


Stata tip: Browse and cite stata manuals easily

Yongli Chen [1] Yujun Lian [2]

[1]Antai College of Economics and Management, Shanghai Jiao Tong University

[2]Lingnan College, Sun Yat-Sen University

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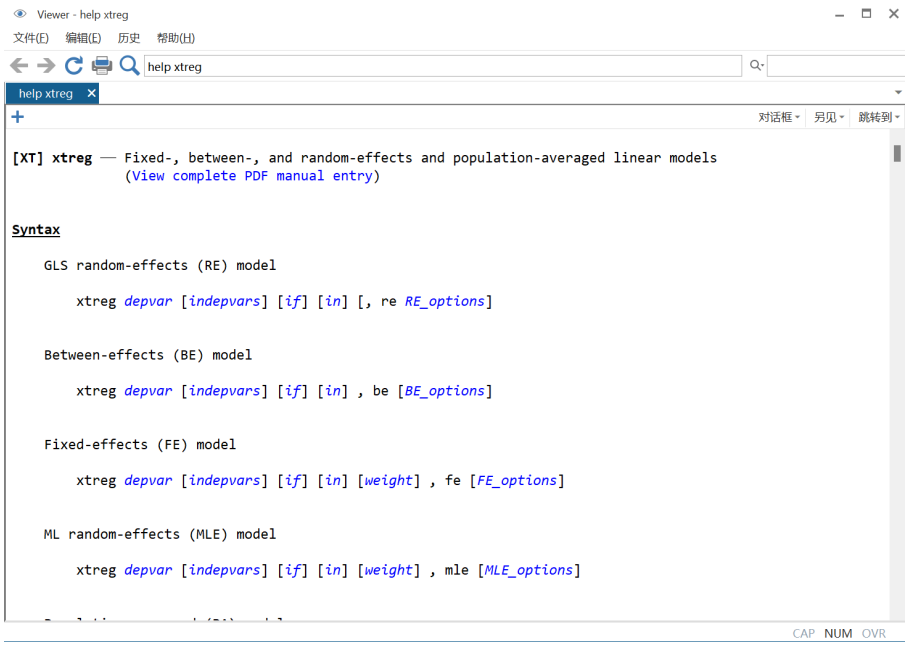
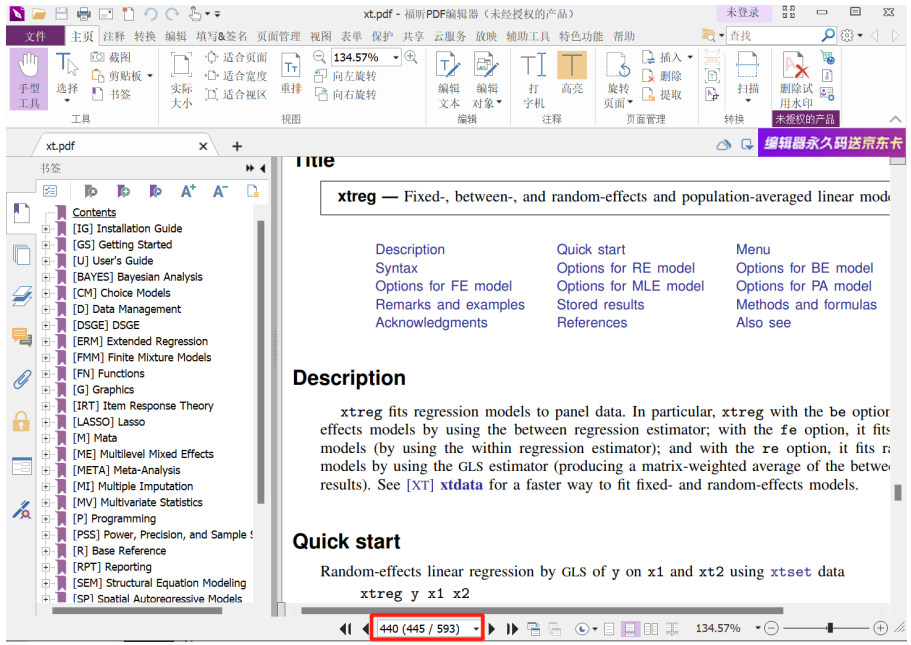
Contents

Offline help files (traditional way of utilising the help files)

- **Stata's built-in help file (`.sthlp`)**: via the `help` command
- **PDF Manual**: via the link provided in the help file



