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Access Compare Users' Manual

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Introduction

Access Compare allows Microsoft Access users and developers to compare two Microsoft Access (.mdb) databases. This powerful utility inspects not only table and query definitions, but also forms, reports, VBA code behind forms and reports, and VBA modules. Both professional and standard versions summarize differences in a tree-view format. The professional version also provides the ability to drill down and view differences in VBA source code and in specific object properties.

Software requirements

- Microsoft Windows'95 or Windows NT Workstation 4.0
- Microsoft Access 97

Installation

Access Compare comes in Standard and Professional versions. The Standard version can be downloaded free of charge from our web site or from various download sites such as Z-D Net.

Professional version

The standard version can be upgraded to professional, by supplying the software with an "unlock" code. (Note: you must have version 1.5 or later. If you have an older version, please download the latest version from www.slofstra.com.) You can obtain an unlock code for a specific PC by purchasing a licence from Henry Slofstra Consulting. See registration for more information. To enter the code, click on "About..." then "Unlock Program".

Download information

Access compare can be downloaded through http://www.slofstra.com
After downloading "acomp.zip", extract it to a temporary folder and run "setup.exe" to start installation.

Registration

We've made it easy for you to upgrade the standard version to professional. If you register the software with us, and pay for the professional licence, we will supply you with a code to unlock the professional features. Here are the steps to follow:

1. Ensure that you have version 1.5 or later. If you have an earlier version, download the latest free version from www.slofstra.com.
2. Run the software registration wizard "swRegister.exe" to create a registration form. This form will prompt for a VISA number and encrypt it to ensure it will not be misused.
3. The software registration wizard will provide you with 3 options:
    - E-mail the registration to henry@slofstra.com, OR
    - Fax the registration information to (519) 698-2067, OR
    - Mail the registration information to:

    Henry Slofstra Consulting
    PO Box 215
    St.Clements, Ont.
    Canada N0B 2M0.

4. Once your payment clears, we will provide you with a code to unlock the professional features. This code will only work on the PC on which you have installed the software. Should you wish to deinstall the software and move it to another machine, we will provide you with a new unlock code at no additional charge. To enter the unlock code, press the unlock button in the **About...** box.

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Getting started

1. On the main screen, pick two databases by entering their full pathnames or by clicking on **Browse**.

2. Click on **Compare**.

3. After both databases are loaded and compared, select one of the following: *Forms, Macros, Modules, Queries, Reports, Tables* to view the results.
Select **First**, **Second**, **Differences** or **Both** to switch between different views in the Details window. To display the results of the previous comparison click on Load Previous

Exhaustive Compare

Note: Exhaustive Compare is available only in the Professional version

Exhaustive compare examines the database objects in a lot more detail:
- Table and Query definitions
- Controls, list of controls, form and report properties
- VBA Code

Warning: please note that the Exhaustive Compare option can take quite a long time to inspect the thousands of properties on a complex form or report.

Tables and queries

Note: If your database has linked tables AND they are not attached, Access Compare will not be able to load the table or query definitions.

The best way to illustrate how exhaustive compare works on tables is by example:

1. The following message on the details screen means that a new field (Color) was added to the table definition:

```
Tables
Product
Field List

Lines added (From line  5 to  5)
s2: Field: Color
```

2. This example shows that a property of a field (*size* in this case) was changed from 50 to 60:

```
Tables
Site
Field: Description

Lines are different:
s1: Size=50
s2: Size=60
```

Forms and reports

Examples:

1. There are two controls in the first database that don't exist in the second:

```
Reports
AllInventory
Control List

Line(s) added (From line   7 to   7)
s1: Control: Cost Label
Line(s) added (From line   16 to   16)
s1: Control: Cost
```

2. A control was resized:

```
Reports
AllInventory
Control: Retail

Lines are different:
s1: Left=8820
s2: Left=7020
Lines are different:
s1: Width=1920
s2: Width=3720
```

VBA code

Example: a line was added to the source code

```
Modules
Utilities
Source

Lines added (From line  7 to  7)
s2:           MsgBox "Division by zero"
```

If you use the **Both** option instead of **Differences** you can see where exactly the line was added:

```
Modules
Utilities
Source

Option Compare Database
Option Explicit

Function SafeDivide(a As Currency, b As Currency) As Currency
    If b = 0 Then
        SafeDivide = 0


Lines added (From line  7 to  7)
s2:           MsgBox "Division by zero"


    Else
        SafeDivide = a / b
    End If
End Function
```

You can set Access Compare to display these differences in color so you can find them easily.

