notes — Place notes in data

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Description

notes attaches notes to the dataset in memory. These notes become a part of the dataset and are saved when the dataset is saved and retrieved when the dataset is used; see [D] **save** and [D] **use**. notes can be attached generically to the dataset or specifically to a variable within the dataset.

Quick start

Attach "My note about data" to current dataset

```
notes: My note about data
```

Add note "There is one note for v1" to v1

```
notes v1: There is one note for v1
```

Add note "A note was added to v2 on" and a time stamp for the note

```
notes v2: A note was added to v2 on TS
```

Add note "Data have changed" to the dataset

```
notes: Data have changed
```

Remove the first note from the dataset

```
notes drop _dta in 1
```

Renumber notes after removing a note from the dataset

```
notes renumber _dta
```

As above, but for a variable

```
notes renumber v1
```

List all notes

```
notes
```

List notes for the dataset but omit notes applied to variables

```
notes _dta
```

List only notes for variables

```
notes *
```

Search all notes for the word "check"

```
notes search check
```

Menu

notes (add)

Data > Variables Manager

notes list and notes search

Data > Data utilities > Notes utilities > List or search notes

notes replace

Data > Variables Manager

notes drop

Data > Variables Manager

notes renumber

Data > Data utilities > Notes utilities > Renumber notes

Syntax

Attach notes to dataset

```
notes [evarname]: text
```

List all notes

```
notes
```

List specific notes

```
notes [list] evarlist [in #[/#]]
```

Search for a text string across all notes in all variables and _dta

```
notes search [sometext]
```

Replace a note

```
notes replace evarname in # : text
```

Drop notes

```
notes drop evarlist [in #[/#]]
```

Renumber notes

```
notes renumber evarname
```

where *evarname* is `_dta` or a varname, *evarlist* is a varlist that may contain the `_dta`, and # is a number or the letter `l`.

If *text* includes the letters `TS` surrounded by blanks, the `TS` is removed, and a time stamp is substituted in its place.

Remarks and examples

stata.com

Remarks are presented under the following headings:

How notes are numbered

Notes are numbered sequentially, with the first note being 1. Say the myvar variable has four notes numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4. If you type notes drop myvar in 3, the remaining notes will be numbered 1, 2, and 4. If you now add another note, it will be numbered 5. That is, notes are not renumbered and new notes are added immediately after the highest numbered note. Thus, if you now dropped notes 4 and 5, the next note added would be 3.

You can renumber notes by using notes renumber. Going back to when myvar had notes numbered 1, 2, and 4 after dropping note 3, if you typed notes renumber myvar, the notes would be renumbered 1, 2, and 3. If you added a new note after that, it would be numbered 4.

Attaching and listing notes

A note is nothing formal; it is merely a string of text reminding you to do something, cautioning you against something, or saying anything else you might feel like jotting down. People who work with real data invariably end up with paper notes plastered around their terminal saying things like, “Send the new sales data to Bob”, “Check the income variable in salary95; I don’t believe it”, or “The gender dummy was significant!” It would be better if these notes were attached to the dataset.

Adding a note to your dataset requires typing note or notes (they are synonyms), a colon (:), and whatever you want to remember. The note is added to the dataset currently in memory.

```
. note:  Send copy to Bob once verified.
```

You can replay your notes by typing notes (or note) by itself.

```
. notes

_dta:
  1.  Send copy to Bob once verified.
```

Once you resave your data, you can replay the note in the future, too. You add more notes just as you did the first:

```
. note: Mary wants a copy, too.

. notes

_dta:
  1.  Send copy to Bob once verified.
  2.  Mary wants a copy, too.
```

You can place time stamps on your notes by placing the word TS (in capitals) in the text of your note:

```
. note: TS merged updates from JJ&F

. notes

_dta:
  1.  Send copy to Bob once verified.
  2.  Mary wants a copy, too.
  3.  19 Apr 2014 15:38 merged updates from JJ&F
```

Notes may contain SMCL directives:

```
. use http://www.stata-press.com/data/r14/auto
(1978 Automobile Data)

. note: check reason for missing values in {cmd:rep78}

. notes

_dta:
  1.  from Consumer Reports with permission
  2.  check reason for missing values in rep78
```

The notes we have added so far are attached to the dataset generically, which is why Stata prefixes them with _dta when it lists them. You can attach notes to variables:

```
. note mpg: is the 44 a mistake?  Ask Bob.

. note mpg: what about the two missing values?

. notes

_dta:
  1.  Send copy to Bob once verified.
  2.  Mary wants a copy, too.
  3.  19 Apr 2014 15:38 merged updates from JJ&F

mpg:
  1.  is the 44 a mistake? Ask Bob.
  2.  what about the two missing values?
```

Up to 9,999 generic notes can be attached to _dta, and another 9,999 notes can be attached to each variable.

Selectively listing notes

Typing notes by itself lists all the notes. In full syntax, notes is equivalent to typing notes _all in 1/l. Here are some variations:

notes _dta	list all generic notes
notes mpg	list all notes for variable mpg
notes _dta mpg	list all generic notes and mpg notes
notes _dta in 3	list generic note 3
notes _dta in 3/5	list generic notes 3–5
notes mpg in 3/5	list mpg notes 3–5
notes _dta in 3/l	list generic notes 3 through last

Searching and replacing notes

You had a bad day yesterday, and you want to recheck the notes that you added to your dataset. Fortunately, you always put a time stamp on your notes.

```
. notes search "29 Jan"

_dta:
  2.  29 Jan 2014 13:40 check reason for missing values in foreign
```

Good thing you checked. It is rep78 that has missing values.

```
. notes replace _dta in 2: TS check reason for missing values in rep78
  (note 2 for _dta replaced)

. notes

_dta:
  1.  from Consumer Reports with permission
  2.  30 Jan 2014 12:32 check reason for missing values in rep78
```

Deleting notes

`notes drop` works much like listing notes, except that typing `notes drop` by itself does not delete all notes; you must type `notes drop _all`. Here are some variations:

`notes drop _dta`	delete all generic notes
`notes drop _dta in 3`	delete generic note 3
`notes drop _dta in 3/5`	delete generic notes 3–5
`notes drop _dta in 3/l`	delete generic notes 3 through last
`notes drop mpg in 4`	delete `mpg` note 4

Warnings

- Notes are stored with the data, and as with other updates you make to the data, the additions and deletions are not permanent until you save the data; see [D] **save**.
- The maximum length of one note is 67,784 characters for Stata/MP, Stata/SE, and Stata/IC; it is 13,400 characters for Small Stata.

References

Gleason, J. R. 1998. dm57: A notes editor for Windows and Macintosh. *Stata Technical Bulletin* 43: 6–9. Reprinted in *Stata Technical Bulletin Reprints*, vol. 8, pp. 10–13. College Station, TX: Stata Press.

Long, J. S. 2009. *The Workflow of Data Analysis Using Stata*. College Station, TX: Stata Press.

Also see

[D] **codebook** — Describe data contents

[D] **describe** — Describe data in memory or in file

[D] **ds** — List variables matching name patterns or other characteristics

[D] **save** — Save Stata dataset

[D] **varmanage** — Manage variable labels, formats, and other properties

[U] **12.8 Characteristics**