Title

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file formats .dta — Description of .dta file format

Description Remarks and examples Also see

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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.

Remarks and examples

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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. To obtain a copy of the help file in PostScript format, which you can then print, type

```
. which dta.sthlp
. translate help_file dta.ps, translator(smcl2ps)
```

The first command will show you where the help file is, and then you can type that name in the `translate` command. Even easier is

```
. findfile dta.sthlp
. translate "`r(fn)'" dta.ps, translator(smcl2ps)
```

Either way, you can then print the new file `dta.ps` from your current directory.

Also see

[R] **translate** — Print and translate logs