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**by Margaret Levine Young,
Alison Barrows, and
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Dedication

To my husband Jordan, my kids Meg and Zac, and my supportive friends.
(MLY)

To Matt, Parker, Mason, and Evan. (AB)

To Mom, as always. (JCS)

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We're proud of this book; please send us your comments at <http://dummies.custhelp.com>. For other comments, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002.

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Introduction

Whoa! What happened to menu bars, toolbars, and all that other stuff I used to have? Well, in case you haven't noticed yet, they're all gone. Of course, if you never used Access before in your life, you're starting fresh, so never mind. Whether you never used any version of Microsoft Access, and aren't even sure what a "version" is, you've come to the right book.

The basic idea behind Microsoft Access is to allow individuals and small businesses to manage large amounts of information the way the big corporations do — with relational databases. The difference is that while the big boys spend millions on computer hardware, software, and staffs of nerdy database-administrator types, Access allows you to do it all yourself with a run-of-the-mill PC and a realistic software budget.

Microsoft Access 2010 is the latest-and-greatest version of a long line of Access versions, starting (not surprisingly) with version 1. Not that this is the 2,010th version. Somewhere along the way, Microsoft switched from using sequential numbers for versions to using years — an idea first pioneered by the automotive industry, which sells things like "2010 Ford Mustangs" as opposed to "Mustang Version 9.3s."

Without going into boring detail about what's new in Access 2010, you find the usual kind of stuff you find in new versions these days — more power, more flexibility, and more things you can do with it. And of course — along the lines of the Holy Grail of Everything Computerish these days — more taking advantage of everything the Internet has to offer. But the most noticeable change for the Access-experienced is the new look and feel (introduced in the 2007 version) — along with some new ways of doing things.

About Access 2010 All-in-One Desk Reference For Dummies

If you ever have the misfortune of trying to read anything written by one of the aforementioned database-administrator types, you know all about being faced with a decision among the lesser of *three* evils:

(Option 1) Try to figure it out by guessing-and-poking until you break something.

(Option 2) Part with your hard-earned money to hire someone to do the work for you, only to have someone with poor taste in clothing look at you like you're an idiot every time you open your mouth.

(Option 3) Forget computers altogether and stick with index cards.

Option 1 is the one most people try first — until they get to the part where they start breaking things, and it starts costing money to get them fixed. Option 2 is too odious to warrant serious consideration. Option 3 just isn't very realistic nowadays, unless you're dealing with a tiny amount of personal information. Which leaves a new Option 4 — this book.

The nerds who wrote this book are aware of the fact that *nobody* on the planet was *ever* born knowing what *any* technical term means. In fact, if at all possible, we avoid technical terms like a root canal. But because you are probably faced with technical terms outside this book, we do explain what they mean along the way.

As a rule, big fat computer books aren't such a great option. For that reason, this isn't really a big fat computer book. It's several *smaller* computer books combined into one. Each small book represents a single topic that you can pursue — or ignore — as your personal tastes and immediate needs dictate.

The idea here is definitely *not* to try to read the book cover to cover, unless you're desperately seeking a cure for insomnia. Rather, use the Table of Contents up front, or the Index out back, to look up information when trying to figure it out by guessing just isn't cutting it.

To prevent this book from topping 3,000 pages, we don't explain every possible way to do every possible thing in Access. Instead, we chose what we think are the most important database-management tasks, and we show you the best way — at least in our opinions — to do each one.

Conventions

Speaking of insomnia, this book, like most books, follows certain conventions to alert you to different kinds of stuff, as follows:

Boldface: Stuff you actually *do* while sitting at your computer is shown in boldface, to distinguish it from boring information you probably don't care about anyway.

Italics: When reality rears its ugly head and we're forced to use a technical term, we always show that term in italics the first time it's used. Then we define that term, right there on the spot. Of course, that doesn't mean you won't forget the definition two minutes later. But you can easily flip back a few pages and locate the definition amidst all the other words on the page.

`Monospace:` Monospace text (text in that typeface right back there) represents *code*, instructions that are written for computers, rather than people, to follow. Computers are so stupid, the term "stupid" is a compliment. Unconscious, non-thinking, non-beings (a.k.a. *machines*) is more like it. Anyway, when writing instructions for a computer, you *really* have to spell