10 Listing data and basic command syntax

Command syntax

This chapter gives a basic lesson on Stata's command syntax while showing how to control the appearance of a data list.

As we have seen throughout this manual, you have a choice between using menus and dialogs and using the Command window. Although many find the menus more natural and the Command window baffling at first, some practice makes working with the Command window often much faster than using menus and dialogs. The Command window can become a faster way of working because of the clean and regular syntax of Stata commands. We will cover enough to get you started; `help language` has more information and examples, and [U] **11 Language syntax** has all the details.

The syntax for the `list` command can be seen by typing `help list`:

<u>l</u>ist [*varlist*] [*if*] [*in*] [, *options*]

Here is how to read this syntax:

- Anything inside square brackets is optional. For the `list` command,
  a. *varlist* is optional. A *varlist* is a list of variable names.
  b. *if* is optional. The `if` qualifier restricts the command to run only on those observations for which the qualifier is true. We saw examples of this in [GSW] **6 Using the Data Editor**.
  c. *in* is optional. The `in` qualifier restricts the command to run on particular observation numbers.
  d. `,` and *options* are optional. *options* are separated from the rest of the command by a comma.
- Optional pieces do not preclude one another unless explicitly stated. For the `list` command, it is possible to use a *varlist* with *if* and *in*.
- If a part of a word is underlined, the underlined part is the minimum abbreviation. Any abbreviation at least this long is acceptable.
  a. The `l` in `list` is underlined, so `l`, `li`, and `lis` are all equivalent to `list`.
- Anything not inside square brackets is required. For the `list` command, only the command itself is required.

Keeping these rules in mind, let's investigate how `list` behaves when called with different arguments. We will be using the dataset `afewcarslab.dta` from the end of the previous chapter.

list with a variable list

Variable lists (or *varlist*s) can be specified in a variety of ways, all designed to save typing and encourage good variable names.

- The *varlist* is optional for `list`. This means that if no variables are specified, it is equivalent to specifying all variables. Another way to think of it is that the default behavior of the command is to run on all variables unless restricted by a *varlist*.
- You can list a subset of variables explicitly, as in `list make mpg price`.
- There are also many shorthand notations:
  - `m*` means all variables starting with `m`.
  - `price-weight` means all variables from `price` through `weight` in the dataset order.
  - `ma?e` means all variables starting with `ma`, followed by any character, and ending in `e`.

● You can list a variable by using an abbreviation unique to that variable, as in `list gear_r~o`. If the abbreviation is not unique, Stata returns an error message.

```
. list
```

	make	price	mpg	weight	gear_r~o	foreign
1.	VW Rabbit	4697	25	1930	3.78	foreign
2.	Olds 98	8814	21	4060	2.41	domestic
3.	Chev. Monza	3667	.	2750	2.73	domestic
4.		4099	22	2930	3.58	domestic
5.	Datsun 510	5079	24	2280	3.54	foreign
6.	Buick Regal	5189	20	3280	2.93	domestic
7.	Datsun 810	8129	.	2750	3.55	foreign

```
. l make mpg price
```

	make	mpg	price
1.	VW Rabbit	25	4697
2.	Olds 98	21	8814
3.	Chev. Monza	.	3667
4.		22	4099
5.	Datsun 510	24	5079
6.	Buick Regal	20	5189
7.	Datsun 810	.	8129

```
. list m*
```

	make	mpg
1.	VW Rabbit	25
2.	Olds 98	21
3.	Chev. Monza	.
4.		22
5.	Datsun 510	24
6.	Buick Regal	20
7.	Datsun 810	.

```
. li price-weight
```

	price	mpg	weight
1.	4697	25	1930
2.	8814	21	4060
3.	3667	.	2750
4.	4099	22	2930
5.	5079	24	2280
6.	5189	20	3280
7.	8129	.	2750

```
. list ma?e

              make

  1.      VW Rabbit
  2.        Olds 98
  3.    Chev. Monza
  4.
  5.     Datsun 510

  6.    Buick Regal
  7.     Datsun 810

. l gear_r~o

           gear_r~o

  1.          3.78
  2.          2.41
  3.          2.73
  4.          3.58
  5.          3.54

  6.          2.93
  7.          3.55
```

list with if

The `if` qualifier uses a logical expression to determine which observations to use. If the expression is true, the observation is used in the command; otherwise, it is skipped. The operators whose results are either true or false are

<	less than
<=	less than or equal
==	equal
>	greater than
>=	greater than or equal
!=	not equal
&	and
|	or
!	not (logical negation)
()	parentheses are for grouping to specify order of evaluation

