

AsciiConvert

Version 7.6

User Guide

Please print this user guide for easy reference.

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Introduction

AsciiConvert is a versatile tool to reformat and/or re-arrange the order of data fields in comma-delimited, tab-delimited and fixed-width records.

All records in the source file must be consistent in terms of number of fields and data types.

Before you overwrite any files, always make sure that you have a good backup the files. This program is supplied AS IS without any warranties and liability.

AsciiConvert requires Microsoft .NET version 2.0.

Please contact technical support for suggestions, or if you encounter errors.

Please download latest version of AsciiConvert from www.informatik.com.

Trial Version

The free trial version is for testing only and is limited to processing files with fewer than 50 records. The licensed version does not have a limit (subject to computer's capabilities).

Step-by-Step Procedure

Open source file

Click on the Open File icon in the toolbar or select the option from the File menu. If you have previously created a template file, also open the template.

AsciiConvert supports three types of files:

- Tab-Delimited files
- Comma-Delimited files (with or without quote encapsulation)
- Fixed-Width files

For Fixed-Width files, AsciiConvert also prompts you to supply the Fixed-Width Specification file. The specification file is a list of field sizes. See Fixed-Width Specification File section below

When you click on OK, the source file is parsed into the recognized individual fields.

Fixed-Width Specification File

The Fixed-Width Specification file specifies the field length (in number of characters) of each field in the source file. The Fixed-Width Specification simply lists the field sizes (including spaces), each value separated by a comma, for example:

```
5,1,10,9,10,5,20
```

It is suggested that you give the specification file the same name as the data file, with a '_spec' suffix. For example a C:\somedir\datafile.txt would have a companion specification file named c:\somedir\datafile_spec.txt. With that naming method the specification file will be defaulted by the system. Alternatively, you can give the specification file the same base name as the data file but with a .spec extension name.

Re-arrange the field sequence

In the main window, at the location of the field that you wish to re-position, click on a #id cell in the New Lineup section (4th column) and select the field id# for that location.

Add a New Field

In the main window, at the location where you wish to insert a new field, click on the Add button. A new field #id is allocated to the newly created field. To specify the properties of the new file, click on the Format button. For formatting, see sections below.

Remove a Field

In the main window, at the location where you wish to remove a field, click on the Delete button.

Formatting

To format the data in a field, click on the Format button of the field that you wish to reformat. The Format window opens. Select the type of data (Text, Number or Date).

There are two methods of formatting:

- a) Click on a radio button for some common formatting options, or
- b) Specify the formatting in one of the many custom options. If you use a custom option, the radio button must be set to 'None'.

After you have specified the formatting, always click on the Preview button to see the effect of the reformatting. If correct, click on the OK button.

The formatting specification can be saved as a template for use in future data file conversions. Templates are saved and opened from the File menu in the main window. See also the Templates section below.

If a conversion specification is incompatible with the source data, the output field will be left blank.

Format Options

Trim

The Trim option will remove leading and/or trailing spaces from the source data. If a data file is converted from a fixed-width file to a comma-delimited or tab-delimited file, all fields are trimmed by default.

Replace Characters, Remove Characters

A string (characters) in the source data can be replaced with a specified new string. The characters are case sensitive. For this option always specify the field as a 'Text field'. To remove characters, leave the 'With' field blank.

Truncate

The source data will be cut back to the specified number of characters. Truncating is from the end of the string. The Truncate option is executed before the Fixed Length option.

Fixed Length

The field size is set to the specified value. Unless the Right-Adjust checkbox is checked, the string will be placed to the left with spaces (if any) to the right. For numbers, the Zero-Fill option will right-adjust the number and fill any leading gap with zeros. Note, if the Fixed Length value is less than the length of the source data, the data will be truncated. The Fixed Length option is executed after the Truncate option.

If the output is saved to a fixed-width file, the fixed length of the field must be specified in the 'Fixed Length' field. If the source file is also a fixed-width file, the entry can be left blank and the system will apply the original field length.

Number of Decimals

This option specifies the number of decimals for numbers if the formatting option is selected in the Numbers option panel. This option is ineffective if the formatting is specified in the Custom Format field. The option is available for Standard and 'Thousand Separator' data formats only.

Auto-Incrementing Numbers

The Auto-Increment numbering of a field is available in Custom Format for text. Please refer to the Custom Formatting section.

Custom Formats

The Custom Format option allows you to format Text, Numbers and Dates in many different ways. Click on the Help link above the Custom Format field for options. Each data type (Text, Number, Date) has its own help text.

See section below for a description of all custom formatting options.

Finalize and Save

Caution: Always make sure that you have a good backup of all files before you overwrite files.

