

Import Wizard vs Data Loader vs Smart Lookup

Smart Lookup Data Loader | TwinStack Solutions

Blog 5 of 10



Three tools, overlapping jobs, and the usual advice is “use the Wizard for small loads and Data Loader for big ones.” That is true as far as it goes, and it misses the thing that actually decides most imports.

Data Import Wizard

Built into Setup. No installation, runs in the browser, guided step by step.

Good for: ad hoc loads of Accounts, Contacts, Leads, Campaign Members, Person Accounts and custom objects, up to 50,000 records. Duplicate matching on a small set of standard rules. Admins who import rarely and want guardrails.

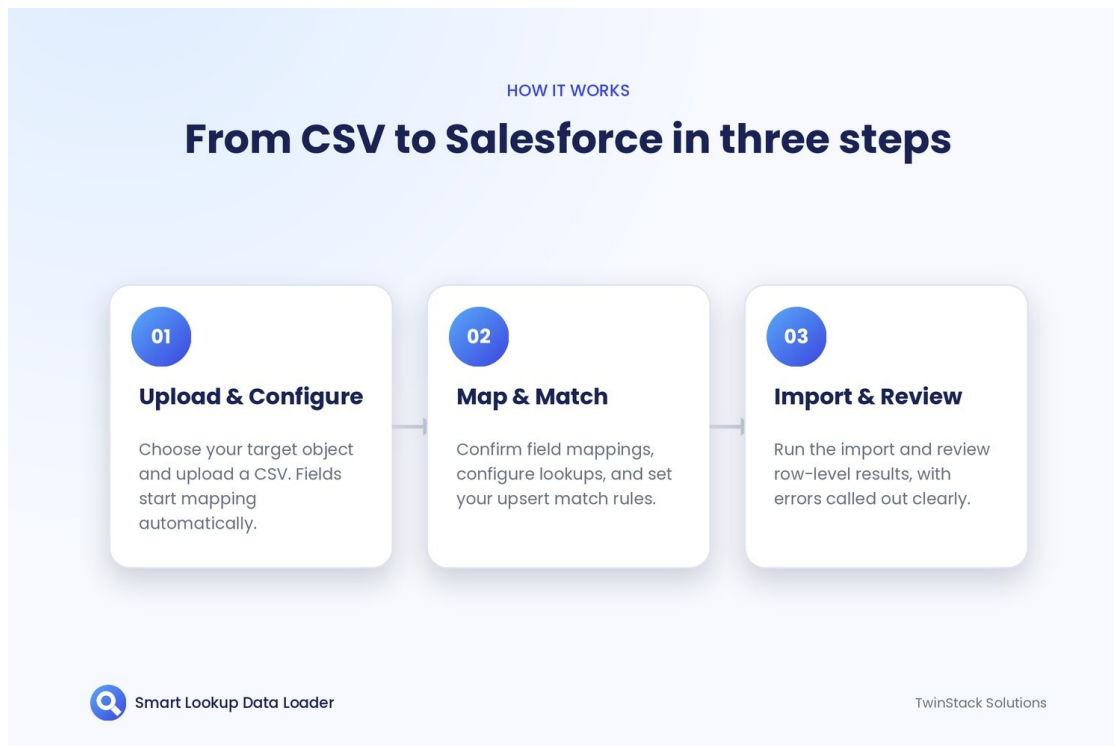
Where it stops: the 50,000 record limit is hard. It does not cover every object, so Opportunities and many others are out. It cannot delete. Field mapping is manual for anything it does not recognise, and lookup handling is limited to the matching options it offers.

Data Loader

Salesforce’s desktop application. Handles up to five million records, covers every object, supports insert, update, upsert, delete and hard delete, and can be scripted from the command line.

Good for: large migrations, scheduled loads, anything needing delete operations, and teams comfortable with a command line.

Where it stops: it is desktop software, which means installing it, keeping it updated, and dealing with a Java runtime on some platforms. Lookup fields expect record IDs, so files almost always need a VLOOKUP pass first. Errors come back as a batch-level file you reconcile against your source by hand. And it lives on one person's laptop, which becomes a problem when that person is on leave.



