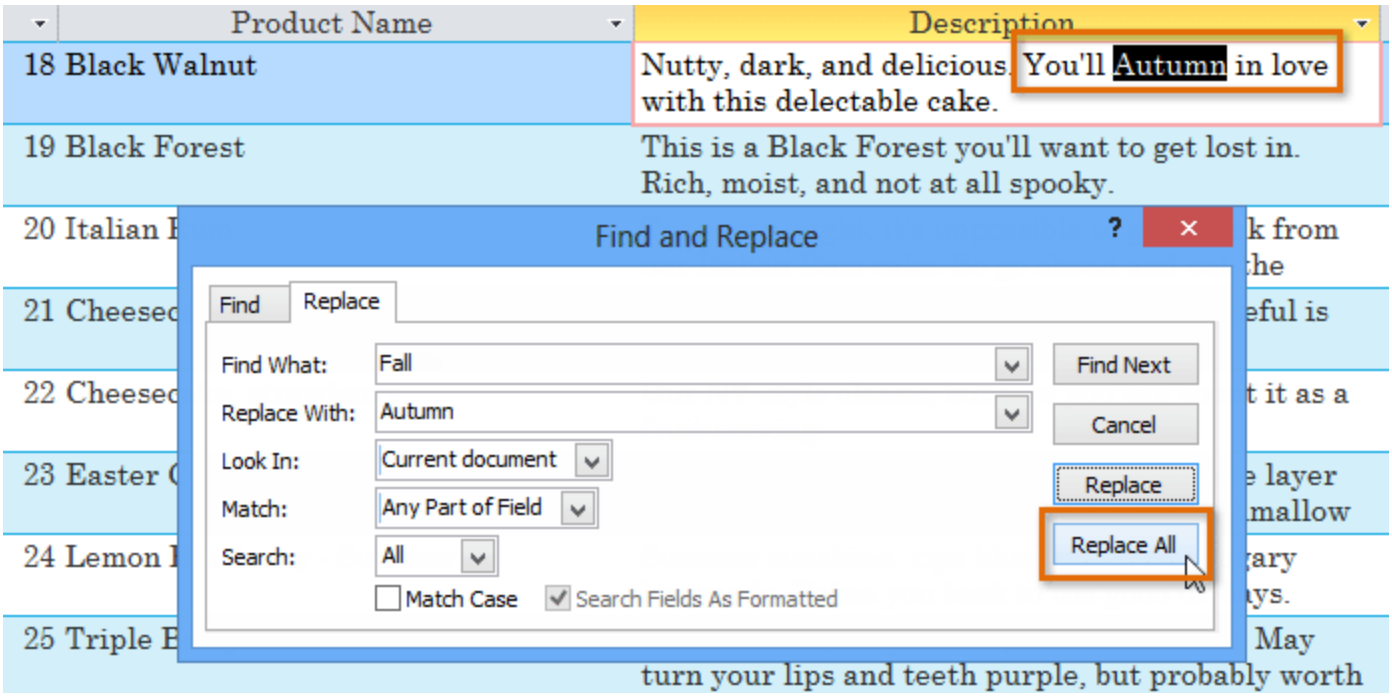


7. Review the text to make sure you want to replace it.
   Click **Replace** to replace the original word with the new one.



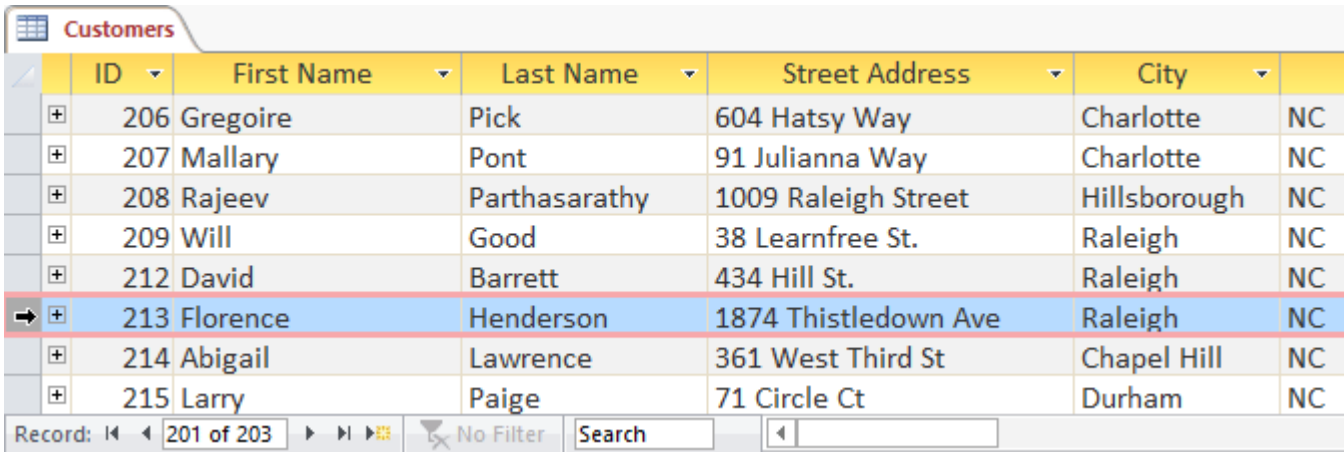
8. Access will move to the next instance of the text in the object. When you are finished replacing text, click **Cancel** to close the dialog box.

