Oracle SQL By Example (4th Edition)

By Alice Rischert

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"The book...has enough depth for even a seasoned professional to pick up enough tips to pay back the price of the book
many times over."
–Dr. Paul Dorsey, President, Dulcian, Inc., *Oracle* Magazine PL/SQL Developer of the Year 2007, and President
Emeritus, New York Oracle Users Group

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book is helpful to beginners and experts alike who seek alternative ways to resolve advanced scenarios."–Oleg Voskoboynikov, Ph.D., Database Architect

The World's #1 Hands-On Oracle SQL Workbook–Fully Updated for Oracle 11*g*

Crafted for hands-on learning and tested in classrooms worldwide, this book illuminates in-depth every Oracle SQL technique you'll need. From the simplest query fundamentals to regular expressions and with newly added coverage of Oracle's powerful new SQL Developer tool, you will focus on the tasks that matter most. Hundreds of step-by-step, guided lab exercises will systematically strengthen your expertise in writing effective, high-performance SQL. Along the way, you'll acquire a powerful arsenal of useful skills–and an extraordinary library of solutions for your real-world challenges with Oracle SQL.

Coverage includes

- 100% focused on Oracle SQL for Oracle 11*g*, today's #1 database platform–not "generic" SQL!
- Master all core SQL techniques including every type of join such as equijoins, self joins, and outer joins
- Understand Oracle functions in depth, especially character, number, date, timestamp, interval, conversion, aggregate, regular expressions, analytical, and more
- Practice all types of subqueries, such as correlated and scalar subqueries, and learn about set operators and hierarchical queries

- Build effective queries and learn fundamental Oracle SQL Developer and SQL*Plus skills
- Make the most of the Data Dictionary and create tables, views, indexes, and sequences
- Secure databases using Oracle privileges, roles, and synonyms
- Explore Oracle 11g's advanced data warehousing features
- Learn many practical tips about performance optimization, security, and architectural solutions
- Avoid common pitfalls and understand and solve common mistakes
- **For every database developer, administrator, designer, or architect, *regardless of experience!***

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Preface

SQL is the de facto standard language for relational databases, and Oracle's database server is the leading relational database on the market today. *Oracle SQL by Example*, 4th edition, presents an introduction to the Oracle SQL language in a unique and highly effective format. Rather than being a reference book, it guides you through basic skills until you reach a mastery of the language. The book challenges you to work through hands-on guided tasks rather than read through descriptions of functionality. You will be able to retain the material more easily, and the additional exercise and quiz questions reinforce and further enhance the learning experience.

Who This Book Is For

This book is intended for anyone requiring a background in Oracle's implementation of the SQL language. In particular, application developers, system designers, and database administrators will find many practical and representative real-world examples. Students new to Oracle will gain the necessary experience and confidence to apply their knowledge in solving typical problems they face in work situations. Individuals already familiar with Oracle SQL but wanting a firmer foundation or those interested in the new Oracle 11g features will discover many useful tips and tricks, as well as a wealth of information.

The initial audience for the book was the students of the Oracle SQL class at Columbia University's Computer Technology and Applications program. The student body typically encompassed a wide-ranging level of technology experience. Their questions, learning approaches, and feedback provided the framework for this book. Many students cited the hands-on exercises as critical to their understanding of database technology and SQL and continuously asked for more examples and additional challenging topics. This book shares much of the material presented in the classroom and looks at the various angles of many solutions to a particular issue.

The book begins with the basic concepts of relational databases, the SQL Developer and SQL*Plus tools, and SQL; it then gradually deepens the knowledge. Whether you already have some fundamental understanding of SQL or not, you will benefit from reading this book as it allows you to gain insight into writing alternative SQL statements. After performing the exercises in this book, you will harness the power of SQL and utilize much of Oracle's SQL functionality.

