

# Candidate key

Any [column](#) or group of columns which can uniquely identify a [data set](#), and can therefore be considered for use as a [primary key](#). It is always **NOT NULL** (i.e. must not be left undefined), and [unique](#), which means that the values in these column(s) must never change. It is therefore unadvisable to use columns such as surnames, telephone numbers and the like. Candidate keys do not have to be used as [primary](#) or [foreign keys](#), and the automatically generated primary key ID remains the preferred method.

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