Grouping is used to provide a result set in which each result represents a group of results which have identical values in the specified field(s). If I have a DB with student records, we could group by graduation year, age, amount of credits earned (possibly as ranges), first letter of last name, and really almost anything you can think of. Multiple fields may be specified. In some interfaces a group may be selected, upon which the results contained in that group can be displayed.

Grouping is great for data analysis, timeline building (such as for event tracking), reporting/summarizing, data integrity verification, and much more. It is very often the means of getting useful, actionable information out of large datasets.

To use the student example, we might look at students who got great grades on a tough course. You can start to branch off and look at common circumstances surrounding students who did well in that course, or even who didn’t do well. Maybe you find there is an instructor for that course with a great track record. Then you could make sure they have a bigger role in the course material development. Or maybe you find that the students who did well had all taken a specific course previously, and you decide to make that course a prerequisite.

This is just one very specific example, but grouping is an awesome way to turn data and information into understanding!

References:

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