(a) .sthlp



(b) PDF Manual

Figura 1: offline help files

Help system II

Drawbacks

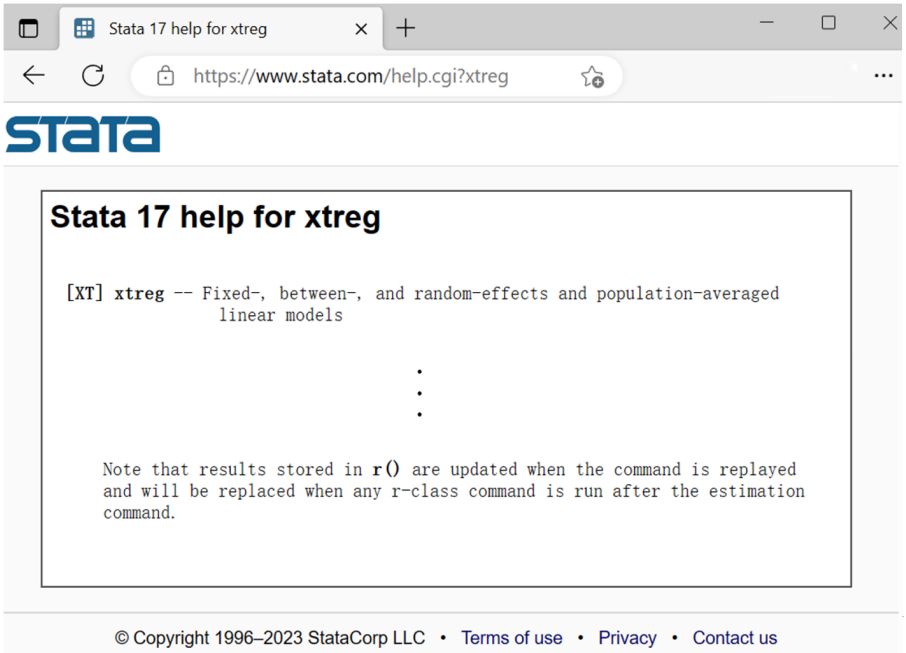
- **.sthlp**: cannot be used without Stata
- **PDF manual** (can be used independently of stata): hard to pinpoint and share commands of interest within
  - a very large file with a collection of all the official commands
  - does not save each command separately

Solution: wwwhelp

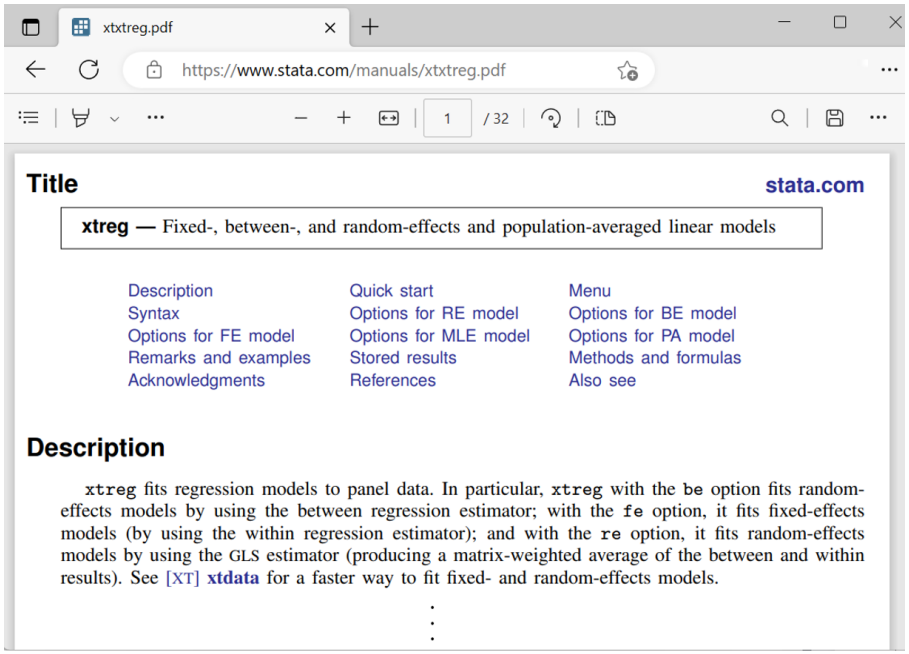
- provides links to online help files
  - opened directly in a browser even without Stata installed
  - HTML version & PDF version
- provides a range of hyperlinks' formatting options
  - **enhance the convenience of citation**
  - *markdown*, *txt*, *ms*, *latex*, *texfull*, and *format(#)*

Online help files

- **HTML version**: offers a brief overview of the official commands
  (url: https://www.stata.com/help.cgi?xtreg)
- **PDF version**: a split of the PDF manual
  (url: https://www.stata.com/manuals/xtxtreg.pdf)



(a) HTML version



(b) PDF version

Figura 2: online help files

Citing scenarios

Stata Blog

Balov(2022)[1]: Quarterly observations on real GDP, measured in billions of dollars, are obtained from the Federal Reserve Economic Data repository using the **import fred** command. I consider observations only between the first quarter of 1947 and second quarter of 2021. A quarterly date variable, **dateq**, is generated and used with **tsset** to set up the time series.