What Makes This Book Different

This book encourages you to learn by doing, to actively participate by performing the exercises, quizzes, and Workshop exercises. Ultimately, the reward is a thorough understanding of SQL and a high level of comfort dealing with real-world Oracle SQL topics. Performing the exercises aids in retention of the material, and the quizzes and Workshop sections further test your understanding and offer additional challenges. The companion Web site, located at http://www.informit.com/ph, provides solutions to the Workshop exercises and includes additional exercises and answers.

The book's focus is on providing examples of how the SQL language is commonly used, with many exercises supporting the learning experience. Unlike other SQL books, this book discusses Oracle's specific implementation of the language. Learning the language alone is not enough. The book also teaches you how to adopt good habits and educates you about many Oracle-specific technology features that are essential to successful systems development. The examples are based on from a sample database that takes you through the typical tasks you will encounter when working with an Oracle database.

This book is not a reference book; rather, it teaches SQL by illustrating its use through many examples. Take advantage of the index to look up concepts and refer to certain topics. The best way to learn the SQL language is to perform the exercises and compare your answers with the sample answers and accompanying explanations. Additional teaching points are part of the answers; the idea is that after you have performed an exercise, you are ready for additional, more advanced material.

This book does not cover the entire Oracle SQL syntax but emphasizes the essentials of the most frequently used features, with many examples to reinforce your learning. Some of Oracle's syntax options are too numerous, and many are very infrequently used; including them all would make the book swell by several hundred additional pages. Instead, I have concentrated on those that you will use most. After performing the exercises, you will also have gained sufficient knowledge to read up and understand the Oracle documentation, if needed. I hope that you will enjoy this learning experience and come away with the knowledge you hoped to gain.

How This Book Is Organized

Each chapter of this book is divided into labs covering particular topics. The objective of each lab is defined at its beginning, with brief examples that introduce you to the covered concepts.

Following the lab's introductory examples are exercises, which are the heart of the lab. They reinforce and expand your knowledge of the subject. Each exercise consists of a series of steps to follow to perform specific tasks or particular questions that are designed to help you discover the important aspects of SQL. The answers to these questions are given at the end of the exercises, along with more in-depth discussion of the concepts explored.

After you perform the exercises and compare the answers with the sample queries, answers, and explanations, you can move on to the multiple-choice quiz questions. These are meant to test your understanding of the material covered in the lab. The answers to these questions appear in Appendix A, "Answers to Quiz Questions." There are additional quiz questions at the book's companion Web site, located at http://www.informit.com/ph.

At the end of each chapter, the Workshop section reinforces and combines all the topics learned in labs and helps you solidify your skills. The answers to these questions are provided on the companion Web site for this book (http://www.informit.com/ph).

Each chapter is laid out as follows:

- Chapter introduction
  - Lab
    - ExercisesExercise Answers (with detailed discussion)Quiz
  - Lab …Workshop

The chapters should be completed in sequence because concepts covered in earlier chapters are required for the completion of exercises in later chapters.

About the Companion Web Site

The companion Web site, located at http://www.informit.com/ph, provides the following:

- Installation files you need to download before you begin reading the book.

- Answers to the Workshop questions.
- Additional Quiz questions.
- Additional resources, such as links, tips, and errata.

Installation Files

All the exercises and quiz questions are based on a sample schema called STUDENT. You can download the required files to install the STUDENT schema and the installation instructions from the companion Web site.

Workshop

The answers to the Workshop sections are provided at the companion Web site.

Additional Quiz Questions

The Web site provides many other features, such as additional quiz questions and periodically updated information about the book.

Tip - Visit the companion Web site and download the required files before starting the labs and exercises.

What You Need

To complete the exercises, you need the following:

- The Oracle database software
- Oracle's SQL Developer or SQL*Plus software
- Access to the Internet

Oracle 11g

Oracle 11g is Oracle's latest version of the relational database software and its flagship product. To follow along with this book, you can use either the Standard Edition or Enterprise Edition. The Enterprise Edition of Oracle version 11.1.0.6.0 was used to create the exercises for this book.

If you have a previous version of the Oracle database, you will be able to complete a large majority of the exercises; however, some syntax options and features are available only in Oracle 11g.