The **Replace All** option is powerful, and it may actually change some things you don't want to change. In the example below, the word **fall** did not refer to the season, so replacing it with **Autumn** would be incorrect. Using the normal **Replace** option allows you check each instance before replacing the text. You can click **Find Next** to skip to the next instance without replacing the text.



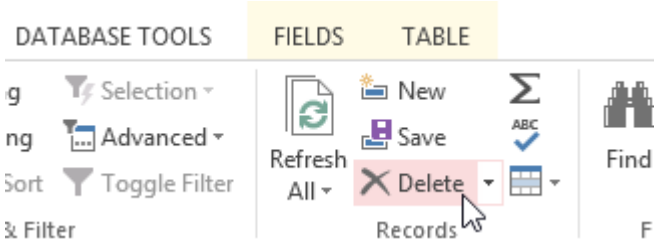
To delete a record:

1. Select the entire record by clicking the **gray border** on the left side of the record.

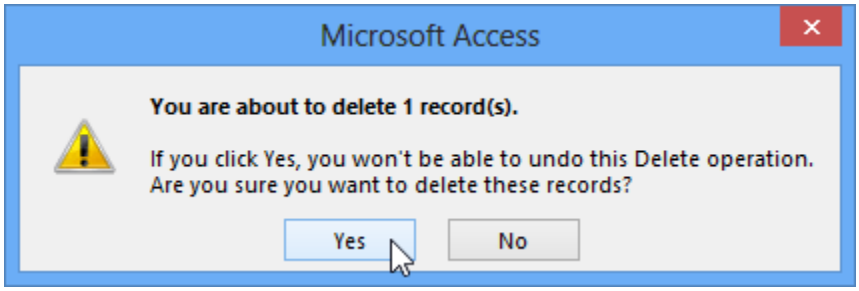


ID	First Name	Last Name	Street Address	City	
206	Gregoire	Pick	604 Hatsy Way	Charlotte	NC
207	Mallary	Pont	91 Julianna Way	Charlotte	NC
208	Rajeev	Parthasarathy	1009 Raleigh Street	Hillsborough	NC
209	Will	Good	38 Learnfree St.	Raleigh	NC
212	David	Barrett	434 Hill St.	Raleigh	NC
213	Florence	Henderson	1874 Thistledown Ave	Raleigh	NC
214	Abigail	Lawrence	361 West Third St	Chapel Hill	NC
215	Larry	Paige	71 Circle Ct	Durham	NC