Advanced features

Note: Most of these features are available only in the professional version

Comparison Sets

The Comparison Set window appears when you press **Change Comparison Sets** on the Options window or when the program starts up (if you selected the **Show this dialog on startup** checkbox).
Use the Comparison Set feature to pre-store different types of comparisons that must be performed on a recurring basis. For example, you can have comparison sets called *Sales Reports Notebook to Server* or *Order Entry PC to Server*. Just open the comparison set you need and you don't have to re-enter the pathnames or options again. Access Compare also saves the result of the last compare (even if it doesn't finish) for each pair, which you can retrieve by clicking on <u>Load Previous</u> on the main screen.

Manual Open

In some special cases, it may not be possible for Access Compare to open the selected databases automatically:
1. When the databases are secured, and they belong to different workgroups
2. When the database contains dynamically attached tables
3. In general, if loading the database requires some sort of user interaction

To enable manual open, go to **Options**, **Custom Compare Options** and check **Manual Open**. When Manual Open is active, Access Compare will prompt you to open Microsoft Access yourself when you press "Compare".

Select Lists

Access Compare can compare only specific objects that you select from a list. This feature can be useful in the following situations:
1. You don't have permission to access certain objects of the database
2. If the database is so big that you can improve the speed of comparison by selecting only a few objects
3. If some objects cause Access Compare to stop abnormally (corrupt file, bad queries, missing table-links)
Note that if Access Compare couldn't complete the last comparison it performed, it displays the select list when you re-start Access Compare. The select list shows which objects were and which objects were not loaded during the last comparison. You can use this as a diagnostic tool to determine which object is causing trouble. Often a secured object is the culprit (see <u>manual open</u>). You can use the select list to compare all objects but the secured one.

Generate Report

If you need to document the result of the last comparison, use **Generate Report**. It generates a text file, which you can either print or import into a word processor.
You can also use this function to generate a list of all the objects in the databases.

Instant Open Object

When you see the differences in the Database Explorer window, you may want to modify the database objects. You can accomplish this by right-clicking on the object you want to modify. A pop-up menu will appear, and you can select the database you want to open. Access Compare will open Microsoft Access for you with the selected object in design mode.

User Interface Reference

Comparison Sets

Comparison sets define the details of a particular comparison to be performed on a repetitive basis. The details of the last comparison you make is saved as a comparison set.
To delete a comparison set, press "Delete".

You can edit a select list for a comparison set by pressing Edit Select List.

Interrupted Comparisons
If you see the following message:

```
The previous comparison was abnormally terminated. Do you
want to edit the select list to prevent this next time ?
```

This indicates that the last comparison was either interrupted by the user or stopped because of a run-time error. The program will allow you to edit a select list. The select list will show you which objects were loaded and which objects were not.

Hint: To load the results of the last comparison performed click on Load Previous on the main screen.

Select Lists

Select Lists are used to select the objects to be compared. The select list window will contain a combined list of the objects in the two databases. By default, every object is checked, which means they will be exhaustively compared. When you uncheck a particular object, Access Compare will not examine the object exhaustively. (Its modification date will still be inspected).

The select list will also reveal if the object was loaded properly during the last comparison. Using this information you can uncheck objects that have caused Access Compare to fail.

Important !
You have to open **Options/Custom Compare Options** and check Use Select List to activate your select list. If you are using a comparison method other than Custom Compare, the select list will not be active.

Main Window

- **Selecting Databases**
  Enter the filename of the two databases with the full path here. Click on "Browse" to open them interactively.