Stata Journal

Cox(2022)[2]: The step is to use `generate` and `egen` (see [D] **generate** and [D] **egen**) as workhorses within a framework provided by the by (see [D] **by**) prefix. The perspective is now that new variables are needed, so that we can graph, table, and further analyze our results most easily.

Other Resources (such as Stata manuals and textbooks)

Examples

Gould (2010) [3] wrote,

> `Gould(2010)`: You can read the online help or the manual about the Mata function **luinv()**. I chose it because I needed a matrix inverter that could handle nonsymmetric matrices.

use *wwwhelp mata luinv, texfull* command to get

```
\href{https://www.stata.com/manuals/m-5luinv.pdf}{\bfseries{[\MakeUppercase{m-5}]
mf luinv}}
```

paste it into a .tex file and compile it, then get the following readable text

> `Gould(2010)[3]`: You can read the online help or the manual about the Mata function **[M-5] mf luinv**. I chose it because I needed a matrix inverter that could handle nonsymmetric matrices.

wwwhelp *command*, **web**

markdown

txt

ms

texfull

latex

format(#)

clipoff

Common use

wwwhelp: open the *online help files* of Stata's official commands

- open **PDF version**: *wwwhelp xtreg*
- open **HTML version**: *wwwhelp xtreg, web || hhelp xtreg*

Citing with various formats I

Displays the web link in various format, which can be automatically copied to the clipboard.
(users can disable this copying function by utilizing the **clipoff** option)

- **markdown**: Markdown format

```
. wwwhelp regress, markdown
[**[R]** regress](https://www.stata.com/manuals/rregress.pdf)
Text is on clipboard. Press 'Ctrl+V' to paste
```

  - automatically copied to the clipboard
  - appears as a clickable link when pasted into Markdown. **[R] regress**
  - on MacOS system, the notes will be "... Press 'Command+V' to paste" 'Ctrl+V' to paste".

- **txt**: text (command: URL)

```
. wwwhelp regress, txt
[R] regress: https://www.stata.com/manuals/rregress.pdf
Text is on clipboard. Press 'Ctrl+V' to paste
```

Citing with various formats II

- **ms** sends a rich text punctuated with links to the clipboard, which can be pasted easily to the MicroSoft Word.

When pressing 'Command+V' in the MicroSoft Word, the text will appear as a clickable link. **[R] regress**.

  - Limitation: requires Stata16 or newer versions of Stata to be installed as well as Python.
  - Otherwise, automatically switch to the txt option, which displays a plain text with links. (command:URL)

- **texfull**: full Tex text
inserted into a .tex document and compiled using a TeX editor, which will appear as a clickable link in the PDF file. **[R] regress**.

```
. wwwhelp regress, texfull
\href{https://www.stata.com/manuals/rregress.pdf}{\bfseries{[\MakeUppercase{r}] regress}}
Text is on clipboard. Press 'Ctrl+V' to paste
```

Citing with various formats III

- **latex**: in LaTex form

```
. wwwhelp regress, latex
\stwwwhelp[r]{regress}
Text is on clipboard. Press 'Ctrl+V' to paste
```

\stwwwhelp is a new user-defined command in the .tex document, and needs to be defined by adding the following to the introductory section of the .tex file.

```
\newcommand{\stwwwhelp}[2][r]{
        \href{https://www.stata.com/manuals/#1#2.pdf}{\bfseries{[\MakeUppercase{#1}] #2}}

}
```

- **format(#)**: in three supporting Markdown preset formats.
  - `format(1)`: **[R] regress**
  - `format(2)`: **regress**
  - `format(3)`: **help regress**

All of the above are web links to **PDF help files**. Web links to the **HTML help files** can be obtained by setting the **web** option.

Special cases I

Multiple keywords: Some help files require multiple keywords to be uniquely identified.

- **Basic syntax structure**: *category + keyword*
  - Graph class: *wwwhelp graph export*
  - Mata class: *wwwhelp mata intro*
  - Function class: *wwwhelp math function, wwwhelp string function*
- **More complicated cases**: use the *help* command to find out the correct keywords at the first step, and then use the *wwwhelp* command to get their online help files.