2. Select the **Home** tab and locate the **Records** group.
3. Click the **Delete** command.

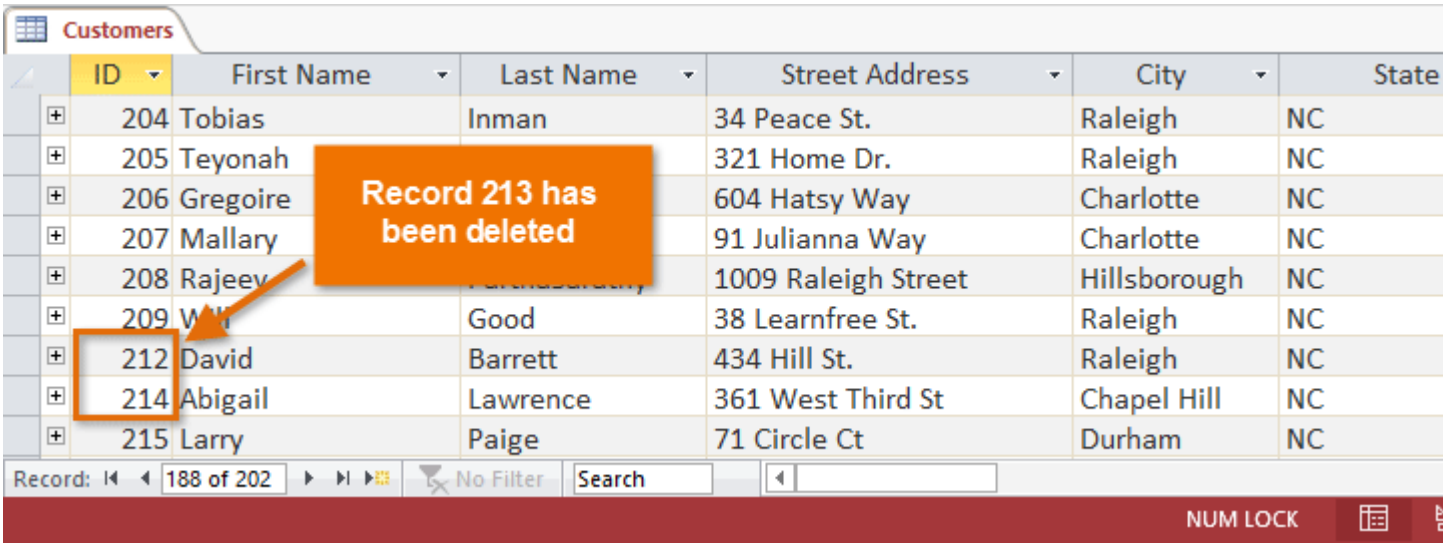


4. A dialog box will appear. Click **Yes**.



5. The record will be permanently deleted.

The ID numbers assigned to records stay the same even after you delete a record. For example, if you delete the 213th record in a table the sequence of record ID numbers will read ...212, **214**, 215... rather than ...212, **213**, 214, 215...



Modifying table appearance

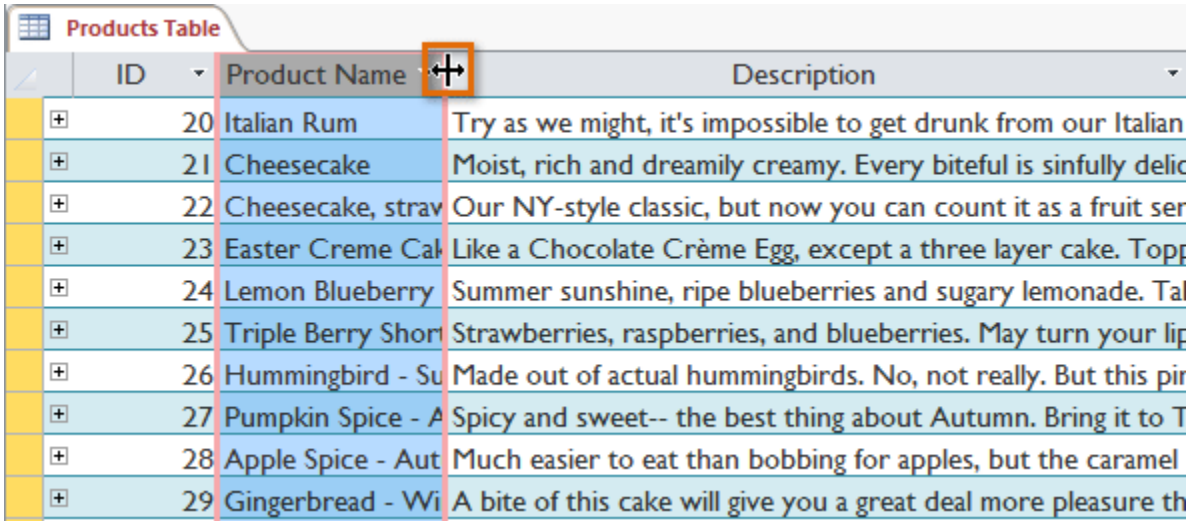
Access offers various ways to modify the appearance of tables, including resizing fields and rows and temporarily hiding information you don't need to see. These changes aren't just about making your table look good; they also can make the table easier to read.

