FileMaker and Microsoft Access:
A Criteria-Based Comparison

If you're trying to decide what database is going to best fit your needs, but have been wondering what the difference is between Microsoft Access and FileMaker® software, below is a comparison based on the criteria that third-party reviewers use to evaluate database products. Discover why FileMaker is the leading, easy-to-use database and has received the most awards from the experts.

Criteria	FileMaker	Microsoft Access
Ease of Getting Started	**Simple to learn** More than 30 basic database templates and intuitive, graphical interface allows new users to get started fast.	**Requires database expertise** More intricate user interface and lack of built-in database views makes initial learning curve high for new users.
Ease of Finding and Viewing Information	**Automatically creates views** Automatically creates table, list, and form views for all information. Able to view live web pages associated with database records. Web pages update when data is modified.	**Views created manually** Must manually create each view of information. Finding data requires mastery of a query system.
Scripting & Programming	**Point & Click scripting** Point & Click scripting language with over 130 script steps allows users to easily automate any task. Programming expertise not required.	**Programming knowledge required** Selection of 56 macros covers some database tasks but many solutions require use of Visual Basic – a more complex programming language.
Customization	**Simple customization** Toolbars guide users in modifying fields, layouts, reports, or menus* in a few straightforward clicks.	**High-level customization** Numerous options and click paths require prior experience to navigate. Extensive customization requires knowledge of Visual Basic.
Reporting	**Drag & Drop reporting** Drag & Drop reporting tools help create a variety of custom reports. Create and share Adobe® PDF files using built-in PDF Maker.	**Manual design interface** Wizards aid in creating simple reports however modifications require use of an advanced design interface. No PDF creation capabilities without add-in.
Database Capacity	**8 terabyte capacity** 8 terabyte limit per database**. Fields can hold 2GB of data.	**2 gigabyte capacity** 2GB limit per database. Text fields hold 255 characters, memo fields hold 65,535 characters.
Scalability	**Supports individual to large workgroups** FileMaker Pro supports up to 9 simultaneous users, or add FileMaker Server Advanced and connect hundreds of FileMaker Pro clients.***	**Supports small workgroups** User may experience less than optimal performance with 20 or more users. No Access server available.
Web Publishing	**Share complete solution via web** In one click, publish an entire database solution to the web using FileMaker Pro – no additional software required. Sharing allows users full read/write privileges with built-in security features.	**Share components of solution** Share individual forms and reports over the web, but not an entire database solution. Requires users to have installation of Microsoft Office to share files.
Security	**Field-level access** Flexible security options allow user to restrict access to databases, or specific layouts or fields within a database.	**Database-level access** Allows user to restrict access at database level only, more granular security not supported.
Platforms	**Windows and Mac compatible** Share databases on both Windows and Mac platforms.	**Compatible with Windows only** Runs on Windows only.

Comparison is based on FileMaker 11 and Microsoft Access 2007.

*Menu customization is available in FileMaker Pro 11 Advanced.
** Capacity represents the limits imposed by the FileMaker architecture, the actual usable limits will vary based on other factors such as disk space, RAM, OS resource limits, etc.
***FileMaker Server 11 Advanced technology does not limit the number of FileMaker Pro clients. Technical limits are imposed only by your hardware and operating system.

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