

# 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`:

```
list [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 *varlists*) 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

```
. li 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. *numlists* 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 `sepyby()` 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.	Olds 98	8814	2.41	domestic
2.	Buick Regal	5189	2.93	domestic
3.		4099	3.58	domestic
4.	Chev. Monza	3667	2.73	domestic
5.	Datsun 810	8129	3.55	foreign
6.	Datsun 510	5079	3.54	foreign
7.	VW Rabbit	4697	3.78	foreign

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

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

```
. list, divider
```

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


## More

When you see a `—more—` prompt at the bottom of the Results window, it means that there is more information to be displayed. This happens, for example, when you are listing many observations.


```
. list make mpg
```

	make	mpg
1.	Linc. Continental	12
2.	Linc. Mark V	12
3.	Cad. Deville	14
4.	Cad. Eldorado	14
5.	Linc. Versailles	14
6.	Merc. Cougar	14
7.	Merc. XR-7	14
8.	Peugeot 604	14
9.	Buick Electra	15
10.	Merc. Marquis	15
11.	Buick Riviera	16
12.	Chev. Impala	16
13.	Dodge Magnum	16
14.	Olds Toronado	16
15.	ANC Pacer	17
16.	Audi 5000	17
17.	Dodge St. Regis	17
18.	Volvo 260	17
19.	Buick LeSabre	18
20.	Dodge Diplomat	18

```
—more—
```

If you want to see the next screen of text, you have a few options: press any key, such as the Spacebar; click on the **More** button, ; or click on the blue `—more—` at the bottom of the Results window. To see just the next line of text, press *Enter*.

## Break

If you want to interrupt a Stata command, click on the **Break** button, . If you see a `—more—` prompt at the bottom of the Results window and wish to interrupt it, click on the **Break** button or press `q`.

```
. list make mpg
```

	make	mpg
1.	Linc. Continental	12
2.	Linc. Mark V	12
3.	Cad. Deville	14
4.	Cad. Eldorado	14
5.	Linc. Versailles	14
6.	Merc. Cougar	14
7.	Merc. XR-7	14
8.	Peugeot 604	14
9.	Buick Electra	15
10.	Merc. Marquis	15
11.	Buick Riviera	16
12.	Chev. Impala	16
13.	Dodge Magnum	16
14.	Olds Toronado	16
15.	AMC Pacer	17
16.	Audi 5000	17
17.	Dodge St. Regis	17
18.	Volvo 260	17
19.	Buick LeSabre	18
20.	Dodge Diplomat	18

```
—Break—  
r(1);
```

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.