

A database project positively needs planning. This page is a teacher's plan for a class database project. The following pages show the steps in more detail.

Starting from the basics

If the children have no experience of databases try the following as a preamble. Make a card-index database about the class and sort the cards in order of height. Pick out those with black hair and arrange them as a bar chart on the desk. Or you might arrange the children as a bar chart in the hall (cf. diagram above).

Look at a database of children's data.

Sort, search and graph a ready-made database. See the pages that follow on Using graphs which exemplify various ways to find things out with a computer.

Add your entry to the database.

Children can add their personal data to an existing database. They might then draw a bar chart, say of their heights and see where they appear. Following this dry-run they can set about preparing a database for real.

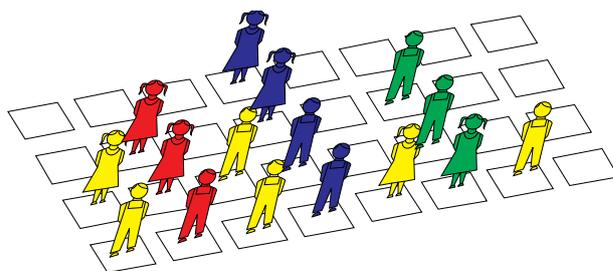
Decide what you want to find out.

You might want to know: who is the tallest in the class? Who is the oldest? Does arm reach have anything to do with height? Which eye colour is the most common? What are our favourite foods? Limit the number of questions: use 3 or 4 questions with younger groups, use six or seven questions with older groups. See the sheet on Doing a survey for a suggested approach.

Decide on the information you need to collect.

For example you might collect details of height, birth date, shoe size, arm reach, eye colour, hair colour and favourite food. You will need to be sensitive to children being permanently labelled 'shortest' or whatever. Measuring fingers and thumbs is a work around.

Decide on how you will collect the



information.

List all of the items of data you need to collect on a questionnaire. Also list the units to use, for example, height in cm, gender as B or G, birthdate as YYMMDD, eye colour - choice of blue, black, brown or green, favourite food as choice of beans (not baked beans), chips (not fries). Print off the questionnaires and collect the data.

Check the information for mistakes.

Check the completed sheets for errors and inconsistency.

Create the heading (or field) names.

Some software will insist that you shorten long headings and sacrifice clarity: for example, 'hair colour' might have to be shortened to 'hair'. See the two sheets that follow called About computer databases and Make a database for a survey.

Enter the data.

The children can enter their information. They should save their work regularly.

Check the information in the computer.

Print out the information and check it.

Use the database to answer your questions

Look at the questions you started with. Use the database program to sort, graph and average to answer them. See the pages on Using graphs for examples.

Evaluate the work

The children may find this difficult. See the table in Section 1 on Assessment - applications and effects of IT for some of the points you might raise.