
Subject: Re: fits_help issues again/still

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Thu, 23 Jul 2009 21:22:48 GMT

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Barbara writes:

> my variable is a string. What is so confusing is it was all working 10
> min ago! and I even tried to use the file I was working on before that
> it had worked on, and it's not. I have no idea what ext name is. I
> wasn't using my variable (cause for some reason that never works) so I
> was using the actual file name, copied directly from the folder it's
> in.

Humm. I hope you are not one of those people who
thinks programming is easy, or that it "always
makes sense".

Here is something to try. Type "RETALL" (this
stands for RETurn ALL the way back to the main
IDL level). This might get you back on track.
It could be that when you crashed your program
you got stuck inside the program. That will certainly
confuse you.

Here is a piece of advice. Well over 95% of
programming errors are caused by the programmer.
An untold number of these are caused by the programmer
thinking he or she knows what is going on, but not
realizing they are making bogus assumptions.

So, when something goes wrong (and it does about every
10 minutes or so, on average, for most programmers)
take a couple of deep breaths and start questioning
your assumptions. Then test a few of them. Have a look
around. Maybe just gaze out the window at the mountains
(if you have any) for a couple of minutes to settle yourself.
Sometimes I do my best debugging when I go for a short walk
in the park across the street. Then step through your code to
see if what you THINK you are doing is really what you are
doing. 9 times out of 10 it is not, and you have found that
bug.

Now, on to the next one! :-)

Cheers,

David

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David Fanning, Ph.D.
Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming (www.dfanning.com)
Sepore ma de ni thui. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")
