


# 13 Using the Do-file Editor—automating Stata

## The Do-file Editor

Stata comes with an integrated text editor called the Do-file Editor, which can be used for many tasks. It gets its name from the term *do-file*, which is a file containing a list of commands for Stata to run (called a batch file or a script in other settings). See [U] 16 Do-files for more information. Although the Do-file Editor has advanced features that can help in writing such files, it can also be used to build up a series of commands that can then be submitted to Stata all at once. This feature can be handy when writing a loop to process multiple variables in a similar fashion or when doing complex, repetitive tasks interactively.










To get the most from this chapter, you should work through it at your computer. Start by opening the Do-file Editor, either by clicking on the **Do-file Editor** button, , or by typing `doedit` in the Command window and pressing *Enter*.

## The Do-file Editor toolbar

The Do-file Editor has 15 buttons. Many of the buttons share a similar purpose with their look-alikes in the main Stata toolbar.



If you ever forget what a button does, hover the mouse pointer over a button, and a tooltip will appear.

-  **New:** Open a new do-file in a new tab in the Do-file Editor.
-  **Open:** Open a do-file from disk in a new tab in the Do-file Editor.
-  **Save:** Save the current file to disk.
-  **Print:** Print the contents of the Do-file Editor.
-  **Find:** Open the *Find* dialog for finding text.
-  **Cut:** Cut the selected text and put it in the Clipboard.
-  **Copy:** Copy the selected text to the Clipboard.
-  **Paste:** Paste the text from the Clipboard into the current document.
-  **Undo:** Undo the last change.



**Redo:** Undo the last undo.



**Toggle bookmark:** Turn on or off the bookmark on the current line. Bookmarks are a way to move quickly within the do-file. They are quite useful in long do-files or when debugging.



**Previous bookmark:** Go to the previous bookmark (if any).



**Next bookmark:** Go to the next bookmark (if any).



**Show file in Viewer:** Show the contents of the do-file in a Viewer window. This is worthwhile when editing files that contain SMCL tags, such as log files or help files.



**Execute (do):** Run the commands in the do-file, showing all commands and their output. If text is highlighted, the button becomes the **Execute selection (do)** button and will run only the selected lines, showing all output. We will refer to this as the **Do** button.

## Using the Do-file Editor

Suppose that we would like to analyze fuel usage for 1978 automobiles in a manner similar to what we did in [GSW] 1 **Introducing Stata—sample session**. We know that we will be issuing many commands to Stata during our analysis and that we want to be able to reproduce our work later without having to type each command again.

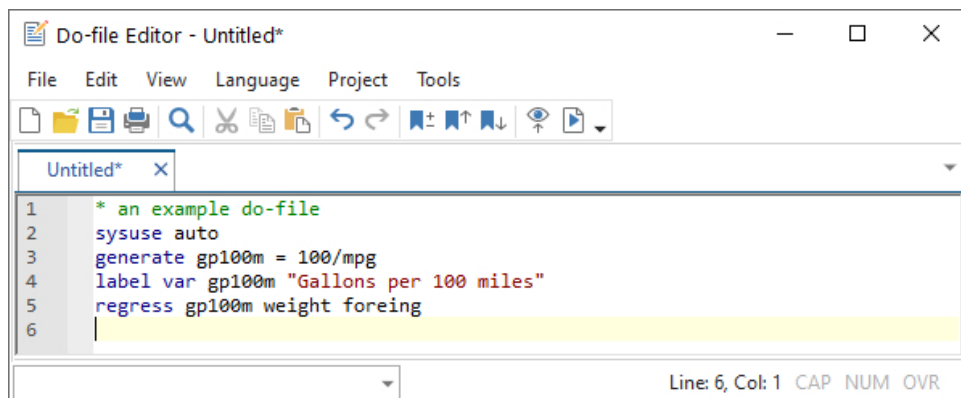
We can do this easily in Stata: simply save a text file containing the commands. When that is done, we can tell Stata to run the file and execute each command in sequence. Such a file is known as a Stata *do-file*; see [U] 16 **Do-files**.

To analyze fuel usage of 1978 automobiles, we would like to create a new variable containing gallons per mile. We would like to see how that variable changes in relation to vehicle weight for both domestic and imported cars. Performing a regression with our new variable would be a good first step.

