
Subject: Re: IDL vs. matlab

Posted by [Randall Skelton](#) on Wed, 04 Apr 2001 16:07:46 GMT

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OK... here are my 2 cents.

- 1) As an undergrad, I would go with what your friends and professors suggest as you do not want to be re-inventing code all night and fighting with syntax idiosyncrasies while your friends are out drinking beer ;)
- 2) MATLAB has far better student pricing (in my opinion) and if you are using it on an Intel platform in your class then I would go with that. The IDL student version is 5.0 (well out of date) and it is severely crippled even for undergraduates in my experience. There is talk that RSI may be changing its license pricing to accommodate students who use the full version of IDL at school and need the full version on their own personal computer. Perhaps one of the 'RSI marketing lurkers' would like to comment on this? (I believe there are a few of them among us here).
- 3) MATLAB does have some problems on linux as the software tends to lag behind current linux systems which can cause problems if you are using newer linux installations. Moreover, I don't believe that new versions of MATLAB will be released for the macintosh so if that is your OS of choice, you are best to go with IDL or an alternative.
- 4) Both MATLAB and IDL can be memory hogs and while some people argue that MATLAB is worse, I have seen both programs grind a computer to a halt.
- 5) With all the above being said, you may also want to consider IGOR (<http://www.wavemetrics.com>) if you are using windows 95/98/NT/2000 or macOS. I used this as both an undergrad and grad student and was very happy with it. It offers a similar 'command line' interface to MATLAB and IDL, while maintaining an intuitive GUI to make the learning process a little smoother. The student price for IGOR was \$99 USD when I bought it and it is a *full* version.

A free alternative to MATLAB on Linux would be Octave (I believe you can even get octave to work on windows if you try hard enough).

Randall

On Wed, 4 Apr 2001, Pavel A. Romashkin wrote:

- > Hi,
- >
- > Have you looked into Dadisp? Free student version, limited slightly
- > though. Incentives available, if you want a full version. Really
- > intuitive interface. I used it for graduate work, and found it fully

> adequate. Check <http://www.dadisp.com/> Full price is comparable with IDL
> or Matlab, but you can get a feel for it for free.
> I use IDL now. In contrast with Dadisp, IDL does require programming,
> and, IMHO, is more *project-oriented*. In other words, you can write
> really nice things in IDL if you know well what you are doing. But if
> you are not quite sure what you are doing (as I was during my undergrad
> and grad work), fast prototyping of numerical models is easier and
> cheaper in Dadisp.
>
> Cheers,
> Pavel