If you do not have the latest release of the Oracle software available, you can obtain a trial copy from Oracle's Web site, at http://www.oracle.com. You have the option of either downloading the Standard Edition or Enterprise Edition or purchasing a CD media pack from the Oracle store (https://oraclestore.oracle.com) for a nominal fee.

Oracle SQL Developer and SQL*Plus

You can perform most of the exercises in this book with Oracle's SQL Developer or SQL*Plus software.

Both software tools are included with the Oracle database and are part of the default installation.

SQL Developer is easier to use and offers a superior display of results. Because SQL Developer is a relatively new product and independent of the Oracle database release, you may find later versions of the software on Oracle's Web site, as a separate product download.

The book's screenshots and described functionality are based on SQL Developer 1.5.3. Although there may be significant changes in future versions, it would be a grave omission not to cover SQL Developer. This tool sets the future product direction and has many useful features to improve your productivity and enhance your SQL knowledge and skill set.

This book is not intended as a comprehensive SQL Developer book. Rather, the focus is SQL. You use SQL Developer as part of your interaction with the Oracle database. Therefore, you need to understand the basics of the tool within the context of SQL.

Oracle's intended target audience for the SQL Developer tool is not only SQL users but also PL/SQL programmers. Therefore, you'll find that menu options in this tool are related to PL/SQL. The purpose of this book is not to describe and point out every menu option but to teach you the SQL language. SQL Developer is a useful tool for executing SQL statements and helping you understand the effects of the commands. The coverage of SQL Developer's core functionality is intended within the context of SQL.

Using the SQL Developer graphical user interface does not eliminate the need to know and understand the SQL language. SQL Developer is a productivity tool that makes you a more efficient and proficient user of the language. You still need to know and understand your actions, and the tools can eliminate some basic mistakes and alleviate some frustrations for a beginning user.

SQL*Plus has been part of Oracle since its early beginnings and will continue to be shipped with every installation and platform. It has such a long history and defined purpose in Oracle's strategy that you cannot ignore SQL*Plus altogether. Therefore, you will gain some basic knowledge of this tool as part of the exercises in this book. This book points out the relevant differences between SQL Developer and SQL*Plus, and you will gain an appreciation for each tool's inherent benefits. You can choose to perform most of the exercises in either tool, depending on your preference. Because the book cannot comprehensively cover both tools and the SQL language, it focuses on the SQL Developer and SQL*Plus features you will use most.

Instead of using SQL Developer or SQL*Plus, you can also use other SQL execution environments; a list of such environments is provided in Appendix H, "Resources."

Access to the Internet

You need to have access to the Internet so that you can access the companion Web site, at http://www.informit.com/ph. Here you will find files that are necessary to install the sample STUDENT schema.

About the STUDENT Schema

Throughout this book, you access data from a sample schema called STUDENT, which contains information about a computer education program. The schema was designed to record data about instructors, courses, students, and their respective enrollments and grades.

After you download the installation files to create the schema within your Oracle database, you will be able to follow the exercises in the book. Chapter 1, "SQL and Data," introduces you to the relational concepts

necessary to read a schema diagram. Appendix D, "STUDENT Database Schema," shows a graphical representation of the schema, and Appendix E, "Table and Column Descriptions," lists descriptive information about each table and column.

Conventions Used in This Book

Several conventions used in this book help make your learning experience easier. These are explained here.

Note - This icon denotes advice and useful information about a particular topic or concept.

Tip - This icon flags tips that are especially helpful tricks to will save you time or trouble—for instance, a shortcut for performing a particular task or a useful method.

Warning - Warnings are provided to warn you about any potential issues regarding the safety of your database or to save you headaches in the long run.

Errata

I have made every effort to make sure there are no errors in the text and code. However, to err is human. At the companion Web site (http://www.informit.com/ph), you will find corrections as they are spotted. If you find an error that has not been reported, please let me know by contacting me at ar280@yahoo.com. You comments and suggestions are greatly appreciated.

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