

DMBOK Knowledge Areas Quick Reference

A one-stop orientation to the eleven data-management knowledge areas: what each covers in practice, the questions it answers, and where to start.

About this quick reference

What it is. A practitioner summary of the knowledge-area structure used in DAMA-DMBOK, written in our own words for quick orientation. It is not a summary or substitute for the DAMA-DMBOK publication.

Who it is for. Data governance practitioners, data owners and stewards, and anyone joining a data-management programme who needs to place their work in context.

How to use it. Read the overview table, then use the detail cards (pages 2–3) to check scope and typical outputs, and the situation guide (page 4) to decide where to focus first. Nothing needs to be filled in.

How the knowledge areas fit together

DAMA-DMBOK organises data management into eleven knowledge areas. **Data Governance sits at the centre:** it provides the authority, policies and accountability that the other ten areas operate within. The other areas are complementary disciplines, not sequential phases — most organisations work on several at once, prioritised by business need. For orientation we cluster them into four groups (a dataintelligenceinsights.com aid, not part of DAMA-DMBOK): **Direction & control** (mandate and oversight), **Design** (blueprint and shared meaning), **Build, run & protect** (available, protected, moving data) and **Trust & use** (consistent, understood, fit-for-purpose data used to decide).

The eleven knowledge areas at a glance

#	Knowledge area	Group	In one line (practitioner view)
1	Data Governance	Direction & control	Authority, decision rights and policy over data
2	Data Architecture	Design	The blueprint for what data exists and how it flows
3	Data Modelling & Design	Design	Agreed structures and meaning before data is built
4	Data Storage & Operations	Build, run & protect	Keeping data stores available and recoverable
5	Data Security	Build, run & protect	Protecting data by sensitivity and obligation
6	Data Integration & Interoperability	Build, run & protect	Moving and combining data reliably
7	Document & Content Management	Build, run & protect	Governing documents, records and other unstructured content
8	Reference & Master Data	Trust & use	One trusted version of core entities and code lists
9	Data Warehousing & Business Intelligence	Trust & use	Governed data for analysis and decisions
10	Metadata Management	Trust & use	Making data findable, understandable and traceable
11	Data Quality	Trust & use	Measuring and improving fitness for purpose

Knowledge-area detail cards

Each card gives our plain-English reading of the area's purpose, the questions a practitioner uses it to answer, typical outputs, and the roles usually involved. Outputs listed are common practice examples, not a mandatory list.

1. Data Governance	
Purpose in practice	Decides who has authority over data, how decisions about data are made, and how data rules are set, monitored and enforced. Every other area relies on it for mandate and escalation.
Questions it answers	Who owns this data and can decide on it? Which policies apply? How are disputes resolved?
Typical outputs	Governance charter and forums; policy set; ownership and stewardship model; issue log; compliance measures.
Typical roles	Executive sponsor, data owners, data stewards, governance office.
2. Data Architecture	
Purpose in practice	Describes the data an organisation needs and how it should be arranged and flow across systems, so that change programmes build towards a coherent target rather than adding silos.
Questions it answers	What are our core data domains? Where should each be mastered? What is the target state and roadmap?
Typical outputs	Enterprise data model, domain map, data flow diagrams, target-state architecture, architecture principles.
Typical roles	Data/enterprise architects, solution architects, domain owners.
3. Data Modelling & Design	
Purpose in practice	Turns business requirements into precise, shared structures (conceptual, logical, physical) so that meaning is agreed before data is built and stored.
Questions it answers	Do teams agree what each entity and attribute means? Are models reviewed and versioned?
Typical outputs	Conceptual/logical/physical models, naming standards, model review records.
Typical roles	Data modellers, business analysts, database designers.
4. Data Storage & Operations	
Purpose in practice	Keeps data stores available, performant, backed up and recoverable across their lifecycle, from provisioning to retirement.
Questions it answers	Can we recover to an agreed point? Who supports each store? Is capacity planned?
Typical outputs	Backup/recovery plans, service levels, runbooks, retention implementation, platform inventory.
Typical roles	DBAs, platform/cloud engineers, operations.
5. Data Security	
Purpose in practice	Protects data according to its sensitivity and obligations: who may see or change it, under what conditions, and how misuse is prevented and detected.
Questions it answers	Is data classified? Are access rights least-privilege and reviewed? Do we know where sensitive data sits?
Typical outputs	Classification scheme, access model, security standards, access reviews, incident procedures.
Typical roles	Information security, privacy/DPO, data owners, IAM team.