In the logical expressions, & is evaluated before | (similar to multiplication before addition in arithmetic). You can use this in your expressions, but it is often better to use parentheses to ensure that the expressions are evaluated in the proper order. See [U] 13.2 Operators for complete details.

```
. list

                  make    price    mpg    weight    gear_r~o      foreign

    1.        VW Rabbit     4697     25      1930        3.78      foreign
    2.          Olds 98     8814     21      4060        2.41     domestic
    3.      Chev. Monza     3667      .      2750        2.73     domestic
    4.                      4099     22      2930        3.58     domestic
    5.       Datsun 510     5079     24      2280        3.54      foreign

    6.      Buick Regal     5189     20      3280        2.93     domestic
    7.       Datsun 810     8129      .      2750        3.55      foreign

. list if mpg > 22

                  make    price    mpg    weight    gear_r~o      foreign

    1.        VW Rabbit     4697     25      1930        3.78      foreign
    3.      Chev. Monza     3667      .      2750        2.73     domestic
    5.       Datsun 510     5079     24      2280        3.54      foreign
    7.       Datsun 810     8129      .      2750        3.55      foreign

. list if (mpg > 22) & !missing(mpg)

                  make    price    mpg    weight    gear_r~o      foreign

    1.        VW Rabbit     4697     25      1930        3.78      foreign
    5.       Datsun 510     5079     24      2280        3.54      foreign

. list make mpg price gear if (mpg > 22) | (price > 8000 & gear < 3.5)

                  make     mpg    price    gear_r~o

    1.        VW Rabbit     25     4697        3.78
    2.          Olds 98     21     8814        2.41
    3.      Chev. Monza      .     3667        2.73
    5.       Datsun 510     24     5079        3.54
    7.       Datsun 810      .     8129        3.55

. list make mpg if mpg <= 22 in 2/4

              make     mpg

    2.      Olds 98     21
    4.                  22
```

In the listings above, we see more examples of Stata treating missing numerical values as large values, as well as the care that should be taken when the if qualifier is applied to a variable with missing values. See [GSW] **6 Using the Data Editor**.

list with if, common mistakes

Here is a series of listings with common errors and their corrections. See if you can find the errors before reading the correct entry.

```
. list

                 make    price    mpg    weight    gear_r~o    foreign

  1.          VW Rabbit     4697     25      1930        3.78     foreign
  2.           Olds 98      8814     21      4060        2.41    domestic
  3.        Chev. Monza     3667      .      2750        2.73    domestic
  4.                        4099     22      2930        3.58    domestic
  5.          Datsun 510    5079     24      2280        3.54     foreign

  6.         Buick Regal    5189     20      3280        2.93    domestic
  7.         Datsun 810     8129      .      2750        3.55     foreign

. list if mpg=21
=exp not allowed
r(101);
```

The error arises because "equal" is expressed by ==, not by =. Corrected, it becomes

```
. list if mpg==21

              make    price    mpg    weight    gear_r~o    foreign

  2.       Olds 98     8814     21      4060        2.41    domestic
```

Other common errors with logic:

```
. list if mpg==21 if weight > 4000
invalid syntax
r(198);
. list if mpg==21 and weight > 4000
invalid 'and'
r(198);
```

Joint tests are specified with &, not with the word and or multiple ifs. The if qualifier should be if mpg==21 & weight>4000, not if mpg==21 if weight>4000. Here is its correction:

```
. list if mpg==21 & weight > 4000

              make    price    mpg    weight    gear_r~o    foreign

  2.       Olds 98     8814     21      4060        2.41    domestic
```

A problem with string variables:

```
. list if make==Datsun 510
Datsun not found
r(111);
```

Strings must be in double quotes, as in make=="Datsun 510". Without the quotes, Stata thinks that Datsun is a variable that it cannot find. Here is the correction:

```
. list if make=="Datsun 510"
```

	make	price	mpg	weight	gear_r~o	foreign
5.	Datsun 510	5079	24	2280	3.54	foreign

Confusing value labels with strings:

```
. list if foreign=="domestic"
type mismatch
r(109);
```

Value labels look like strings, but the underlying variable is numeric. Variable foreign takes on values 0 and 1 but has the value label that attaches 0 to "domestic" and 1 to "foreign" (see [GSW] **9 Labeling data**). To see the underlying numeric values of variables with labeled values, use the label list command (see [D] **label**), or investigate the variable with codebook *varname*. We can correct the error here by looking for observations where foreign==0.

