

# Stata Syntax Structure and Help Documentation

aka How do I know what to type and where?

## Parts of Syntax

These are the most common parts of Stata's syntax, others include the prefixes `by` and `svy`.

<code>command</code>	1, 2, or 3 words describing the action	→	Two-word commands include <code>label list</code> and <code>label variable</code>
<code>varlist</code>	0, 1, or more variables to do it with		
<code>qualifiers</code>	specify details or limits (multiple types)	→	One type is an <code>if</code> condition, which does the command on <i>only</i> the observations for which the given logical statement is true.
<code>options</code>	show/hide output or tweak the process		

## General Structure

The parts of syntax, if used, are always in the same order:

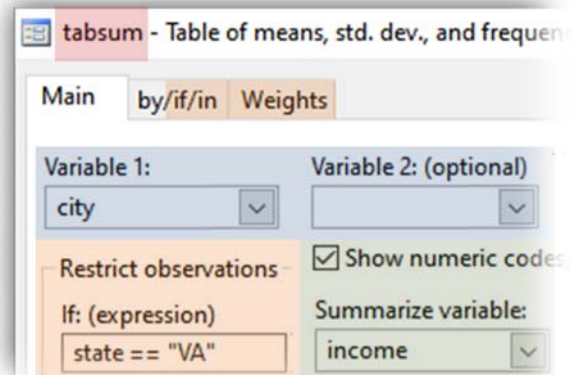
`command varlist qualifiers, options`

A **space** separates each variable      A **comma** starts the list of options      A **space** separates each option

`tab city if (state = "VA"), nolabel sum(income)`

Extra spaces are fine;  
line breaks are allowed  
only in do-files after `///`

The two types of options:  
a `word` and a `word with ()`  
in which you specify something



## Syntax Template

Help documentation for each command shows the specific elements needed, and the qualifiers and options allowed. Formatting is crucial to interpretation:

- Underline      shortest allowed abbreviation
- Blue**              click to see more about this
- [**Brackets**]      optional element
- Italics*            use your own variables/values

**Command**  
`help tabulate`

The Viewer works like a web browser



`tabulate varname1 [varname2] [if] [in] [weight] [, options]`

options	Description
<code>summarize(varname3)</code>	report summary statistics for varname3
<code>nolabel</code>	show numeric codes, not labels

## Try-it Examples

In Help, scroll all the way down or use the Jump to menu. See also ([View complete PDF manual entry](#)) at the top.

A **period** indicates each line of syntax.  
Type the text *after* exactly as shown.

All "**use**" commands open data.  
Start there, then run every line.

### Examples: one-way tables

```
. sysuse auto  
. tabulate foreign, summarize(mpg)  
  
. sysuse census  
. tabulate region [aweight=pop], sum
```