
Subject: ascii-template

Posted by [Lasse Clausen](#) on Wed, 18 May 2005 10:01:32 GMT

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greetings.

i am reading and writing a lot of ascii text files with data. it works like this:

- 1) i write data in columns into a ascii file
- 2) i use a self implemented function which uses ASCII_TEMPLATE and SAVE to save an ascii template which contains the names of the columns in the data file
- 3) when reading the data i use RESTORE to restore the template and use it in the READ_ASCII function.

in the course of my work this format of the ascii data file changes. new columns appear, other columns disappear. everytime that happens i have to use my SAVE_ASCII_TEMPLATE function to make a whole new template which is annoying if the data file now contains 25 columns instead of 26 because i have to type in the names of the 25 columns again although they haven't changed.

does anybody know if i can directly manipulate the saved ascii template? the documentation of the structure ASCII_TEMPLATE produces is rather poor.

thank you very much
lasse clausen

Subject: Re: ascii-template

Posted by [Justin\[4\]](#) on Sun, 22 May 2005 19:14:31 GMT

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If your files are reasonably simple (space or tab delimited) I would avoid the use of ascii_template altogether and use a structure to define what each line looks like, replicate the line and readf it into an array. E.g. for 4 columns (3 integers and a float) use:

```
line = {year:0, month:0, day:0, temperature:0.0}  
num_lines = 1000 ; Could use file_lines or similar to count the lines here  
data = REPLICATE(line, num_lines) ;Make array to hold data  
OPENR, lun, filename, /GET_LUN  
READF, lun, data ;Read in all the data  
FREE_LUN, lun ;Close file
```

```
PRINT, data[100].temperature ; Print the 101st temp
```

Then as your file changes just change the definition of the line

structure. Of course if you have a complicated file structure you'll need to stick with the flexibility (and complexity) of READ_ASCII.

HTH

Justin

On Wed, 18 May 2005 12:01:32 +0200, Lasse Clausen wrote:

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