



Best Practices for Improving SQL Performance

Version 2025.1
2025-06-03

Best Practices for Improving SQL Performance

PDF generated on 2025-06-03

InterSystems IRIS® Version 2025.1

Copyright © 2025 InterSystems Corporation

All rights reserved.

InterSystems®, HealthShare Care Community®, HealthShare Unified Care Record®, IntegratedML®, InterSystems Caché®, InterSystems Ensemble®, InterSystems HealthShare®, InterSystems IRIS®, and TrakCare are registered trademarks of InterSystems Corporation. HealthShare® CMS Solution Pack™, HealthShare® Health Connect Cloud™, InterSystems® Data Fabric Studio™, InterSystems IRIS for Health™, InterSystems Supply Chain Orchestrator™, and InterSystems TotalView™ For Asset Management are trademarks of InterSystems Corporation. TrakCare is a registered trademark in Australia and the European Union.

All other brand or product names used herein are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective companies or organizations.

This document contains trade secret and confidential information which is the property of InterSystems Corporation, One Congress Street, Boston, MA 02114, or its affiliates, and is furnished for the sole purpose of the operation and maintenance of the products of InterSystems Corporation. No part of this publication is to be used for any other purpose, and this publication is not to be reproduced, copied, disclosed, transmitted, stored in a retrieval system or translated into any human or computer language, in any form, by any means, in whole or in part, without the express prior written consent of InterSystems Corporation.

The copying, use and disposition of this document and the software programs described herein is prohibited except to the limited extent set forth in the standard software license agreement(s) of InterSystems Corporation covering such programs and related documentation. InterSystems Corporation makes no representations and warranties concerning such software programs other than those set forth in such standard software license agreement(s). In addition, the liability of InterSystems Corporation for any losses or damages relating to or arising out of the use of such software programs is limited in the manner set forth in such standard software license agreement(s).

THE FOREGOING IS A GENERAL SUMMARY OF THE RESTRICTIONS AND LIMITATIONS IMPOSED BY INTERSYSTEMS CORPORATION ON THE USE OF, AND LIABILITY ARISING FROM, ITS COMPUTER SOFTWARE. FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION REFERENCE SHOULD BE MADE TO THE STANDARD SOFTWARE LICENSE AGREEMENT(S) OF INTERSYSTEMS CORPORATION, COPIES OF WHICH WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.

InterSystems Corporation disclaims responsibility for errors which may appear in this document, and it reserves the right, in its sole discretion and without notice, to make substitutions and modifications in the products and practices described in this document.

For Support questions about any InterSystems products, contact:

InterSystems Worldwide Response Center (WRC)

Tel: +1-617-621-0700

Tel: +44 (0) 844 854 2917

Email: support@InterSystems.com

Table of Contents

- Best Practices for Improving SQL Performance..... 1**
 - 1 Define Indexes 1
 - 2 Decide on a Storage Layout 1
 - 3 Leverage Table Statistics 2
 - 4 Configuration Optimization 2
 - 5 Examine INFORMATION_SCHEMA 2
 - 6 Troubleshoot Query Performance 2

Best Practices for Improving SQL Performance

While InterSystems SQL provides a number of mechanisms that will automatically perform certain operations to improve SQL performance, such as Adaptive Mode, there are a number of steps you can take yourself to ensure best performance. This page serves as a guide through some of these options.

1 Define Indexes

Indexes are a crucial part of optimizing the efficiency of your SQL queries. Adding an index on one or more fields can significantly speed up the performance of queries that use those fields for filtering, grouping, and JOIN operation by offering a faster access path, as opposed to reading the entire master map. To read more about what fields should have an index on them, refer to [What to Index](#).

