



The Guru's Guide to Transact-SQL

By Ken Henderson

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Since its introduction over a decade ago, the Microsoft SQL Server query language, Transact-SQL, has become increasingly popular and more powerful. The current version sports such advanced features as OLE Automation support, cross-platform querying facilities, and full-text search management. This book is the consummate guide to Microsoft Transact-SQL. From data type nuances to complex statistical computations to the bevy of undocumented features in the language, *The Guru's Guide to Transact-SQL* imparts the knowledge you need to become a virtuoso of the language as quickly as possible. In this book, you will find the information, explanations, and advice you need to master Transact-SQL and develop the best possible Transact-SQL code. Some 600 code examples not only illustrate important concepts and best practices, but also provide working Transact-SQL code that can be incorporated into your own real-world DBMS applications.

Your journey begins with an introduction explaining language fundamentals such as database and table creation, inserting and updating data, queries, joins, data presentation, and managing transactions. Moving on to more advanced topics, the journey continues with in-depth coverage of:

- Transact-SQL performance tuning using tools such as Query Analyzer and Performance Monitor
- Nuances of the various T-SQL data types
- Complex statistical calculations such as medians, modes, and sliding aggregates
- Run, sequence, and series identification and interrogation
- Advanced Data Definition Language (DDL) and Data Management Language (DML) techniques
- Stored procedure and trigger best practices and coding methods
- Transaction management
- Optimal cursor use and caveats to look out for
- Full-text search
- Hierarchies and arrays
- Administrative Transact-SQL
- OLE Automation
- More than 100 undocumented commands and language features, including numerous unpublished DBCC command verbs, trace flags, stored procedures, and functions

Comprehensive, written in understandable terms, and full of practical information and examples, *The Guru's Guide to Transact-SQL* is an indispensable reference for anyone working with this database development language. The accompanying CD-ROM includes the complete set of code examples found in the book as well as a SQL programming environment that will speed the development of your own top-notch Transact-SQL code.

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

This is a coder's book. It's intended to help developers build applications that make use of Transact-SQL. It's not about database administration or design. It's not about end-user or GUI application development. It's not even about server or database performance tuning. It's about developing the best Transact-SQL code possible, regardless of the application.

When I began writing this book, I had these design goals in mind:

Be very generous with code samples--don't just tell readers how to do something, show them. Include complete code samples within the chapter texts so that the book can be read through without requiring a computer or CD-ROM. Use modern coding techniques, with specific emphases on ANSI compliance and current version features and enhancements. Construct chapters so that they're self-contained--so that they rely as little as possible on objects created in other chapters. Provide real-world code samples that have intrinsic value apart from the book. Avoid rehashing what's already covered extensively in the SQL Server Books Online. Highlight aspects of Transact-SQL that differentiate it from other SQL dialects; don't just write another ANSI SQL book. Avoid excessive screenshots and other types of filler mechanisms often seen in computer books. Proceed from the simple to the complex within each chapter and throughout the book. Provide an easygoing, relaxed commentary with a de-emphasis on formality. Be the reader's indulgent, amiable tutor. Attempt to communicate in writing the way that people speak.

You'll have to judge for yourself whether these goals have been met, but my hope is that, regardless of the degree of success, the effort will at least be evident. About the Sample Databases

This book uses SQL Server's Northwind and pubs sample databases extensively. You'll nearly always be able to determine which database a particular example uses from the surrounding commentary or from the code itself. The pubs database is used more often than Northwind, so, when it's not otherwise specified or when in doubt, use pubs.

Usually, modifications to these databases are made within transactions so that they can be reversed; however, for safety's sake, you should probably drop and recreate them after each chapter in which they're modified. The scripts to rebuild them (instnwnd.sql and instpubs.sql) can be found in the Install subdirectory under the root SQL Server folder. Results Abridged

If I have a pet peeve about computer books, it's the shameless use of space-filling devices to lengthen them--the dirty little secret of the computer publishing industry. Many technical books these days overflow with gratuitous helpings of screenshots, charts, diagrams, outlines, sidebars, icons, line art, etc. There are people who assign more value to a book that's heavy, and many authors and publishers have been all too happy to accommodate them. They seem to take the old saying that "a picture is worth a thousand words" literally--in some cases turning out books that are little more than picture books.

