Difference Between WHERE and WHERE EXISTS in SQL

1. WHERE Clause:

- Filters rows based on a condition.

- Evaluates each row individually.

- Used with direct comparisons or logical expressions.

Example:

SELECT * FROM employees

WHERE department = 'Sales';

2. WHERE EXISTS Clause:

- Tests for the existence of rows in a subquery.

- Returns TRUE if the subquery returns any row.

- Often used for correlated subqueries.

Example:

SELECT * FROM employees e

WHERE EXISTS (

    SELECT 1 FROM departments d

    WHERE d.manager_id = e.employee_id

);

Key Differences:

- WHERE is used for direct row filtering using column values.

- WHERE EXISTS is used to check for the presence of related data in a subquery.

- WHERE EXISTS stops scanning once a match is found, making it efficient in some cases.