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Part of How-To Series:
Setting Up Item ID's

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Food Connex Setting Up Item Ids

Setting up Item ID's

One of the most important aspects of creating your item file is determining how you are going to identify your items.

Food Connex uses a 15 character item id, allowing you to be as creative and flexible as you want to be. You can choose to use letters, numbers, or a combination of both. But use caution with your creativity – you do not want to make your item id's too long or complex to remember. On the other hand, giving the item id's meaning will help the users remember or locate them more easily.

Some users prefer to use very short alphanumeric or numeric item id's. This works best if the number of products you carry is limited, so that searching for a product does not mean scanning hundreds or thousands of items. However, if the number of products you carry is extensive, the short item id's will not work as well for you.

Where do I begin?

There is no doubt that if you are going to assign new id's to you items, there is a lot of planning to do. When setting up your item id's there are many issues to consider first. Among them are:

Are you satisfied with your current item id's?
If not, how would you change them ?
If you are, why would you change them?

Do you want to use Numeric or Alphanumeric item id's ?

What product characteristics make items unique ?

For Example:

Product categories, sub-categories and sub-sub-categories

Weight / Cut / Size

Product Lines

Fresh / Frozen / Non perishable

Imported or Domestic

How do you most frequently identify your products now with customers, vendors, and your co-workers? If you have something in place now that works, and is familiar to most people who need to be able to identify your products, a big change might not be advisable.

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Additional Issues to consider when creating item id's

The following examples are based on creating **alphanumeric** item id's. We are using the item id's to group together items in a way that will be most useful to you when entering orders, running inventory inquiries, and reporting.

Food Connex allows the you to 'look up' an item by typing as much of an item id as you know, and then displaying all of the items where the item id begins with the letters or numbers you typed in.

For our sample inventory, we are using a fish distributor who carries both fresh and frozen fish, and who has many cuts of that fish available to his customers.

For example, if you start all of your frozen fish items with the letters FZFSH, followed by the type of fish and how it is cut, you can easily find your frozen fish products by typing in "FZFSH" and pressing enter. The following lookup might be displayed:

Item Lookup	
ITEM ID	DESCRIPTION
>FZFSHCODFIL40Z	COD FILET - 4 OZ - FROZEN
FZFSHCODFIL70Z	COD FILET - 7 OZ - FROZEN
FZFSHCODFIL120Z	COD FILET - 12 OZ - FROZEN
FZFSHCODWHL100Z	COD WHOLE - 10 OZ - FROZEN
FZFSHCODWHL160Z	COD WHOLE - 16 OZ - FROZEN
FZFSHCODWHL200Z	COD WHOLE - 20 OZ - FROZEN
FZFSHTRTFIL40Z	TROUT FILET - 4 OZ - FROZEN
FZFSHTRTFIL70Z	TROUT FILET - 7 OZ - FROZEN
FZFSHTRTFIL120Z	TROUT FILET - 12 OZ - FROZEN
FZFSHTRTWHL100Z	TROUT WHOLE - 10 OZ - FROZEN
FZFSHTRTWHL160Z	TROUT WHOLE - 16 OZ - FROZEN
FZFSHTRTWHL220Z	TROUT WHOLE - 22 OZ - FROZEN
FZFSHTRTWHL280Z	TROUT WHOLE - 28 OZ - FROZEN

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Items are easy to find, but the item id's are very long, requiring more keyboard input when entering an item id. This can quickly become cumbersome, especially if someone's typing skills are not the best!

In this example, the item id's are very descriptive, but you might be able to pare them down a little and still keep them descriptive.

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Additional Issues to consider when creating item id's (continued)

The item id's above could be abbreviated more, and still be easily remembered. See the example below.

FZFSH (frozen fish) has now been abbreviated to FF

The cut has been reduced to one character (F = filet, W = whole)

The weight abbreviation for OZ has been changed to Z (L could be used to abbreviate LB)

Item Lookup	
ITEM ID	DESCRIPTION
>FFCODF4Z	COD FILET - 4 OZ - FROZEN
FFCODF7Z	COD FILET - 7 OZ - FROZEN
FFCODF12Z	COD FILET - 12 OZ - FROZEN
FFCODW10Z	COD WHOLE - 10 OZ - FROZEN
FFCODW16Z	COD WHOLE - 16 OZ - FROZEN
FFCODW20Z	COD WHOLE - 20 OZ - FROZEN
FFTRTF4Z	TROUT FILET - 4 OZ - FROZEN
FFTRTF7Z	TROUT FILET - 7 OZ - FROZEN
FFTRTF12Z	TROUT FILET - 12 OZ - FROZEN
FFTRTW10Z	TROUT WHOLE - 10 OZ - FROZEN
FFTRTW16Z	TROUT WHOLE - 16 OZ - FROZEN
FFTRTW22Z	TROUT WHOLE - 22 OZ - FROZEN
FFTRTW28Z	TROUT WHOLE - 28 OZ - FROZEN

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Additional Issues to consider when creating item id's (continued)

But now, how are you going to identify your **Fresh Fish** products?! As you can see, you have to think and plan ahead so that you do not create conflicts when you abbreviate too much! In this example, you might want to abbreviate FROZEN as FZ and FRESH as FS.