To get started, click on the **Do-file Editor** button to open the Do-file Editor. After the Do-file Editor opens, type the commands below into the Do-file Editor. Purposely misspell the name of the `foreign` variable on the fifth line. (We are intentionally making some common mistakes and then pointing you to the solutions. This will save you time later.)

```
* an example do-file
sysuse auto
generate gp100m = 100/mpg
label var gp100m "Gallons per 100 miles"
regress gp100m weight foreing
```

Here is what your Do-file Editor should look like now:



You will notice that the color of the text changes as you type. The different colors are examples of the Do-file Editor's syntax highlighting. The colors and text properties of the syntax elements can be changed by selecting **Edit > Preferences...** from the Do-file Editor menu bar and then clicking on the **Colors** tab in the resulting window. You can also define your own list of keywords for syntax highlighting.

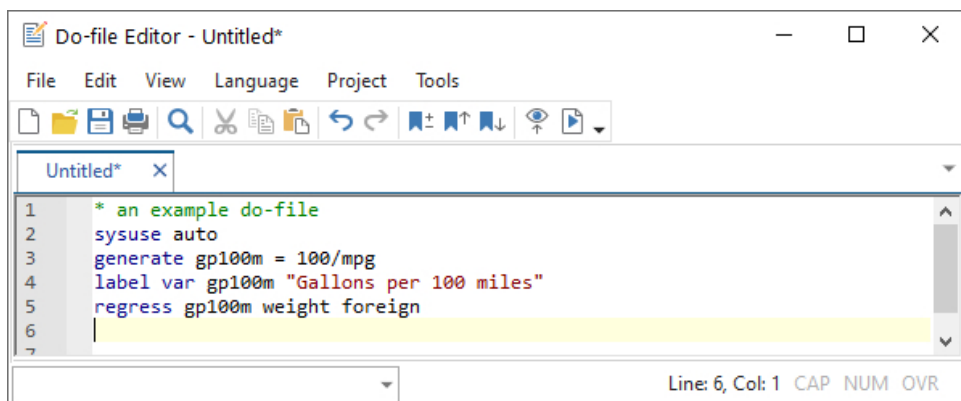
Syntax highlighting extends beyond highlighting Stata commands. You can switch the syntax highlighting from Stata by going to the **Language** menu and choosing the language you would like. The **Language** menu includes a selection for Markdown because Stata can process Markdown to create dynamic documents. See [RPT] [dyndoc](#) for more information. This menu also contains selections for Python and Java because Stata has both Python integration and Java integration. See [P] [PyStata integration](#) and [P] [Java integration](#) for more information. Stata will default to the proper language based on the extension of the file you are editing, but if the file has not been saved yet, you will need to tell it what language to choose.

Also note that if you pause briefly as you type, the Do-file Editor will allow autocompletion of command names and words that are already in the do-file and, in [StataNow](#), autocompletion of variable names, macros, and stored results. Once the suggestions appear, more typing will narrow down the possibilities. You can navigate the suggestions using the up- and down-arrow keys or keep typing to narrow them to a single word. Once you have the word you like, pressing *Enter* will place the word in your do-file.

Click on the **Do** button, , to execute the commands. Stata executes the commands in sequence, and the results appear in the Results window:

```
. do C:\Users\mydir\AppData\Local\Temp\STD08000000.tmp
. * an example do-file
. sysuse auto
(1978 automobile data)
. generate gp100m = 100/mpg
. label var gp100m "Gallons per 100 miles"
. regress gp100m weight foreing
variable foreing not found
r(111);
.
end of do-file
```

The `do "C:\..."` command is how Stata executes the commands in the Do-file Editor. Stata saves the commands from a do-file with unsaved changes to a temporary file and issues the `do` command to execute them. Everything worked as planned until Stata saw the misspelled variable. The first three commands were executed, but an error was produced on the fourth. Stata does not know of a variable named `foreign`. We need to go back to the Do-file Editor and change the misspelled variable name to `foreign` in the last line:



Click on the **Do** button again. Alas, Stata now fails on the first line—it will not overwrite the dataset in memory that we changed.