Resizing fields and rows

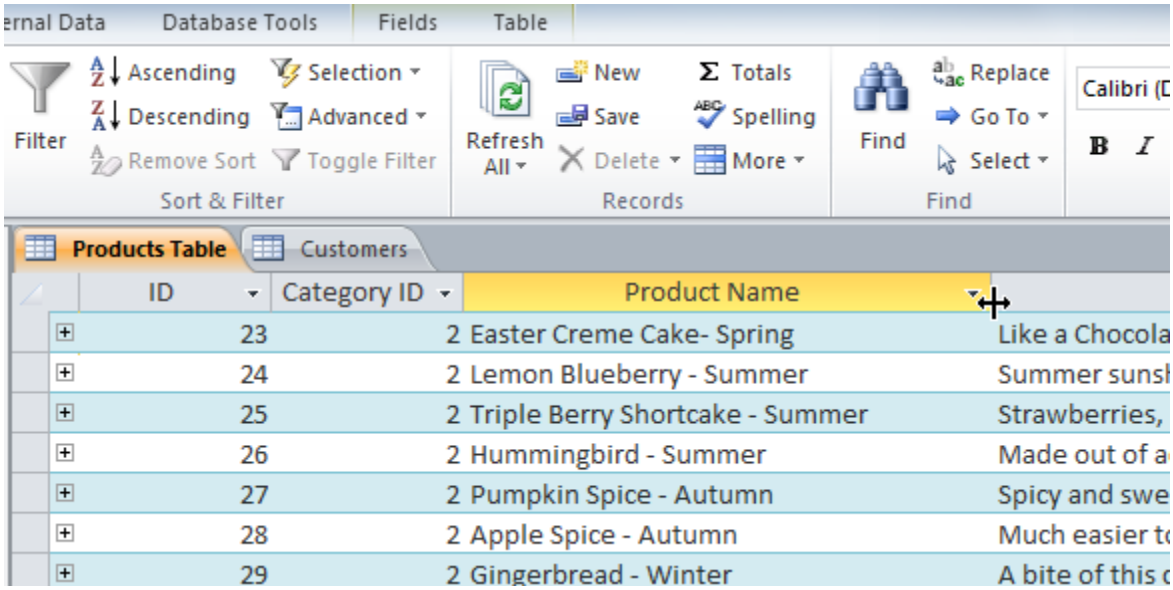
If your fields and rows are too small or large for the data contained with them, you can always **resize** them so all of the text is displayed.

To resize a field:

1. Place your cursor over the **right gridline** in the **field title**. Your mouse will become a **double arrow**.



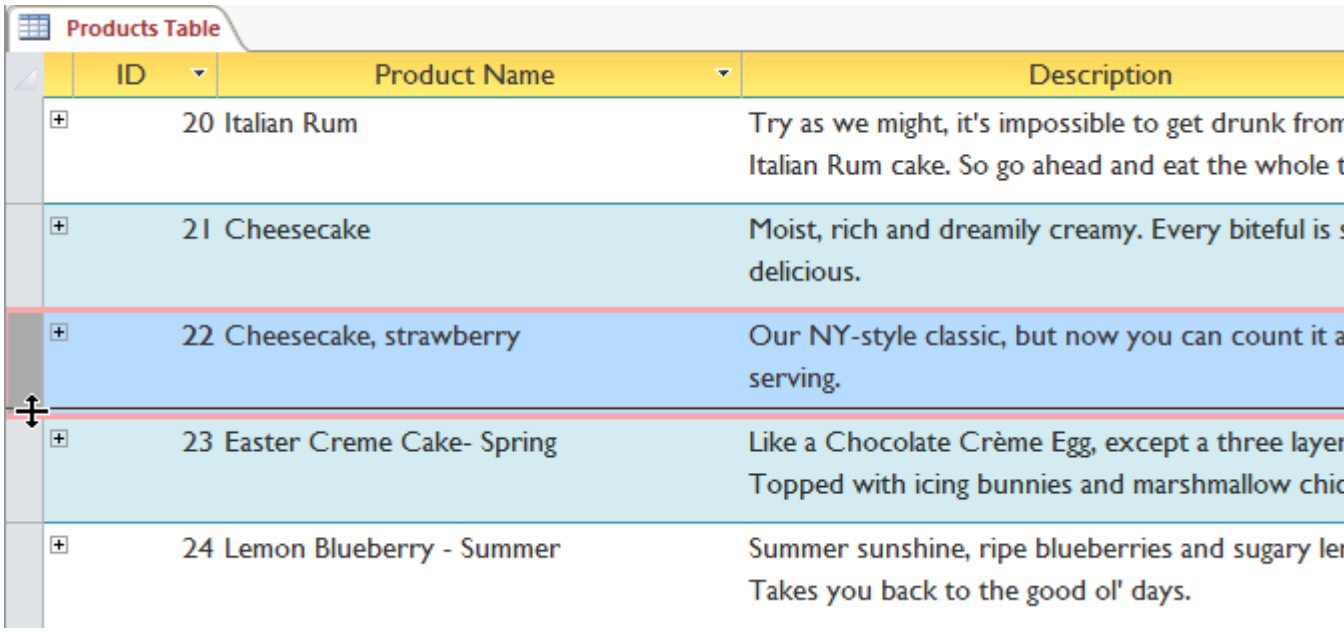
2. Click and drag the gridline to the right to increase the field width or to the left to decrease the field width, then release the mouse. The field width will be changed.



