

SAC-FORMAT

C++20 SAC-file Library

User Manual

Version: 0.3.0

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1 Introduction

sac-format is a single-header statically linked library designed to make working with binary **SAC**-files as easy as possible. Written in C++20, it follows a modern and easy to read programming-style while providing the high performance brought by C++.

sac-format's actively developed on [GitHub](#)!

[Download](#) an offline version of the documentation (PDF).

1.1 Why sac-format

sac-format is Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) released under the MIT license. Anyone can use it, for any purpose (including proprietary software), anywhere in the world. sac-format is operating system agnostic and confirmed working on Windows, macOS, and Linux systems.

1. Safe

sac-format is **safe**—testing is an important part of software development. The sac-format library is extensively tested using the **Catch2** testing framework. Everything from low-level binary conversions to high-level `Trace` reading/writing are tested and confirmed working. New tests added when they're imagined. Check and run the tests yourself. See the Testing section for more information.

2. Fast

sac-format is **fast**—it's written in C++ and extensively benchmarked. You can run the benchmarks yourself to find out how sac-format performs on your system. See the Benchmarking section for more information.

3. Easy

sac-format is **easy**—single-header makes integration in any project simple. Building is a breeze with **CMake**, even on different platforms. Object-oriented design makes use easy and intuitive. See the Quickstart section to get up and running.

4. Small

sac-format is **small**—in total (header + implementation—excluding comments) it's fewer than 1500 lines of code and compiles to ~200 KB. Small size opens the door to using on any sort of hardware (old or new) and makes it easy to expand upon.

5. Documented

sac-format is extensively **documented**—both online and in the code. Nothing's hidden—nothing's obscured. Curious how something works? Check the documentation and in-code comments.

6. Trace Class

sac-format includes the `Trace` class for seismic traces, providing high-level object-oriented abstraction to seismic data. With the `Trace` class, you don't need to worry about manually reading SAC-files word-by-word. It's compatible with `v6` and `v7` SAC-files and can automatically detect the version upon reading. File output defaults to `v7` SAC-files and there is a `legacy_write` function for `v6` output.

7. Low-Level I/O

If you want to roll your own SAC-file processing workflow you can use the low-level I/O functionality built into sac-format. All functions tested and confirmed working—they're used to build the `Trace` class!

2 Quickstart

2.1 Manual Instructions

1. Build Instructions

Building is as easy as cloning the repository, running CMake for your preferred build tool, and then building.

(a) Ninja

```
git clone https://github.com/arbCoding/sac-format.git
mkdir bin && cd bin/
cmake -G Ninja .. && ninja
```

(b) **Make**

```
git clone https://github.com/arbCoding/sac-format.git
mkdir bin && cd bin/
cmake .. && make
```

2. **Use**

To use link to the compiled library (`libsac-format.a` on Linux/macOS, `libsac-format.lib` on Windows) and include `src/sac_format.hpp`.

2.2 Example Programs

1. `list_sac`

`list_sac` is a command line program that takes a single SAC-file as its input argument. It reads the SAC-file and outputs the header/footer information, as well as the true size of the `data1` and `data2` vectors.

2.3 CMake Integration

To integrate `sac-format` into your CMake project, add it to your `CMakeLists.txt`.

```
include(FetchContent)
set(FETCHCONTENT_UPDATES_DISCONNECTED TRUE)
FetchContent_Declare(sac-format
  GIT_REPOSITORY https://github.com/arbCoding/sac-format
  GIT_TAG vX.X.X)
FetchContent_MakeAvailable(sac-format)
include_directory(${sacformat_SOURCE_DIR}/src)

project(your_project
  LANGUAGES CXX)

add_executable(your_executable
  your_sources
  sac_format.hpp)

target_link_libraries_library(your_executable
  PRIVATE sac-format)
```

2.4 Example

1. **Reading and Writing**

```
#include <filesystem>
#include <iostream>
#include <sac_format.hpp>

using namespace sacfmt;
namespace fs = std::filesystem;

int main() {
    Trace trace1{};
    // Change header variable
    trace1.kstnm("Station1");
```

```
fs::path file{"/test.SAC"};
// Write
tracel.write(file);
// Read
Trace trace2 = Trace(file);
// Confirm equality
std::cout << (tracel == trace2) << '\n';
fs::remove(file);
return EXIT_SUCCESS;
}
```