Sections: subsection functionality of *wwwhelp command##Section*

- HTML version: can be exactly located
- PDF version: might not be exact
  - the naming of the subsection bookmarks in the PDF manual is not systematic

Command abbreviations

When the keywords can

- **uniquely identify** the official command: open the online help file.
- **not uniquely identify** the official command: list several similar commands using the abbreviation as keyword.

```
. wwwhelp regress_pos
Please input the full name of the command to make the link to help file accurate and unique. See help regress_pos

Find 3 similar commands:
 regress_postestimation |  regress_postestimation_plots |  regress_postestimationts
```

the URL of online help files

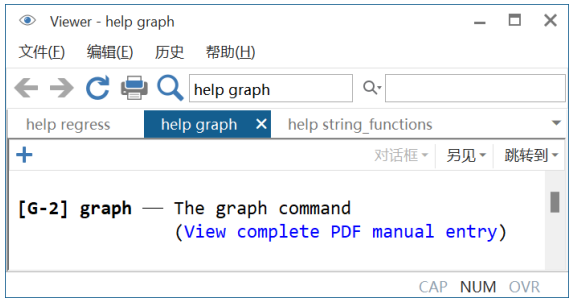
- html version
  - regress: https://www.stata.com/help.cgi?regress
  - graph: https://www.stata.com/help.cgi?graph
  - string functions: https://www.stata.com/help.cgi?string functions
- pdf version
  - regress: https://www.stata.com/manuals/rregress.pdf
  - graph: https://www.stata.com/manuals/g-2graph.pdf
  - string functions: https://www.stata.com/manuals/fnstringfunctions.pdf
- The URL can roughly consist of [prefix] + [kws] + [suffix]
  - **html version**: https://www.stata.com/help.cgi? + [kws]
  - **pdf version**: https://www.stata.com/manuals/ + [kws] + .pdf

[kws]

- **html version**: replacing spaces in the command with underscores
  - regress: regress

- graph: graph
- string functions: string_ functions

- **pdf version**: contains the shorthand notation of the Stata manual corresponding to the official command ⇒ the offline PDF version in the .sthlp suffixed help file



- regress: rregress
- graph: fnstringfunctions
- string functions: fnstringfunctions

Once the [kws] is determined, the URL is established by adding prefixes and suffixes (if any) according as the online help file is HTML or PDF.

Command abbreviation

Abbreviation

- *reg y x* $\Longleftrightarrow$ *regress y x*
- *ge x* $= 3 \Longleftrightarrow$ *generate x* $= 3$

Index files (?help alias.maint)

- provide the correspondence between the full name of the command and all its abbreviations.[1]
- starting with **a-z** or _ (such as ahelp alias.maint)
- contain two columns: (1) list all abbreviated commands; (2) list the corresponding full names

Operations in wwwhelp

1. determine the **index file** (e.g. rhelp alias.maint) corresponding to the abbreviated command (e.g. reg)
2. find the **full name** (e.g. regress) in the index file
3. construct htmlURL or pdfURL from the full name

[1] For example, the abbreviated commands reg, regr, regre and regres all correspond to the full name regress.

automatically copying the formatted text to the clipboard

- On Windows system

```
. wwwhelp xtreg, texfull
\href{https://www.stata.com/manuals/xtxtreg.pdf}{\bfseries{[\MakeUppercase{xt}] xtreg}}
Text is on clipboard. Press ´Ctrl+V´ to paste
```

- On MacOS system

```
. wwwhelp xtreg, texfull
\href{https://www.stata.com/manuals/xtxtreg.pdf}{\bfseries{[\MakeUppercase{xt}] xtreg}}
Text is on clipboard. Press ´Command+V´ to paste
```

Users can paste the resulting content into desired text editor using the Ctrl+V shortcut, without manually selecting and copying the text.

Capability: shell command (interaction with the Operating System)

- On Windows system: shell echo "text"| clip
- On Mac system: shell echo text | pbcopy

The following setting is better as it will not add a newline.

- On Windows system: shell echo | set /p=text| clip
- On Mac system: shell echo -n text| pbcopy

References


N. Balov, “Bayesian threshold autoregressive models,” *The Stata Blog:*, p. Not Elsewhere Classified, 2022.


N. J. Cox, “Speaking stata: The largest five—a tale of tail values,” *The Stata Journal*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 446–459, 2022.


W. Gould, “Mata matters: Stata in mata,” *The Stata Journal*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 125–142, 2010.