

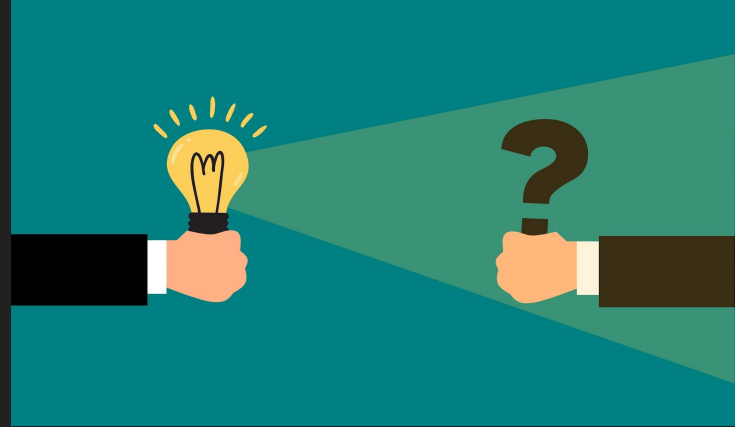
Using Stata Help Files

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What is a Stata Help File?

A help file is a file built into Stata that provides all of the documentation on any of the built in commands.

If you can think of a Stata command then there is a help file for it.



When Should I Use the Stata Help Files?

When you are just getting started, your Professor's instructions on what commands to use will be your best friend!

If allowed... Google and ChatGPT are also great resources for finding commands.

The help files are most useful when you know what command you want to use. Then you can use the help file for...

- Syntax
- What exactly a command does
- Additional options the command allows
- And more!

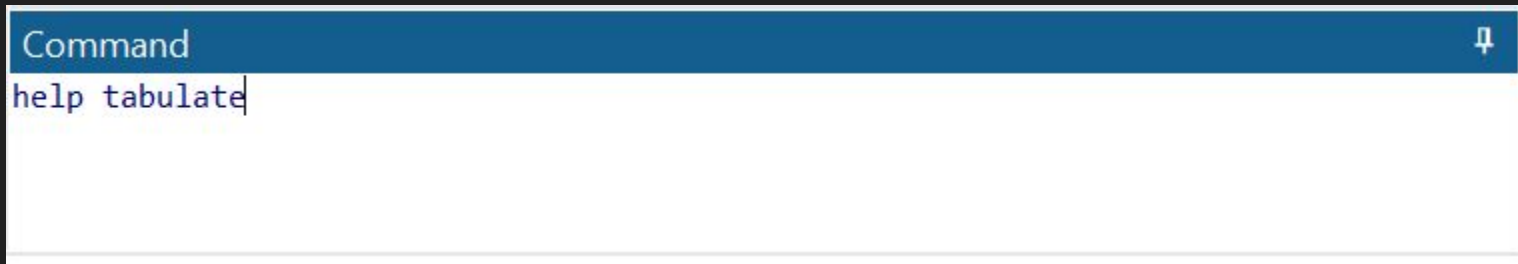
This is a great reason to pay attention in class and to carefully track commands you have used.

How to Access the Stata Help Files

1. IN THE COMMAND BOX (at the bottom of your Stata window)
2. type “help [the command you are looking for help with]”
3. Hit enter

Example commands:

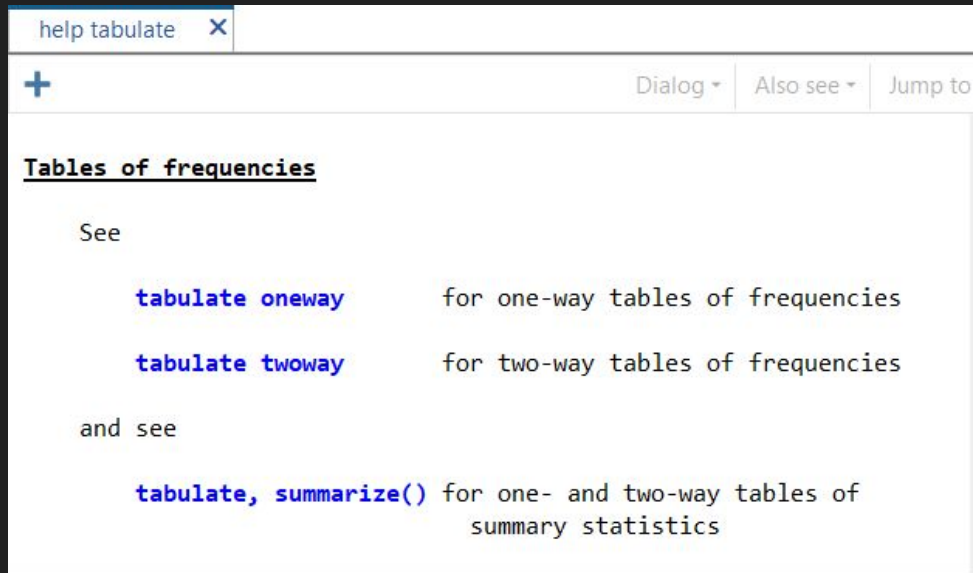
- help tabulate
- help reg
- help metrics is so hard (this won't work... but worth a try)



```
Command
help tabulate
```

OH NO What Do I Do Next?!?

