

edit — Browse or edit data with Data Editor

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Description

`edit` brings up a spreadsheet-style data editor for entering new data and editing existing data. `edit` is a better alternative to `input`; see [\[D\] input](#).

`browse` is similar to `edit`, except that modifications to the data by editing in the grid are not permitted. `browse` is a convenient alternative to `list`; see [\[D\] list](#).

See [\[GS\] 6 Using the Data Editor](#) ([GSM](#), [GSU](#), or [GSW](#)) for a tutorial discussion of the Data Editor. This entry provides the technical details.

Quick start

Open dataset in the Data Editor for entering new data or editing existing data

```
edit
```

As above, but include only `v1`, `v2`, and `v3`

```
edit v1 v2 v3
```

As above, but only for observations where `v3` is missing

```
edit v1 v2 v3 if v3 >= .
```

Open dataset in the Data Editor with no ability to edit data

```
browse
```

As above, but include only `v1`, `v2`, and `v3` and suppress value labels

```
browse v1 v2 v3, nolabel
```

Menu

`edit`

Data > Data Editor > Data Editor (Edit)

`browse`

Data > Data Editor > Data Editor (Browse)

Syntax

Edit using Data Editor

```
edit [varlist] [if] [in] [, nolabel]
```

Browse using Data Editor

```
browse [varlist] [if] [in] [, nolabel]
```

Option

nolabel causes the underlying numeric values, rather than the label values (equivalent strings), to be displayed for variables with value labels; see [\[D\] label](#).

Remarks and examples

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Remarks are presented under the following headings:

Modes

The current observation and current variable

Assigning value labels to variables

Changing values of existing cells

Adding new variables

Adding new observations

Copying and pasting

Logging changes

Advice

Clicking on Stata's **Data Editor (Edit)** button is equivalent to typing **edit** by itself. Clicking on Stata's **Data Editor (Browse)** button is equivalent to typing **browse** by itself.

edit, typed by itself, opens the Data Editor with all observations on all variables displayed. If you specify a *varlist*, only the specified variables are displayed in the Editor. If you specify one or both of *in range* and *if exp*, only the observations specified are displayed.

Modes

We will refer to the Data Editor in the singular with **edit** and **browse** referring to two of its three modes.

Full-edit mode. This is the Editor's mode that you enter when you type **edit** or type **edit** followed by a list of variables. All features of the Editor are turned on.

Filtered mode. This is the Editor's mode that you enter when you use **edit** with or without a list of variables but include *in range*, *if exp*, or both, or if you filter the data from within the Editor. A few of the Editor's features are turned off, most notably, the ability to sort data and the ability to paste data into the Editor.

Browse mode. This is the Editor's mode that you enter when you use **browse** or when you change the Editor's mode to **Browse** after you start the Editor. The ability to type in the Editor, thereby changing data, is turned off, ensuring that the data cannot accidentally be changed. One feature that is left on may surprise you: the ability to sort data. Sorting, in Stata's mind, is not really a change to the dataset. On the other hand, if you enter using **browse** and specify *in range* or *if exp*, sorting is not allowed. You can think of this as restricted-browse mode.

Actually, the Editor does not set its mode to filtered just because you specify an *in range* or *if exp*. It sets its mode to filtered if you specify *in* or *if* and if this restriction is effective, that is, if the *in* or *if* would actually cause some data to be omitted. For instance, typing `edit if x>0` would result in unrestricted full-edit mode if *x* were greater than zero for all observations.

The current observation and current variable

The Data Editor looks much like a spreadsheet, with rows and columns corresponding to observations and variables, respectively. At all times, one of the cells is highlighted. This is called the current cell. The observation (row) of the current cell is called the current observation. The variable (column) of the current cell is called the current variable.

You change the current cell by clicking with the mouse on another cell or by using the arrow keys.

To help distinguish between the different types of variables in the Editor, string values are displayed in red, value labels are displayed in blue, and all other values are displayed in black. You can change the colors for strings and value labels by right-clicking on the Data Editor window and selecting **Preferences...**

Assigning value labels to variables

You can assign a value label to a nonstring variable by right-clicking any cell on the variable column, choosing the **Data > Value Labels** menu, and selecting a value label from the **Attach Value Label to Variable ‘varname’** menu. You can define a value label by right-clicking on the Data Editor window and selecting **Data > Value Labels > Manage Value Labels...** You can also accomplish these tasks by using the Properties pane; see [GS] 6 **Using the Data Editor (GSM, GSU, or GSW)** for details.

Changing values of existing cells

Make the cell you wish to change the current cell. Type the new value, and press *Enter*. When updating string variables, do not type double quotes around the string. For variables that have a value label, you can right-click on the cell to display a list of values for the value label. You can assign a new value to the cell by selecting a value from the list.

Technical note

Stata experts will wonder about storage types. Say that variable `mpg` is stored as an `int` and you want to change the fourth observation to contain 22.5. The Data Editor will change the storage type of the variable. Similarly, if the variable is a `str4` and you type `alpha`, it will be changed to `str5`.

The Editor will not, however, change numeric variable types to strings (unless the numeric variable contains only missing values). This is intentional, as such a change could result in a loss of data and is probably the result of a mistake.

