

Editors' Preface

The booklet you are reading reprints 33 Stata Tips from the *Stata Journal*, with thanks to their original authors. We, the *Journal* editors, began publishing tips in 2003, beginning with volume 3, issue 4. It pleases us now to introduce them in this booklet.

The *Stata Journal* publishes substantive and peer-reviewed articles ranging from reports of original work to tutorials on statistical methods and models implemented in Stata, and indeed on Stata itself. The original material we have published since 2001 includes special issues such as those on measurement error models (volume 3, number 4, 2003) and simulated maximum likelihood (volume 6, number 2, 2006).

Other features include regular columns on Stata (currently, “Speaking Stata” and “Mata Matters”), book reviews, and announcements of software updates.

We are pleased by the external recognition that the *Journal* has achieved. In 2005, it was added to two of Thomson Scientific’s citation indexes, the Science Citation Index Expanded and the CompuMath Citation Index.

But back to Tips. There was little need for tips in the early days. Stata 1.0 was released in 1985. The original program had 44 commands and its documentation totaled 175 pages. Stata 9, on the other hand, has more than 700 commands—including an embedded matrix language called Mata—and Stata’s official documentation now totals more than 6,500 pages. Beyond that, the user community has added several hundred more commands.

The pluses and the minuses of this growth are evident. As Stata expands, it is increasingly likely that users’ needs can be met by available code. But at the same time, learning how to use Stata and even learning what is available become larger and larger tasks.

Tips are intended to help. The ground rules for Stata Tips, as found in the original 2003 statement, are laid out as the next item in this booklet.

The Tips grew from many discussions and postings on Statalist, at Users Group meetings and elsewhere, which underscore a simple fact: Stata is now so big that it is easy to miss even simple features that can streamline and enhance your sessions with Stata. This applies not just to new users, who understandably may quake nervously before the manual mountain, but also to longtime users, who too are faced with a mass of new features in every release.

Tips have come from Stata users as well as StataCorp employees. Many discuss new features of Stata, or features not documented fully or even at all. We hope that you enjoy the Tips reprinted here and can share them with your fellow Stata users. If you have tips that you would like to write, or comments on the kinds of tips that are helpful, do get in touch with us, as we are eager to continue the series.

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