

# How can I convert data files between statistical packages like Stata and Excel?

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[Stata](#) (a common statistical package used in MIT's economics, political science, and other departments) creates .dta files, which are not standard for other statistical software (like SPSS, R, or Excel). Stata can also import tab or comma delimited files, though cleanup is often necessary. Frequently, data sets are only available in other formats and will need to be converted into files that Stata can read.

There are two main options for users looking to convert files.

- The first, and often easiest, is the commercial software package Stat/Transfer, which is expensive but often the only option for complicated data transfer. For more information, see: <http://www.stata.com/products/transfer.html>. This software is not standard at MIT but it may be available on machines at MIT in some academic departments and at [the Harvard MIT Data Center](#).
- Users may also be able to manually convert data files into tab-delimited files that Stata will read. For more on this, see Stata's website: <http://www.stata.com/support/faqs/data/newexcel.html>.

Since conversions can often be tricky, clients with questions may wish to look at the resources in this Wiki article: [Where can I obtain support using Stata \(statistical package\)?](#).

Note that Stat/Transfer may be the only good way to convert old Stata files into ones readable by newer versions of Stata (which is not backwards compatible with early versions).