

GCSE Bitesize Computer Science

BBC's Simon Lumb on relational databases

My name's Simon Lumb and I look after games in BBC Future Media. Some of our most popular games are games for Mr Bloom and Tree Fu Tom on CBeebies, and for Scooby Doo and Wolfblood on CBBC.

A text file is a flat database. It might not have much structure to it. Whereas a relational database is a very structured and optimised for certain types of queries. So in any kind of computing situation, there are many different ways of doing things, and each different way is better for certain types of things. So when you're making a decision about what's going to be fastest – if speed is what's important – or what's going to be able to handle millions, or hundreds of millions of items – you might make a different decision over what type of database you want.

So relational databases – things like MySQL – we use them for the iPlayer, we use them for the sports website, we use them for most of the things we do day-to-day. They're very, very good at reading very, very quickly.

When you read very, very quickly, you can show the web page very, very quickly. And that's really important to people if they're trying to get their football scores.