I think there's a point at which comprehensiveness gives way to corpulence, a time when exhaustiveness becomes exhausting. In this book, I've tried to strike a balance between being thorough and being space-efficient. To that end, I've often truncated or clipped query result sets, especially those too wide to fit on a page and those of excessive length (I always point this out). On occasion I also list them using reduced font sizes. I don't include screenshots unless doing so benefits the discussion at hand materially (only one chapter

contains any screenshots). This is in keeping with my design goal of being complete without being overwrought. Nearly 600 SQL scripts are used in this book, and they are all included in the chapters that reference them. Hopefully none of the abridgements will detract from the book's overall usefulness or value.

On Formality

Another of my pet peeves is formality for the sake of formality. An artist once observed that "it's harder to draw a good curved line than a straight one." What he meant was that it's in some ways more difficult to do something well for which there is no exact or stringent standard than to do something that's governed by explicit rules and stuffy precedents. All you have to do to draw a straight line is pick up a straightedge. The rules that govern formal writing, particularly that of the academic variety, make writing certain kinds of books easier because they convert much of the subjective nature of writing into something more objective. They're like training wheels on the would-be author's bicycle. Writing goes from being a creative process to a mechanical one. Cross all the T's, dot all the I's, and you're halfway there. Obviously, this relieves the author of many of the decisions that shape creative writing. It also turns otherwise good pieces of work into dreary, textbook-like dissertations that are about as interesting as the telephone book White Pages.

So, I reject the notion that formal writing is better writing, that it is a higher standard and is the ideal for which all technical writers should strive. Instead, I come from the Mark Twain school of thought--I "eschew surplusage"--and I believe that, so long as common methods of speech do not become overly banal (a subjective distinction, I freely admit), the ultimate goal of the technical writer should be to write the way that readers speak. It is the way people--even technical people--are most accustomed to communicating and the way they are the most able to learn and share ideas. I did not invent this way of thinking; it's simply the way most of my favorite authors--Mark Twain, Dean Koontz, Joe Celko, Ernest Hemingway, Robert Heinlein, Andrew Miller, Oscar Wilde, P. J. O'Rourke, Patricia O'Connor--write. Though it is far more difficult to structure and write a narrative that flows naturally and reads easily, it's worth the effort if the ideas the writer seeks to convey are understood as they were intended.

So, throughout this book, you'll see a number of the rules and pseudo rules of formal writing stretched, skirted, bent, and sometimes outright broken. This is intentional. Sometimes I split infinitives, begin sentences with conjunctions, and end them with prepositions. Sometimes record is used interchangeably with row; sometimes field takes the place of column; and I never, ever treat data as a plural word. I saw some software recently that displayed a message to the effect "the data are being loaded," and I literally laughed out loud. The distinction between the plural data and its obscure singular form datum is not maintained in spoken language and hasn't really ever been (except, perhaps, in ancient Rome). It has also been deprecated by numerous writing guides and many authors. You will have to look very hard for an author who treats data as a plural word (I can think of only one off the top of my head, the irascible Ted Codd). The tendency for technical communication to become self-important or ostentatious has always baffled me: why stoop to pretension? Why trade the fluid conveyance of ideas between people for nonsense that confuses some and reads like petty one-upmanship to others?

Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank my wife, who not only makes it possible for me to write books but also makes it worthwhile. The book you see before you is as much hers as it is mine. I'd like to thank Neil Coy, who made a real programmer of me many years ago. Under Neil's tutelage, I learned software craftsmanship from a master. Joe Celko, the dean of the SQL language, has been a good friend and a valuable source of information throughout this project. Kudos to John Sarapata and Thomas Holaday for helping me come up with a title for the book (I'll keep Sybase for Dummies in mind for future use, John). Thanks to the book's technical reviewers, particularly Wayne Snyder, Gianluca Hotz, Paul Olivieri, and Ron Talmage. Heartfelt thanks to John Gmuender, Joe Gallagher, Mike Massing, and Danny Thorpe for their equanimity and for keeping me sane through the recent storm. Congratulations and genuine appreciation to the superb team at Addison-Wesley--Michael Slaughter, Marisa Meltzer, J. Carter Shanklin, and others too numerous to list. Special

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From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Ken Henderson, a nationally recognized consultant and leading DBMS practitioner, consults on high-end client/server projects for such customers as the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Navy, H&R Block, Travelers Insurance, J.P. Morgan, the CIA, Owens-Corning, and CNA Insurance. He is the author of five previous books on client/server and DBMS development, a frequent magazine contributor to such publications as *Software Development Magazine* and *DBMS Magazine*, and a speaker at technical conferences.

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Ruth Jones:

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Helen McClain:

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