3 Documentation

3.1 Trace class

1. Reading SAC
2. Writing SAC
3. Getters and Setters
4. Internal Structure
 - (a) floats array
 - (b) doubles array
 - (c) ints array
 - (d) bools array
 - (e) strings array
 - (f) data array
 - (g) Lookup Table
5. Convenience Methods

3.2 Low-Level I/O

3.3 Testing

3.4 Benchmarking

3.5 Source File List

1. Core
 - (a) sac_format.hpp
 - (b) sac_format.cpp
2. Testing and Benchmarking
 - (a) util.hpp
 - (b) utests.cpp
 - (c) benchmark.cpp
3. Example programs
 - (a) list_sac.cpp

3.6 Dependencies

1. Automatic (CMake)
 - (a) [Xoshiro-cpp v1.12.0](#) (testing and benchmarking)
 - (b) [Catch2 v3.4.0](#) (testing and benchmarking)

3.7 SAC-file format

The official and up-to-date documentation for the SAC-file format is available from the EarthScope Consortium (formerly IRIS/UNAVCO) [here](#). The following subsections constitute my notes on the format. Below is a quick guide—all credit for the creation of, and documentation for, the SAC file-format belongs to its developers and maintainers (details [here](#)).

1. Floating-point (39)
 - 32-bit (1 word, 4 bytes)
 - (a) `depmin`
Minimum value of the dependent variable (displacement/velocity/acceleration/volts/counts).
 - (b) `depmen`
Mean value of the dependent variable.
 - (c) `depmax`
Maximum value of the dependent variable.
 - (d) `odelta`
Modified (*observational*) value of `delta`.
 - (e) `resp (0--9)`
Instrument response parameters (poles, zeros, and a constant).
Not used by SAC—they’re free for other purposes.
 - (f) `stel`
Station elevation in meters above sea level (*m.a.s.l.*).
Not used by SAC—free for other purposes.
 - (g) `stdp`
Station depth in meters below surface (borehole/buried vault).
Not used by SAC—free for other purposes.
 - (h) `evel`
Event elevation *m.a.s.l.*
Not used by SAC—free for other purposes.
 - (i) `evdp`
Event depth in kilometers (*previously meters*) below surface.
 - (j) `mag`
Event magnitude.
 - (k) `user (0--9)`
Storage for user-defined values.
 - (l) `dist`
Station–Event distance in kilometers.
 - (m) `az`
Azimuth (Event → Station), decimal degrees from North.
 - (n) `baz`
Back-azimuth (Station → Event), decimal degrees from North.

(o) `gcarc`
Station–Event great circle arc-length, decimal degrees.

(p) `cmpaz`
Instrument measurement azimuth, decimal degrees from North.

| Value | Direction |
|-------|-----------|
| 0° | North |
| 90° | East |
| 180° | South |
| 270° | West |
| Other | 1/2/3 |

(q) `cmpinc`
Instrument measurement incident angle, decimal degrees from upward vertical (incident 0° = dip -90°).

| Value | Direction |
|-------|------------|
| 0° | Up |
| 90° | Horizontal |
| 180° | Down |
| 270° | Horizontal |

NOTE: SEED/MINISEED use dip angle, decimal degrees down from horizontal (dip 0° = incident 90°).

(r) `xminimum`
Spectral-only equivalent of `depmin` (f_0 or ω_0).

(s) `xmaximum`
Spectral-only equivalent of `depmax` (f_{max} or ω_{max}).

(t) `yminimum`
Spectral-only equivalent of `b`.

(u) `ymaximum`
Spectral-only equivalent of `e`.

2. Double (22)

64-bit (2 words, 8 bytes)

NOTE: in the header section these are floats—they're doubles in the footer section of v7 SAC-files. In memory they're stored as doubles regardless of the SAC-file version.

(a) `delta`
Increment between evenly spaced samples (Δt for timeseries, Δf or $\Delta \omega$ for spectra).

(b) `b`
First value (*begin*) of independent variable (t_0).

(c) `e`
Final value (*end*) of independent variable (t_{max}).

(d) `o`
Event *origin* time, in seconds relative to the reference time.

(e) `a`
Event first *arrival* time, in seconds relative to the reference time.

(f) `t` (0--9)
User defined *time* values, in seconds relative to the reference time.

(g) `f`
Event end (*fini*) time, in seconds relative to the reference time.

- (h) `stla`
Station latitude in decimal degrees, N/S–positive/negative.
- (i) `stlo`
Station longitude in decimal degrees, E/W–positive/negative.
- (j) `evla`
Event latitude in decimal degrees, N/S–positive/negative.
- (k) `evlo`
Event longitude in decimal degrees, E/W–positive/negative.
- (l) `sb`
Original (*saved*) `b` value.
- (m) `sdelta`
Original (*saved*) `delta` value.

