
Subject: Usage of System Variables

Posted by [Liam Gumley](#) on Thu, 02 Dec 1999 08:00:00 GMT

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A colleague and I were having a discussion recently about system variables in IDL. My colleague regularly uses system variables such as !p.region, !p.font, !p.margin for configuring plots. My opinion is that system variables should be used as little as possible. In fact the only system variable I ever modify is !p.multi for creating multiple plots. Otherwise I prefer to use keywords to plot, surface, tv, tvscl, etc.

It seems to me that modifying global system variables is not a good idea, since they have a global effect. These days you can write applications which run while leaving the IDL command line active, and setting/modifying system variables in this case sounds like a recipe for disaster.

Can anyone think of other cases where setting a system variable is the only way to achieve the desired effect (e.g. !p.multi)?

Cheers,
Liam.

--

Liam E. Gumley
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Subject: Re: Usage of System Variables

Posted by [davidf](#) on Mon, 06 Dec 1999 08:00:00 GMT

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Martin Schultz (m218003@modell3.dkrz.de) writes:

> well, !p.multi can be disastrous in just the same way! Better to use the
> position keyword -- although !p.multi is much easier to use for quick and
> dirty plots, admittedly.

I like to use !P.MULTI because it takes care of a lot of other things for you besides position. For example, it also handles character sizing appropriately. And I've never found !P.MULTI to be disastrous, except when people forget to turn it off. Then it's disastrous for the *next* guy, but that's not my problem. :-)

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

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Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>

Toll-Free IDL Book Orders: 1-888-461-0155

Subject: Re: Usage of System Variables

Posted by [m218003](#) on Mon, 06 Dec 1999 08:00:00 GMT

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In article <3846A7E0.27FAA71@ssec.wisc.edu>,

Liam Gumley <Liam.Gumley@ssec.wisc.edu> writes:

> a recipe for disaster.

>

> Can anyone think of other cases where setting a system variable is the

> only way to achieve the desired effect (e.g. !p.multi)?

>

Hi Liam,

well, !p.multi can be disastrous in just the same way! Better to use the position keyword -- although !p.multi is much easier to use for quick and dirty plots, admittedly.

Martin

--

```

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[[
[[

```

Subject: Re: Usage of System Variables

Posted by [m218003](#) on Tue, 07 Dec 1999 08:00:00 GMT

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In article <MPG.12b57c2e7791f45a9899b4@news.frii.com>,

davidf@dfanning.com (David Fanning) writes:

> Martin Schultz (m218003@modell3.dkrz.de) writes:

>

> I like to use !P.MULTI because it takes care of a lot of
> other things for you besides position. For example, it
> also handles character sizing appropriately. And I've
> never found !P.MULTI to be disastrous, except when
> people forget to turn it off. Then it's disastrous
> for the *next* guy, but that's not my problem. :-)
>
> Cheers,
>
> David

OK, ok ... I guess it depends on how you manage your system variables. If you only use one plot window - no problem (if you clean up at the end as you suggest implicitly). If you use several windows - only a problem if you don't store the system variable state with each of your windows. And, hey, how do you do this? ... here we aim again for draw widgets or objects, don't we?

... and I disagree that !P.Multi handles character sizes "appropriately". I have often found it more annoying than helpful that characters are shrunk by 0.62 if there are at least three windows in a row or column. So many of my programs contain a statement like
if (!p.multi>!p.multi[2]) ge 3 then charsize = charsize/0.62

Cheers,
Martin

--

```

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```

Subject: Re: Usage of System Variables
Posted by [davidf](#) on Wed, 08 Dec 1999 08:00:00 GMT
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Ed 'the next guy' Meinel (edward.s.meinel@aero.org) writes:

> Of course, that would be true for _any_ editable system variable, so it
> would seem that this whole thread is moot.

Well, *most* of what we discuss here is probably "moot".
But that's what's fun about a newsgroup. You can shoot

the bull with your friends and have it appear to
your boss that you are hard at work. :-)

Cheers,

David

--

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Subject: Re: Usage of System Variables
Posted by [edward.s.meinel](#) on Wed, 08 Dec 1999 08:00:00 GMT
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davidf@dfanning.com (David Fanning) wrote:

> And I've
> never found !P.MULTI to be disastrous, except when
> people forget to turn it off. Then it's disastrous
> for the *next* guy, but that's not my problem. :-)

Of course, that would be true for any editable system variable, so it
would seem that this whole thread is moot.

Oh! Were you backing up Liam's complaint?

Ed 'the next guy' Meinel

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