InterSystems SQL supports multiple different kinds of indexes that are each specialized for certain situations. To read about the different types of indexes, refer to the following sections of [Define and Build Indexes](#):

- [Standard Indexes](#)
- [Bitmap Indexes](#)
- [Bitslice Indexes](#)
- [Columnar Indexes](#)

The addition of an extent index to your tables can also greatly improve the efficiency of your queries. This kind of index helps determine the existence of IDs in your table. The most efficient variant of this index is the [bitmap extent index](#), which can be defined if a table has a bitmap-compatible [IDKEY](#) (as is the default). The [CREATE TABLE](#) DDL Statement automatically defines a bitmap extent index on the table it creates. For information about adding an extent index to a table defined through a persistent class in ObjectScript, see [Define SQL Optimized Tables Through Persistent Classes](#).

2 Decide on a Storage Layout

Tables can make use of either columnar or row-wise storage or employ a combination of both strategies. Each of these strategies can be highly effective when utilized in the proper setting. A columnar storage layout is recommended on data that requires frequent filtering and aggregating operations to perform analytical queries on large amounts of data. A row-wise storage layout is recommended on tables where you want to select small sets of rows at a time and on tables that will experience frequent inserts, updates, and deletes of data. For more information about storage layouts, see [Choose an SQL Table Storage Layout](#).

3 Leverage Table Statistics

Table statistics, like [ExtentSize](#), [Selectivity](#), and [Map Size](#), describe the distribution of data within the table. The SQL Optimizer is able to make use of these insights to properly determine which query plan will run fastest.

The [TUNE TABLE](#) utility collects these statistics that are essential to the performance of SQL queries and should be run when the table has been populated with a representative quantity of real data.

For more information about how this command works, see [Table Statistics for Query Optimizer](#). You should also run TUNE TABLE when the distribution of values in the columns changes significantly after adding a sizeable amount of data.

4 Configuration Optimization

By default, the **Memory and Startup Settings** default to **Automatically** configured, and the **Maximum Per-Process Memory** defaults to -1, which denotes unlimited use. When configuring a production system, you should verify if any of the other Memory and Startup Settings should be tuned based on this guide. For further details, refer to [Memory and Startup Settings](#) in the Configuring InterSystems IRIS page.

5 Examine INFORMATION_SCHEMA

The INFORMATION_SCHEMA schema packages information about the schemas, tables, indexes, views, triggers, [Integrated ML models](#), and SQL Statements that exist on an instance of InterSystems IRIS®. You can efficiently view crucial information about your SQL configuration, including distribution of data through a table and performance metrics, by issuing SELECT statements against the various tables in the schema.

In particular, you may consider querying the INFORMATION_SCHEMA.STATEMENTS table to view [SQL Statements](#) or the INFORMATION_SCHEMA.COLUMN_HISTOGRAMS table to view the distribution of data in columns of a table.

Information about these tables, including what columns you will find in them, can be found in the class reference for INFORMATION_SCHEMA.

6 Troubleshoot Query Performance

Monitoring performance statistics and runtime statistics of queries that are run on the system can provide insights into what further optimizations you might want to make. It is best practice to periodically monitor statistics for newer queries in order to determine if they have sub-optimal performance and where their efficiency can be increased.

InterSystems provides multiple tools for such monitoring. To monitor queries as they are being executed, use the SQL Activity page in the Management Portal, found by navigating to **System Operation > SQL Activity**. To view performance data of historical queries, you should examine the [SQL Runtime Statistics](#). The [Statement Index](#) offers an easy interface to browse all of this information and review SQL statements that represent a high load on the system, based on the combination of times executed and execution time. When you have identified such statements, you may consider adding additional indexes to speed them up.

If you notice some undesired behavior (for example, unexpectedly high values for TimeSpent or GlobalRefs or both), you should look at the [query execution plan](#) that the system has generated to understand how it is executing the query.

For a more concerted analysis effort of such statements, you may take advantage of the utilities in the [SQL Performance Analysis Toolkit](#).

If you cannot determine the cause of inadequate performance, contact [InterSystems Worldwide Response Center \(WRC\)](#) by using the [Generate Report](#) tool to submit a query performance report.

