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Subject: Re: help with relational operators  
Posted by [davidf](#) on Thu, 08 Jul 1999 07:00:00 GMT  
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Dave (dmarshall@ivory.trentu.ca) writes:

> I'm getting near wits end.

Yikes! Me, too, but for a completely different reason today. :-)

```
> repeat begin
> ...
> ; get user to input file name
> ...
> dataFName='somefile.xdr'
> ...
> fileCheck=findfile(dataFName)
> if fileCheck eq " then print, 'error: ', dataFName,' file not found'
>
> endrep until fileCheck ne "
>
> % Expression must be a scalar in this context: <BYTE    Array[1]>.
>
> I just want to verify the file exists before opening it.
> This gives my error message if file does not exist, but craps out if file
> does exist.
>
> help, fileCheck ne "
>
> tells me it _is_ a scalar expression. ?
```

Whoops. What you don't know is that FINDFILE \*always\* returns an array, even if there is only a single element in it, as in this case. What you need in the IF statement is a scalar not an array. You could do this:

```
if fileCheck[0] eq " then print, 'error: ', dataFName,' file not found'
```

But a better way to handle this is to use the COUNT keyword to FINDFILE, like this:

```
fileCheck=findfile(dataFName, Count=numFiles)
IF numFiles EQ 0 THEN print, 'error: ', dataFName,' file not found'
```

Then you don't have to worry about this quirk in IDL. :-)

Cheers,

David

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[Note: This follow-up was e-mailed to the cited author.]

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