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THE STATA JOURNAL

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The *Stata Journal*, electronic version (ISSN 1536-8734) is a publication of Stata Press, and Stata is a registered trademark of StataCorp LP.

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 = "Österreich" 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 Österreich  
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`.