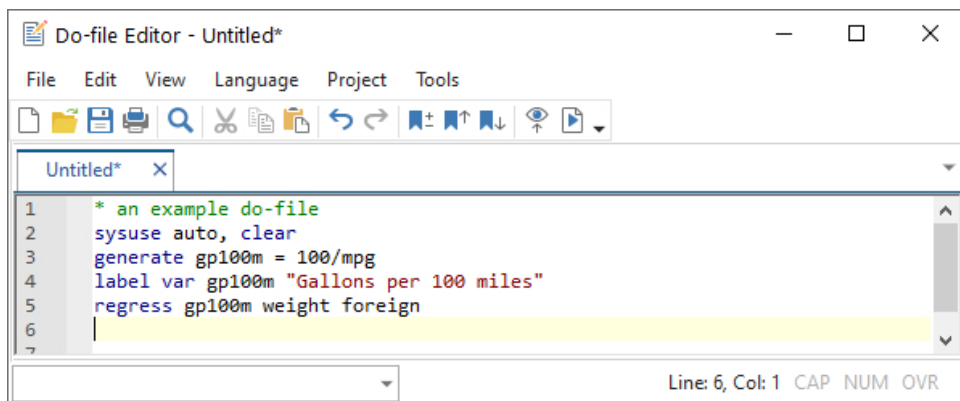
```

. do C:\Users\mydir\AppData\Local\Temp\STD08000000.tmp
. * an example do-file
. sysuse auto
no; dataset in memory has changed since last saved
r(4);
.
end of do-file
  
```

We now have a choice for what we should do:

- We can put a `clear` command in our do-file as the very first command. This automatically clears out Stata's memory before the do-file tries to load `auto.dta`. This is convenient but dangerous because it defeats Stata's protection against throwing away changes without warning.
- We can type a `clear` command in the Command window to manually clear the dataset and then process the do-file again. This process can be aggravating when building a complicated do-file.

Here is some advice: Automatically clear Stata's memory while debugging the do-file. Once the do-file is in its final form, decide the context in which it will be used. If it will be used in a highly automated environment (such as when certifying), the do-file should still automatically clear Stata's memory. If it will be used rarely, do not clear Stata's memory. This decision will save much heartache. We will add a `clear` option to the `sysuse` command to automatically clear the dataset in Stata's memory before the do-file runs:



The do-file now runs well, as clicking on the **Do** button shows:

```

. do C:\Users\mydir\AppData\Local\Temp\STD08000000.tmp
. * an example do-file
. sysuse auto, clear
(1978 automobile data)
. generate gp100m = 100/mpg
. label var gp100m "Gallons per 100 miles"
. regress gp100m weight foreign

```

Source	SS	df	MS		Number of obs =	74
Model	91.1761694	2	45.5880847		F( 2, 71) =	113.97
Residual	28.4000913	71	.400001287		Prob > F =	0.0000
					R-squared =	0.7625
					Adj R-squared =	0.7558
					Root MSE =	.63246
Total	119.576261	73	1.63803097			

p100m	Coefficient	Std. err.	t	P> t	[95% conf. interval]
weight	.0016254	.0001183	13.74	0.000	.0013896 .0018612
foreign	.6220535	.1997381	3.11	0.003	.2237871 1.02032
_cons	-.0734839	.4019932	-0.18	0.855	-.8750354 .7280677

```

.
end of do-file

```

You might want to select **File > Save as...** to save this do-file from the Do-file Editor. Later, you could select **File > Open** to open it and then add more commands as you move forward with your analysis. By saving the commands of your analysis in a do-file as you go, you do not have to worry about retyping them with each new Stata session. Think hard about removing the `clear` option from the first command.

After you have saved your do-file, you can execute the commands it contains by typing `do filename`, where the *filename* is the name of your do-file.

## The File menu

The **File** menu of the Do-file Editor includes standard features found in most text editors. You may choose any of these menu items: create a **New > Do-file**, **Open** an existing file, **Save** the current file, save the current file under a new name with **Save as...**, or **Print** the current file. There are also buttons on the Do-file Editor's toolbar that correspond to these features. After you select **New > Do-file**, the Do-file Editor will create an empty document within a new tab in the current Do-file Editor window. If you would like to create a new Do-file Editor window, select **New > Window**.

Finally, you can create a **New > Project...** to keep track of collections of files used in a project. These can be do-files, data files, graph files, or any other files you like. For more information on the Project Manager, see [P] [Project Manager](#).