There is a second construction that also allows the use of the value label directly.

```
. list if foreign==0
```

	make	price	mpg	weight	gear_r~o	foreign
2.	Olds 98	8814	21	4060	2.41	domestic
3.	Chev. Monza	3667	.	2750	2.73	domestic
4.		4099	22	2930	3.58	domestic
6.	Buick Regal	5189	20	3280	2.93	domestic

```
. list if foreign=="domestic":origin
```

	make	price	mpg	weight	gear_r~o	foreign
2.	Olds 98	8814	21	4060	2.41	domestic
3.	Chev. Monza	3667	.	2750	2.73	domestic
4.		4099	22	2930	3.58	domestic
6.	Buick Regal	5189	20	3280	2.93	domestic

list with in

The in qualifier uses a *numlist* to give a range of observations that should be listed. *numlist*s have the form of one number or *first/last*. Positive numbers count from the beginning of the dataset. Negative numbers count from the end of the dataset. Here are some examples:

```
. list

                  make     price    mpg    weight    gear_r~o     foreign

     1.        VW Rabbit    4697     25      1930        3.78       foreign
     2.          Olds 98    8814     21      4060        2.41      domestic
     3.      Chev. Monza    3667      .      2750        2.73      domestic
     4.                     4099     22      2930        3.58      domestic
     5.        Datsun 510   5079     24      2280        3.54       foreign

     6.      Buick Regal    5189     20      3280        2.93      domestic
     7.       Datsun 810    8129      .      2750        3.55       foreign

. list in 1

                 make     price    mpg    weight    gear_r~o    foreign

     1.      VW Rabbit     4697     25      1930        3.78     foreign

. list in -1

                  make     price    mpg    weight    gear_r~o    foreign

     7.      Datsun 810     8129      .      2750        3.55     foreign

. list in 2/4

                  make     price    mpg    weight    gear_r~o     foreign

     2.          Olds 98    8814     21      4060        2.41      domestic
     3.      Chev. Monza    3667      .      2750        2.73      domestic
     4.                     4099     22      2930        3.58      domestic

. list in -3/-2

                  make     price    mpg    weight    gear_r~o     foreign

     5.       Datsun 510    5079     24      2280        3.54       foreign
     6.      Buick Regal    5189     20      3280        2.93      domestic
```

Controlling the list output

The fine control over list output is exercised by specifying one or more options. You can use sepby() to separate observations by variable. abbreviate() specifies the minimum number of characters to abbreviate a variable name in the output. divider draws a vertical line between the variables in the list.

```
. sort foreign
. list ma p g f, sepby(foreign)
```

	make	price	gear_r~o	foreign
1.		4099	3.58	domestic
2.	Chev. Monza	3667	2.73	domestic
3.	Buick Regal	5189	2.93	domestic
4.	Olds 98	8814	2.41	domestic
5.	Datsun 810	8129	3.55	foreign
6.	VW Rabbit	4697	3.78	foreign
7.	Datsun 510	5079	3.54	foreign

```
. list make weight gear, abbreviate(10)
```

	make	weight	gear_ratio
1.		2930	3.58
2.	Chev. Monza	2750	2.73
3.	Buick Regal	3280	2.93
4.	Olds 98	4060	2.41
5.	Datsun 810	2750	3.55
6.	VW Rabbit	1930	3.78
7.	Datsun 510	2280	3.54

```
. list, divider
```

	make	price	mpg	weight	gear_r~o	foreign
1.		4099	22	2930	3.58	domestic
2.	Chev. Monza	3667	.	2750	2.73	domestic
3.	Buick Regal	5189	20	3280	2.93	domestic
4.	Olds 98	8814	21	4060	2.41	domestic
5.	Datsun 810	8129	.	2750	3.55	foreign
6.	VW Rabbit	4697	25	1930	3.78	foreign
7.	Datsun 510	5079	24	2280	3.54	foreign

The separator() option draws a horizontal line at specified intervals. When not specified, it defaults to a value of 5.

```
. list, separator(3)

              make    price    mpg    weight    gear_r~o    foreign

  1.                   4099     22      2930        3.58    domestic
  2.   Chev. Monza     3667      .      2750        2.73    domestic
  3.   Buick Regal     5189     20      3280        2.93    domestic

  4.       Olds 98     8814     21      4060        2.41    domestic
  5.   Datsun 810      8129      .      2750        3.55     foreign
  6.    VW Rabbit      4697     25      1930        3.78     foreign

  7.   Datsun 510      5079     24      2280        3.54     foreign
```

Break

If you want to interrupt a Stata command, click on the **Break** button, ❌ .

It is always safe to click on the **Break** button. After you click on **Break**, the state of the system is the same as if you had never issued the original command.