A *field string* is a type of variable and is the equivalent of a structure in the DDIC but is defined within an ABAP/4 program. Like a structure, a field string is a series of fields grouped together under a common name. The difference lies mainly in where the definition resides. The term structure in R/3 applies only to a Data Dictionary object containing a collection of fields. The term field string applies to a collection of fields defined in an ABAP/4 program.

Two statements are usually used to define field strings in an ABAP/4 program:

* data
* tables

**Using the DATA Statement to Define a Field String**

A field string defined using the data statement is a modifiable data object. It can have global or local visibility.

**Syntax for Defining a Field String Using the DATA Statement**

The following is the syntax for defining a field string using the data statement.

data: begin of *fs1*,

*f1*[(*l*)] [type *t*] [decimals *d*] [value '*xxx*'],

*f2*[(*l*)] [type *t*] [decimals *d*] [value '*xxx*'],

*...*

end of *fs1*.

or

data begin of *fs1*.

data *f1*[(*l*)] [type *t*] [decimals *d*] [value '*xxx*'].

data *f2*[(*l*)] [type *t*] [decimals *d*] [value '*xxx*'].

*...*

[include structure *st1*.]

data end of *fs1*.

or

data *fs1* like *fs2*.

where:

* *fs1* is the field string name.
* *f1*and*f2* are the fields (also called components) of the field string.
* *fs2* is the name of a previously defined field string or is the name of a table or structure in the Data Dictionary.
* (*l*) is the internal length specification.
* *t* is the data type.
* *d* is the number of decimal places (used only with type p).
* '*xxx*' is a literal that supplies a default value.
* *st1* is the name of a structure or table in the Data Dictionary.

Field strings follow the same rules as variables defined using the data statement. To refer to an individual component, its name must be prefixed by the name of the field string and a dash (**-**). For example, to write the number component of the cust\_info field string, you would use the statement write cust\_info-number**.**

The include statement is not part of the data statement; it is a separate statement. Therefore, it cannot be chained to a data statement. The statement before it must be concluded with a period.

**Using the TABLES Statement to Define a Field String**

A field string defined using the tables statement is a modifiable data object. Field strings defined using the tables statement follow the same rules as field strings defined using the data statement.

**Syntax for Defining a Field String Using the TABLES Statement**

The following is the syntax for defining a field string using the tables statement.

tables *fs1*.

where:

* *fs1* is the field string name. A table or structure of the same name must exist in the Data Dictionary.

**Field String Defined Using TABLES Interacting with SELECT**

The tables statement does more than just define a field string. It does two things:

* It defines a field string.
* It gives the program access to a database table of the same name, if one exists.