

How and Why to Decompile an Access Database

What does Decompile mean?

When you use VBA behind your Access database, the Source Code that looks mostly like English is compiled before running. Compile is the process that converts Source Code into machine-readable code called Object Code. To decompile is to remove all previous compiled Object Code. Then the next time you compile you get a brand new totally from scratch machine-readable Object Code.

This differs from Compact and Repair which only applies to tables and does not impact VBA code.

Why should you decompile?

Each time you change existing VBA code or add a new form with its own VBA code, the program compiles the code before running. If you delete some of the VBA code, sometimes the corresponding machine-readable code is not removed from the Object Code.

Decompile (and recompile) will reduce the size of your database because it reduces the size of the Object Code.

Decompile can improve start-up time.

Decompile can eliminate strange errors that creep in due to floating Object Code or change in outside reference interfaces.

I recommend decompiling on a periodic basis approximately every 6 months, after major database changes, after major Office releases, or anytime you suddenly get strange errors and a Compact and Repair is not effective.

I do NOT recommend decompiling on a daily or weekly basis like you do your Compact and Repairs.

How do you decompile?

I recommend a multi-step approach for the most complete decompile. The most difficult step is the Decompile Step. I find the best way to run this step is by using a BATCH file. This provides both an easy way for you to copy and paste in lengthy paths required and modify the syntax slightly as your needs change.

Creating your Decompile Batch file:

1. Create a text file using your favorite Text Editor.
2. Type a double quote, then paste in the path and name to your Microsoft Access executable, then type another double quote. See sample below. Hint – to get the path and name easily, right click on your Microsoft Access shortcut, select Properties, and copy the value in the “Target” field.
3. Type a space, then a double quote, then paste in the path to the database you want to decompile, followed by a back slash, followed by your database name, a period, and the extension, then another double quote. You need to use the version of your database with the code in it, not an executable version. This will likely have an ACCDB or MDB extension.
4. Type a space, then a forward slash, then the word decompile.
5. Save your text file.
6. Rename it with the extension .bat instead of .txt

SAMPLE Decompile text”

```
"C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office 15\root\office15\MSACCESS.EXE" "C:\AccProg\Desktop time card.accdb" /decompile
```

Now you are ready to do the decompile:

1. Create a backup of your database just in case.
2. Open your database and Compact and Repair.
3. Close your database.
4. Run the decompile by double clicking on the Batch file you created above. Alternatively you can use Start – Run, then type in the path to your Microsoft Access executable, followed by a space, then /decompile and Access will prompt you to select your database to decompile.
5. Open your database and Compact and Repair.
6. Compile your code by going into the VBA window (ALT F11), viewing your code, and selecting Debug – Compile. If you have done this successfully your compile option will be greyed out.
7. Compact and Repair again.