

## Selecting Software Programs for Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA)

**Computer-based software programs are a valuable tool** in qualitative data analysis, but they are only a tool – you do the analysis. QDA can be accomplished with pen and paper, but software programs can make the process easier especially if you are analyzing large amounts of interviews or questionnaires or observations.

Software programs for QDA fall into two categories:

- Dedicated QDA software designed specifically for this task: Atlas.ti, NVivo, MaxQDA, Dedoose, and TAMS Analyzer
- Common software programs: MS Word, MS Excel, and MS Access (for PC or Mac), Pages, Numbers and Filemaker for Mac

The key is to select the tool that is the best fit for your task. In making your selection you will need to consider:

- Cost
- Ease of use
- Accessibility by all personnel who will use it
- Size of your project
- Use of multiple sources of data

Consider carefully the decision to purchase dedicated QDA software as they are expensive, require considerable investment of time to train people to use them, and often have more power than you need for evaluation projects.

Below are some tables to help in sorting through the various options.

	<b>Dedicated QDA</b>	<b>Common Software</b>
<b>Cost</b>	Ranges from free (TAMS Analyzer) to very expensive (Atlas.ti, NVivo, MaxQDA) (see Table 2)  Dedoose offers multiple licenses at low cost on a month-to-month basis.	Pages and Numbers come free with new Mac computers, Filemaker and the Microsoft Office Suite are available for less than \$200
<b>Ease of Use</b>	All dedicated QDA programs require time to learn basic navigation and special features.  TAMS Analyzer has guidelines in a downloadable pdf. Dedoose has online training modules and technical assistance. Atlas.ti, NVivo, and MaxQDA offer online, web-based and in person training and	Most computer users are already familiar with and comfortable using common word processing and spreadsheet programs.  Using these programs for QDA requires an hour or two to master using commands they may not be familiar with such as sorting tables

	technical support. Some trainings require fees.	by column or performing advanced searches.  Access and Filemaker require extensive training time and time to set up for QDA.
<b>Accessibility</b>	Dedoose and TAMS Analyzer commands are only available in English though data can be in languages other than English. Atlas.ti, NVivo, and MaxQDA offer versions in several European and Asian languages.  Dedoose is web-based, so requires good, reliable, and fast internet service.	The Microsoft Office suite is available in 108 languages and almost all computer users install a word processing and spreadsheet program.  Filemaker and Access are not included in many bundles of office suites.
<b>Size of Project</b>	All of these programs can handle large projects.	Word and Pages are useful for small projects and for projects that are more structured.  Excel and Numbers can handle larger projects with respect to the number of interviews or events, but if interviews are long it becomes difficult to manage data entry and display.  Access and Filemaker are powerful databases that can accommodate large projects and perform complex queries.
<b>Use of Multiple Sources of Data</b>	You can use TAMS Analyzer, Atlas.ti, NVivo, and MaxQDA to analyze multiple sources of data: text, still and moving images, audio recordings, and documents scanned into pdfs. They can also analyze some quantitative data and conduct quantitative analysis of qualitative data.	None of these programs are useful for analyzing pdfs, still or moving images or audio recordings.

<b>Program</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Platform</b>	<b>Language</b>
MaxQDA	\$713 Government, NGO single user \$99, Student, unlimited time, single user Free 30-day trial	PC, Mac versions	15 languages
Atlas.ti	\$1,290 Government, NGO single user \$99, Student, one year, single user Free trial version, unlimited time, limited to 10 documents	PC only, Mac version available July 2014	6 languages
NVivo	\$1,340 Government, NGO single user \$215 Student, one year, single user Free 30-day trial	PC, Mac versions	7 languages
Dedoose	\$12.95/month Single User No student discount Free 30-day trial	PC or Mac, web-based	English only version (data can be in any language)

For more information, see:

- Hahn, Christopher. 2008. *Doing Qualitative Research Using Your Computer*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- La Pelle, Nancy. 2004. Simplifying Qualitative Data Analysis Using General Purpose Software. *Field Methods* 16(1):85-108.
- Meyer, Daniel Z., and Leanne M. Avery. 2009. Excel as a Qualitative Data Analysis Tool. *Field Methods* 21(1): 91-112.
- Miles, Matthew B., A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana. 2013. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.