## The Edit menu

The **Edit** menu of the Do-file Editor includes the standard **Undo**, **Redo**, **Cut**, **Copy**, **Paste**, **Delete**, and **Find** capabilities. There are also buttons on the Do-file Editor's toolbar for easy access to these capabilities. There are several other **Edit** menu features that you might find useful:

- You can select **Insert file...** to insert the contents of another file at the current cursor position in the Do-file Editor.
- You can select the current line with **Select line**.
- You can delete the current line with **Delete line**.
- **Find > Go to line...** will allow you to jump to a specific line number. The line numbers are displayed at the left and the lower-right of the Do-file Editor window.
- **Advanced** leads to a submenu with some programmer's friends:
  - **Shift right** indents the selection by one tab.
  - **Shift left** unindents the selection by one tab.
  - **Re-indent** indents the selection according to its nesting within blocks and programs.
  - **Toggle comment** toggles `//`-style comments at the start of the selected lines.
  - **Add block comment** puts a `/*` before and a `*/` after the selected region, commenting it out.
  - **Remove block comment** undoes the above.
  - **Make selection uppercase** converts the selection to all capital letters.
  - **Make selection lowercase** converts the selection to all lowercase letters.
  - **Complete word** attempts to complete the current word based on words that are already in the do-file. If there are multiple possibilities, all will be shown. You can either pick the completion you would like or keep typing to narrow the choices.
  - **Convert to UTF-8...** converts the current file to UTF-8 encoding.
  - **Convert line endings to macOS/Unix format (\n)** converts the line endings for the current file to macOS/Unix format.
  - **Convert line endings to Windows format (\r\n)** converts the line endings for the current file to Windows format.
  - **Convert tabs to spaces** replaces any tab characters with spaces, leaving the spacing as it currently appears.
  - **Convert leading spaces to tabs** converts any spaces at the start of lines to tab characters. The number of spaces per tab is determined by a preference setting.
  - **Convert all spaces to tabs** converts spaces to tab characters wherever possible. The number of spaces per tab is determined by a preference setting.
  - **Convert Unicode spaces and curly quotes to ASCII** converts spaces and curly quotes in Unicode to ASCII encoding.

Matching and balancing of parentheses ( ), braces { }, and brackets [ ] are also available from the **Edit** menu. When you select **Edit > Find > Match brace**, the Do-file Editor looks at the character immediately to the left and right of the cursor. If either is one of the characters that the editor can match, the editor will find the matching character and place the cursor immediately in front of it. If there is no match, the cursor will not move.

When you select **Edit > Find > Balance braces**, the Do-file Editor looks to the left and right of the current cursor position or selection and creates a selection that includes the narrowest level of matching braces. If you select **Balance braces** again, the editor will expand the selection to include the next level of matching braces. If there is no match, the cursor will not move. Balancing braces is useful for working with blocks of code defined by loops or if commands. See [P] [foreach](#), [P] [forvalues](#), [P] [while](#), and [P] [if](#) for more information.

**Balance braces** is easier to explain with an example. Type `{now {is the} time}` in the Do-file Editor. Place the cursor between the words `is` and `the`. Select **Edit > Find > Balance braces**. The Do-file Editor will select `{is the}`. If you select **Balance braces** again, the Do-file Editor will select `{now {is the} time}`.

Text in Stata strings can include Unicode characters and is encoded as UTF-8 (see [U] [12.4.2 Handling Unicode strings](#)). However, you may have do-files, ado-files, or other text files that you used with Stata 13 or earlier, and those files contain characters other than plain ASCII such as accented characters, Chinese, Japanese, or Korean (CJK) characters, Cyrillic characters, and the like. If you open a file that is not encoded in UTF-8, Stata prompts you to specify the encoding for the file so that it can convert the file to UTF-8. If you cancel the conversion or choose the wrong encoding, you can try the conversion again later using **Convert to UTF-8**. The conversion to UTF-8 can be undone by using **Edit > Undo** and is not permanent until you save the do-file. For Stata datasets with characters not encoded in UTF-8 or for bulk conversion of multiple Stata files, you should use the `unicode translate` command.

Editing tip: You can click on the left margin near a line number to select the entire line and the end-of-line characters. Doing so makes it easy to delete lines or cut lines and paste them elsewhere. You can click and drag within the line-number column to select a range of complete lines.

## The View menu

The View menu of the Do-File Editor allows you to zoom in and out or display special characters such as tabs and line endings.

## The Tools menu

You have already learned about the **Do** button. Selecting **Tools > Execute (do)** is equivalent to clicking on the **Execute (do)** button.

