

# Data Analysis Applications Group (DAAG) Update: Reading tab-delimited files in IDL

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# You can read tab-delimited text files into IDL

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- The key to parsing a tab-delimited file is the **STRSPLIT ()** function
- Though details vary depending on the exact file structure, the basic idea is to:
  - Open the file
  - Read the header line
  - Read the data lines
  - Extract the numbers for each data line and put into your data array

## First, open the file and read the header line

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```
; open file read-only  
openr, lun, `myFile.txt`, /get_lun  
  
; make our line buffer into a string  
buf=' '  
  
; read header line into buffer  
readf, lun, buf  
  
; extract column headers using strsplit()  
columnHeaders = strsplit(buf, /extract)
```

# Read data lines and extract values

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```
; define the width of our data rows (we know
; how many columns we have, but not how many rows
rows = fltarr(n_elements(columnHeaders))

; read data values and put into data array
while not eof(lun) do
  buf=''
  readf, lun, buf ; read a line
  strData = strsplit(buf, /extract) ; get strings
  floatData = float(strData) ; convert
  rows = [ [rows], [floatData] ] ; add row
wend

; trim that first empty row
rows = rows[* , 1:*]
```