

Buying a Database: Choosing Pre-packaged Databases

Off-the-Shelf Database Assessment

Use this worksheet to assess an off-the-shelf database package for your organization.

- Will the database program address the needs uncovered in the course of your assessment?
- Did you like the look and feel of the database?
- What technical support will be available with the software you select?
- Will your staff and leader need training and technical assistance to use this database? How much and what kind?
- Is there documentation? Can you understand it?

On a scale of 1 - 5 (1=lowest; 5=highest) how would you rank a database (Access, FileMaker)?

Addresses our needs	1	2	3	4	5
Ease of use	1	2	3	4	5
Look of database	1	2	3	4	5
Documentation	1	2	3	4	5
Technical help available	1	2	3	4	5

Pre-packaged database

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quick implementation and start up of your database. ○ Ease of use (in most cases). ○ You know what the costs for the database are now and for the immediate future. ○ Documentation is provided ○ Training in the use of the product is available (for a fee). ○ Support is probably more widely available, which reduces dependence on a single individual. ○ Upgrades are available regularly and relatively cheaply. ○ In most cases you can get decent support for the product. ○ Periodic new releases provide new features and support up-to-date platforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The product is/can be expensive and may provide more than you need. ○ Often there are yearly "updates" you will need to pay for. ○ In most cases you will need to "customize" the product, which will need to be done by a staff person or consultant. ○ Training can be expensive. ○ Once specifications are set, it may be difficult to add new features. ○ The database product frequently reduces or defines platform or operating system choices, which in turn reduces the choice of using software that requires a different platform or operating system. ○ System upgrades are at the discretion of a company that probably doesn't place a high priority on the needs of small users. ○ Not all packages will work with both a Macintosh and PC computer. ○ Big financial consequence if it is not the "right" database package.