
Subject: Re: unformatted strings (reading)
Posted by [Jackel](#) on Sat, 03 Feb 1996 08:00:00 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

In article <4eule1\$si1@news.alaska.edu> immel@gi.alaska.edu (Thomas Immel) writes:
> Here's a question for anyone who reads unformatted strings.
> Is there a way to read a whole ,say 10 character, string at once
> in IDL?

Not in general. When written as standard binary, strings don't contain any information about their length, or markers between them. Consequently, IDL has no way of knowing how many bytes to read. However, in the XDR binary mode, stringlengths are stored along with the string, allowing something like the following:

```
IDL> teststrings= ['This','is','a','set of','test strings. Okay?']  
IDL> openw,1,'test.dat',/XDR  
IDL> writeu,1,teststrings  
IDL> close,1
```

```
IDL> openr,1,'test.dat',/XDR  
IDL> newstrings= strarr(5) ;define some strings, don't worry about their lengths  
IDL> readu,1,newstrings  
IDL> print,newstrings  
This is a set of test strings. Okay?
```

Of course, this is only useful if you can make sure XDR is used in the first place (and if you had control over the writing you could just pad everything out to some known length). Otherwise you can try things like searching for spaces (like another poster suggested), but that could get messy if there are non-strings mixed in with the data. Good luck.

Brian Jackel
University of Western Ontario
