Subscripts — Use of subscripts

Description | Syntax | Remarks and examples | Conformability
Diagnostics | Reference | Also see

Description

Subscripts come in two styles.

In [*subscript*] syntax—called list subscripts—an element or a matrix is specified:

`x[1,2]`	the 1,2 element of x; a scalar
`x[(1\3\2), (4,5)]`	the 3×2 matrix composed of rows 1, 3, and 2 and columns 4 and 5 of x:

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_{14} & x_{15} \\ x_{34} & x_{35} \\ x_{24} & x_{25} \end{bmatrix}$$

In [|*subscript*|] syntax—called range subscripts—an element or a contiguous submatrix is specified:

`x[|1,2|]`	same as `x[1,2]`; a scalar
`x[|2,3 \ 4,7|]`	3×4 submatrix of x:

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_{23} & x_{24} & x_{25} & x_{26} & x_{27} \\ x_{33} & x_{34} & x_{35} & x_{36} & x_{37} \\ x_{43} & x_{44} & x_{45} & x_{46} & x_{47} \end{bmatrix}$$

Both style subscripts may be used in expressions and may be used on the left-hand side of the equal-assignment operator.

Syntax

x[*real vector r* , *real vector c*]

x[|*real matrix sub*|]

Subscripts may be used on the left or right of the equal-assignment operator.

Remarks and examples

Remarks are presented under the following headings:

List subscripts
Range subscripts
When to use list subscripts and when to use range subscripts
A fine distinction

List subscripts

List subscripts—also known simply as subscripts—are obtained when you enclose the subscripts in square brackets, `[` and `]`. List subscripts come in two basic forms:

x`[`*ivec*`,`*jvec*`]`	matrix composed of rows *ivec* and columns *jvec* of matrix *x*
v`[`*kvec*`]`	vector composed of elements *kvec* of vector *v*

where *ivec*, *jvec*, *kvec* may be a vector or a scalar, so the two basic forms include

x`[`*i*`,`*j*`]`	scalar *i*,*j* element
x`[`*i*`,`*jvec*`]`	row vector of row *i*, elements *jvec*
x`[`*ivec*`,`*j*`]`	column vector of column *j*, elements *ivec*
v`[`*k*`]`	scalar *k*th element of vector *v*

Also missing value may be specified to mean all the rows or all the columns:

x`[`*i*`, .]`	row vector of row *i* of *x*
x`[.,`*j*`]`	column vector of column *j* of *x*
x`[`*ivec*`, .]`	matrix of rows *ivec*, all columns
x`[.,`*jvec*`]`	matrix of columns *jvec*, all rows
x`[.,.]`	the entire matrix

Finally, Mata assumes missing value when you omit the argument entirely:

x`[`*i*`,]`	same as *x*`[`*i*`, .]`
x`[`*ivec*`,]`	same as *x*`[`*ivec*`, .]`
x`[,`*j*`]`	same as *x*`[.,`*j*`]`
x`[,`*jvec*`]`	same as *x*`[.,`*jvec*`]`
x`[,]`	same as *x*`[.,.]`

Good style is to specify *ivec* as a column vector and *jvec* as a row vector, but that is not required:

x`[(1\2\3), (1,2,3)]`	good style
x`[(1,2,3), (1,2,3)]`	same as *x*`[(1\2\3), (1,2,3)]`
x`[(1\2\3), (1\2\3)]`	same as *x*`[(1\2\3), (1,2,3)]`
x`[(1,2,3), (1\2\3)]`	same as *x*`[(1\2\3), (1,2,3)]`

Similarly, good style is to specify *kvec* as a column when *v* is a column vector and to specify *kvec* as a row when *v* is a row vector, but that is not required and what is returned is a column vector if *v* is a column and a row vector if *v* is a row:

rowv`[(1,2,3)]`	good style for specifying row vector
rowv`[(1\2\3)]`	same as *rowv*`[(1,2,3)]`
colv`[(1\2\3)]`	good style for specifying column vector
colv`[(1,2,3)]`	same as *colv*`[(1\2\3)]`

Subscripts may be used in expressions following a variable name:

```
first = list[1]
multiplier = x[3,4]
result = colsum(x[,j])
```

Subscripts may be used following an expression to extract a submatrix from a result:

```
allneeded = invsym(x)[(1::4), .] * multiplier
```

Subscripts may be used on the left-hand side of the equal-assignment operator:

```
x[1,1] = 1
x[1,.] = y[3,.]
x[(1::4), (1..4)] = I(4)
```

