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Tecplot can handle very complex input data. However, it needs to have a fairly strictly formatted input file. If you are going to be loading in more than a few variables, or want to create a complex plot, then you are strongly encouraged to read chapter 6 of the Tecplot manual, available in the Barker Library stacks. There, input files are gone over in more detail.

Tecplot can either read ASCII (text) data files or data files in a Tecplot specific binary format. Loading of binary files is faster. You can create a binary file from an ASCII file by running the program `preplot` on your data. If you are going to be using the same set of data more than once or twice, it is probably best to run preplot so that you can load it more quickly. More information on preplot can be found in section 7.1 of the Tecplot manual.

If your data is a simple plot, then you need only have it in a file with the values seperated by spaces or linebreaks. Tecplot will assume that the first variable is the X coordinate, the second the Y coordinate, and
the third Z. You can change this from within Tecplot once the data is loaded.

Tecplot uses the number of values on the first row to determine how many variables there are. You can override this by putting a line that looks like

```
VARIABLES = "variable1", "variable2", "etc"
```

at the top of your file. This would tell Tecplot that there are 3 variables in your data file and that they were named variable1, variable2, and etc.

To read a data file into Tecplot, choose the menu path /File/DataFiles/Read with the mouse or keyboard. Once you have done this, Tecplot will list any files in the current directory which end with .plt You can use the up and down arrows to select one of these, or type them in yourself from the keyboard. You can change the working directory by choosing the menu path /File/DataFiles/FilePath.

Once you have loaded your data, you can load a style sheet by using the menu path /File/DataFiles/StyleSheets/Read. Layout files work similarly under File/Layout.

## See Also

- Tecplot Landing Page