Oracle SQL Developer Tips & Tricks

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Introduction

I have been delivering one form or another of this presentation for about the past eight years. What do developers and DBAs spend a lot of time doing when connected to the database? And how can we make that work achievable with fewer clicks, fewer keystrokes? And can we even get close to being able to say that it can also be fun?

In this session, I aim to deliver at least two to three new techniques for each attendee that will dramatically affect how they use the tool. I want you so save time. I am a productivity freak, and I obsess over the little things in the tools that you probably use every day. I want to help you save time.

I have plenty of material to fill the allotted time, but everyone will have a much more enjoyable experience if they feel free to ask questions or even challenge the material being presented.

Each tip or trick is documented in more detail on my blog. I will provide those links below, and they are also included in the PowerPoint slide deck.

Most of the techniques will be demonstrated live on my laptop, running a 12.1.0.2 Oracle Database, although many of the tips are applicable to all users of Oracle.

In addition if a tip is dependent on a specific version of Oracle SQL Developer, I will specify said version.

A Few Tips

Disabling Automatic Features

I do not usually enjoy 'automatic' behaviour. I prefer for the tool to perform things at my request. However for many users, they do not have the time to learn these keyboard shortcuts to invoke the 'helpers.' In our session I use SQL Developer's Completion Insight feature as an example.

As I am typing in an editor, I will see the tool trying to help me with suggestions on object names in my queries or my PL/SQL code.
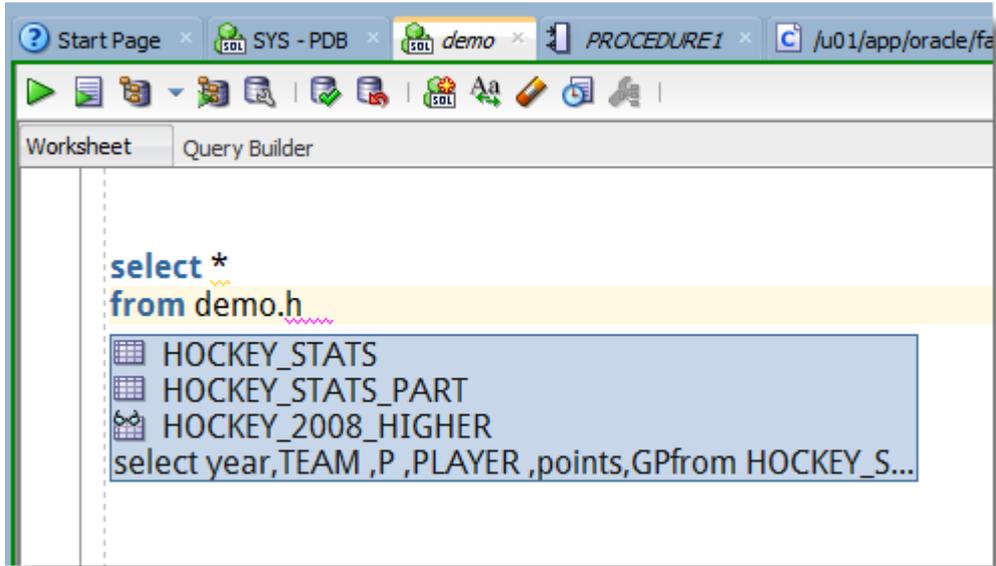
Illustration. 1: SQL Developer attempts to auto-complete my table name in the SQL statement as I type

