



Database programs

Today's scientists need database programs to handle their data. They may search through a database on CD-ROM, or even on the Internet. They use their science skills to collect, organise and analyse data. They think carefully and look for patterns, they think critically and check data for errors. They will see how their findings fit other peoples'. Using a database in school parallels these processes.

Database programs allow you to store, sort and graph the results of a survey. If you had a database of children's personal data, you could sort the children into order of shoe size, or work out the average for the class. You could draw a bar chart to see how the shoe sizes vary across the class. Or draw a scattergraph to see if shoe sizes vary with the children's height. You might also search for all those with black hair and see if they have any eye colour in common. Using a database provides many opportunities to analyse data. It is a great tool for exploring science.

Children can also learn to make databases. They can study themselves or survey opinion. Either way, when they make a database they have to be quite scientific in how they work. They have to define what they want to find out, collect the data, organise and analyse it. The pages that follow show how to do this.

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