

## Tutorial: Keeping Track of your Stata Session

### Log Files

The log file is where you save all the work you do during your Stata session. When a log file is open, almost everything that appears in the *Results* window is saved in the log file. Graphs are not saved to the log file.

- Create a log file by clicking on the button that looks like a notebook. Alternatively, you could pull down *File/Log/Begin*.
- In the window that appears, enter a file name (e.g. `session1`). Choose the `.log` file type, and click on Open. The `.log` extension is used so that the log file can be opened in most word processing applications.
- Look at what appears in the *Results* window.

Once you have opened a log file, it records everything you do. To suspend or close your log file, click on the notebook button again (or use the *File* menu), and select the appropriate option.

When you choose the **close** option, the log file is ended, and you have to open a new log file before recording again. Using **suspend**, recording is paused until you click the log button again, at which point Stata begins recording in the same log file, appending the new results to the existing. You can **view** the current contents of the log file by choosing the *snapshot of log file* option.

- Leave the log file open while you are working through tutorials, if you would like to keep a record of the Stata commands and output!

### Printing

You can print output from your session two different ways. (1) Choose *Print viewer* from the *File* menu when viewing the log snapshot. (2) Copy (use control-C or *Edit/Copy* from dropdown menu) and paste the contents of the log file (or the *Results* window) to a document in a word processor and print from there. This is often a little bit neater and it allows you to print only the relevant parts of your session. Note: fixed width fonts (e.g. Courier New) work well in Microsoft Word.

### Do Files

The log files are useful for reviewing what you have done in a Stata session. However, if you want to quit halfway through your Stata session and pick up later, log files are not the best option, because you cannot directly execute a log file. In practice, if you do an analysis, it is best to send collaborators your data and a file of commands that can replicate everything that you did.

**Do-files** (.do) are text files that contain all of the commands that you want to run for a given analysis. Note that to create a do-file, you need to copy-paste Stata commands from the *Review* window into this file (or type them from memory if you are a Stata pro).

- Check out `lesson1.do` for an example of a Stata do-file containing all of the commands for this tutorial.

When doing a data analysis project, creating a do-file with all of your commands could save you a lot of time and energy. It is also very important to accurately comment your do-file and write clean code. For instance, don't leave in commands that you aren't using and try to segment your code into different relevant sections, for readability. To learn about how to comment a do-file, type `search comments`.