
Subject: Re: Input Files - Size Limit?

Posted by [davidf](#) on Sun, 18 May 1997 07:00:00 GMT

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Mark Harvey <mark@vortex.shm.monash.edu.au> writes:

- > Hi. I'm pretty much an IDL rookie but have been handed quite
- > a big project - developing an IDL-based analysis and
- > visualisation package for meteorological data.
- >
- > My question is this: can IDL handle extremely large files (in
- > various data formats) without crashing out? I'm thinking of
- > sizes in the region of 100mb+.

Sure, put it into the variable "a". :-)

Seriously, Mark, there is no special limitations on the size of data inside of IDL, but there are some practical limitations. For example, most system administrators limit the amount of process memory any one process can have. You have to pretty much hand over your first born child to get them to give you more.

Large files are usually not a problem with IDL, as long as you don't read all the data into memory at once. Use the associated variable method to read just that portion of the data you need at any one time, and practice good memory management techniques while you are working with data. In practice, this means deleting or undefining variables when you are done with them, etc. (See my web page for ideas about this.) In IDL 5.0 you will want to take advantage of pointers for sure. Just be sure you delete the pointer data when you are done with it.

If you run into trouble, there are lots of good IDL programmers nearby. Justin Baker and Robert Dahni at the Bureau of Meteorology there in Melbourne are two names that come immediately to mind.

Oh, and ask for a machine that has *LOTS* of RAM!

Best of luck!

David

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