To resize a row:

1. Place your cursor over the **bottom gridline** in the **gray area** to the left of the row. Your mouse will become a **double arrow**.

2. Click and drag the gridline downward to increase the row height or upward to decrease the row height, then release the mouse. The row height will be changed.

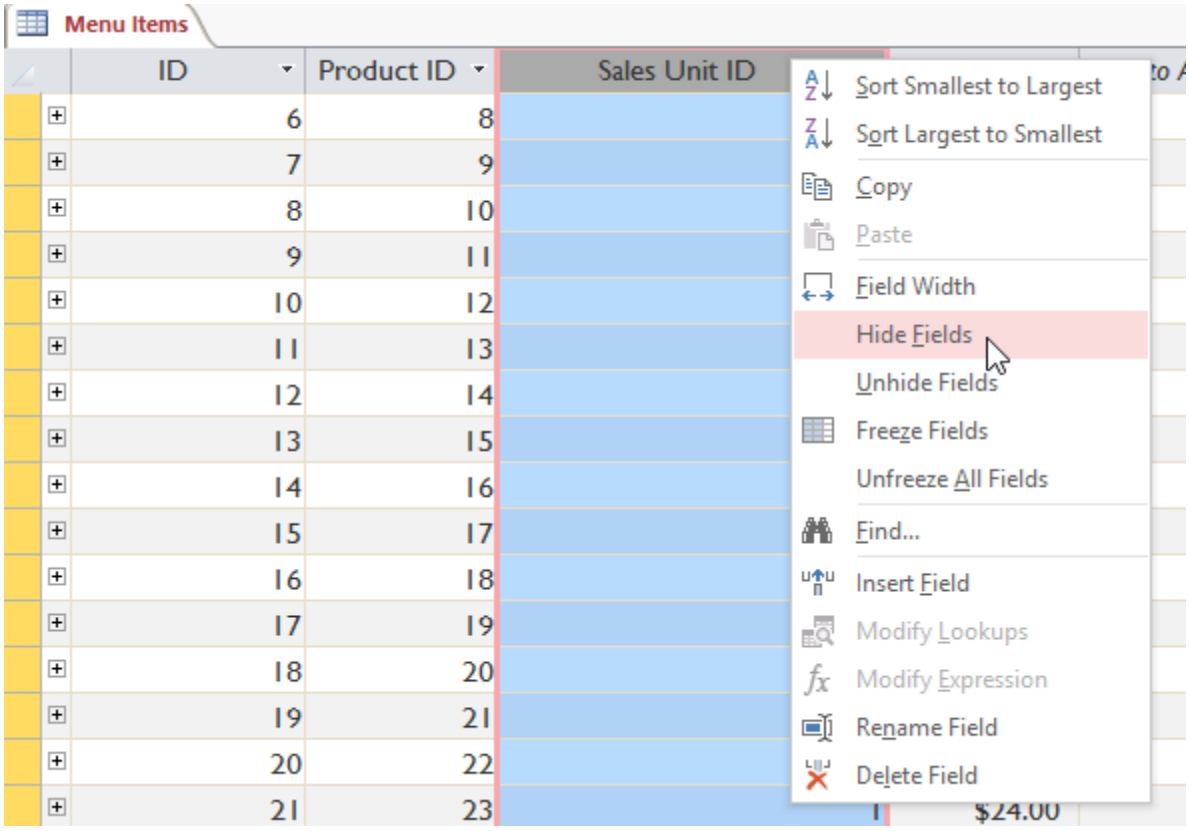


Hiding fields

If you have a field you don't plan on editing or don't want other people to edit, you can **hide** it. A hidden field is invisible but is still part of your database. Data within a hidden field can still be accessed from forms, queries, reports, and any related tables.

To hide a field:

1. Right-click the **field title**, then select **Hide Fields**.



2. The field will be hidden.

If you decide you want the field to be visible again, you can **unhide** it. Simply right-click any field title, then select **Unhide Fields**. A dialog box will appear. Click the checkboxes of any fields you want to be visible again, then click **Close**.