Selecting **Tools > Execute (do) from top** will send all the commands from the first line to the current line to the Command window. This method is a quick way to run a part of a do-file.


Selecting **Tools > Execute (do) to bottom** will send all the commands from the current line through the end of the contents of the Do-file Editor to the Command window. This method is a quick way to run a part of a do-file.

Selecting **Tools > Execute (do) line** will send all the commands from the current line to the Command window. The cursor will then automatically advance to the next executable line, bypassing empty lines and comments. This method is an easy way to run a do-file line by line.

Selecting **Tools > Execute quietly (run)** is equivalent to **Tools > Execute (do)** but the commands will be executed quietly; that is, no output will be displayed in the Command window.

Selecting **Tools > Execute (include)** is similar to clicking on the **Execute (do)** button with one major difference: local macros defined in the current session can be expanded in the commands being executed.

**Do** is equivalent to Stata's `do` command, whereas **Execute (include)** is equivalent to Stata's `include` command. See [U] 16 Do-files for a complete discussion.

You can also preview files in the Viewer by selecting **Tools > Show file in Viewer** or by clicking on the **Show file in Viewer** button, . This feature is useful when working with files that use Stata's SMCL tags, such as when writing help files or editing log files.

## Saving interactive commands from Stata as a do-file

While working interactively with Stata, you might decide that you would like to rerun the last several commands that you typed interactively. From the History window, you can send highlighted commands or even the entire contents to the Do-file Editor. You can also save commands as a do-file and open that file in the Do-file Editor. You can copy a command from a dialog (rather than submit it) and paste it into the Do-file Editor. See [GSW] 6 Using the Data Editor for details. Also see [R] `log` for information on the `cmdlog` command, which allows you to log all commands that you type in Stata to a do-file.

## Navigating your do-file

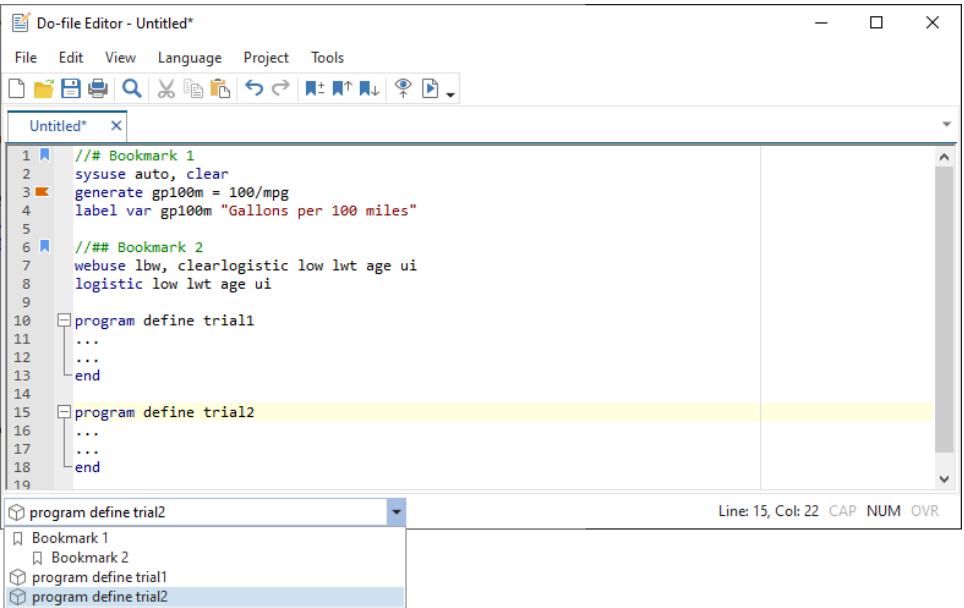
When you work with long files, bookmarks allow you to easily navigate through your do-file. By placing a bookmark before important sections in your do-file, you can return to those sections more easily later. The Do-file Editor supports two different types of bookmarks: permanent and temporary. Permanent bookmarks are saved with a do-file and reappear when the do-file is opened in the Do-file Editor. Temporary bookmarks are lost when a do-file is closed. Bookmarks are displayed as icons in the bookmark margin next to the line number in the Do-file Editor. Permanent bookmarks are indicated with a vertical bookmark icon, while temporary bookmarks are indicated with a horizontal bookmark icon.