3. Integer (26)

32-bit (1 word, 4 bytes)

- (a) `nzyear`
Reference time GMT year.
- (b) `nzjday`
Reference time GMT day-of-year (often called **Julian Date**) (1–366).
- (c) `nzhour`
Reference time GMT hour (00–23).
- (d) `nzmin`
Reference time GMT minute (0–59).
- (e) `nzsec`
Reference time GMT second (0–59).
- (f) `nz msec`
Reference time GMT Millisecond (0–999).
- (g) `nvhdr`
SAC-file version.

| Version | Description |
|---------|-----------------------------------|
| v7 | Footer (2020+, sac 102.0+) |
| v6 | No footer (pre-2020, sac 101.6a-) |

- (h) `norid`
Origin ID.
- (i) `nevid`
Event ID.
- (j) `npts`
Number of points in data.
- (k) `nsnpts`
Original (*saved*) `npts`.
- (l) `nwfid`
Waveform ID.
- (m) `nxsize`
Spectral-only equivalent of `npts` (length of spectrum).
- (n) `nysize`
Spectral-only, width of spectrum.

(o) iftype

File type.

| Value | Type | Description |
|-------|-------|----------------------------|
| 01 | ITIME | Time-series |
| 02 | IRLIM | Spectral (real/imaginary) |
| 03 | IAMPH | Spectral (amplitude/phase) |
| 04 | IXY | General XY file |
| ?? | IXYZ* | General XYZ file |

*Value not listed in the standard.

(p) iddep

Dependent variable type.

| Value | Type | Description |
|-------|--------|---|
| 05 | IUNKN | Unknown |
| 06 | IDISP | Displacement (nm) |
| 07 | IVEL | Velocity ($\frac{\text{nm}}{\text{s}}$) |
| 08 | IACC | Acceleration ($\frac{\text{nm}}{\text{s}^2}$) |
| 50 | IVOLTS | Velocity (volts) |

(q) iztype

Reference time equivalent.

| Value | Type | Description |
|-------|---------|----------------------------|
| 05 | IUNKN | Unknown |
| 09 | IB | Recording start time |
| 10 | IDAY | Midnight reference GMT day |
| 11 | IO | Event origin time |
| 12 | IA | First arrival time |
| 13–22 | IT(0–9) | User defined time (t) pick |

(r) iinst

Recording instrument type.

Not used by SAC—free for other purposes.

(s) istreg

Station geographic region.

Not used by SAC—free for other purposes.

(t) ievreg

Event geographic region.

Not used by SAC—free for other purposes.

(u) ievtyp

Event type.

| Value | Type | Description |
|-------|--------|--|
| 05 | IUNKN | Unknown |
| 11 | IO | Other source of known origin |
| 37 | INUCL | Nuclear |
| 38 | IPREN | Nuclear pre-shot |
| 39 | IPOSTN | Nuclear post-shot |
| 40 | IQUAKE | Earthquake |
| 41 | IPREQ | Foreshock |
| 42 | IPOSTQ | Aftershock |
| 43 | ICHEM | Chemical explosion |
| 44 | IOTHER | Other |
| 72 | IQB | Quarry/mine blast—confirmed by quarry/mine |
| 73 | IQB1 | Quarry/mine blast—designed shot info-ripple fired |
| 74 | IQB2 | Quarry/mine blast—observed shot info-ripple fired |
| 75 | IQBX | Quarry/mine blast—single shot |
| 76 | IQMT | Quarry/mining induced events—tremor and rockbursts |
| 77 | IEQ | Earthquake |
| 78 | IEQ1 | Earthquake in a swarm or in an aftershock sequence |
| 79 | IEQ2 | Felt earthquake |
| 80 | IME | Marine explosion |
| 81 | IEX | Other explosion |
| 82 | INU | Nuclear explosion |
| 83 | INC | Nuclear cavity collapse |
| 85 | IL | Local event of unknown origin |
| 86 | IR | Region event of unknown origin |
| 87 | IT | Teleseismic event of unknown origin |
| 88 | IU | Undetermined/conflicting information |

(v) `igual`

Quality of data.

| Value | Type | Description |
|-------|--------|---------------------------|
| 44 | IOTHER | Other |
| 45 | IGOOD | Good |
| 46 | IGLCH | Glitches |
| 47 | IDROP | Dropouts |
| 48 | ILOWSN | Low signal-to-noise ratio |

Not used by SAC—free for other purposes.