I prefer to only see these suggestions when I ask for them. You can in fact disable the 'automatic' portion of this feature.
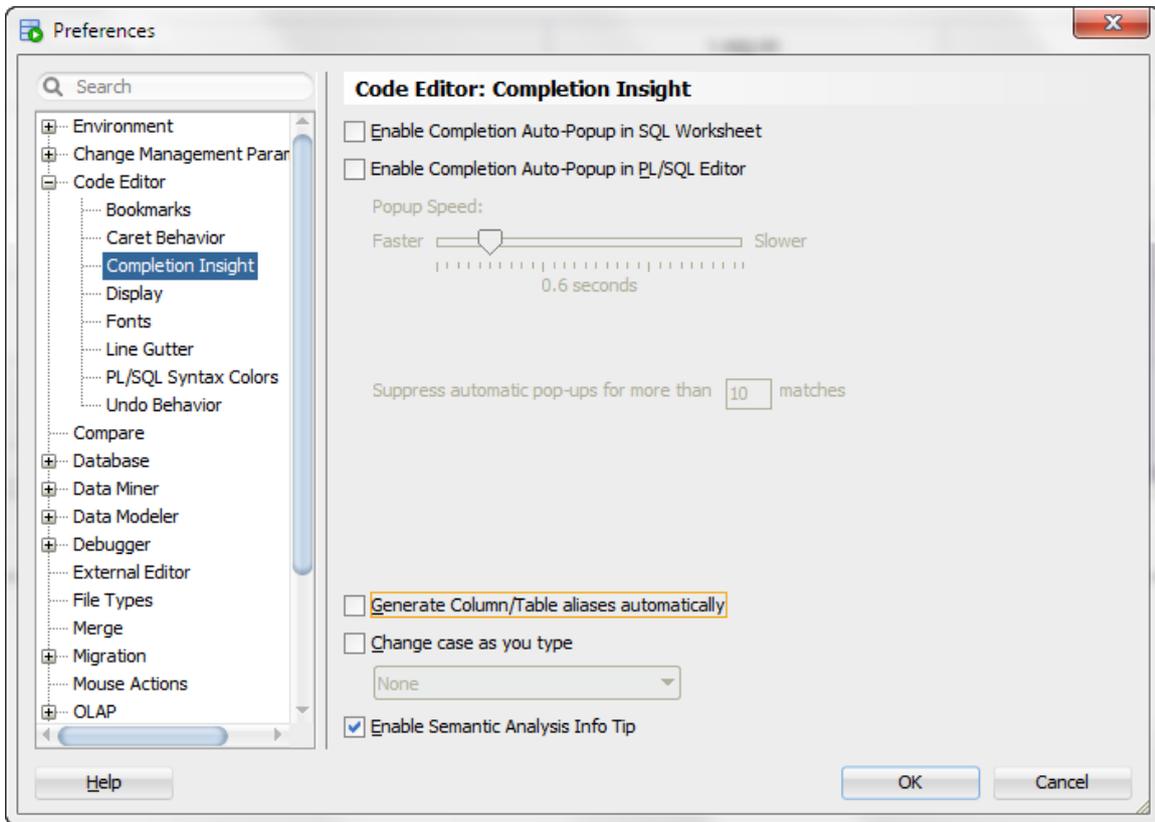

Illustration. 2: Completion Insight Preferences, uncheck 'Enable Completion Auto-Popup'

From this point on, the editor will remain in my complete control. When I am ready for help, I can use the keyboard to invoke it. The default shortcut for the completion insight assistance is Ctrl+Spacebar.