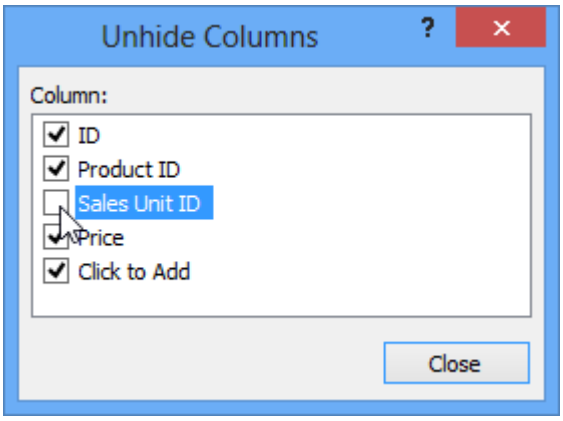


Table formatting options

Alternate row color

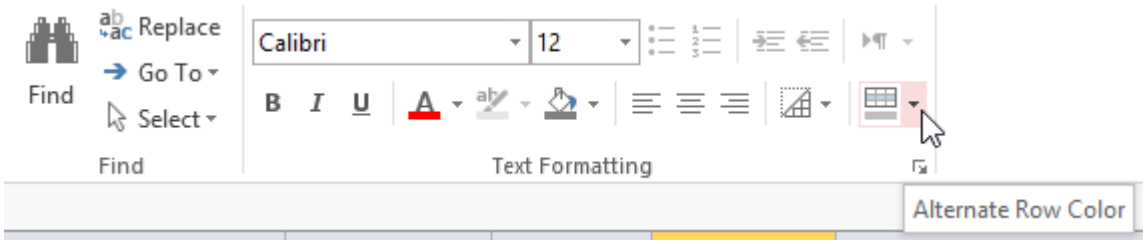
By default, the background of every other row in an Access table is a few shades darker than the background of the rest of the table. This darker **alternate row color** makes your table easier to read by offering a **visual distinction** between each record and the records directly above and below it.

Customers

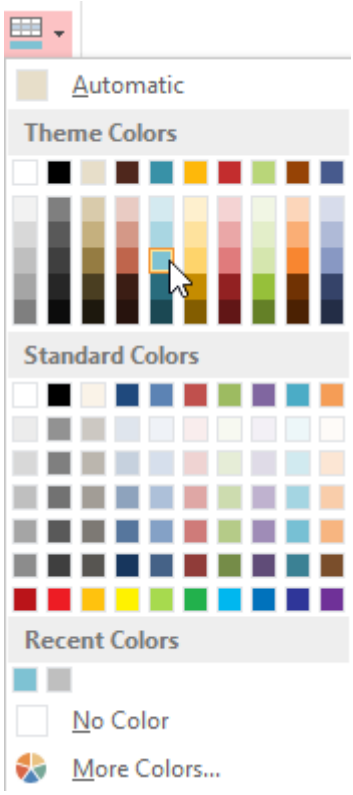
ID	First Name	Last Name	Street Address	City	State
1	Tracey	Beckham	7 East Walker Dr.	Raleigh	NC
2	Lucinda	George	789 Brewer St.	Cary	NC
3	Jerrod	Smith	211 St. George Ave.	Raleigh	NC
4	Brett	Newkirk	47 Hillsborough St.	Raleigh	NC
5	Chloe	Jones	23 Solo Ln.	Raleigh	NC
6	Quinton	Boyd	4 Cypress Cr.	Durham	NC
7	Alex	Hinton	1011 Hodge Ln.	Cary	NC
8	Nisha	Hall	123 Huntington St.	Raleigh	NC
9	Hillary	Clayton	2516 Newman	Raleigh	NC
10	Kiara	Williams	9014 Miller Ln.	Durham	NC

To change the alternate row color:

1. Select the **Home** tab, locate the **Text Formatting** group, and click the **Alternate Row Color** drop-down arrow.



2. Select a color from the drop-down menu, or select **No Color** to remove the alternate row color.



3. The alternate row color will be updated.

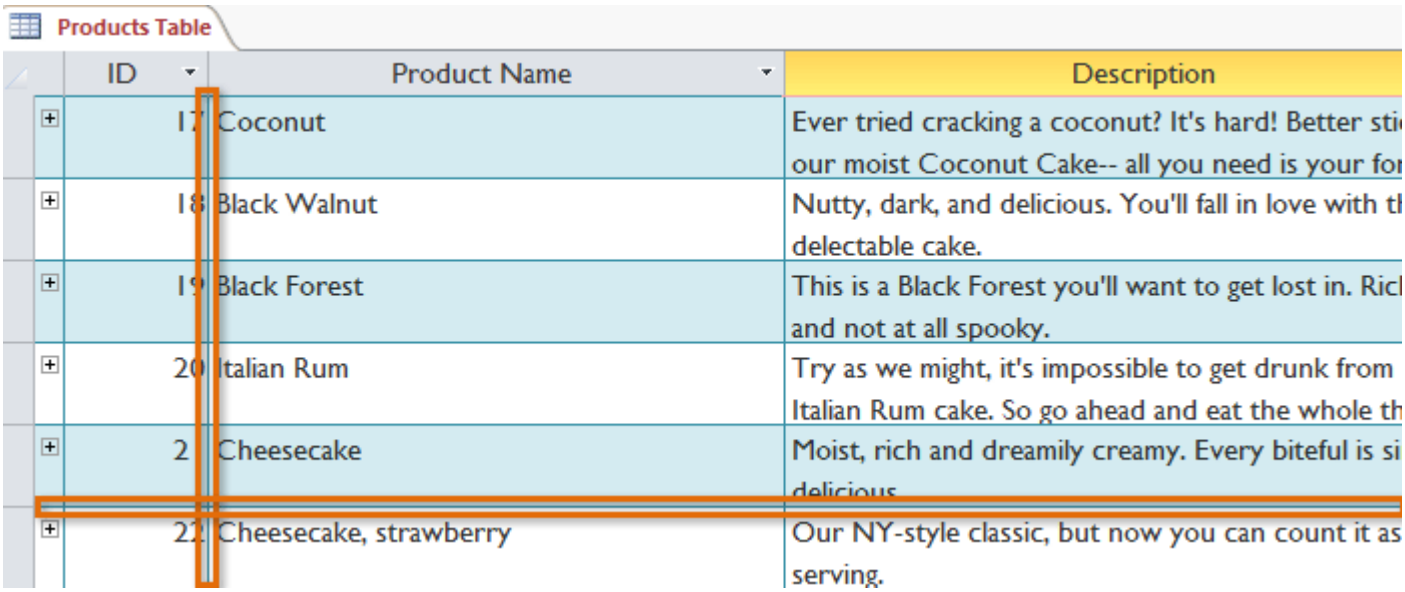
Customers

ID	First Name	Last Name	Street Address	City	State
1	Tracey	Beckham	7 East Walker Dr.	Raleigh	NC
2	Lucinda	George	789 Brewer St.	Cary	NC
3	Jerrod	Smith	211 St. George Ave.	Raleigh	NC
4	Brett	Newkirk	47 Hillsborough St.	Raleigh	NC
5	Chloe	Jones	23 Solo Ln.	Raleigh	NC
6	Quinton	Boyd	4 Cypress Cr.	Durham	NC
7	Alex	Hinton	1011 Hodge Ln.	Cary	NC
8	Nisha	Hall	123 Huntington St.	Raleigh	NC
9	Hillary	Clayton	2516 Newman	Raleigh	NC
10	Kiara	Williams	9014 Miller Ln.	Durham	NC

Modifying gridlines

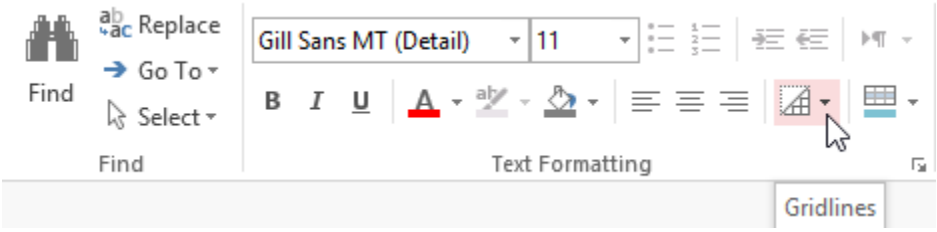
Another way Access makes your tables easier to read is by adding **gridlines** that mark the borders of each cell. Gridlines are the **thin lines** that appear between each cell, row, and column of your table. By default, gridlines are dark gray and

appear on every side of a cell, but you can change their **color** and **hide** undesired gridlines.

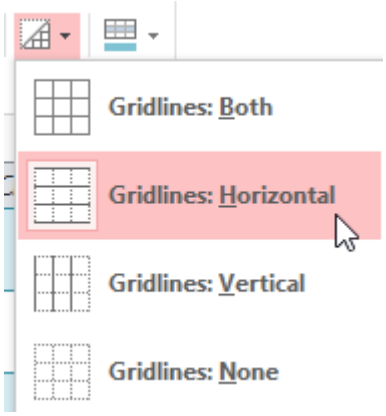


To customize which gridlines appear:

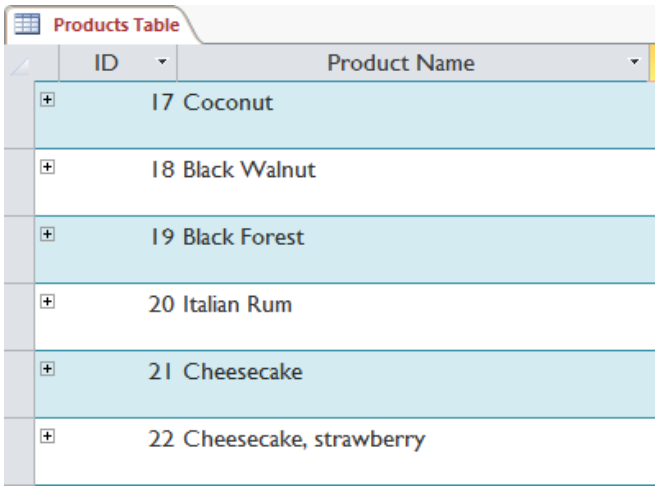
1. Select the **Home** tab, locate the **Text Formatting** group, and click the **Gridlines** drop-down arrow.



2. Select the gridlines you want to appear. You can choose to have **horizontal**gridlines between the rows, **vertical** gridlines between the columns**, both** types of gridlines, or **none** at all.

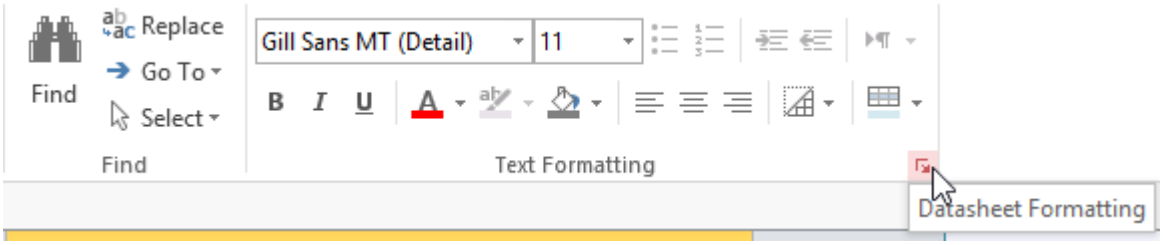


3. The gridlines on your table will be updated.



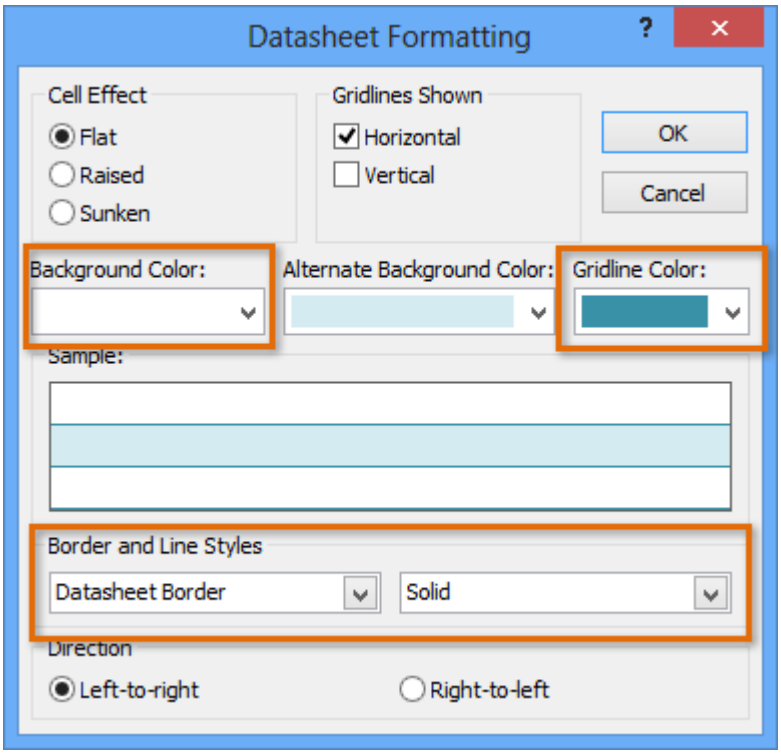
Additional formatting options

To view additional formatting options, click the **Datasheet Formatting arrow** in the bottom-right corner of the **Text Formatting** group.



The **Datasheet Formatting** dialog box offers several advanced formatting options, including the ability to modify background color, gridline color, and border and line style. It even includes the ability to view a **sample** table with

your formatting choices, so play around with the various formatting options until you get your table looking the way you want it.



Challenge!

1. Open an **existing Access database**. If you want, you can use our "Tables.accdb"
2. Open the **Customers** table.
3. Add a new **record** to the table. Be sure to enter data for every field.
4. **Find** the record with the name **Tyra Kirby**, and **replace** it with a name of your choice.
5. **Hide** a field, then **unhide** it.
6. Change the **alternate row color**.