(w) `isynth`

Synthetic data flag.

| Value | Type | Description |
|-------|---------|-------------|
| 49 | IRLDATA | Real data |
| XX | * | Synthetic |

*Values and types not listed in the standard.

(x) `imagtyp`

Magnitude type.

| Value | Type | Description |
|-------|------|----------------------------------|
| 52 | IMB | Body-wave magnitude (M_b) |
| 53 | IMS | Surface-wave magnitude (M_s) |
| 54 | IML | Local magnitude (M_l) |
| 55 | IMW | Moment magnitude (M_w) |
| 56 | IMD | Duration magnitude (M_d) |
| 57 | IMX | User-defined magnitude (M_x) |

(y) `imagsrc`

Source of magnitude information.

| Value | Type | Description |
|-------|----------|--|
| 58 | INEIC | National Earthquake Information Center |
| 61 | IPDE | Preliminary Determination of Epicenter |
| 62 | IISC | International Seismological Centre |
| 63 | IREB | Reviewed Event Bulletin |
| 64 | IUSGS | U.S. Geological Survey |
| 65 | IBRK | UC Berkeley |
| 66 | ICALTECH | California Institute of Technology |
| 67 | ILLNL | Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory |
| 68 | IEVLOC | Event location (computer program) |
| 69 | IJSOP | Joint Seismic Observation Program |
| 70 | IUSER | The user |
| 71 | IUNKNOWN | Unknown |

(z) `ibody`

Body/spheroid definition used to calculate distances.

| Value | Type | Name | Semi-major axis (a [m]) | Inverse Flattening (<i>f</i>) |
|--------|----------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| -12345 | UNDEF | Earth (<i>Historic</i>) | 6378160.0 | 0.00335293 |
| 98 | ISUN | Sun | 696000000.0 | 8.189e-6 |
| 99 | IMERCURY | Mercury | 2439700.0 | 0.0 |
| 100 | IVENUS | Venus | 6051800.0 | 0.0 |
| 101 | IEARTH | Earth (<i>WGS84</i>) | 6378137.0 | 0.0033528106647474805 |
| 102 | IMOON | Moon | 1737400.0 | 0.0 |
| 103 | IMARS | Mars | 3396190.0 | 0.005886007555525457 |

4. Boolean (4)

32-bit (1 word, 4 bytes) in-file/8-bit (1 byte) in-memory

(a) `leven`**REQUIRED**

Evenly-spaced data flag.

If true, then data is evenly spaced.

(b) `lpspol`

Station polarity flag.

If true, then station has positive-polarity—it follows the left-hand convention (for example, North-East-Up [NEZ]).

(c) `lovrok`

File overwrite flag.

If true, then it's okay to overwrite the file.

(d) `lcalda`

Calculate geometry flag.

If true, then calculate `dist`, `az`, `baz`, and `gcarc` from `stla`, `stlo`, `evla`, and `evlo`.

5. String (23)

32/64-bit (2/4 words, 8/16 bytes, 8/16 characters)

(a) `kstnm`

Station name.

(b) `kevn*`

Event name.

*This is the **only** four word (16 character) string.

- (c) `khole`
Nuclear—hole identifier.
Other—Location identifier (LOCID).
- (d) `ko`
Text for `o`.
- (e) `ka`
Text for `a`.
- (f) `kt (0--9)`
Text for `t (0--9)`.
- (g) `kf`
Text for `f`.
- (h) `kuser (0--2)`
Text for the first three of `user (0--9)`.
- (i) `kdatrd`
Date the data was read onto a computer.
- (j) `kinst`
Text for `iinst`.

6. Data (2)

32-bit (2 words, 8 bytes) in-file/64-bit (4 words, 16 bytes) in-memory

Stored as floating-point (32-bit) values in SAC-files; stored as double-precision in memory.

- (a) `data1`
The first data vector—**always** present in a SAC-file and begins at word 158.
- (b) `data2`
The second data vector—**conditionally** present and begins after `data1`.
Required if `leven` is false, or if `iftype` is `spectral/XY/XYZ`.

4 Notes

4.1 Why C++20 and not C++23

Compiler restrictions—C++23 support **requires** GCC-13+ and Clang-16+. Many systems, still use GCC-12 and Clang-15—which has near complete support for **C++20**.

sac-format strives for accessibility, modernity, safety, and speed—C++20 provides the best fit.