When looking up a frozen fish item, you would enter 'FZF" and get the following results.

Item Lookup	
ITEM ID	DESCRIPTION
>FZFCODF4Z	COD FILET - 4 OZ - FROZEN
FZFCODF7Z	COD FILET - 7 OZ - FROZEN
FZFCODF12Z	COD FILET - 12 OZ - FROZEN
FZFCODW10Z	COD WHOLE - 10 OZ - FROZEN
FZFCODW16Z	COD WHOLE - 16 OZ - FROZEN
FZFCODW20Z	COD WHOLE - 20 OZ - FROZEN
FZFTRTF4Z	TROUT FILET - 4 OZ - FROZEN
FZFTRTF7Z	TROUT FILET - 7 OZ - FROZEN
FZFTRTF12Z	TROUT FILET - 12 OZ - FROZEN
FZFTRTW10Z	TROUT WHOLE - 10 OZ - FROZEN
FZFTRTW16Z	TROUT WHOLE - 16 OZ - FROZEN
FZFTRTW22Z	TROUT WHOLE - 22 OZ - FROZEN
FZFTRTW28Z	TROUT WHOLE - 28 OZ - FROZEN

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Additional Issues to consider when creating item id's (continued)

When looking up a fresh fish item, you would enter 'FSF" and get the following results.

Item Lookup	
ITEM ID	DESCRIPTION
>FSFCODF4Z	COD FILET - 4 OZ - FRESH
FSFCODF7Z	COD FILET - 7 OZ - FRESH
FSFCODF12Z	COD FILET - 12 OZ - FRESH
FSFCODW10Z	COD WHOLE - 10 OZ - FRESH
FSFCODW16Z	COD WHOLE - 16 OZ - FRESH
FSFCODW20Z	COD WHOLE - 20 OZ - FRESH
FSFTRTF4Z	TROUT FILET - 4 OZ - FRESH
FSFTRTF7Z	TROUT FILET - 7 OZ - FRESH
FSFTRTF12Z	TROUT FILET - 12 OZ - FRESH
FSFTRTW10Z	TROUT WHOLE - 10 OZ - FRESH
FSFTRTW16Z	TROUT WHOLE - 16 OZ - FRESH
FSFTRTW22Z	TROUT WHOLE - 22 OZ - FRESH
FSFTRTW28Z	TROUT WHOLE - 28 OZ - FRESH

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Make your Item ID's work WITH you

When creating your item id's, it is helpful to make the item id's reflect the way in which items are generally referred to. For example, if you refer to fish as either frozen or fresh before you mention whether it is cod or trout, the above conventions will work for you. When printing lists or running inquiries, the system will automatically group together all of your fresh fish (FSF) and all of your frozen fish (FZF), because items are usually printed in item id sequence.

However, if it is more important whether it is trout filets or whole cod than whether it is fresh or frozen, you might try the following item id conventions: place the 'F' (filet) and 'W' (whole fish) designators after the type of fish, and then whether it is fresh (FS) or frozen (FZ).

When looking up a fresh cod fish item, you would enter 'FCOD" and get the following results, listing the cod filets first, followed by your whole cod items. Fresh and frozen products will be mixed together.

Item Lookup	
ITEM ID	DESCRIPTION
>FCODFFS4Z	COD FILET - 4 OZ - FRESH
FCODFFS7Z	COD FILET - 7 OZ - FRESH
FCODFFS12Z	COD FILET - 12 OZ - FRESH
FCODFFZ4Z	COD FILET - 4 OZ - FROZEN
FCODFFZ7Z	COD FILET - 7 OZ - FROZEN
FCODFFZ12Z	COD FILET - 12 OZ - FROZEN
FCODWFS10Z	COD WHOLE - 10 OZ - FRESH
FCODWFS16Z	COD WHOLE - 16 OZ - FRESH
FCODWFS20Z	COD WHOLE - 20 OZ - FRESH
FCODWFZ10Z	COD WHOLE - 10 OZ - FROZEN
FCODWFZ16Z	COD WHOLE - 16 OZ - FROZEN
FCODWFZ20Z	COD WHOLE - 20 OZ - FROZEN

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Additional Issues to consider when creating item id's (continued)

Another choice would be to group together frozen cod fresh cod. This will be accomplished by placing the 'F' (filet) and 'W' (whole fish) designators AFTER the 'FS' (fresh) and 'FZ' (frozen) designators, which would then give you the following results if you entered 'CODF' when looking up an item:

