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# Organizing Data with Tables

*Tables are used to show and compare numbers in a way that is easier to see.*

## Uses for Data Tables

One way to organize a set of numbers (or data) is to put it into a table. A table may also be called a chart.

To learn how to make a table, look at the following example. A student performed an investigation to find out what kinds of insects and how many of each kind were in a sample of pond water. The student's observations are shown below.

- There was 1 mayfly nymph in the water sample.
- There were 4 dragonfly nymphs in the water sample.
- There was 1 water strider in the water sample.
- There were 2 water bugs in the water sample.
- There were 3 water boatmen in the water sample.

It is much easier to understand data when it is organized in a table. Recording data in a table is also easier than writing out complete sentences. The following steps explain how organize data in a table.

## Guidelines for Making Tables

Here are some simple steps to follow in order to make a table:

1. **Decide what information needs to be put in the chart.** Be sure to include what you were studying and the important measurements or observations you made. For example, when making a table with the student's data shown above, important information to include would be the types of insects seen and how many of each there were.

2. **Make a title to put above the chart** that clearly says what the information in the table is about.

Type and Number of Insects in Pond Water Sample	

The title tells what information is in the table.

3. **Make rows and columns for the data to be placed in.** Rows go across and columns go up and down. Each column should have only one kind of information in it. Since there are two different kinds of data to put in the table about pond insects, there should be two columns.

Type and Number of Insects in Pond Water Sample	

Rows go across from left to right.

Columns go up and down.

4. **Put a title at the top of each column** to show what kind of data is in the column. The columns for the pond water table would be: *Type of Insect* and *Number Seen*.

Type and Number of Insects in Pond Water Sample	
TYPE OF INSECT	NUMBER SEEN

The first column title tells what was being studied.

The second column title tells what observation was made.

5. **Make sure any measurements also have a unit with them,** such as "inches," "grams," or "seconds." Since only observations and no

measurements were made during the investigation on pond insects, no units need to be included in this table.

6. **Fill in the table with the data.** Make sure that all of the information in a row is related. For example, the first row shows one type of insect—the mayfly nymph—and the number of them that were observed in the pond water sample.

Rows go across from left to right. All the information in a row should be related. This row shows that only one mayfly nymph was seen in the pond water sample.

Type and Number of Insects in Pond Water Sample	
TYPE OF INSECT	NUMBER SEEN
Mayfly Nymph	1
Dragonfly Nymph	4
Water Strider	1
Water Bug	2
Water Boatman	3

Columns go up and down. Each column should have only one kind of information. This column shows the number of each kind of insect seen.

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