6. Data Integration & Interoperability

Purpose in practice	Moves and combines data between systems and organisations reliably, with consistent meaning, timing and quality controls.
Questions it answers	Which interfaces feed critical processes? Are they documented, monitored and owned?
Typical outputs	Integration catalogue, interface specifications, data sharing agreements, pipeline monitoring.
Typical roles	Integration engineers, data engineers, API/platform teams.

7. Document & Content Management

Purpose in practice	Manages unstructured information (documents, records, media, email) so it can be found, retained, disclosed or disposed of correctly.
Questions it answers	Where are our records of value? Are retention and legal-hold rules applied to content?
Typical outputs	Records/retention schedule, content taxonomy, repository standards, disposal records.
Typical roles	Records managers, knowledge/content managers, legal.

8. Reference & Master Data

Purpose in practice	Creates one trusted, shared version of core business entities (such as customer, product, supplier, location) and the controlled code lists used to classify them.
Questions it answers	Do systems disagree about the same customer or product? Who maintains code lists?
Typical outputs	Master data domain definitions, golden-record rules, match/merge rules, reference data sets and owners.
Typical roles	MDM lead, domain data stewards, business process owners.

9. Data Warehousing & Business Intelligence

Purpose in practice	Integrates data for analysis and reporting and delivers it to decision-makers in a governed, reusable way.
Questions it answers	Do reports agree with each other? Are key metrics defined once and reused?
Typical outputs	Analytical data platform, curated data products, metric definitions, reporting catalogue.
Typical roles	BI/analytics engineers, data product owners, analysts.

10. Metadata Management

Purpose in practice	Captures and connects the data about data — definitions, lineage, ownership, quality, usage — so people can find, understand and trust information assets.
Questions it answers	Can a user find a dataset, see what it means, who owns it and where it came from?
Typical outputs	Business glossary, data catalogue, lineage, metadata standards, curation workflow.
Typical roles	Metadata/catalogue owner, data stewards, platform engineers.

11. Data Quality

Purpose in practice	Defines what 'fit for purpose' means for important data, measures it, and fixes root causes rather than symptoms.
Questions it answers	Which data is critical? What quality level is required and how far are we from it?
Typical outputs	Critical data element list, quality rules and thresholds, scorecards, issue and remediation log.
Typical roles	Data quality analysts, stewards, process owners.

Where to start: situation guide

Use the symptom you recognise to choose a lead knowledge area. Supporting areas are usually needed for a durable fix. This is our practical guidance, not a DAMA-DMBOK prescription.

If you recognise this...	Lead with	Support with
Nobody can say who is accountable for key data	Data Governance	Metadata Management (record ownership where people can find it)
Reports disagree; leaders do not trust the numbers	Data Quality	Data Warehousing & BI (single metric definitions); Metadata Management
Customer or product records conflict across systems	Reference & Master Data	Data Governance (domain ownership); Data Quality
Regulator, audit or privacy findings about data	Data Security	Data Governance; Document & Content Management (retention)
Analysts spend days finding and understanding data	Metadata Management	Data Modelling & Design (shared definitions)
Cloud/platform migration or new data platform	Data Architecture	Data Integration & Interoperability; Data Storage & Operations
Brittle, undocumented data feeds break processes	Data Integration & Interoperability	Metadata Management (lineage); Data Storage & Operations
Shared drives full of uncontrolled documents	Document & Content Management	Data Security (classification); Data Governance

Five orientation tips

- **Start from a business problem, not the full framework.** Covering all eleven areas at once is rarely affordable or necessary.
- **Establish governance early but lightly.** Named owners and a decision forum unblock every other area; heavyweight bureaucracy does not.
- **Treat the areas as interlocking.** Master data without quality rules, or a catalogue without ownership, tends to decay.
- **Measure before and after.** Agree a small set of measures per area you invest in, so progress is visible.
- **Assess maturity by area.** Organisations are typically uneven — strong in storage and security, weaker in metadata or quality — and priorities should follow the gaps that matter most.

Next step

Going further: the dataintelligenceinsights.com **DMBOK Knowledge Area Maturity Assessment (PRO)** lets you score each area, set targets and prioritise gaps.

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