

# Choosing a Helix ALM Database Format

**Note:** This information only applies to Helix ALM (and TestTrack 2012 - 2016.1).

Helix ALM uses SQLite for the native backend database format. However, projects and the server database can be stored in other RDBMS types, such as SQL Server, Oracle, or PostgreSQL.

Consider the following when choosing between database formats.

## Administration

The Helix ALM native database format does not require much advanced administration. Other RDBMS databases usually require some administration to optimize speed, set up backup processes, etc. If you are considering using other RDBMS database types, we recommend working with an experienced database administrator. See the database vendor documentation for best practices.

## Set up

When using a Helix ALM native database, the Helix ALM Server automatically creates the entire database. When creating other RDBMS databases, the server can create all of the database tables, but the physical database must already exist. Your administrator should create the physical database so they can change the configuration settings for your environment. When using an ODBC database, you must also create an ODBC data source name (DSN) so the server can find the database.

## Database licenses

Helix ALM native database functionality is bundled with your user licenses and does not require additional licenses. Licenses for other RDBMS databases are not bundled with Helix ALM. If you use another RDBMS database, you may need to purchase additional database licenses.

## Reporting

Helix ALM's built-in reports are available regardless of the database format. Helix ALM also has external reporting plug-ins that can be used to create reports using a third-party reporting tool, such as Crystal Reports. Additional reporting utilities are included with some RDBMS databases. If your company has expertise with other reporting tools or has existing data in a specific RDBMS database format, this may help you choose a database format.

The following **should not** impact your decision when deciding between database formats.

## Speed

In our testing, operations resulted in similar timings for RDBMS and Helix ALM native database formats. We selected the native database format in part for its quick speed.

## Backups

Back up Helix ALM databases on a regular basis to protect against hard drive crashes, viruses, or other corruption. All of the supported database types can be backed up, but the processes are different. See [Backing Up Databases](#). For information about backing up other RDBMS databases, refer to the database vendor documentation.

# Configurability

For both Helix ALM native and RDBMS databases, you can configure field names, custom fields, workflows, notification rules, and more. Use the Helix ALM Client to make these changes instead of making them at the database level. Do not change database tables/column names, modify column size/attributes, or make any other structural database changes. These types of changes result in errors running Helix ALM.

## Live updates

Helix ALM caches data to improve the performance of complex reports and filters. Do not perform live updates of data at the database level unless the Helix ALM Server has been shut down. If you want to perform live updates to data, use SOAP, bulk field changes, or other methods available in the Helix ALM Client.

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Article ID: 384

Last updated: 31 May, 2017

Revision: 6

Helix ALM (formerly TestTrack) -> Choosing a Helix ALM Database Format

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