



# Reading CSV Data Using ifstream in C++

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## Overview

In C++, the `ifstream` class (from the `<fstream>` header) is used to read data from files. To read **CSV (Comma-Separated Values)** data, you typically read each line as a string and then parse the line by splitting it on commas.

This approach is **manual**, but it gives you full control over how the data is interpreted and processed.

## Key Concepts

### Line-by-Line Reading

Use `std::getline(file, line)` to read each row of the CSV file.

- `getline` will read a line from the stream
  - the first parameter is the stream to read
  - the second parameter is the string to store the data into

`getline` will read until it encounters the `\n` character OR the end of the stream

### String Stream Parsing

Use `std::stringstream` to split each line into fields using `std::getline(ss, field, ',')`.

- take the string from step 1 above and create a stringstream
- use the stringstream with `getline` to read pieces of csv data
- You can tell `getline` what character (the delimiter) to look for instead of `\n`
  - give `getline` a 3rd char argument. `getline` will use this character instead of `\n`

`getline` will read until it encounters the character OR the end of the stream

```
std::stringstream ss(line);
std::getline(ss, field, ',');
```

### Reading multiple lines

Use the stream's `eof()` method to check if you are at the end of the file OR use the return type from calling `std::getline`.

```
while(not file.eof()) {
    //read the line
    //parse the line using stringstream
}

//OR...

while (std::getline(file, line)) { //read the line
    //parse the line using stringstream
}
```

## Storing Data in a Vector

You can store parsed data in a container like `std::vector` for further processing:

```
struct Student {
    std::string name;
    int age;
    std::string major;
};

std::vector<Student> students;

while (std::getline(file, line)) {
    std::stringstream ss(line);
    std::string name, ageStr, major;

    std::getline(ss, name, ',');
    std::getline(ss, ageStr, ',');
    std::getline(ss, major, ',');

    students.push_back({name, std::stoi(ageStr), major});
}
```



## Basic Example

Suppose we have a file `students.csv`:

```
Name,Age,Major
Alice,21,Computer Science
Bob,22,Mathematics
Charlie,20,Physics
```



## Required Headers

```
#include <iostream>
#include <fstream>
#include <sstream>
#include <string>
#include <vector>
```

### Reading a Simple CSV File

```
int main() {
    std::ifstream file("students.csv");
    std::string line;

    if (file.is_open()) {
        // Read header
        std::getline(file, line);
        std::cout << "Header: " << line << "\n";

        // Read data rows
        while (std::getline(file, line)) {
            std::stringstream ss(line);
            std::string name, age, major;

            std::getline(ss, name, ',');
            std::getline(ss, age, ',');
            std::getline(ss, major, ',');

            std::cout << "Name: " << name
                      << ", Age: " << age
                      << ", Major: " << major << "\n";
        }

        file.close();
    } else {
        std::cout << "Failed to open file.\n";
    }

    return 0;
}
```



## Common Pitfalls

- Not checking if the file opened successfully
- Assuming all rows have the same number of fields
- Using `std::stoi` without error checking



## Best Practices

- Always validate file opening and data format
- Use `std::getline` with a delimiter for parsing
- Consider using a CSV library for complex files (e.g., Fast C++ CSV Parser)



## Quiz!

Here's a short quiz on the topic: [quiz](#)

Footer Separator



## Markdown Viewer

How to view the markdown files in a browser...

- [Markdown Viewer](#)



## Lecture Practices

Here are the lecture Practices...

- [Day 10](#)
- [Day 11](#)



## Lecture Quizzes

Here are the lecture quizzes...

- [Day 10](#)
- [Day 11](#)

## Weekly Topics

Here are the topics for the week...

- [CSV](#)
- [Writing CSV](#)
- [Reading CSV](#)
- [Serializing](#)
- [Deserializing](#)