Technical note

Stata can store long strings in the `strL` storage type. Although the `strL` type can hold very long strings, these strings may only be edited if they are 2045 characters or less. Similarly, `strLs` that hold binary data may not be edited. For more information on storage types, see [D] **data types**.

Adding new variables

Go to the first empty column, and begin entering your data. The first entry that you make will create the variable and determine whether that variable is numeric or string. The variable will be given a name like `var1`, but you can rename it by using the Properties pane.

Technical note

Stata experts: The storage type will be determined automatically. If you type a number, the created variable will be numeric; if you type a string, it will be a string. Thus if you want a string variable, be sure that your first entry cannot be interpreted as a number. A way to achieve this is to use surrounding quotes so that "123" will be taken as the string "123", not the number 123. If you want a numeric variable, do not worry about whether it is `byte`, `int`, `float`, etc. If a `byte` will hold your first number but you need a `float` to hold your second number, the Editor will recast the variable later.



Technical note

If you do not type in the first empty column but instead type in one to the right of it, the Editor will create variables for all the intervening columns.



Adding new observations

Go to the first empty row, and begin entering your data. As soon as you add one cell below the last row of the dataset, an observation will be created.

Technical note

If you do not enter data in the first empty row but, instead, enter data in a row below it, the Data Editor will create observations for all the intervening rows.



Copying and pasting

You can copy and paste data between Stata's Data Editor and other applications.

First, select the data you wish to copy. In Stata, click on a cell and drag the mouse across other cells to select a range of cells. If you want to select an entire column, click once on the variable name at the top of that column. If you want to select an entire row, click once on the observation number at the left of that row. You can hold down the mouse button after clicking and drag to select multiple columns or rows.

Once you have selected the data, copy the data to the Clipboard. In Stata, right-click on the selected data, and select **Copy**.

You can copy data to the Clipboard from Stata with or without the variable names at the top of each column by right-clicking on the Data Editor window, selecting **Preferences...**, and checking or unchecking *Include variable names on copy to Clipboard*.

You can choose to copy either the value labels or the underlying numeric values associated with the selected data by right-clicking on the Data Editor window, selecting **Preferences...**, and checking or unchecking *Copy value labels instead of numbers*. For more information about value labels, see [U] 12.6.3 Value labels and [D] label.

After you have copied data to the Clipboard from Stata's Data Editor or another spreadsheet, you can paste the data into Stata's Data Editor. First, select the top-left cell of the area into which you wish to paste the data by clicking on it once. Then right-click on the cell and select **Paste**. Stata will paste the data from the Clipboard into the Editor, overwriting any data below and to the right of the cell you selected as the top left of the paste area. If the Data Editor is in filtered mode or in browse mode, **Paste** will be disabled, meaning that you cannot paste into the Data Editor. You can have more control over how data is pasted by selecting **Paste Special...**

□ Technical note

If you attempt to paste one or more string values into numeric variables, the original numeric values will be left unchanged for those cells. Stata will display a message box to let you know that this has happened: "You attempted to paste one or more string values into numeric variables. The contents of these cells, if any, are unchanged."

If you see this message, you should look carefully at the data that you pasted into Stata's Data Editor to make sure that you pasted into the area that you intended. We recommend that you take a snapshot of your data before pasting into Stata's Data Editor so that you can restore the data from the snapshot if you make a mistake. See [GS] 6 Using the Data Editor (GSM, GSU, or GSW) to read about snapshots.



Logging changes

When you use `edit` to enter new data or change existing data, you will find output in the Stata Results window documenting the changes that you made. For example, a line of this output might be

```
. replace mpg = 22.5 in 5
```

The Editor submits a command to Stata for everything you do in it except pasting. If you are logging your results, you will have a permanent record of what you did in the Editor.

Advice

- People who care about data integrity know that editors are dangerous—it is too easy to make changes accidentally. Never use `edit` when you want to browse.
- Protect yourself when you edit existing data by limiting exposure. If you need to change `mpg` and need to see `model` to know which value of `mpg` to change, do not click on the **Data Editor** button. Instead, type `edit model mpg`. It is now impossible for you to change (damage) variables other than `model` and `mpg`. Furthermore, if you know that you need to change `mpg` only if it is missing, you can reduce your exposure even more by typing `'edit model mpg if mpg=>.'`
- Stata's Data Editor is safer than most because it logs changes to the Results window. Use this feature—look at the log afterward, and verify that the changes you made are the changes you wanted to make.

References

- Brady, T. 1998. `dm63`: Dialog box window for browsing, editing, and entering observations. *Stata Technical Bulletin* 46: 2–6. Reprinted in *Stata Technical Bulletin Reprints*, vol. 8, pp. 28–34. College Station, TX: Stata Press.
- . 2000. `dm63.1`: A new version of `winshow` for Stata 6. *Stata Technical Bulletin* 53: 3–5. Reprinted in *Stata Technical Bulletin Reprints*, vol. 9, pp. 15–19. College Station, TX: Stata Press.

Also see

- [D] **import** — Overview of importing data into Stata
- [D] **input** — Enter data from keyboard
- [D] **list** — List values of variables
- [D] **save** — Save Stata dataset
- [GSM] **6 Using the Data Editor**
- [GSW] **6 Using the Data Editor**
- [GSU] **6 Using the Data Editor**