if — if programming command

Description

The if command (not to be confused with the if qualifier; see [U] 11.1.3 if exp) evaluates exp. If the result is true (nonzero), the commands inside the braces are executed. If the result is false (zero), those statements are ignored, and the statement (or statements if enclosed in braces) following the else is executed.

Syntax

if exp {
  or if exp single_command
  multiple_commands
}

which, in either case, may be followed by

else {
  or else single_command
  multiple_commands
}

If you put braces following the if or else,

1. the open brace must appear on the same line as the if or else;
2. nothing may follow the open brace except, of course, comments; the first command to be executed must appear on a new line;
3. the close brace must appear on a line by itself.

Remarks and examples

Remarks are presented under the following headings:

Introduction

Avoid single-line if and else with ++ and -- macro expansion

Introduction

The if command is intended for use inside programs and do-files; see [U] 18.3.4 Macros and expressions for examples of its use.
Example 1

Do not confuse the if command with the if qualifier. Typing `if (age>21) summarize age` will summarize all the observations on `age` if the first observation on `age` is greater than 21. Otherwise, it will do nothing. Typing `summarize age if age>21`, on the other hand, summarizes all the observations on `age` that are greater than 21.

Example 2

`if` is typically used in do-files and programs. For instance, let’s write a program to calculate the Tukey (1977, 90–91) “power” function of a variable, `x`:

```stata
program power
test if ‘2’>0 {
    generate z='1'^‘2’
    label variable z "'1'^‘2’"
}
else if ‘2’==0 {
    generate z=log('1')
    label variable z "log('1')"
}
else {
    generate z=('-1'^('2'))
    label variable z "-'1'^('2')"
}
end
```

This program takes two arguments. The first argument is the name of an existing variable, `x`. The second argument is a number, which we will call `n`. The program creates the new variable `z`. If `n > 0`, `z` is $x^n$; if `n = 0`, `z` is $\log x$; and if `n < 0`, `z` is $-x^n$. No matter which path the program follows through the code, it labels the variable appropriately:

```stata
. power age 2
. describe z
```

Technical note

If the expression refers to any variables, their values in the first observation are used unless explicit subscripts are specified.

Avoid single-line if and else with ++ and -- macro expansion

Do not use the single-line forms of `if` and `else`—do not omit the braces—when the action includes the `++` or `--` macro-expansion operators. For instance, do not code

```stata
if (...) somecommand ++i
```
Code instead,

```stata
if (...) {
    somecommand '++i'
}
```

In the first example, `i` will be incremented regardless of whether the condition is true or false because macro expansion occurs before the line is interpreted. In the second example, if the condition is false, the line inside the braces will not be macro expanded and so `i` will not be incremented.

The same applies to the `else` statement; do not code

```stata
else somecommand '++i'
```

Code instead,

```stata
else {
    somecommand '++i'
}
```

Technical note

What was just said also applies to macro-induced execution of class programs that have side effects. Consider

```stata
if (...) somecommand '.clspgm.getnext'
```

Class-member program `.getnext` would execute regardless of whether the condition were true or false. Here code

```stata
if (...) {
    somecommand '.clspgm.getnext'
}
```

Understand that the problem arises only when macro substitution causes the invocation of the class program. There would be nothing wrong with coding

```stata
if (...) '.clspgm.getnext'
```

Reference


Also see

[P] `continue` — Break out of loops
[P] `foreach` — Loop over items
[P] `forvalues` — Loop over consecutive values
[P] `while` — Looping
[U] 18 Programming Stata