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The Stata Journal

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Stata tip 16: Using input to generate variables

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Sometimes using `generate` is an untidy and long-winded way to generate new variables, particularly if the variable you want to create is categorical and there are many different categories. Thus rather than using

```
. gen iso3166_2 = "AT" if country == "Austria"
. replace iso3166_2 = "BE" if country == "Belgium"
. replace iso3166_2 = "TR" if country == "Turkey"
and so on for say 28 countries
. gen iso3166_3 = "AUT" if country == "Austria"
. replace iso3166_3 = "BEL" if country == "Belgium"
. replace iso3166_3 = "TUR" if country == "Turkey"
and so on for say 28 countries
. gen gername = "Õsterreich" if country == "Austria"
. replace gername = "Belgien" if country == "Belgium"
. replace gername = "Türkei" if country == "Turkey"
and so on for say 28 countries
```

you can use `input` to produce a new dataset, `save` to a temporary file, and then `merge`:

```
. preserve
. clear
. input str15 country str2 iso3166_2 str3 iso3166_3 str15 gername
 Austria AT AUT Õsterreich
 Belgium BE BEL Belgien
 Turkey  TK TUR Türkei
and so on
. end
. sort country
. tempfile foo
. save ‘foo’
. restore
. sort country
. merge country using ‘foo’
```

Among the benefits are less typing; a cleaner log file; in huge datasets, faster data processing; and arguably fewer errors.

See [R] **input** for the finer points on `input`.

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