

Article # 1194

Technical Note: Understanding How AccountMate Handles Special Characters in Key Fields

Difficulty Level: Beginner AccountMate User

Version(s) Affected: AccountMate 7 for SQL, Express and LAN
AccountMate 6.5 for SQL, MSDE and LAN

Module(s) Affected: All Modules

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DESCRIPTION

Understanding the capabilities of your system enables you to fully maximize its usage. It is also important that you are aware of its limitations. Knowing these limitations helps you plan how to more efficiently manage your system. One of the most common limitations in accounting software is that of handling special characters. In AccountMate, we refer to these characters as "illegal characters." This TechNote provides you with a list of characters that are illegal in AccountMate and examples of possible problems that you may encounter when illegal characters are used.

SOLUTION

Below is a list of characters considered illegal in AccountMate:

- Apostrophe/single quote (')
- Quotation mark/double quotes (")
- Colon (:)
- Semi-colon (;)
- Comma (,)
- Asterisk (*)
- Space
- Tilde (~)
- Ampersand (&)
- Caret (^)
- Backward and forward slashes (\ /)
- Question mark (?)
- Less than and greater than signs (< >)
- Vertical bar (|)

Entering values containing illegal characters in primary key fields (e.g. Customer #) can cause errors when transactions are entered or reports are generated. The use of illegal characters may even lead to data corruption.

To avoid problems potentially caused by illegal characters, do not use these characters in the following places:

- Item #, Customer #, Vendor #
- Database name
- GL Account ID

Note: Starting in **AM7.5 for SQL and Express**, you can specify what characters not allowed in primary key fields. To do this, perform the following:

1. Launch the AccountMate Administrator program.
2. Access the Setup menu, and select the System Setup function.
3. Go to the Miscellaneous tab.
4. In the Key Field Restriction field, accept or amend the default illegal characters that you want to disallow in primary key fields. You can also enter additional characters in this field.

AccountMate will validate the characters you enter in a Maintenance or Transaction function's primary key field against the list of illegal characters in Key Field Restriction. AccountMate will display a warning message each time you enter an illegal character in a primary key field.

For example if you enter an apostrophe (') in Key Field Restriction when you create a customer record with an apostrophe in the Customer # (e.g. POP'S) field, you will see the following message:

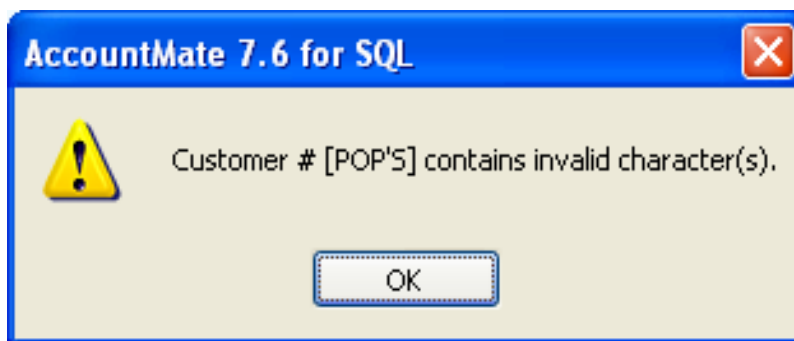


Figure 1. Key field contains illegal character(s)

This message serves as a warning and you cannot save the record.

This feature only affects new records; and, it is not retroactive. AccountMate will not warn the user that the record contains invalid characters and will save the record as entered if at the time the record is created these illegal characters are not specified in the Key Field Restriction field. Once these illegal characters are saved in Maintenance or Transactions function, errors may be encountered (see the first example below) instead of the warning message.

The following are examples of errors that you may encounter due to usage of illegal characters:

This error may occur if an apostrophe/single quote was used in the Customer # (e.g. POP'S) field