Range subscripts

Range subscripts appear inside the difficult to type `[|` and `|]` brackets. Range subscripts come in four basic forms:

x`[|`*i*`,`*j*`|]`	*i*,*j* element; same result as *x*`[`*i*`,`*j*`]`
v`[|`*k*`|]`	*k*th element of vector; same result as *v*`[`*k*`]`
x`[|`*i*`,`*j* `\` *k*`,`*l*`|]`	submatrix, vector, or scalar formed using (*i*,*j*) as top-left corner and (*k*, *l*) as bottom-right corner
v`[|`*i* `\` *k*`|]`	subvector or scalar of elements *i* through *k*; result is row vector if *v* is row vector, column vector if *v* is column vector

Missing value may be specified for a row or column to mean all rows or all columns when a 1 × 2 or 1 × 1 subscript is specified:

x`[|`*i*`, .|]`	row *i* of *x*; same as *x*`[`*i*`, .]`
x`[|.,`*j*`|]`	column *j* of *x*; same as *x*`[.,`*j*`]`
x`[|.,.|]`	entire matrix; same as *x*`[.,.]`
v`[|.|]`	entire vector; same as *v*`[.]`

Also missing may be specified to mean the number of rows or the number of columns of the matrix being subscripted when a 2 × 2 subscript is specified:

x`[|1,2 \ 4,.|]`	equivalent to *x*`[|1,2 \ 4,cols(`*x*`)|]`
x`[|1,2 \ .,3|]`	equivalent to *x*`[|1,2 \ rows(`*x*`),3|]`
x`[|1,2 \ .,.|]`	equivalent to *x*`[|1,2 \ rows(`*x*`),cols(`*x*`|]`

With range subscripts, what appears inside the square brackets is in all cases interpreted as a matrix expression, so in

```
sub = (1,2)
... x[|sub|] ...
```

`x[sub]` refers to `x[1,2]`.

Range subscripts may be used in all the same contexts as list subscripts; they may be used in expressions following a variable name

```
submat = result[|1,1 \ 3,3|]
```

they may be used to extract a submatrix from a calculated result

```
allneeded = invsym(x)[|1,1 \ 4,4|]
```

and they may be used on the left-hand side of the equal-assignment operator:

```
x[|1,1 \ 4,4|] = I(4)
```

When to use list subscripts and when to use range subscripts

Everything a range subscript can do, a list subscript can also do. The one seemingly unique feature of a range subscript,

```
x[|i1,j1 \ i2,j2|]
```

is perfectly mimicked by

```
x[(i1::i2), (j1..j2)]
```

The range-subscript construction, however, executes more quickly, and so that is the purpose of range subscripts: to provide a fast way to extract contiguous submatrices. In all other cases, use list subscripts because they are faster.

Use list subscripts to refer to scalar values:

```
result = x[1,3]
x[1,3] = 2
```

Use list subscripts to extract entire rows or columns:

```
obs = x[., 3]
var = x[4, .]
```

Use list subscripts to permute the rows and columns of matrices:

```
: x = (1,2,3,4 \ 5,6,7,8 \ 9,10,11,12)
: y = x[(1\3\2), .]
: y
          1    2    3    4
      +---------------------+
    1 |   1    2    3    4  |
    2 |   9   10   11   12  |
    3 |   5    6    7    8  |
      +---------------------+

: y = x[., (1,3,2,4)]
: y
          1    2    3    4
      +---------------------+
    1 |   1    3    2    4  |
    2 |   5    7    6    8  |
    3 |   9   11   10   12  |
      +---------------------+

: y=x[(1\3\2), (1,3,2,4)]
```

```
: y
        1    2    3    4
    +---------------------+
  1 |   1    3    2    4  |
  2 |   9   11   10   12  |
  3 |   5    7    6    8  |
    +---------------------+
```

Use list subscripts to duplicate rows or columns:

```
: x = (1,2,3,4 \ 5,6,7,8 \ 9,10,11,12)
: y = x[(1\2\3\1), .]
: y
        1    2    3    4
    +---------------------+
  1 |   1    2    3    4  |
  2 |   5    6    7    8  |
  3 |   9   10   11   12  |
  4 |   1    2    3    4  |
    +---------------------+
: y = x[., (1,2,3,4,2)]
: y
        1    2    3    4    5
    +--------------------------+
  1 |   1    2    3    4    2  |
  2 |   5    6    7    8    6  |
  3 |   9   10   11   12   10  |
    +--------------------------+
: y = x[(1\2\3\1), (1,2,3,4,2)]
: y
        1    2    3    4    5
    +--------------------------+
  1 |   1    2    3    4    2  |
  2 |   5    6    7    8    6  |
  3 |   9   10   11   12   10  |
  4 |   1    2    3    4    2  |
    +--------------------------+
```

A fine distinction

There is a fine distinction between *x*[*i*,*j*] and *x*[|*i*,*j*|]. In *x*[*i*,*j*], there are two arguments, *i* and *j*. The comma separates the arguments. In *x*[|*i*,*j*|], there is one argument: *i*,*j*. The comma is the column-join operator.

