

# 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 [\[GSM\] 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  |

. 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 [\[GSM\] 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 [GSM] 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 make
. list ma p g f, sepyby(foreign)
```

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

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

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

```
. list, divider
```


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

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