

Re: Question about a data structure

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- *From:* "asdf" <asdf@xxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Tue, 30 Jan 2007 00:20:06 +1100
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"Arjen" <dont@xxxxxxx> wrote in message
[news:45bdef60\\$0\\$81840\\$dbd4d001@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](news:45bdef60$0$81840$dbd4d001@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

Larry in Honolulu schreef:

I'm helping a friend with a website (aren't we all) that will have a long questionnaire. There will be about 150 data items, all of which will be chosen from radio buttons with four choices each. I'll store the resulting data in a MySQL data table, and I'm thinking I don't want 150 fields there. Since all the responses can be coded as 1-4 (or 0-3), I'm thinking of storing them in groups, with the values just strung together, and later decoded. i.e. 12132 24331 31142 etc. That would reduce the number of fields to a more manageable size.

What I'm really wondering is, where's the tradeoff? If I store it as a string, it could just be a single 150 character string. If stored as numeric (seems more efficient) then I'd have to keep the max values in line with the numeric type.

....an aside.... what a pity that PHP doesn't enforce *strict* type declarations... ho hum...

The data will eventually be used as numbers, but php can pretty easily convert between so that doesn't seem to me to be an issue?

Any suggestions?

I once had a lot of trouble storing floats as a varchar (it had it's reasons -> preexisting structure and not much time). I had to strip them digit by digit and then add them up again for php to recognize them as floats. Declaring them as float had no effect whatsoever.

Why dont u save yourself lotsa trouble and do it right (and keep ur script

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flexible). If you have 150 answers store them in 150 fields. If you have an unknown amount of answers per user store them in a relative database.

or table?

Only if performance is a big issue you might want to reconsider.

—

Arjen

<http://www.hondenpage.com>

I agree with Arjen, for what it's worth...

Frankly, it's not worth the candle.... store 150 fields... it's easier, quicker and probably execution-faster than messing about with packing/unpacking strings and arrays. Better programmers than me (and probably you) have already solved the execution-speed problem in MySQL code IMHO. And, I suspect, the SQL for retrieving the results is most likely easier and less error-prone than messing about with unpacking strings into arrays etc.

Exact data structure will depend on what you want to do with the data, of course. A more flexible data structure will entail a table of individual responses (like one record per response). Unless your traffic is *very* high (like constant), personally, I'd avoid 'stringing' together responses. Even then, you'd have to test the execution-speed results, comparing 'stringing' responses with the 150 fields approach. I'd bet the 150 fields would be faster execution-wise :).

Happy to see results contrary to this, naturally :)

You might also like to check out the MySQL docs regarding upper limits on database, table and field sizes.....