



COLUMNISTS

ChessBase Cafe

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Building a Personal Database in *Fritz 9*: Part Two

In last month's [column](#) we learned how to create a database for our personal games and how to manually enter the games into the database. This month we're going to examine a few additional database tricks that will help you organize your personal database.

We saw in our last column that the ECO (*Encyclopedia of Chess Openings*) code for a game is automatically inserted into its header when you save the game into your database. However, there might come an occasion when you'd want to redo all of the ECO codes in your database's game headers. For instance, if you get interrupted before inputting all the moves of a particular game, so you save the game "as is" with the intention of going back later to finish entering the moves. In this case, the ECO code might not be correct, as later moves might transpose the game into a completely different opening or a sub-classification that has a different ECO code.

Well, there's a "global" command that will insert the proper ECO code into the header of every game in the database. Hit F12 to go to the game list window and open your database, either using File/Open/Database or the CTRL-O keyboard shortcut or even the pull-down menu in the upper right-hand corner of the game list. Then just go to the Tools menu, select "Classification," and then "Set ECO codes" from the submenu will appear. You'll see a dialogue box asking for the starting game number. This is the game number in the game list at which you'd like to start the process. The default value is "1," but you can reset this to any game number you choose. This is especially handy if you've imported a bunch of games in PGN format and wish to code them. The new games appear at the bottom of the game list and if you want to classify just the new games (while leaving the previous games alone), you'd enter the number of the first newly-imported game.

After you've entered a starting game number (or just chose the default value), click "OK." In a few moments (or seconds) the process will be complete. On very small databases, you'll likely see a quick "flicker" as the program displays a progress bar for a fraction of a second. You'll know the process has completed when you see the message, "Done - Set ECO codes," appear on the message bar at the lower left-hand corner of your screen.

A second way of classifying your database involves the use of keys. A “Key” is just another word for “index.” *Fritz* can utilize pre-created index files to classify games according to the openings used in them. There are two ways to get started on this process. In the first, just click the “Openings” tab at the top of the game list. You’ll see four buttons at the center of your game list screen:

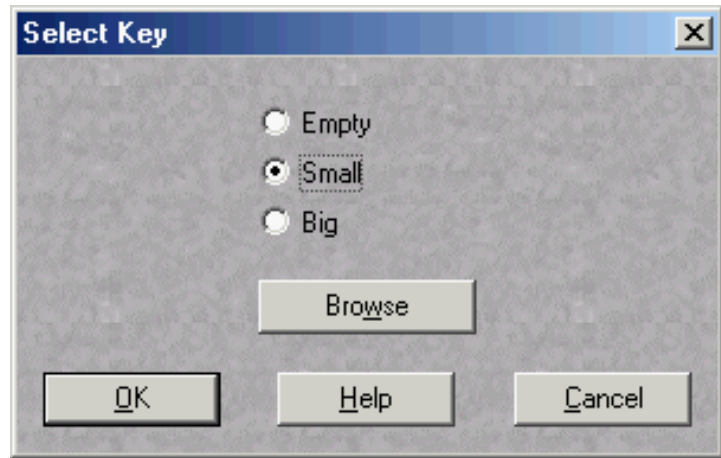


Here’s what each button does:

- **Install Big Key** – this will install a huge comprehensive index of all ECO codes, as well as various numbered sub-variations within each code (as they appear in ECO itself). This key is intended for use with large databases containing many thousands of games. For a small personal database, this big key is too much of a good thing – the key files will require many more times the amount of hard drive space than is taken up by your actual game files.
- **Install Small Key** – the key that’s installed after clicking this button is well-suited for use with smaller databases. It is a less comprehensive, more general opening key; for example, instead of the dozens of keys and sub-keys that you’d get for the Sicilian Defense by using the big key, you’ll get a main key called “Sicilian Defense” and double-clicking on it will display a small list of sub-keys based on the most commonly played Sicilian variations.
- **Select key** – this will bring up the Windows File Select dialogue that will allow you to select an opening key from any drive or folder. This is useful for installing a specialized key, such as one you’d find on a separate ChessBase training or database CD.
- **Install empty key** – this will install a “blank” key without any index categorizations. This option isn’t recommended unless you also have the *ChessBase* database program, since *Fritz* on its own doesn’t give you the option to create your own key indexes.

