

A Key is
a minimal set of columns of a table
that will have a unique value for each row.

e.g.

In student table
PID
SSN
DLic
(Fname, Lname, Address)

Key categories:

- natural (key columns have significance outside the database - they are also visible)
e.g. SSN
- artificial (key columns have no relevance outside the DB, but they are visible to the user)
e.g. PID
- surrogate (key columns have no relevance outside DB and invisible to the user)
only for internal use inside the DB for the DBMS

Keys:

Candidate key: Keys eligible to be chosen as the primary key of a table

DBAs can determine and classify keys as

Primary key (only one candidate key is chosen as the primary key)
all other candidate keys are referred to as alternate keys.