

Table 1. Strengths and Weaknesses of EpiData Entry
Strengths
<p>Focus on data documentation: Labels, notes, etc.</p> <p>Quality Control: Double Entry, internal consistence control, legal values, ranges, conditional jumps, etc.</p> <p>Data Security and Confidentiality: Automatic backup, data encryption (DES standard), file encryption (DES standard).</p> <p>Data Relationship: Hierarchical</p> <p>Compatibility: Open standard, export with labels to Stata, SPSS and SAS. Export raw data to CSV and DBF. 100% compatible with Epi Info 6.</p> <p>No interference with the setup of the PC: does not install or include any DLL files or system files - options are saved in an INI file.</p> <p>File and program size: The program files are tiny 1MB, the files generated are very small because they are text files and can be easily shared by e-mails.</p>
Limitations
<p>Single user: Only one user can have access to the data file at the same time. However, the software can be used by more than one user simultaneously.</p> <p>Screen Design: Line oriented, only one font and colour can be set for each file.</p> <p>Variables types: Combined Date-time field and multi-line text (memo field) are not supported.</p> <p>Edit control: No audit trail function implemented (yet)</p> <p>File size: There is a limit in the size of the QES/CHK files that the editor can handle.</p> <p>Operating system: Currently only directly available for Windows, but works in Linux variants and to some extent in Machintosh via emulators.</p>
Table 2. Strengths and Weaknesses of EpiData Analysis – release version
Strengths
<p>Simplicity: Easy to use both through the keyboard or the mouse (menus).</p> <p>Usefulness: It includes the basic commands a field epidemiologist could need during an outbreak investigation</p> <p>Automation: It is easy to create a program to perform routine tasks</p> <p>Compatibility with standard: Reads DBF, CVS and REC files. Creates standardised (W3C) HTML output</p> <p>File size: Data file size very small (easy to transmit) (e.g. 10-20kb)</p>
Limitations
Survival Data and aggregated data cannot be analysed.

Table 3: Main elements of the coming five years
<p>Independence: Maintain the independence of software creators.</p> <p>Rewriting: Convert all source code to Open Source cross platform.</p> <p>Entry module development: Attaining GCP (Good Clinical Practice) compliance. Extending visual interface for database definition. Development. Operating system independence Linux, Mac, Windows.</p> <p>Analysis module development: Survival analysis (Kaplan Meier and Log Rank testing), analysis of aggregated data, EpiCurve, extending graphs, extending menuing and reporting. Major part of this is in v2 for release mid 2007.</p> <p>Courses and instruction: Several courses are running in independent institutions and universities, but no distinct distance based learning programme.</p> <p>Organisational setting: Major NGO's or organisations should take on responsibility for maintenance.</p> <p>Funding: Stable funding needs to be secured.</p>