

NOTETAB Canned Code Trick

This is my main heavy hitter for productivity.

This trick I came up with some years ago in the DOS world. It basically expands upon the idea of reusing existing code. When approaching a new task, most programmers will look around and see if they have code that is close to what they want to produce. If so, they copy the code in and modify it, rather than start over from scratch.

The Canned Code trick is simply an extension of this. I keep a set of “canned code” ready to be called up wherever I am at. By using just 3 to 5 keystrokes, I can call up anywhere from a single line of code to a set of 10 to 20 lines of code. I have a set of standard code in a library called “SPSS.clb”, that has my SPSS commands. These days I use a software called NoteTab.

For instance, when I start a new SPSS program, I punch in “prog” and hit F2. That is 5 keystrokes, and this is what I get:

```
SET PRINTBACK=YES. /*Forces the listing of commands in the output
SET RESULTS = LISTING /*Forces the text results into the output
/ERRORS = BOTH /*says to list both WARNINGS and ERRORS in the output
/MESSAGES = BOTH /*says to list resource utilization in the output
/HEADER=YES /*says to list the headers (default, TITLE, and SUBTITLE) in the output
/WIDTH=128 /*page width = 128
/LENGTH=51 . /*page length = 51

TITLE .
*****
*.sps .
*
*BY GREG BLACK, MASTER OF THE KNOWN UNIVERSE .
*
*
*
*
*****
```

In addition, NoteTab allows you put the cursor wherever you want it to appear in the code rather than appear at the end of the code. In the clip above, I have the cursor appear between the “*” and “.sps” because the first thing I want to do is name the program.

Another example. When I am looking for and want to tag duplicate cases, I hit “dup” and F2, and I get:

```
*****
SUBTITLE TAG DUPLICATES .
SORT CASES BY XXX .

AGGREGATE OUTFILE='C:\DATA\TEMP\AGGR 1.SAV'
/PRESORTED
/BREAK=XXX
/NRECS=N .

MATCH FILES TABLE='C:\DATA\TEMP\AGGR 1.SAV'
/FILE=*
/BY XXX .
SUBTITLE .
*****
TEMPORARY .
SUBTITLE .
SELECT IF NRECS > 1 .
LIST VARIABLES=
/CASES FROM 1 TO 100 .
SUBTITLE .
*****
```

Here I place the cursor on the SUBTITLE line because I want to do a global change on “xxx”.

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When I am doing a finite task that requires repeating the same code over and over, I create a customized clip set up for that task. I usually just include a new clip called “xxx” and use it over and over until I am done, then delete it out of the clipbook.

CLIPBOOK LIBRAIRES

The power of this tool resides in creating your own customized Clipbook Libraries. From the menu bar, go to TOOLS -> CLIPBOOK -> New Library, and you can create a whole new library from scratch. Here you would put your often used clips, or maybe create a library for a specific project. I always just add a new clip into my existing library when I have a project specific clip (see below).

However, the easiest way to get your library working is to just borrow already existing library from someone, rename it to your name, and then drop it into the C:\Program file\NOTETAB\Libraries. When you fire up NOTETAB again, it will automatically call its up.

ADD EXISTING LIBRARY

To add in an existing library so that it shows up on your list of libraries at the bottom, simply copy the new clipbook into “C:\Program files\NoteTab Light\Libraries”. NOTETAB will automatically detect it and call it up next time you enter the program. It will show up as a tab at the bottom. When you click on that tab, the clipbook will appear on the right side and be accessible.

In this help page, I have a link to SPSS.clb. You are free to copy that and use it for your SPSS library.

MULTIPLE CLIPBOOK LIBRARIES

If you take this trick to it’s logical extension, you could have a number of different libraries of code set up. You could have different libraries for each of the different projects your working on, or different libraries for each of the data sets you work with, or a REPORTS library, a TABLES library, etc. The possibilities are endless.

ADDED BONUS – CODE IS CORRECT AND HAS THE OPTIONS YOU WANT ALREADY THERE

In my canned code, I have all of the options for that particular command or set of commands already in the clip. I don’t have to remember the option that I want because it is already there in my canned code clip.

PLACE HOLDER IN CLIP

In addition, you can enter a place holder in the clip that positions the cursor exactly where you want it when you call up the clip. Simply insert the charectors “^&” (without the “s) in the clip, and your cursor goes automatically to that spot when you call the clip up.

SIDE NOTES ON NOTETAB (Used in presentation)

You can download and use NOTETAB for free for 30 days off the internet. It is an award winning ASCII editor, with numerous PC Magazine Editor’s choice awards, and I love it. For \$20, it is a bargain. The web address to download the trial is:

<http://www.notetab.com/ntl.htm>

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NOTETAB Configuration hints

Click on “Edit” on the NOTETAB taskbar, and then choose “options”.

- Documents Tab: Most important. Set word wrap off, and set auto-indent on.
- Files Tab: I like to set the bottom options to “match directory”, and then set the directories to C:\PROG.
- Clipbook: I used to turn on “single click to paste”, but I change my clips so often now that I no longer set this on. In order to edit a clip, you have to be able to click on it. If this is set on, NOTETAB will just paste it instead of allowing you to edit it.
- I also set the associations that I want, usually .txt, .prt (for print – mainframe output), and .lst (for listing – micro output).
- I also set the background to black and the print to white.

Other than that, you are good to go.