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## Description

= assigns the evaluation of *exp* to *lval*.

Do not confuse the = assignment operator with the == equality operator. Coding

```
x = y
```

assigns the value of *y* to *x*. Coding

```
if (x==y) ...           (note doubled equal signs)
```

performs the action if the value of *x* is equal to the value of *y*. See [M-2] [op\\_logical](#) for a description of the == equality operator.

If the result of an expression is not assigned to a variable, then the result is displayed at the terminal; see [M-2] [exp](#).

## Syntax

$$lval = exp$$

where *exp* is any valid expression and where *lval* is

```
name
name[exp]
name[exp, exp]
name[|exp|]
```

In pointer use (advanced), *name* may be

```
*lval
*(lval)
*(lval[exp])
*(lval[exp, exp])
*(lval[|exp|])
```

in addition to being a variable name.

## Remarks and examples

Remarks are presented under the following headings:

*Assignment suppresses display*  
*The equal-assignment operator*  
*lvals, what appears on the left-hand side*  
*Row, column, and element lvals*  
*Pointer lvals*

## Assignment suppresses display

When you interactively enter an expression or code an expression in a program without the equal-assignment operator, the result of the expression is displayed at the terminal:

```
: 2 + 3
5
```

When you assign the expression to a variable, the result is not displayed:

```
: x = 2 + 3
```

## The equal-assignment operator

Equals is an operator, so in addition to coding

```
a = 2 + 3
```

you can code

```
a = b = 2 + 3
```

or

```
y = x / (denominator = sqrt(a+b))
```

or even

```
y1 = y2 = x / (denominator = sqrt(sum=a+b))
```

This last is equivalent to

```
sum = a + b
denominator = sqrt(sum)
y2 = x / denominator
y1 = y2
```

Equals binds weakly, so

```
a = b = 2 + 3
```

is interpreted as

```
a = b = (2 + 3)
```

and not

```
a = (b=2) + 3
```

## lvals, what appears on the left-hand side

What appears to the left of the equals is called an *lval*, short for left-hand-side value. It would make no sense, for instance, to code

```
sqrt(4) = 3
```

and, as a matter of fact, you are not allowed to code that because `sqrt(4)` is not an *lval*:

```
: sqrt(4) = 3
invalid lval
r(3000);
```

An *lval* is anything that can hold values. A scalar can hold values

```
a = 3
x = sqrt(4)
```

a matrix can hold values

```
A = (1, 2 \ 3, 4)
B = invsym(C)
```

a matrix row can hold values

```
A[1,.] = (7, 8)
```

a matrix column can hold values

```
A[:,2] = (9 \ 10)
```

and finally, a matrix element can hold a value

```
A[1,2] = 7
```

*lvals* are usually one of the above forms. The other forms have to do with pointer variables, which most programmers never use; they are discussed under [Pointer lvals](#) below.

## Row, column, and element lvals

When you assign to a row, column, or element of a matrix,

```
A[1,.] = (7, 8)
A[:,2] = (9 \ 10)
A[1,2] = 7
```

the row, column, or element must already exist:

```
: A = (1, 2 \ 3, 4)
: A[3,4] = 4
<istmt>: 3301 subscript invalid
r(3301);
```

This is usually not an issue because, by the time you are assigning to a row, column, or element, the matrix has already been created, but in the event you need to create it first, use the `J()` function; see [\[M-5\] J\(\)](#). The following code fragment creates a  $3 \times 4$  matrix containing the sum of its indices:

```
A = J(3, 4, .)
for (i=1; i<=3; i++) {
    for (j=1; j<=4; j++) A[i,j] = i + j
}
```

## Pointer lvals

In addition to the standard *lvals*

```
A = (1, 2 \ 3, 4)
A[1, .] = (7, 8)
A[., 2] = (9 \ 10)
A[1, 2] = 7
```

pointer *lvals* are allowed. For instance,

```
*p = 3
```

stores 3 in the address pointed to by pointer scalar p.

```
(*q)[1, 2] = 4
```

stores 4 in the (1,2) element of the address pointed to by pointer scalar q, whereas

```
*Q[1, 2] = 4
```

stores 4 in the address pointed to by the (1,2) element of pointer matrix Q.

```
*Q[2, 1][1, 3] = 5
```

is equivalent to

```
*(Q[2, 1])[1, 3] = 5
```

and stores 5 in the (1,3) element of the address pointed to by the (2,1) element of pointer matrix Q.

Pointers to pointers, pointers to pointers to pointers, etc., are also allowed. For instance,

```
**r = 3
```

stores 3 in the address pointed to by the address pointed to by pointer scalar r, whereas

```
*((*(Q[1, 2]))[2, 1])[3, 4] = 7
```

stores 7 in the (3,4) address pointed to by the (2,1) address pointed to by the (1,2) address of pointer matrix Q.

## Conformability

$a = b$ :

*input*:

$b: \quad r \times c$

*output*:

$a: \quad r \times c$

## Diagnostics

$a = b$  aborts with error if there is insufficient memory to store a copy of  $b$  in  $a$ .

## Also see

[M-5] [swap\(\)](#) — Interchange contents of variables

[M-2] [exp](#) — Expressions

[M-2] [Intro](#) — Language definition

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