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Stata tip 147: Porting downloaded packages between machines

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Stata users are often asked to work on web-disabled machines with little or no Internet access. So it may not be possible for the user to download packages at will using the `net` or `ssc` command. This requirement may exist for good reasons, such as prevention of cybercrime and data breaches.

Stata, like R and Genstat, is a statistical language with potentially as many dialects as users. These dialects are defined by the optional packages that each user has downloaded; the number may be hundreds for a high-power user. This is a major advantage of a statistical language (such as Stata) over a statistical package (such as SPSS). And Stata users would like to continue to have that advantage on web-disabled machines.

Fortunately, downloaded packages can be ported between machines. Downloaded packages on a web-enabled machine are stored in a folder called PLUS, which is one of a list of folders called the ado-path and which Stata searches when asked to run an ado-file. To list the ado-path, including the PLUS folder, we should use the `adopath` command (see [P] `sysdir`). If we use the author's Stata 17 under Windows 10, we get the following output:

```
. adopath
[1] (BASE)      "C:\Program Files\Stata17\ado\base/"
[2] (SITE)      "C:\Program Files\Stata17\ado\site/"
[3]             ", "
[4] (PERSONAL)  "C:\Users\Roger Newson\ado\personal/"
[5] (PLUS)      "C:\Users\Roger Newson\ado\plus/"
[6] (OLDPLACE)  "c:\ado/"
```

We see that the PLUS folder is

```
"C:\Users\Roger Newson\ado\plus/"
```

which is a folder containing subfolders that contain the files belonging to the downloaded packages. In our case, there are over 100 packages containing over 1,000 files.

Most ways of porting a PLUS folder start by zipping it into a `.zip` folder to save space. The official Stata way to do this is by using the `zipfile` command (see [D] `zipfile`):

```
. zipfile "C:\Users\Roger Newson\ado\plus/", saving(myplus.zip, replace)
```

This command produces a lot of output to the log, which I have omitted. However, it also produces the `.zip` folder `myplus.zip`, which contains the folder `Users`, which contains the folder `Roger Newson`, which contains the folder `ado`, which contains the folder `plus`, which contains the subfolders and other contents of our original PLUS folder.

A `.zip` folder may be ported using a high-security file transfer utility, or it may be simply copied to a USB drive that is itself ported to the destination machine. Either way, the user copies the contents of the ported PLUS folder to a location on the destination machine. In our case, our destination machine also uses Windows, and this location will be

```
S:\CPG\Studies\cpgplus\
```

To be able to use the packages on our destination machine, we simply add the location (and its subfolders) to our `ado-path`, using an `adopath +` command:

```
. adopath + "S:\CPG\Studies\cpgplus\"
[1]          " ."
[2] (BASE)    "C:\Program Files\Stata17\ado\base/"
[3] (SITE)    "C:\Program Files\Stata17\ado\site/"
[4] (PERSONAL) "D:\Users\Roger.Newson\ado\personal/"
[5] (PLUS)    "D:\Users\Roger.Newson\ado\plus/"
[6] (OLDPLACE) "c:\ado/"
[7]          "S:\CPG\Studies\cpgplus\"
```

Once this is done, we can use any packages in the ported folder (or its subfolders). Note that the ported folder is ported as a single item, so this process takes no more time for 100 packages containing 1,000 files than for 1 package containing 2 files. Therefore, no powers are lost, even for high-power users with hundreds of downloaded packages.

Methods similar to these might also save time porting all of a user's downloaded packages together from one machine to another, even if the destination machine is not web disabled or if the downloaded packages on the source machine live in a folder other than the PLUS folder.