

# Charset / Character set

A character set is specified in Firebird to define which characters are allowed in a [CHAR](#), [VARCHAR](#) or [BLOB](#) field. It also provides collation options when Firebird needs to sort a [column](#).

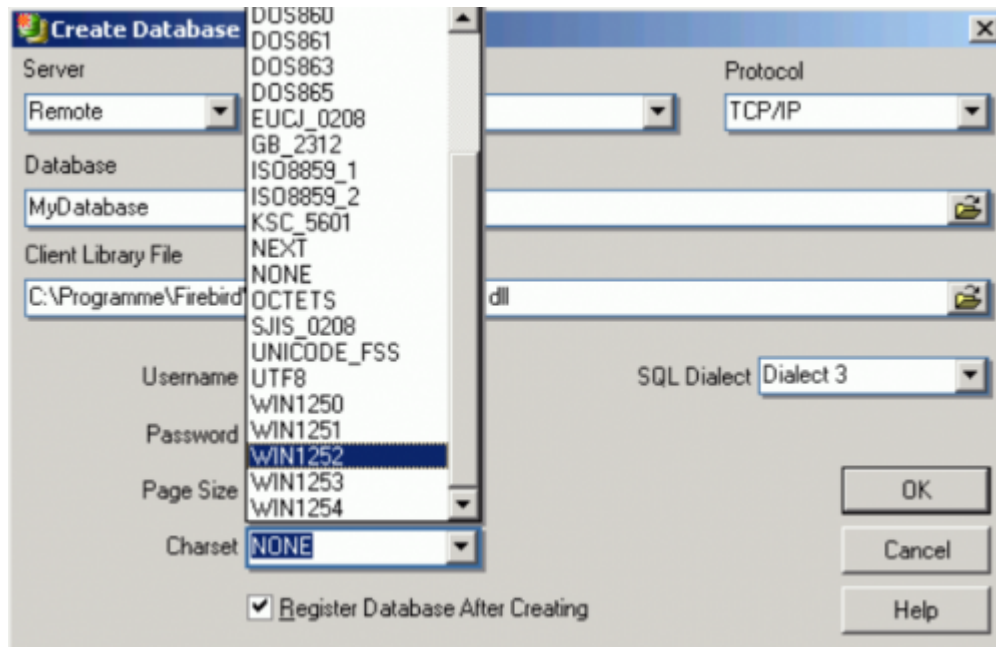
Character sets and their collations need to be considered very carefully when defining the database [metadata](#). For those with little previous experience with character sets, we strongly recommend first reading the following articles:

- [Character Set](#)
- [Character sets and Unicode in Firebird](#)

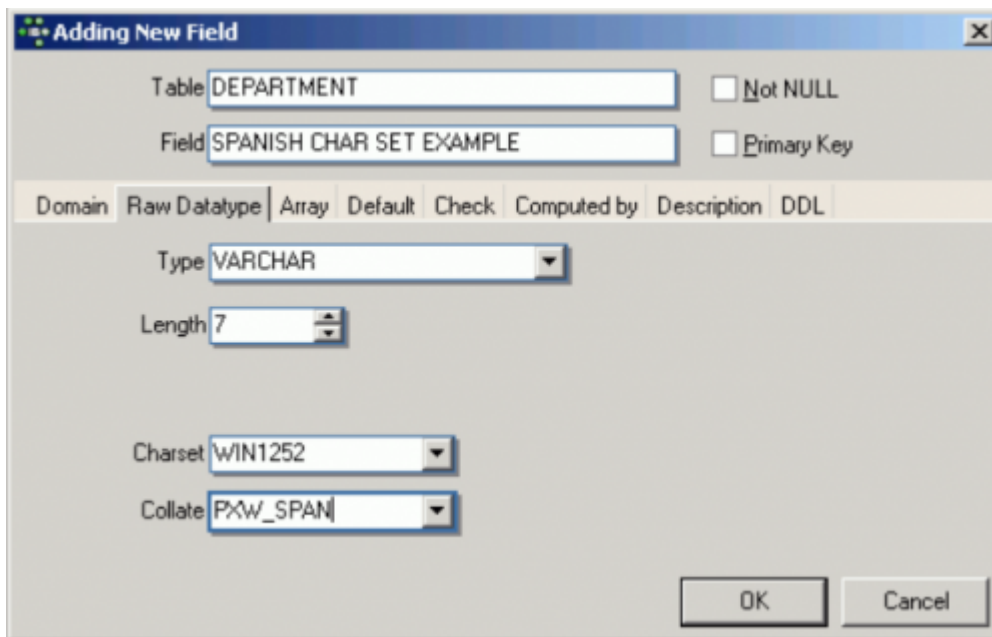
and, depending on your database version:

- [Overview of the main character sets in Firebird](#)
- [InterBase® character sets and collation orders](#)
- [New character sets in Firebird 2.5](#)
- [New character sets in Firebird 2.1](#)
- [New character sets in Firebird 2.0](#)
- [Firebird 2.0 Language Reference Update: Character set NONE](#)
- [Firebird 2.1 Release Notes: International Language Support \(INTL\)](#)
- [Firebird 2.1 Release Notes: Appendix B: International character sets](#)

Character sets can be defined for the [database](#) (default character set):



or for [domains](#) and [fields](#) (where the collation can also be specified):



Adding New Field

Table: DEPARTMENT  Not NULL

Field: SPANISH CHAR SET EXAMPLE  Primary Key

Domain Raw Datatype Array Default Check Computed by Description DDL

Type: VARCHAR

Length: 7

Charset: WIN1252

Collate: P<X>W\_SPAN

OK Cancel

Declaring character sets on the client side is explained in detail in the Database Technology article, [Character sets and Unicode in Firebird](#).

**SET NAMES** specifies the character set to use for subsequent database attachments in an application. It enables the server to translate between the default character set for a database on the server and the character set used by an application on the client.

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