After you’ve made your selection, the program will attach the key to the database and then sort the games into the appropriate keys. We’ll come back to this in a moment.

The second way of starting the process is to go to the Tools menu, select “Classification,” and then “Install key” from the sub-menu that appears. You’ll see the following dialogue:



This gives you the same four choices as in the previous illustration, albeit in a slightly different form. You have radio buttons here for three of the choices, while the “Select key” button has been replaced by a “Browse” button in this view. Just make your selection (most likely “Small”) and then click “OK.”

After a short time (just a second or two in a small database) you'll see the program automatically switch to the "Openings" tab view and you'll see this display if you selected a small key:



As noted earlier, this small key contains a list of major openings. The number in parentheses to the right indicates the number of games that fall under a particular index classification. If an ellipsis (...) appears within the parentheses, it means that there are further sub-classifications within that index. For example, let's double-click on "Sicilian":

The screenshot shows the ChessBase software interface with the 'Games' tab selected. The list displays various chess openings and their game counts in parentheses. The openings listed are:

- ALBINO VARIATION (1)
- Closed Sicilian (1)
- LATON-SCHWAB VARIATION (1)
- Sveinsson (1)
- SLANDER VARIATION (1)
- Recovery Road (1)
- WALTON (1)
- Scholarship Variation (1)
- SCOTT-SHAW ATTACK (1)
- Dragon Variation (1)
- Scheveningen System (1)
- Soria (1)
- Scholar Variation (1)

At the bottom, there are three 'loose' games listed:

- GRANDMASTER 1972, 1-0
- Chandler-Besmanova 1985, 1-0
- Position 1 after example ... Line

Here we see a number of Sicilian sub-variations listed, with a game count in parentheses off to the right. Note that there are further “deeper” sub-variations available for the Dragon, the Scheveningen, and the Najdorf – just double-click on one of these entries to see the further sub-variations. There are also three “loose” games at the bottom of the list that don’t fall within any of the listed sub-variations. This is the trade-off of using the small key. With the big key, no games are ever “loose,” but you’re paying for it by a large increase in the disk space required to house all of those hundreds of extra classifications. The small key saves disk space (as well as some double-clicking, since games won’t be indexed as “deeply”), but some games wind up very “generally” classified, as we see above.

To open and replay a game in a key list, you just double-click on it as you do in the regular game list. To return to the regular game list just click the “Games” tab at the top of the game list.

You can also install index keys for other areas of the game besides the opening. Just click on a tab at the top of the game list and make your selection (as described above).

Note that you’ll sometimes want to reclassify games. As you add games to your database, you’ll find that the new additions aren’t sorted into index classifications in the keys. So, after adding new games to your database, go to the Tools menu, select “Classification,” and then “Classify all keys” from the submenu. A dialogue will appear listing the keys that you presently have attached to the database: Openings, Themes, etc. Select the ones you want the program to reorganize (in most cases this will be all of the available choices) and click “OK,” the program will then sort the games into the correct keys.

There are some other interesting things you can do with a personal database using the various functions of *Fritz*; we’ve previously discussed game analysis by a chess engine (visit the [Archives](#)) and we’ll likely look at others in the future. For now, though, you’re well on your way to utilizing one of the most important, yet overlooked, features of the *Fritz* program: building a personal database of your own games.

Until next month, have fun!

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All the ChessBase software described by Steve in this column, as well as many more ChessBase programs, are available in the [ChessCafe Online Catalog](#).

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