When all re-positioning and formatting is done, click on the Save option (File menu or Save icon in the toolbar). Specify the file format for the output data: Tab-delimited, Comma-delimited (with or without quote encapsulation) or Fixed-width.

It is recommended that you click on the Sample button and carefully review the reformatted first record. The converted first record is displayed in Notepad for easy review. You can print the sample from Notepad's print option.

If the formatting is correct, repeat the save option and click on the OK button.

You may also want to save the format specifications as a template for use with future files. See Template section below.

Custom Formatting

For fixed data, enter the text string in the Custom Format field. The data entered for numeric and date fields must be in the final format.

For formatting imported text, the following options are supported (with examples):

Text fields

AAA [F5] [L5] ZZZ

First 5 characters of the current field and Last 5 characters of current field are inserted between the character strings AAA and ZZZ.

AAA [3] [4] ZZZ

The third and fourth single characters of the current field are inserted between the character strings AAA and ZZZ.

AAA [F5 #3] ZZZ

First 5 characters of Field #3 are inserted between the character strings AAA and BBB.

For this purpose the data of field #3 is trimmed, i.e. spaces in front or at the back of field #3 are ignored.

AAA [5 #3] ZZZ

The fifth characters of Field #3 is inserted between the character strings AAA and BBB.

For this purpose the data of field #3 is trimmed, i.e. spaces in front or at the back of field #3 are ignored.

AAA [+0001] ZZZ

An auto-incrementin number is inserted between the text string AAA and ZZZ, starting with number 00001.

AAA [F5] [L5 #3] [6] [7] ZZZ

Sample of a combination of all the above.

For fixed text, enter the text in free form. If the text string includes a '[' character, then encapsulate the text string in double quotes.

Numbers

Please use the ### convention, for example:

###-##-##### converts 123456789 to 123-45-6789

(###) ###-##### converts 1234567890 to (123) 456-7890

Data string must be whole numbers, decimals are not allowed.

Ensure that the number of digits corresponds with the number of # characters.

The system will not give an error message if the number of digits does not match.

For fixed data, enter the text in free form in a final numeric format.

If a conversion specification is incompatible with the source data, the output field will be left blank.

The most common number formats can be selected from the Number data panel.

Dates

Placeholders (case sensitive):

- d for day of month (no leading zero)
- dd for day of month (with a leading zero if needed)
- ddd for day of week (3 letter abbreviation)
- dddd for day of week (full name)
- m for month number (no leading zero)

mm for month number (with a leading zero if needed)
mmm for month name (3 letter abbreviation)*
MMM for month name (3 letter abbreviation), upper-case *
mmmm for month name (full name) *
MMMM for month name (full name), upper-case *
y for year (last 1 or 2 digits, no leading zero)
yy for year (last 2 digits, with leading zero if needed)
yyyy for year (4 digits)

*To allow for upper-case option, these are different from standard Windows definitions.

Examples converting the date 1/1/08:

d/M/y converts to 1/1/8 (not recommended)
dd/MM/yy converts to 01/01/08
dd/MM/yyyy converts to 01/01/2008
dd-MM-yyyy converts to 01-01-2008
dd-MMM-yyyy converts to 01-Jan-2008
yyyy-mm-dd converts to 2008-01-01
yyyymmdd converts to 20080101
Year yyyy converts to Year 2008
\Month mm converts to Month 01 (M is a reserved character and must be preceded by a backslash).

Free text is allowed, but do not use letters y, d, m or M in the free-text-string unless preceded by a backslash (\).

For fixed data, enter the text in free form in a final date format.

The most common date formats can be selected from the Date data panel.

Fixed entries in the Custom field (text, numbers, dates) are processed as such and are not subjected to other formatting settings.

If a conversion specification is incompatible with the source data, the output field will be left blank.

Sequence of processing

The formatting options are processed in the following order:

Text:

1. Replace string
2. Formatting
3. Trim text
4. Case (upper, lower, proper)
5. Truncate string
6. Fixed field width

Numbers:

1. Formatting
2. Trim text
3. Truncate string
4. Fixed field width

Dates:

1. Formatting
2. Replace string
3. Trim string
4. Truncate string
5. Fixed field width

If a data file is converted from a fixed-width file to a comma-delimited or tab-delimited file, all fields are trimmed by default.

Templates

The formatting specifications can be saved as a template for future use with identical data files. Templates are saved and opened from the File menu in the main window. Template files are saved in XML format.

Technical Support

For technical support contact information, please go to www.informatik.com

Other Software

Please visit www.informatik.com for many other software products, including scanning, document imaging, graphics file conversions. Some of the software is free.

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