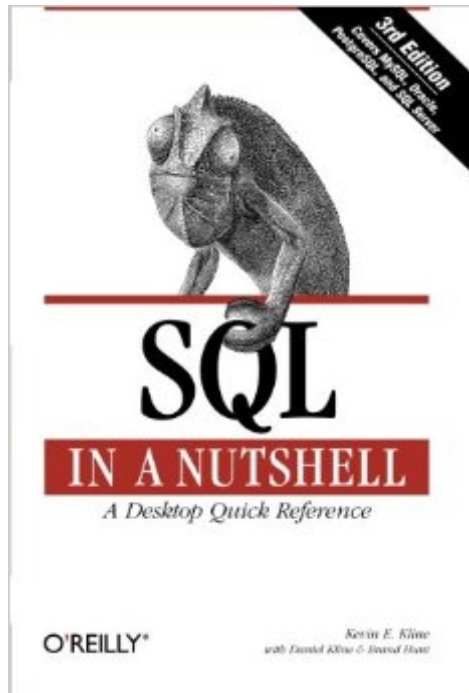# SQL In A Nutshell (In A Nutshell (O'Reilly))

Synopsis

For programmers, analysts, and database administrators, SQL in a Nutshell is the essential reference for the SQL language used in today's most popular database products. This new edition clearly documents every SQL command according to the latest ANSI standard, and details how those commands are implemented in Microsoft SQL Server 2008, Oracle 11g, and the MySQL 5.1 and PostgreSQL 8.3 open source database products. You'll also get a concise overview of the Relational Database Management System (RDBMS) model, and a clear-cut explanation of foundational RDBMS concepts -- all packed into a succinct, comprehensive, and easy-to-use format. This book provides:Background on the Relational Database Model, including current and previous SQL standardsFundamental concepts necessary for understanding relational databases and SQL commandsAn alphabetical command reference to SQL statements, according to the SQL2003 ANSI standardThe implementation of each command by MySQL, Oracle, PostgreSQL, and SQL ServerAn alphabetical reference of the ANSI SQL2003 functions, as well as the vendor implementationsPlatform-specific functions unique to each implementationBeginning where vendor documentation ends, SQL in a Nutshell distills the experiences of professional database administrators and developers who have used SQL variants to support complex enterprise applications. Whether SQL is new to you, or you've been using SQL since its earliest days, you'll get lots of new tips and techniques in this book.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is designed as a reference -- the book that you keepnear your workstation after you learn the basics, because youhaven't got everything memorised yet. It's great for that. Irefer to it when I have a question.But actually I picked up this book with no prior knowledge ofSQL (except that I knew it was for doing database stuff) andlearned enough to get started in a couple of days. The introis great for that.The great thing about this book is that it covers the fourmajor SQL implementations in a relatively unbiased fashion.This is nice because if you switch from one to another youdon't have to go looking for a new book. (Otherwise, youwould; as you will see from reading this book, the variousimplementations differ considerably and also differ fromthe unimplemented standard, which the book also covers.)This book is not, and is not intended to be, a tutorial forpeople who are utterly unfamiliar with the very concept ofa database, but it's okay to be utterly unfamiliar with SQL.This book also is not a strategy guide for how to plan andorganise your database; this is an _implementation_ book.As such, it doesn't cover things like deciding which datato put in which table, when to create another table andwhen to create an entirely separate database, or that sortof thing. What it does tell you is what query syntax youneed to create and interact with your database, your tables,and the data in your tables. It also explains datatypes,because they vary considerably between the different SQLimplementations, and table types and the various attributes(indeces and whatnot).Additionally, this book is not a security guide. It doesinclude information about permissions, but only in terms ofthe syntax used, not in terms of strategy.

I have to question whether any of the other reviewers even looked at the table of contents before purchasing this book:Chapter 1. SQL, Vendor Implementations, and Some History - a general overview of SQL and where it comes from;Chapter 2. Foundational Concepts - The general theory behind how a sql works;Chapter 3. SQL Statements Command Reference - "Quick SQL Command Reference";Chapter 4. SQL Functions - A standard function reference and vendor extensions;Chapter 5. Unimplemented SQL99 Commands - commands in the sql standard which aren't implemented by vendors (MS, Oracle);So as to what it says it covers, it does it quite well. Already being quite familiar with SQl, I still found this book to be useful both as a quick reference to commands as well as for a deeper understanding into how SQL works. This book makes an excellent companion to Transact-SQL Programming, also by Oreilly. If you need a complete SQL reference, get Transact-SQL. If you're looking for a background and introduction to SQL, get this book.

Expanded 2nd Edition (more than 3x larger!)fyi ... is including here reviews from both 1st and current 2nd edition. 1st Edition was a "slim" 224 pages (released December 1, 2000 per). 2nd Edition is 800 pages (released September 27, 2004 per). From 224 to 800 pages ... hmmm, quite a change!Per OReilly.com, current 2nd edition covers commercial RDBMS (Oracle, DB2, and Microsoft SQL Server), and open source implementations (PostgreSQL, and MySQL). fyi, 1st edition did not cover DB2.2nd Edition is updated to use the most current ANSI standard, SQL2003, as the baseline in comparing each of the RDBMS.Sample chapter available at OReilly.com. Chapter 4, SQL Functions. As PDF, 28 pages.

To a certain degree I agree with the reviewer who says that SQL in a Nutshell is a "thin" book; it is a command reference for four different RDMSs. But to slam it because it is not a full set of docs is to misread SQL in a Nutshell's purpose; it is designed as a cross-platform reference guide for people like me who are not experts and have to move between RDMS implementations (including desktop apps). Twenty pages out of two hundred on SELECT shows how important the command actually is across platforms.In fact, SQL in a Nutshell's great virtue is that it finally levels the playing field by putting PostgreSQL and MySQL, the popular open source RDMS, on the same level with MS SQL Server and Oracle, each of which easily has its own market for high-end manuals and guides, while open source apps are freely available online.So, if you need full documentation on your favorite RDMS, go ahead and spend a couple of hundred dollars somewhere else. If you want a handy reference, simple explanations and comparisons, and an easy to read introduction to the four most important RDMSs currently available, pick up SQL in a Nutshell. You won't be disappointed.

Contrary to several reviewers, this book is *not* well-suited to its purpose, especially compared to O'Reilly's usual high standards. You often can't find things quickly, and the information is often just not there. This is particularly true of the book's main claim to fame, the myriad of small differences between database products. Some examples: (1) The book explains that some databases use "!=" instead of the standard SQL not-equal operator, "". Which databases? Do they support both operators, or just "!="? The book doesn't say. (2a) The book doesn't tell you that MySQL doesn't support subqueries in SELECT statements -- even though there's a subsection on "MySQL Syntax and Variations" for SELECT statements. (And yes, I do need to know -- I'm working on a software product that supports every database in the book plus several others.) (2b) The index has no entries for subqueries under any conceivable heading: queries, nested queries, subqueries, or SELECT. So

you can spend quite a long time *trying* to find out which databases support subqueries. (Most do.) (3) The table of contents has a glaring typo, that makes you wonder what else got past the proofreaders and fact-checkers. Chapter 3, "SQL Statements Command Reference" doesn't have sub-headings for individual commands or groups of commands ... except for one: "DROP Statements", which are supposedly discussed for 70 pages, a third of the book. If O'Reilly was in such a rush to get the book out that they didn't notice this, how can you have confidence in the book's accuracy?

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