
Subject: Re: Am I having a blackout?

Posted by [Allan Whiteford](#) on Fri, 29 May 2009 09:14:30 GMT

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Mark wrote:

```
> Hi all,  
>  
> I'm trying to read a very simple file with very basic commands, but it  
> reads the wrong values for the last variable (d2): readf does not see  
> it are negative values and reads only the last five digits. The first  
> five items it reads OK. I guess I'm making a very trivial mistake  
> here, but I don't see it. Anyone having a clearer mind than me?  
> Thanks!  
>  
> Mark  
>  
> sum1 = 0.0  
> sum2 = 0.0  
> sum3 = 0.0  
> sum4 = 0.0  
> count = 0  
> dummy1=""  
> openr, unit, /get_lun, 'sunny_days.fits'  
> while ~eof(unit) do begin  
>   readf, unit, format='(A8,F,F,F,F,F)', dummy1, dummy2, A, beta, d1,  
>   d2
```

Mark,

My understanding of simply using 'F' as a format code doesn't mean "read a floating point number in a smart way" it means "use the default values for a floating point number". These are (according to the manual) equivalent to 'F15.7'.

So, when you write:

```
format='(A8,F,F,F,F,F)'
```

this is equivalent to:

```
format='(A8,F15.7,F15.7,F15.7,F15.7,F15.7)',
```

A cursory glance at your file seems to explain what is happening, all your whitespace are being slowly eaten until finally things go wrong at the last column.

The behaviour of 'F' doesn't seem to be as useful as you would reasonably expect it to be.

You probably want to use:

```
format='(A8,5F13)'
```

but when reading data in like this it's usually better not to supply a format code at all - then IDL will try to do something smart for you based on the types of variables you're using.

Thanks,

Allan