The three-step flow: upload and configure, map and match, import and review.

Smart Lookup Data Loader

A native managed package that runs inside Salesforce.

Good for: the majority of routine and migration loads where the file references related records by name, email or code rather than ID. Auto-mapped headers, lookups resolved during the load, multi-field match rules and row-level error reporting.

Where it stops: it is an import tool. It does not do scheduled or command-line loads, and it is not an ETL platform.

Import Wizard vs Data Loader vs Smart Lookup

Three ways to get your data into Salesforce. Different tools. Different strengths. Choose the right one for your needs.

*Same Destination.
A Smoother Journey.*

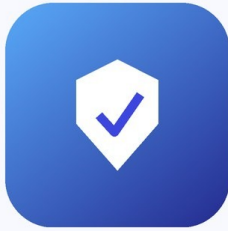
Feature	 Data Import Wizard Simple imports for everyday needs	 Data Loader Power and flexibility for any data job	 Smart Lookup Data Loader Smarter lookups. Faster imports. No limits.
 Where it runs	 Browser	 Desktop	 Browser native
 Installation	 None	 Install + Java sometimes	 AppExchange package
 Record limit (per operation)	 50,000	 5 million	 No usage cap
 Objects you can load	 Subset (standard objects only)	 All objects	 Standard + custom objects
 Lookups by name or code	 Limited	 No, IDs only	 Resolved at import
 Header mapping	 Manual	 Manual	 Auto-mapped
 Multi-field match	 No	 Single external ID	 Yes
 Error detail	 Summary	 Batch-level	 Row-level
 Delete operations	 No	 Yes	 No
 Command line	 No	 Yes	 No
 Cost	 Free	 Free	 Free
	Great for small, one-time imports with standard objects.	Built for large and complex data operations with full control.	The smartest way to load data with lookups — no limits, no complexity.

The three import tools side by side.

Side by side

	Data Import Wizard	Data Loader	Smart Lookup Data Loader
Where it runs	Browser, in Setup	Desktop application	Browser, native in your org
Installation	None	Install, plus Java on some platforms	Managed package from AppExchange
Record limit	50,000	5 million	No usage cap
Objects	A defined subset	All	Standard and custom
Lookups by name or code	Limited	No, IDs only	Resolved at import
Header mapping	Manual	Manual	Auto-mapped
Multi-field match	No	Single external ID	Yes
Error detail	Summary	Batch-level file	Row-level
Delete operations	No	Yes	No
Command line	No	Yes	No
Cost	Free	Free	Free

Comparison reflects publicly documented behaviour at the time of writing. Verify against current Salesforce documentation before relying on any specific limit.



FULLY NATIVE & SECURE

Built 100% on the Salesforce platform

Built entirely with Apex and Lightning Web Components, so your data never leaves your org — every import respects your existing security, sharing, and permissions.



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Native execution is the practical difference between the browser options.

How to choose

Under 50,000 records, a supported object, no awkward lookups: the Wizard is already there and will be faster than installing anything.

You need deletes, scheduling or command-line automation: Data Loader. Nothing else in this list does those.

Your file references related records by name, email or external code, which is most files: the question is whether you want to spend the prep time or not. That is the case Smart Lookup Data Loader was built for, and it is why “small versus large” is the wrong first question. The deciding factor is usually the shape of your lookups, not the row count.

Most teams end up using more than one. The Wizard for quick one-offs, Data Loader for deletes and scripted jobs, and a native loader for the regular work where the file came from somewhere that has never heard of a Salesforce record ID.

SEO metadata

Field	Value
Slug	salesforce-data-import-wizard-vs-data-loader
Target keyword	salesforce data import wizard vs data loader
Secondary keywords	salesforce import tool comparison, best salesforce data loader, salesforce bulk import

Field	Value
	options
Meta description	Data Import Wizard, Data Loader and Smart Lookup Data Loader solve different import problems. A practical comparison of limits, lookups and errors.
Type	Comparison

Smart Lookup Data Loader is a free, native Salesforce managed package by TwinStack Solutions. Install it from the AppExchange, or read more at twinstack.net/products/smart-lookup-data-loader