- **Database Explorer Window**
  This window shows up only if the databases are compared or you loaded back the results of a previous comparison. Double click on the objects to expand them. Use the right mouse button to open Microsoft Access with the selected object. (See Instant Open Object for more information). When you select an object, the differences will show in the Details window.

- **Details Window**
  This window will show details about the object you selected in the **Database Explorer** window. Click on "Differences" to view the differences. Select **First** or **Second** to see the contents of the objects in the first or second database. The **Both** option is useful when you are comparing source code, you will see the source code differences (highlighted) in their context (not highlighted).

Compare

After setting all the options click on **Compare** to start the comparison process. If you selected exhaustive compare it can take a long time. You can interrupt the comparison by clicking on **Cancel** any time.

Load Previous

You don't need to run a new comparison to analyze the differences every time you start the program. You can load the results of the previous comparison.

Generate Report

Using this function you can have a hard copy of what you can see in the Database Explorer window. You have to specify an output file (**Write Report Into**). This will be a regular text file, readable by any text file viewer such as Notepad. Check **Show different or missing objects only** if you want to see only the differences, but not the whole tree of the database structure.

Check **Show object names only** if you don't want to see the differences themselves, only the list of the objects that are different.

Note: **Generate Report** uses the results of the last comparison, so the differences will be shown only in a detail that you specified in Options.

Options

This is the place where you can set most of the options of exhaustive comparison and advanced features.

- **Comparison Method**

  - **Quick Compare**
    Use this option if you want to take a quick look at what has changed without seeing the differences themselves. This type of comparison will look at only the **LastModified** date of the objects.
  - **Exhaustive**
    Use this option if you want to see the differences in full detail. With a large database this option can take quite a long time to run.
  - **Exhaustive - Load all properties**
    Normally, exhaustive only examines the properties of objects that have changed. This option can be useful if you want to view the properties of all objects including objects that have not changed. If you have a large number of forms and reports this option can take an extremely long time to run.
  - **Custom**
    This allows you to exhaustively compare only certain types of objects. For example, if you check Tables and Queries, then only Tables and Queries will be exhaustively compared. The unchecked objects will still be "quick" compared for differences. See also Custom Compare Options

- **Initial Directory**
  If you specify a full path here, the **Browse** buttons will open up in this directory.

- **Custom Compare Options**

  - **Use Select List**
    Checking this option will activate the select list
  - **Exhaustive only when dates are different**
    If you check this, Access Compare will check exhaustively only those objects that have changed. Access Compare uses the object's "Last Modified" date to determine which objects have changed. If you leave this unchecked, Access Compare will exhautively check all objects.
  - **Load Control Properties**
    Checked:
    Access Compare will load every property of every control so it will be able to show if a control was changed.
    Not checked:
    Access Compare will load only the list of controls. It will not show if a control was changed, but it will show if a control was added, deleted or renamed.
  - **Use Jet for tables and queries**
    If you are comparing only tables or queries, it is not necessary to have Microsoft Access installed on your computer if this option is checked. Checking this option will also result in faster comparison.

    If your databases are secured, and the two databases are in different workgroups, you might need to turn off this option.
    When Manual Open is active, automation will be used even if this option is checked.
  - **Try to skip hidden and temporary objects**
    Access Compare normally skips tables with names starting with "MSys" and other objects with names starting with ~.
    If you have objects in your database with such names, or you think you can get important information by checking these objects, you should uncheck this option.
  - **Leave results of previous comparison**
    By default, Access Compare deletes the results of the previous comparison when **Compare** is pressed. If you want to prevent this, check this option.
  - **Manual Open** - see Manual Open for information.

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Unlock Program

Click on **About... / Unlock Program** to unlock your program after purchasing a licence for the professional version from Henry Slofstra Consulting. To get an unlock code you need to send us registration information.

Known Problems

- You have to have at least one printer in Control Panel to be able to run exhaustive compare on reports
- You cannot run exhaustive compare on Macros
- When you open Microsoft Access with a macro object, Access Compare opens only the Macro tab of the database windows, without opening the macro itself

Credits

Access Compare is written by Krisztian Danko from Henry Slofstra Consulting

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