To add or remove a permanent bookmark, use **Edit > Toggle bookmark**, or click in the bookmark margin next to the line number. You can also add a permanent bookmark by manually typing a line beginning with a special comment, `//#`. All other text on the rest of the line is treated as the title of the bookmark. You cannot have ado-code on the same line as the bookmark comment, or the bookmark comment will be ignored. You can also add a bookmark with the special comment `***#`. However, the bookmark comment `//#` may be preferable to use because it's also valid for both Mata and Java. Permanent bookmarks can also be removed by simply deleting the line containing the bookmark. Permanent bookmarks cannot be added within multiline comments or multiline commands, nor can they be added using the **Toggle bookmark** menu item when there's a selection.

To add or remove a temporary bookmark in StataNow, use **Edit > Toggle temporary bookmark**, or click in the bookmark margin while pressing the `Alt` key. Temporary bookmarks can also be removed by simply deleting the line containing the bookmark. Temporary bookmarks can be added to any line that doesn't already contain a permanent bookmark.



You can move between bookmarks using the **Next bookmark** and **Previous bookmark** menu items in the **Edit** menu. You can also move between permanent bookmarks using the Navigation Control. The Navigation Control of the Do-file Editor allows you to move between permanent bookmarks, as well as programs and Java and Python code blocks that you have defined in your do-file. When you select a program or a permanent bookmark from the Navigation Control, you will jump directly to the position of that program or bookmark in your do-file.



You can increase the level of indentation for a permanent bookmark's label in the Navigation Control by adding # to the bookmark comment. For example, bookmark comment `///## Bookmark 2` will be indented one level more than bookmark comment `///Bookmark 1`.

To delete all permanent and temporary bookmarks, use **Edit > Delete all bookmarks....** This will remove all permanent bookmark lines, as well as remove all permanent and temporary bookmark icons from the bookmark margin.

## Projects

For advanced users managing many files as part of a project, Stata has a Project Manager that uses the Do-file Editor. For more information on the Project Manager, see [\[P\] Project Manager](#).

## Auto backup

The Do-file Editor now creates a backup file whenever it opens a document or creates a new one. When an existing document is opened, Stata creates a backup file of a document that is saved to disk in the same directory using the existing document's filename prefixed with ~ and with the extension `.stswp`. When you edit a new and unsaved document, it saves the backup file to the `temp` directory. When a document is closed, the backup file is deleted. However, if Stata does not exit cleanly because of a power outage or a computer crash, the backup file is left behind.

By default, Stata periodically backs up the document every 4 seconds if an edit has been made or after an addition or a deletion of 200 characters or more. The time interval can be changed in the Do-file Editor's advanced settings, and the backup feature can also be turned off.

When you attempt to open a document in the Do-file Editor, it first checks for the existence of a backup file. If a backup file is found, the Do-file Editor prompts you that a backup file exists and asks if you want to recover the backup file, open the original document, or cancel. We will discuss the options in reverse order. Choosing to cancel will cancel opening the document and leave the backup file on disk. If you choose to open the original document, the original document is opened in the Do-file Editor, and the backup file is deleted from disk. If you choose to recover the backup file, the backup file is opened as a new and unsaved document in the Do-file Editor with its default filename set to the original filename and the string **Recovered** appended to the filename. The backup file is deleted from disk. You can keep the recovered document by saving it to disk either as a new file or by overwriting the original document, or you can disregard the changes by closing the document without saving it.

## Adding user-defined keywords for syntax highlighting

You can create a text file containing keywords that Stata will use for syntax highlighting. The text file must be named **stata-userkeywords.txt** and contain a list of keywords that can be separated by any combination of spaces or tabs and can be placed on separate lines. Keywords must follow Stata's rules for valid command names. Comments are not supported. Any keywords that are invalid command names are ignored. There are no limits on the number of keywords you can define. However, you must be mindful of the fact that Stata has to search across all keywords when syntax-highlighting a document, so a very large dictionary of keywords can affect performance in the Do-file Editor. Stata maintains a dictionary of unique keywords, so repeated instances of a keyword are ignored.

Stata searches for both a global keywords file and a local keywords file; if both files exist, then their dictionaries of keywords are merged. The global keywords file must be saved in the Stata directory. This allows the global keywords file to be shared with multiple users without requiring each user to have a copy. You can also create your own local keywords file, which must be saved to your home directory.

Stata reads the keywords files when it launches. Changes to the keywords files while Stata is running require Stata to be restarted to take effect.

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