

DilaSoft for Windows Auto Data Name Feature

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The Auto Data Name Feature: An explanation of the use and functionality.

DilaSoft for Windows now offers an auto-naming feature that controls the names of both the data file (*.prn) and experiment file (*.exp). The use of the auto-naming feature is simple and straight forward. It should provide many users with much faster and more efficient repetitive experiment operation.

The auto-name feature allows the continuous retesting of the same or similar specimens with the least amount of user interaction. Combined with the auto-specimen length feature (in the Dilatometer), no software action is necessary at all except clicking on the Start button to begin an experiment. All other functions are automatic, provided a temperature program is already created and selected in the Experiment Setup.

When the "Auto Data Name" box is checked in the experiment setup screen, the filenames will change to "testxxxx.prn" and "testxxxx.exp". The "xxxx" will be replaced by numbers when the files are created. The software will do a search for current data files starting at "test0000.prn" if that file is found, it will increment the number and continue until it reaches a filename that does not exist. The range of filenames is "test0000" through "test9999" offering ten thousand individual filenames for concurrent tests. This is far more than should be allowed to reside on the hard drive at any time before archiving and removal. Removing the files will automatically reset the filename search to "test0000".

The experiment filenames are exactly the same as the data filenames (except for their respective extensions) so that they are easily matched for archival, storage or reproducing purposes. The names can not be changed by the user when the "Auto Data Name" box is checked as a safety feature. However, if the box is unchecked, the auto experiment files may be manually loaded by the software and then changed. If these files are not to be changed, caution should be advised in this situation. Experiment filenames are controlled by the availability of data filenames so some caution should be observed. If a data file is deleted, that makes the corresponding experiment file available for use. The old experiment file will be overwritten by the new experiment file unless it is saved to a new location. Normally this should present no problem, however if there were some reason to save a particular experiment setup, that file should be either removed from the Experiment Directory or renamed to preserve it. As long as experiment data files and their respective experiment setup files (*.prn and *.exp) are archived and stored as sets, their should be no concern for file loss.

Dilatometer Experiment Setup

Test Data

Operator: Temp Prog:

Data File: Exp. File:

Auto Data Name:

Specimen Data

Name: Shrink Limit: %

Material: Use Max Len.:

Length: mm

Reference Data

Material: Use:

Length: mm Use Correction File Reference Temperature: °C

To use the Auto Data Name feature, simply click on the "Auto Data Name" box with the mouse button in the Experiment Setup screen (select "Change" from the Main Tab). When selected, a check mark is displayed in the box and the filenames will change to "testxxxx" as stated above. The function of the data file and experiment file selection buttons is then disabled. From this point on, the program will select filenames for all experiment and data files automatically. If no other experiment data needs to be changed in between experiments, all that needs to be done is the mechanical setup of the instrument (sample placement, etc) and then clicking on the Start button. The filename search and increment is performed every time the program is loaded, the experiment setup screen is entered and when the Start button is pressed. Existing data files and experiments can not be overwritten using this feature!

When the program is first loaded, the last experiment file is read with the Auto Data Name enabled or not. However, if the Auto Data Name is enabled and a new experiment is started the program will generate new data and experiment filenames before the experiment starts. This insures that the old data file and experiment information remains intact on the hard drive.

As with the manual selection of filenames, their placement is controlled by the File Directory settings from the File drop-down menu. The data files are placed in the Data Directory and the experiment files are placed in the Experiment Directory.

We understand that the "testxxx" filenames are nondescript, but any attempt at a descriptive name would undermine the automatic functionality of this feature. The system does stamp them with the file creation date and time to help clarify when the experiments were run. The date and time is also contained in the header of the data file itself and the experiment file contains the name of the data file it created. They can also be easily renamed at a later time. Both files are stored in standard ASCII text format and can be opened with Notepad or any other text editor or word processor to view the headers or other information contained in them.

A last note of caution. With the auto-naming feature, it becomes very easy to allow the directories on the hard drive to fill with a huge amount of files. These should be checked periodically and archived/removed for the health of the computer system. An advantage of the auto-naming feature is that it automatically displays how many files have been generated by the filename itself!