Seconds since the Epoch

If you precede a number with ‘`@`’, it represents an internal timestamp as a count of seconds. The number can contain an internal decimal point (either ‘`.`’ or ‘`,`’); any excess precision not supported by the internal representation is truncated toward minus infinity. Such a number cannot be combined with any other date item, as it specifies a complete timestamp.

Internally, computer times are represented as a count of seconds since an epoch—a well-defined point of time. On GNU and POSIX systems, the epoch is 1970-01-01 00:00:00 UTC, so ‘`@0`’ represents this time, ‘`@1`’ represents 1970-01-01 00:00:01 UTC, and so forth. GNU and most other POSIX-compliant systems support such times as an extension to POSIX, using negative counts, so that ‘`@-1`’ represents 1969-12-31 23:59:59 UTC.

Traditional Unix systems count seconds with 32-bit two’s-complement integers and can represent times from 1901-12-13 20:45:52 through 2038-01-19 03:14:07 UTC. More modern systems use 64-bit counts of seconds with nanosecond subcounts, and can represent all the times in the known lifetime of the universe to a resolution of 1 nanosecond.

On most hosts, these counts ignore the presence of leap seconds. For example, on most hosts ‘`@915148799`’ represents 1998-12-31 23:59:59 UTC, ‘`@915148800`’ represents 1999-01-01 00:00:00 UTC, and there is no way to represent the intervening leap second 1998-12-31 23:59:60 UTC.