1. Relax
2. If you followed along with my “help tabulate” then you’ll see a pop-up.
3. Just choose what you think (or ideally know) you’re looking for. In this case, it’s “tabulate oneway”
4. Now for the good stuff... the help file



help tabulate x

+ Dialog ▾ Also see ▾ Jump to

Tables of frequencies

See

- `tabulate oneway` for one-way tables of frequencies
- `tabulate twoway` for two-way tables of frequencies

and see

- `tabulate, summarize()` for one- and two-way tables of summary statistics

Woohoo – A Help File

Exciting, right? Take it all in.

Now, let's break it down into pieces.

1. The command itself and what it does
2. Syntax
3. Additional options and their descriptions
4. (One more to know if you scroll further down) Examples
5. (Not Shown Here) Menu info, More in depth descriptions of “tabulate oneway” and it's options, Documentation

The screenshot shows a help viewer window titled "Viewer - help tabulate oneway". The window has a menu bar with "File", "Edit", "History", and "Help". Below the menu bar is a search bar containing "help tabulate oneway" and a search icon. A tab labeled "help tabulate oneway" is active. The main content area displays the following information:

[R] **tabulate oneway** — One-way table of frequencies
([View complete PDF manual entry](#))

Syntax

One-way table

```
tabulate varname [if] [in] [weight] [, tabulate1_options]
```

One-way table for each variable – a convenience tool

```
tab1 varlist [if] [in] [weight] [, tab1_options]
```

<i>tabulate1_options</i>	Description
Main	
subpop (<i>varname</i>)	exclude observations for which <i>varname</i> = 0
missing	treat missing values like other values
nofreq	do not display frequencies
no label	display numeric codes rather than value labels
plot	produce a bar chart of the relative frequencies
sort	display the table in descending order of frequency
Advanced	
generate (<i>stubname</i>)	create indicator variables for <i>stubname</i>
matcell (<i>matname</i>)	save frequencies in <i>matname</i> ; programmer's option
matrow (<i>matname</i>)	save unique values of <i>varname</i> in <i>matname</i> ; programmer's option

How Do I Read a Stata Help File?

Syntax is extremely helpful. It tells you exactly what you can and cannot do in a command. And the format is uniform across help files!

Pay attention to the order the help file tells you!

Syntax

One-way table

```
tabulate varname [if] [in] [weight] [, tabulate1_options]
```

The command!

An underline tells you a shortened version that you can type.

The name of the variable!

Always be careful about spelling. Stata cares.

Anything in [brackets] is optional, but can be used!

With “tabulate” you can include “if”, “in”, and weights before the comma

You may include additional options with tabulate.

Notice where the comma goes!

What?!? Even More Options

You will often want a command to do more than it does in its most basic form.

This is where the “, [insert options]” comes in!

These options can go after one single comma. If you specify multiple options then separate them with a space.

This includes both the additional command and a description of what it does. Pretty great right?

<i>tabulate1_options</i>	Description
Main	
subpop (<i>varname</i>)	exclude observations for which <i>varname</i> = 0
missing	treat missing values like other values
nofreq	do not display frequencies
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plot	produce a bar chart of the relative frequencies
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Advanced	
generate (<i>stubname</i>)	create indicator variables for <i>stubname</i>
matcell (<i>matname</i>)	save frequencies in <i>matname</i> ; programmer's option
matrow (<i>matname</i>)	save unique values of <i>varname</i> in <i>matname</i> ; programmer's option

Example: (with a made up variable name)

Command

```
tabulate num_onion_rings, m nofreq
```


I Know You're Bored—Promise I'm Almost Done

Examples

Setup

```
. sysuse census
```

One-way table of frequencies

```
. tabulate region
```

Show table in descending order of frequencies

```
. tabulate region, sort
```

Create indicator variables for **region**, called **reg1**, **reg2**, ...

```
. tabulate region, gen(reg)
```

Scrolling through the help file can also give you more in depth information on the command itself and options. Explore that more on your own!

One more section I want to point out is if you scroll down to “Examples”

Examples are rarely (if ever) exactly what you're looking for.

But they can give you an idea of how to use a command if you are really lost or just forget.

Can I Keyword Search?

Can you search for any word in the “help ecosystem” instead of just commands?

Yes, but I probably wouldn't recommend it.

You can keyword search using the “search” command

- That command will bring up any instances of whatever you search in the help system – generally that is a LOT of results.
- It can also link you to other Stata resources online – but be careful about whether you are allowed to use sources outside of Stata.

Learn the commands. Keep track of what they do.

Told you it was almost over—Happy Stata-ing!

This presentation has barely scratched the surface of the information that is available in the help files. Go explore them yourself.

(I learned while doing this presentation that some help files have links to youtube clips on how to use commands... that's pretty cool)

If you are still stuck... **Ask for help!**

Ask your Professor, ask your CAT, ask a tutor in SASC, ask a friend.

Stata is hard to learn. Give yourself a chance. Practice often. You'll get it.