More Grids

Do you mind if I immediately contradict myself? There are a few times I enjoy automatic behaviours. For example, I prefer to have my query results automatically pinned.
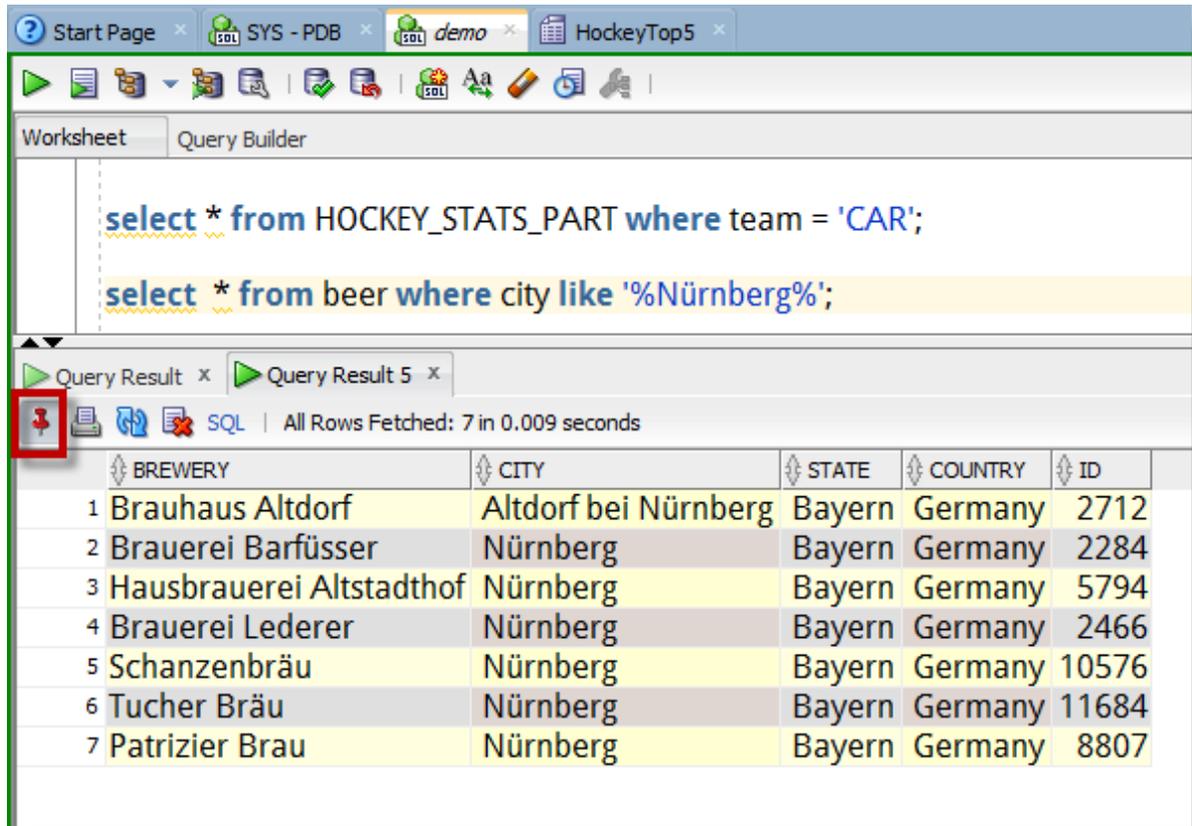

Illustration. 3: You can manually pin grids or you can configure SQL Developer automatically persist them

This is controlled by the preference, Tools > Preferences > Database > Worksheet > 'Show query results in new tabs.'

With this preference enabled, as I execute each query, a new grid is shown to present the results. You should close the grids as you are done with them. Think of them as browser tabs – each one requires more memory to show the information. Be also considerate to your fellow users as the query process or processes remain running on the server as long as there is more data to be fetched.

Recalling Previous SQL Statements and Scripts

SQL Developer locally records each statement or group of statements (scripts) that you execute in the SQL worksheet. These are persisted across sessions, and are available no matter which database you are connected to.

No one can see them but you.

They remain until you have reached your history limit. The default limit is 100, and can be controlled in the preferences, Tools > Preferences > Database > Worksheet > SQL History Limit.

At the point the limit is reached, the least recently executed statement is aged out of the list.

I have two suggestions:
1.   Set this limit higher, say 500 or 1000 – however, if you set it too high, it will affect the start-up time of SQL Developer as each entry must be read from an XML file into memory
2.   Use the keyboard to navigate the list – you can use Ctrl+Up or Down arrow keys to cycle the queries into your worksheet. Otherwise you can see the entire list by using F8.

Tips & Tricks Shown in this Presentation – In Blog Format

I have taken each technique and explained them in more detail on my blog. Here is a list for your enjoyment:

- Customize Preferences
- Recall SQL History via keyboard
- Script Output in CSV, HTML, ...
- Drag 'n' Drop Tables to Worksheet
- Drag 'n' Drop Tables to Model
- PL/SQL Output
- Schema Browser
- Ctrl+Click, Shift+F4, Object Search
- Copying Grids w/ Column Headers
- XML Extensions
- All of my #SQLDev Posts :)

You can also find this presentation on slideshare -

Thank you for your time and allowing me to present at your conference. Please feel free to contact me at any time for questions regarding our database development and design tools.

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