



FileMaker and Microsoft Access:

A Criteria-Based Comparison

If you're trying to decide what database is going to best fit your needs, but have been wondering what the difference is between Microsoft Access and FileMaker® software, below is a comparison based on the criteria that third-party reviewers use to evaluate database products. Discover why FileMaker is the leading, easy-to-use database and has received the most awards from the experts.

Criteria	FileMaker	Microsoft Access
Ease of Getting Started	Simple to learn Many built-in database templates, layout themes and intuitive, graphical interface allows new users to get started fast. Create comprehensive solutions that can be easily optimized for a number of platforms.	Requires database expertise More intricate user interface and lack of built-in database views makes initial learning curve high for new users. Separation of regular database and web database templates result in fragmented solutions and limit database features.
Ease of Finding and Viewing Information	Automatically creates views Automatically creates table, list, and form views for all information. Able to view live web pages associated with database records. Web pages update when data is modified.	Views created manually Must manually create each view of information. Finding data requires mastery of a query system.
Scripting & Programming	Point & Click scripting Point & Click scripting language with over 130 script steps allows users to easily automate any task. Programming expertise not required.	Programming knowledge required Macros and data macros cover some database tasks but require sequential mapping to construct the logic. Other solutions require Visual Basic - a more complex programming language.
Customization	Simple customization Toolbars guide users in modifying fields, layouts, reports, or menus* in a few straightforward clicks.	High-level customization Numerous options and click paths require prior experience to navigate. Extensive customization requires knowledge of Visual Basic.
Reporting	Drag & Drop reporting Drag & Drop reporting tools help create a variety of custom reports. Users can customize chart components and design. Share and view reports via the web with Instant Web Publishing.	Manual design interface Wizards aid in creating simple reports however modification requires use of an advanced design interface. Charts are limited to wizard options and cannot be customized further. Reports are not supported when published to SharePoint on Office 365 - the Microsoft cloud computing platform.
Database Capacity	8 terabyte capacity 8 terabyte limit per database**. Fields can hold 2GB of data.	2 gigabyte capacity 2GB limit per database. Text fields hold 255 characters, memo fields hold 65,535 characters.
Scalability	Supports individual to large workgroups FileMaker Pro supports up to 9 simultaneous users, or add FileMaker Server Advanced and connect hundreds of FileMaker Pro clients.***	Supports small workgroups User may experience less than optimal performance with 20 or more users. No Access server available.
Web Publishing	Integrated web publishing capability In one click, publish an entire database solution to the web using FileMaker Pro - no additional software required. Sharing allows users full read/write privileges with built-in security features.	Server dependent web publishing capability Forms and reports can be shared over the web, but require publishing capabilities that are only made available with Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 or Office 365 accounts. Security permissions must be managed from within SharePoint.
Security	Field-level access Flexible security options allow user to restrict access to databases, or specific layouts or fields within a database.	Database-level access Allows user to restrict access at database level only, more granular security not supported.
Platforms	iOS, Windows, and Mac compatible Share databases between iPad, iPhone, Windows and Mac users.	Compatible with Windows only Runs on Windows only.

Comparison is based on FileMaker 12 and Microsoft Access 2010.

*Menu customization is available in FileMaker Pro 12 Advanced.

** Capacity represents the limits imposed by the FileMaker architecture, the actual usable limits will vary based on other factors such as disk space, RAM, OS resource limits, etc.

***FileMaker Server 12 Advanced technology does not limit the number of FileMaker Pro clients. Technical limits are imposed only by your hardware, database design, and operating system.