# Data Analyst Encyclopedia Article

## Data Analyst

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# Data Analyst

A data analyst does more than simply analyze information. Data are collected for a variety of reasons—to learn about something new, to find relationships and generate statistics, or to create **information databases**. Likewise, there are numerous fields of study that collect data, such as finance, medicine, sales and marketing, and engineering, to name a few. All this data needs to be correlated into useful and relevant information.

When a data analyst faces a printout of numbers or facts, he or she must make sense of it all. First, a data analyst will determine where the data came from, if anything has corrupted the collection, and if more data is needed. As data is sorted, the analyst needs to find relationships among the data, select samples that are indicative of the whole, convert data from one form to another, and even predict results. In short, the analyst helps make the data useful.

Data analysts may also summarize the data in a report and communicate this information to colleagues or the public. Sometimes data analysts maintain routine records in a database or archive data for future use and analysis. Those data analysts with more advanced computer and engineering training may be called upon to design programs or models that collect data, calibrate instruments that run tests, or troubleshoot systems that are not functioning properly.

Mathematics and computer programming are essential skills for data analysts. The most important math skills are strong knowledge of **statistics** and statistical analysis, since a data analyst will often be asked whether a set of data is statistically significant. Data analysts must also have the computer skills necessary to operate a wide variety of databases.

Some data analysts with engineering expertise may work with electronic instrumentation that measures and processes data.

## See Also

Data Collection and Interpretation.

## Bibliography

*Career Information Center,* 8th ed. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2002.