Title

File formats .dta — Description of .dta file format

Description

Stata's `.dta` datasets record data in a way generalized to work across computers that do not agree on how data are recorded. Thus the same dataset may be used, without translation, on different computers (Windows, Unix, and Mac computers). Given a computer, datasets are divided into two categories: native-format and foreign-format datasets. Stata uses the following two rules:

R1. On any computer, Stata knows how to write only native-format datasets.

R2. On all computers, Stata can read foreign-format as well as native-format datasets.

Rules R1 and R2 ensure that Stata users need not be concerned with dataset formats.

Stata is also continually being updated, and these updates sometimes require that changes be made to how Stata records `.dta` datasets. Stata can read older formats, but whenever it writes a dataset, it writes in the modern format. For up-to-date documentation on the Stata `.dta` file format, type `help dta`. The system help file contains all the details a programmer will need.

Also see

[D] **save** — Save Stata dataset

[D] **use** — Load Stata dataset

[D] **sysuse** — Use shipped dataset

[D] **webuse** — Use dataset from Stata website

[U] **1.2.2 Example datasets**