ER Model :

Basic Concepts of ER Model in DBMS

As we described in the tutorial Database models, Entity-relationship model is a model used for design and representation of relationships between data.

The main data objects are termed as Entities, with their details defined as attributes, some of these attributes are important and are used to identity the entity, and different entities are related using relationships.

In short, to understand about the ER Model, we must understand about:

- Entity and Entity Set
- What are Attributes? And Types of Attributes.
- Keys
- Relationships

Let's take an example to explain everything. For a **School Management Software**, we will have to store **Student** information, **Teacher** information, **Classes**, **Subjects** taught in each class etc.

ER Model: Entity and Entity Set

Considering the above example, **Student** is an entity, **Teacher** is an entity, similarly, **Class**, **Subject** etc are also entities.

An Entity is generally a real-world object which has characteristics and holds relationships in a DBMS.

If a Student is an Entity, then the complete dataset of all the students will be the **Entity Set**

ER Model: Attributes

If a Student is an Entity, then student's **roll no.**, student's **name**, student's **age**, student's **gender** etc will be its attributes.

An attribute can be of many types, here are different types of attributes defined in ER database model:

1. **Simple attribute:** The attributes with values that are atomic and cannot be broken down further are simple attributes. For example, student's **age**.
2. **Composite attribute:** A composite attribute is made up of more than one simple attribute. For example, student's **address** will contain, **house no.**, **street name**, **pincode** etc.
3. **Derived attribute:** These are the attributes which are not present in the whole database management system, but are derived using other attributes. For example, *average age of students in a class*.
4. **Single-valued attribute:** As the name suggests, they have a single value.
5. **Multi-valued attribute:** And, they can have multiple values.

ER Model: Keys

If the attribute **roll no.** can uniquely identify a student entity, amongst all the students, then the attribute **roll no.** will be said to be a key.

Following are the types of Keys:

1. Super Key
2. Candidate Key
3. Primary Key

We have covered Keys in details here in Database Keys tutorial

ER Model: Relationships

When an Entity is related to another Entity, they are said to have a relationship. For example, A **Class** Entity is related to **Student** entity, becasue students study in classes, hence this is a relationship.

Depending upon the number of entities involved, a **degree** is assigned to relationships.

For example, if 2 entities are involved, it is said to be **Binary relationship**, if 3 entities are involved, it is said to be **Ternary** relationship, and so on.

In the next tutorial, we will learn how to create ER diagrams and design databases using ER diagrams.

Working with ER Diagrams

ER Diagram is a visual representation of data that describes how data is related to each other. In ER Model, we disintegrate data into entities, attributes and setup relationships between entities, all this can be represented visually using the ER diagram.

For example, in the below diagram, anyone can see and understand what the diagram wants to convey: *Developer develops a website, whereas a Visitor visits a website*.
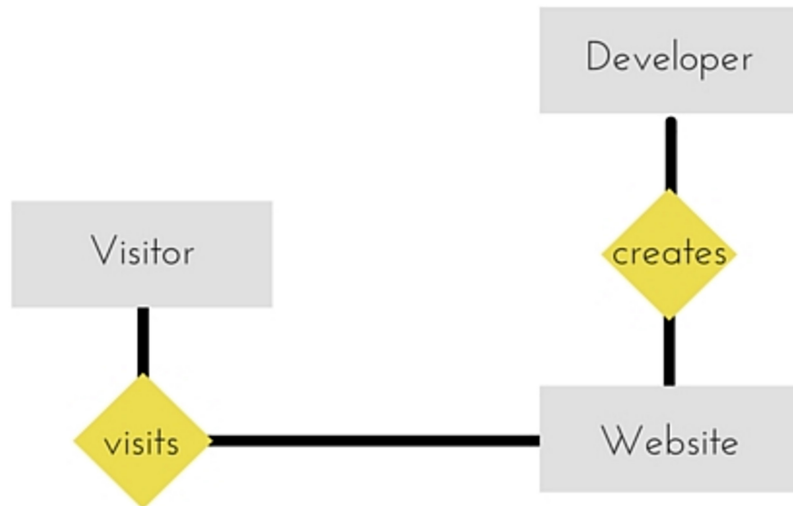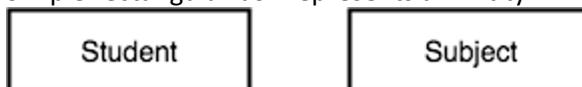
Components of ER Diagram

Entitiy, Attributes, Relationships etc form the components of ER Diagram and there are defined symbols and shapes to represent each one of them.

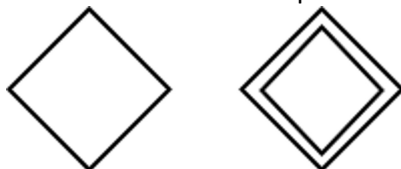Let's see how we can represent these in our ER Diagram.

Entity

Simple rectangular box represents an Entity.

Relationships between Entities - Weak and Strong

Rhombus is used to setup relationships between two or more entities.
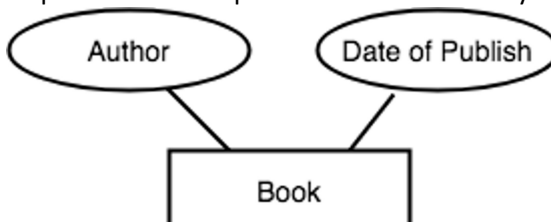

Attributes for any Entity

Ellipse is used to represent attributes of any entity. It is connected to the entity.

Weak Entity

A weak Entity is represented using double rectangular boxes. It is generally connected to another entity.

Loan   Installment

Key Attribute for any Entity

To represent a Key attribute, the attribute name inside the Ellipse is underlined.

Key Attribute

Derived Attribute for any Entity

Derived attributes are those which are derived based on other attributes, for example, age can be derived from date of birth.
To represent a derived attribute, another dotted ellipse is created inside the main ellipse.
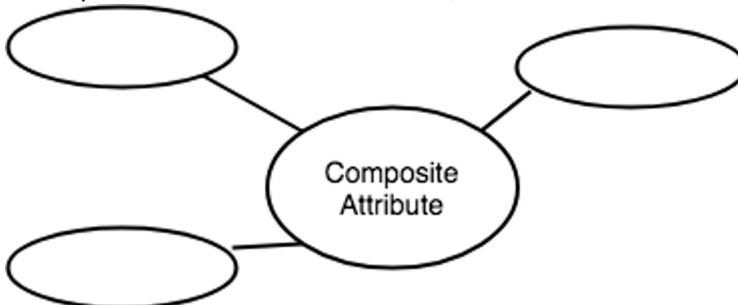
Derived Attribute

Multivalued Attribute for any Entity

Double Ellipse, one inside another, represents the attribute which can have multiple values.

Multivalued
Attribute

Composite Attribute for any Entity

A composite attribute is the attribute, which also has attributes.

Composite
Attribute

ER Diagram: Entity

An **Entity** can be any object, place, person or class. In ER Diagram, an **entity** is represented using rectangles. Consider an example of an Organisation- Employee, Manager, Department, Product and many more can be taken as entities in an Organisation.
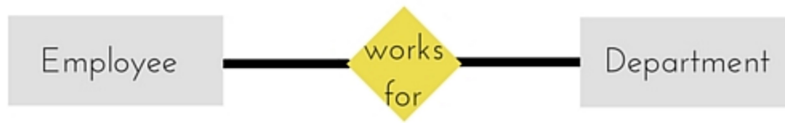
The yellow rhombus in between represents a relationship.