**INPUT MASK**

For this exercise, you will be using the Final Sales Merchandise table in the Gaither Addresses database. This table was created using the Create a Table in Design View and the Change the Table Design lessons.

An Input Mask is used to control how data looks when it is entered into a table. It also can be used to define the format in which the data is stored.

**Define an Input Mask**
- Click somewhere in the Date of Last Order field.
- Click Input Mask under Field Properties for the Date of Last Order field.

- Click the **ellipsis** (three dots) at the end of the Input Mask box.
- The **Input Mask Wizard** dialog box will appear (see illustration below).

  - Choose the **Short Date** option for this lesson.
  - Click the **Try It** box to see how this works. Input a date, using a zero before a single digit number.
  - Click the **Next** button to move to the next step. This box allows you to change the Input Mask layout.
  - In the area where it says **99/99/0000** (see illustration above), remove the last two zeros.
    - There will be several spaces after the zeros.
    - Press the end key to move to the end of the field.
    - Press the backspace key to remove the spaces and the last two zeros.
If you highlight the spaces and numbers and then click delete, all the zeros may be removed instead of just the last two.

Click in the Try It box again to input the date.

Click Finish.

The Input Mask criteria will appear in the Input Mask area of the Field Properties.

The number will display as 99/99/00;_.

With this Input Mask you will not have to enter the slashes when inputting the date into a field.

Create a New Input Mask

It is not always possible to use one of the pre-defined Input Masks for a particular field. It then becomes necessary to create an Input Mask. For this lesson, we want to create a new Input Mask for the Stock Number field. To do this:

Click the Stock Number field in the Design View window.

Click the ellipsis (…) at the end of the Input Mask box.

The Input Mask Wizard window will appear (see illustration below).

Click the Edit List button at the bottom left side of this window.

The Customize Input Mask Wizard window will appear (see illustration above).

Click the New Record button at the bottom of the window. It is the last button after the word record, the one with an arrow and an asterisk.

The entries in the boxes will clear.

In the Description box, input StockNumber.

In the Input Mask box, input the number 9 five times (99999), a hyphen (-), and two more number 9s (99).

When a series of 9s are inserted, it means that any number between 0 and 9 can be inserted into the field.

The entry of these numbers is not required.

Plus and/or minus signs are not allowed when information is entered.

In the Placeholder box, insert a hyphen (-).
In the Sample Data box, input 13036-55.
Leave the Mask/Type as Text/Unbound.
Click Close to exit the Edit Input Mask Wizard window.
Click the Stock Number Input Mask from the list, if necessary.
No further changes are necessary for this action, so click the Finish button to apply this Input Mask to the Stock Number field.
When data is input into this field, the hyphen will appear automatically. This means that only the numbers have to be input.