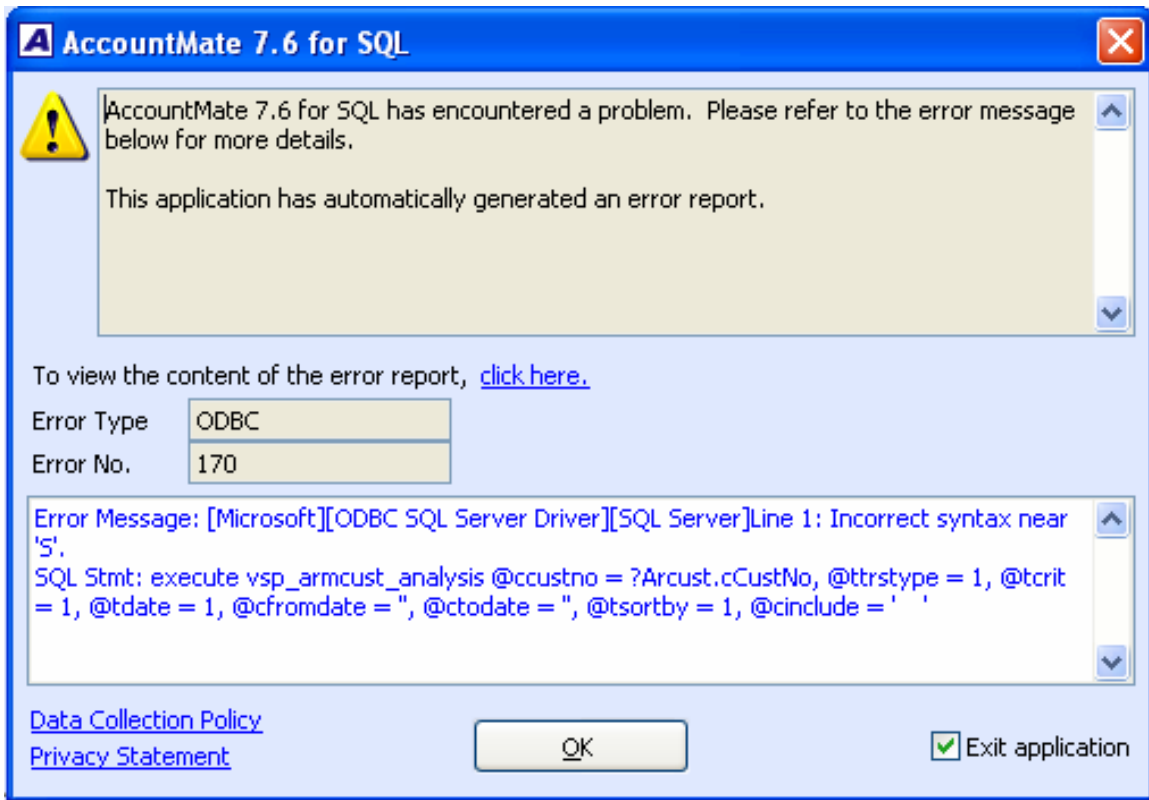


Figure 2 – 1. Error # 170: Incorrect syntax near 'S'

This error may occur when a space is used in a database name:



Figure 2 – 2. Error in creating database

Note: The screenshots used in the preceding examples are taken from AM7.6 for SQL. The same errors are encountered in AM6.5 for SQL (e.g. MS608a).

This example shows an error that you may encounter when you print computer checks for a Vendor # that has apostrophe ('):

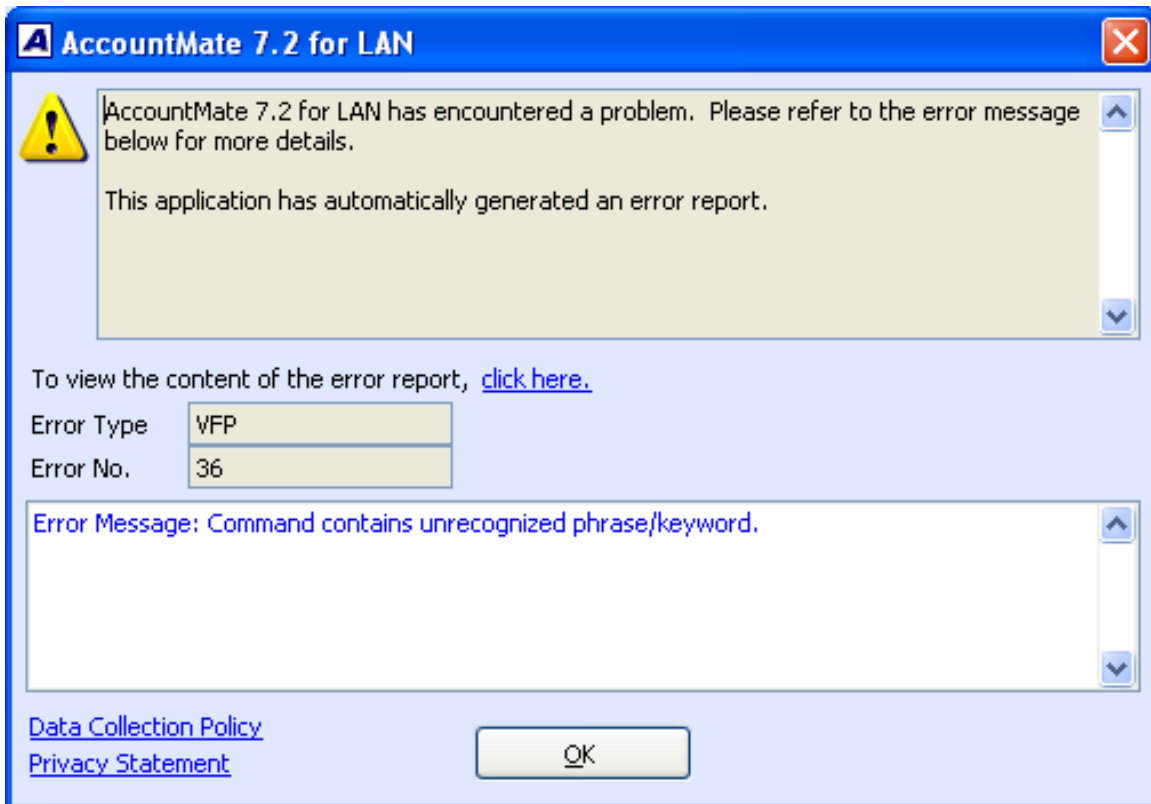


Figure 2 – 3. Command contains unrecognized phrase/keyword.

Note: This error is specific to the LAN platform. The screenshot used in this example is taken from AM7.2 for LAN. The same error message appears in AM6.5 for LAN (e.g. LN604).

The errors shown in this TechNote illustrate a few of the possible problems that you may encounter when you use illegal characters in AccountMate. Now that you know which characters are considered illegal in AccountMate we suggest that you check your AccountMate installation and verify whether any of these characters exist in primary key fields. Should you find any, please contact AccountMate Technical Support for assistance. We further suggest that you keep a record of the list presented in this TechNote and avoid using them in primary key fields. If you are using **AccountMate 7 for SQL and Express**, AM7.5 or higher, we recommend that you enter these illegal characters in the System Setup→Key Field Restriction field so that AccountMate will alert you when you enter values containing illegal characters in primary key fields such as Customer #, Vendor #, etc.

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