

## Description

`set emptycells` allows you to control how Stata handles interaction terms with empty cells. Stata can keep empty cells or drop them. The default is to keep empty cells.

## Syntax

```
set emptycells { keep | drop } [ , permanently ]
```

## Option

`permanently` specifies that, in addition to making the change right now, the setting be remembered and become the default setting when you invoke Stata.

## Remarks and examples

By default, Stata keeps empty cells so they can be reported in the coefficient table. For example, type

```
. use https://www.stata-press.com/data/r19/auto
. regress mpg rep78#foreign, baselevels
```

and you will see a regression of `mpg` on 10 indicator variables because `rep78` takes on 5 values and `foreign` takes on 2 values in the `auto` dataset. Two of those cells will be reported as empty because the data contain no observations of foreign cars with a `rep78` value of 1 or 2.

Many real datasets contain a large number of empty cells, and this could cause the “unable to allocate matrix” error message, `r(915)`. In that case, type

```
. set emptycells drop
```

to get Stata to drop empty cells from the list of coefficients. If you commonly fit models with empty cells, you can permanently set Stata to drop empty cells by typing the following:

```
. set emptycells drop, permanently
```

## Also see

[R] [set](#) — Overview of system parameters

Stata, Stata Press, and Mata are registered trademarks of StataCorp LLC. Stata and Stata Press are registered trademarks with the World Intellectual Property Organization of the United Nations. StataNow and NetCourseNow are trademarks of StataCorp LLC. Other brand and product names are registered trademarks or trademarks of their respective companies. Copyright © 1985–2025 StataCorp LLC, College Station, TX, USA. All rights reserved.

For suggested citations, see the FAQ on [citing Stata documentation](#).