Item Lookup	
ITEM ID	DESCRIPTION
>FCODFSF4Z	COD FILET - 4 OZ - FRESH
FCODFSF7Z	COD FILET - 7 OZ - FRESH
FCODFSF12Z	COD FILET - 12 OZ - FRESH
FCODFSW10Z	COD WHOLE - 10 OZ - FRESH
FCODFSW16Z	COD WHOLE - 16 OZ - FRESH
FCODFSW20Z	COD WHOLE - 20 OZ - FRESH
FCODFZF4Z	COD FILET - 4 OZ - FROZEN
FCODFZF7Z	COD FILET - 7 OZ - FROZEN
FCODFZF12Z	COD FILET - 12 OZ - FROZEN
FCODFZW10Z	COD WHOLE - 10 OZ - FROZEN
FCODFZW16Z	COD WHOLE - 16 OZ - FROZEN
FCODFZW20Z	COD WHOLE - 20 OZ - FROZEN

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Using Numeric Item ID's

Numbers can also be used effectively as item identifiers. Some users find numbers easier and faster to enter than letters.

In the above examples, the item id's were broken down into the following components:

- A general **category** of fish ('F') in the first position of the item id.
- The **type** of fish (COD or TRT)
- A **class** of product - frozen or fresh (FZ or FS)
- How the item was **prepared** ('F'ilet) or ('W'hole)
- The **size** of the item (4OZ and 16OZ)

These components can easily be changed to numerics, but the numbers might not be as easy to remember. For example, you might set up general categories for your products, and then just assign numbers to the products that fall into those categories. This type of system works best if the product id's already exist. It is not recommended that you start with new, numeric product id's.

General Categories

- 01 = Fish
- 02 = Chicken
- 03 = Beef
- 04 = Pork

Specific Type of Product

- 1011 = Cod Filets
- 1012 = Whole Cod
- 1021 = Trout
- 1022 = Whole Trout

Product Class

- 1 = Fresh
- 2 = Frozen
- 3 = Non-perishable

For the above items, you may want to append their weight in ounces to the end of the item id.

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Using Numeric Item ID's (continued)

In the following example, the product category and the specific item type are **bolded**, so you can better see how the item id's were constructed. On an item lookup, if you entered '01' for fish, your results would be something like this:

Item Lookup	
ITEM ID	DESCRIPTION
> 011101104	COD FILET - 4 OZ - FRESH
011101107	COD FILET - 7 OZ - FRESH
011101110	COD FILET - 10 OZ - FRESH
011101212	COD WHOLE - 12 OZ - FRESH
011101216	COD WHOLE - 16 OZ - FRESH
011101220	COD WHOLE - 20 OZ - FRESH
012101104	COD FILET - 4 OZ - FROZEN
012101107	COD FILET - 7 OZ - FROZEN
012101110	COD FILET - 10 OZ - FROZEN
012101212	COD WHOLE - 12 OZ - FROZEN
012101216	COD WHOLE - 16 OZ - FROZEN
012101220	COD WHOLE - 20 OZ - FROZEN

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The length of the item id's makes them difficult to remember, and they are not at all descriptive of the item. *Numeric item Id's in this environment is not advisable.*

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Using Numeric Item ID's

(continued)

I don't carry that many variations of one item. Can I use numbers and make it work?

If the products you distribute are more limited, and you carry 12 cod products, 14 trout products, 13 bass products, etc., numbers may work very well for you. Assigning a 4 or 5 digit item id will allow you identify each type of fish with the first 2 numbers, and the exact product with the last 2 or 3 numbers. When you look up an item, and you know that it is cod, all you have to do is enter the 2 digits that represent cod, and all of the cod items will fit onto one, or possible 2, lookup windows.

For example, if you designated 10 as your cod products, entering 10 and doing a lookup will produce the following lookup window:

Item Lookup	
ITEM ID	DESCRIPTION
>10101	COD FILET - 4 OZ - FRESH
10102	COD FILET - 7 OZ - FRESH
10103	COD FILET - 10 OZ - FRESH
10104	COD WHOLE - 12 OZ - FRESH
10105	COD WHOLE - 16 OZ - FRESH
10106	COD WHOLE - 20 OZ - FRESH
10107	COD FILET - 4 OZ - FROZEN
10108	COD FILET - 7 OZ - FROZEN
10109	COD FILET - 10 OZ - FROZEN
10110	COD WHOLE - 12 OZ - FROZEN
10111	COD WHOLE - 16 OZ - FROZEN
10112	COD WHOLE - 20 OZ - FROZEN

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When using numbers in a sequence like this, it is a good idea to follow 2 very simple rules:

Select a range of numbers to each product group, and leave plenty of unused numbers in that range of numbers. That will allow you to expand your product line and still put the item id's in the right item id range.

Be consistent with the length of the item id and what each digit, or group of digits, in the item id mean.

If you need help in setting up your item id file and are a Food Connex customer, please call Integrated Management Solutions support team for assistance.

If you are not Food Connex customer and would like to learn more about Food Connex features and capabilities, please contact our sales team at 1-800-366-3836 ext. 18 for further information.