In Mata, comma means mostly the column-join operator:

```
newvec = oldvec, addedvalues
qsum = (x,1)'(x,1)
```

There are, in fact, only two exceptions. When you type the arguments for a function, the comma separates one argument from the next:

```
result = f(a,b,c)
```

In the above example, `f()` receives three arguments: *a*, *b*, and *c*. If we wanted `f()` to receive one argument, (*a*, *b*, *c*), we would have to enclose the calculation in parentheses:

```
result = f((a,b,c))
```

That is the first exception. When you type the arguments inside a function, comma means argument separation. You get back to the usual meaning of comma—the column-join operator—by opening another set of parentheses.

The second exception is in list subscripting:

```
x[i,j]
```

Inside the list-subscript brackets, comma means argument separation. That is why you have seen us type vectors inside parentheses:

```
x[(1\2\3),(1,2,3)]
```

These are the two exceptions. Range subscripting is not an exception. Thus in

```
x[|i,j|]
```

there is one argument, *i*,*j*. With range subscripts, you may program constructs such as

```
IJ    = (i,j)
RANGE = (1,2 \ 4,4)
...
... x[|IJ|] ... x[|RANGE|] ...
```

You may not code in this way with list subscripts. In particular, *x*`[IJ]` would be interpreted as a request to extract elements *i* and *j* from vector *x*, and would be an error otherwise. *x*`[RANGE]` would always be an error.

We said earlier that list subscripts *x*[*i*,*j*] are a little faster than range subscripts *x*[|*i*,*j*|]. That is true, but if `IJ=`(*i*,*j*) already, *x*`[|IJ|]` is faster than *x*[*i*,*j*]. You would, however, have to execute many millions of references to *x*`[|IJ|]` before you could measure the difference.

Conformability

x[*i*,*j*]:

x:	$r \times c$			
i:	$m \times 1$	or	$1 \times m$	(does not matter which)
j:	$1 \times n$	or	$n \times 1$	(does not matter which)
result:	$m \times n$			

x[*i*, .]:

x:	$r \times c$			
i:	$m \times 1$	or	$1 \times m$	(does not matter which)
result:	$m \times c$			

x[.,*j*]:

x:	$r \times c$			
j:	$1 \times n$	or	$n \times 1$	(does not matter which)
result:	$r \times n$			

x[.,.]:

x:	$r \times c$
result:	$r \times c$

x[*i*]:

x:	$n \times 1$			1	$\times$	n	
i:	$m \times 1$	or	$1 \times m$	$1 \times m$	or	$m \times 1$	
result:	$m \times 1$			1	$\times$	m	

x[.]:

x:	$n \times 1$	$1 \times n$
result:	$n \times 1$	$1 \times n$

x[|*k*|]:

x:	$r \times c$	
k:	1×2	
result:	1×1	if *k*[1]<. and *k*[2]<.
	$r \times 1$	if *k*[1]>=. and *k*[2]<.
	$1 \times c$	if *k*[1]<. and *k*[2]>=.
	$r \times c$	if *k*[1]>=. and *k*[2]>=.

x[|*k*|]:

x:	$r \times c$
k:	2×2
result:	*k*[2,1]-*k*[1,1]+1 × *k*[2,2]-*k*[1,2]+1
	(in the above formula, if *k*[2,1]>=., treat as if *k*[2,1]=*r*, and similarly, if *k*[2,2]>=., treat as if *k*[2,2]=*c*)

x[|*k*|]:

x:	$r \times 1$	$1 \times c$
k:	2×1	2×1
result:	*k*[2]-*k*[1]+1 × 1	1 × *k*[2]-*k*[1]+1
	(if *k*[2]>=., treat as if *k*[2]=*r*)	(if *k*[2]>=., treat as if *k*[2]=*c*)

Diagnostics

Both styles of subscripts abort with error if the subscript is out of range, if a reference is made to a nonexisting row or column.

Reference

Gould, W. W. 2007. Mata Matters: Subscripting. *Stata Journal* 7: 106–116.

Also see

[M-2] **Intro** — Language definition

For suggested citations, see the FAQ on citing Stata documentation.