

GNUPLOT Quick Reference

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Starting GNUPLOT

to enter GNUPLOT `gnuplot`
to enter batch GNUPLOT `gnuplot macro_file`
to pipe commands to GNUPLOT `application | gnuplot`
see below for environment variables you might want to change before entering GNUPLOT.

Exiting GNUPLOT

exit GNUPLOT `quit`

All GNUPLOT commands can be abbreviated to the first few unique letters, usually three characters. This reference uses the complete name for clarity.

Getting Help

introductory help `help plot`
help on a topic `help <topic>`
list of all help available `help or ?`
show current environment `show all`

Command-line Editing

The UNIX, MS-DOS and VMS versions of GNUPLOT support command-line editing and a command history. EMACS style editing is supported.

Line Editing:

move back a single character `^ B`
move forward a single character `^ F`
moves to the beginning of the line `^ A`
moves to the end of the line `^ E`
delete the previous character `^ H and DEL`
deletes the current character `^ D`
deletes to the end of line `^ K`
redraws line in case it gets trashed `^ L, ^ R`
deletes the entire line `^ U`
deletes the last word `^ W`

History:

moves back through history `^ P`
moves forward through history `^ N`

The following arrow keys may be used on the MS-DOS version if READLINE is used.

IBM PC Arrow Keys:

Left Arrow `same as ^ B`
Right Arrow `same as ^ F`
Ctrl Left Arrow `same as ^ A`
Ctrl Right Arrow `same as ^ E`
Up Arrow `same as ^ P`
Down Arrow `same as ^ N`

Graphics Devices

All screen graphics devices are specified by names a startup file (.gnuplot in UNIX). If you change `replot` command.

get a list of valid devices

Graphics Terminals:

AED 512 Terminal
AED 767 Terminal
Amiga
Adobe Illustrator 3.0 Format
Apollo graphics primitive, rescalable
Atari ST
BBN Bitgraph Terminal
SCO CGI Driver
Apollo graphics primitive, fixed window
SGI GL window
MS-DOS Kermit Tek4010 term - color
MS-DOS Kermit Tek4010 term - mono
NeXTstep window system
REGIS graphics language
Selanar Tek Terminal
SunView window system
Tektronix 4106, 4107, 4109 & 420X
Tektronix 4010; most TEK emulators
VAX UIS window system
VT-like tek40xx terminal emulator
UNIX plotting (not always supplied)
AT&T 3b1 or 7300 UNIXPC
X11 default display device
X11 multicolor point default device

Turbo C PC Graphics Modes:

Hercules
Color Graphics Adaptor
Monochrome CGA
Extended Graphics Adaptor
VGA
Monochrome VGA
Super VGA - requires SVGA driver
AT&T 6300 Micro

MS Windows 3.x and OS/2 Presentation Manager

Hardcopy Devices:

Unknown - not a plotting device
Dump ASCII table of X Y [Z] values
printer or glass dumb terminal
Roland DXY800A plotter

Dot Matrix Printers

Epson-style 60-dot per inch printers
Epson LX-800, Star NL-10
NX-1000, PROPRINTER
NEC printer CP6, Epson LQ-800
Star Color Printer
Tandy DMP-130 60-dot per inch
Vectrix 384 & Tandy color printer

Laser Printers

Talaris EXCL language	<code>set term excl</code>
Imagen laser printer	<code>set term imagen</code>
LN03-Plus in EGM mode	<code>set term ln03</code>
PostScript graphics language	<code>set term post [mode color 'font' size]</code>
CorelDraw EPS	<code>set term corel [mode color 'font' size]</code>
Prescribe - for the Kyocera Laser Printer	<code>set term prescribe</code>
Kyocera Laser Printer with Courier font	<code>set term kyo</code>
QMS/QUIC Laser (also Talaris 1200)	<code>set term qms</code>

Metafiles

AutoCAD DXF (120x80 default)	<code>set term dxf</code>
FIG graphics language: SunView or X	<code>set term fig</code>
FIG graphics language: Large Graph	<code>set term bfig</code>
SCO hardcopy CGI	<code>set term hcgi</code>
Frame Maker MIF 3.0	<code>set term mif [pentype curvetype help]</code>
Portable bitmap	<code>set term pbm [fontsize color]</code>
Uniplex Redwood Graphics Interface Protocol	<code>set term rgip</code>
TGIF language	<code>set term tgif</code>

HP Devices

HP2623A and maybe others	<code>set term hp2623A</code>
HP2648 and HP2647	<code>set term hp2648</code>
HP7580, & probably other HPs (4 pens)	<code>set term hp7580B</code>
HP7475 & lots of others (6 pens)	<code>set term hpgl</code>
HP Laserjet series II & clones	<code>set term hpljii [75 100 150 300]</code>
HP DeskJet 500	<code>set term hpdj [75 100 150 300]</code>
HP PaintJet & HP3630	<code>set term hppj [FNT5X9 FNT9X17 FNT13x25]</code>
HP laserjet III (HPGL plot vectors)	<code>set term pcl5 [mode font fontsize]</code>

TeX picture environments

LaTeX picture environment	<code>set term latex</code>
EEPIC – extended LaTeX picture	<code>set term eepic</code>
LaTeX picture with emTeX specials	<code>set term emtex</code>
PSTricks macros for TeX or LaTeX	<code>set term pstricks</code>
TPIC specials for TeX or LaTeX	<code>set term tpic</code>
MetaFont font generation input	<code>set term mf</code>

Files

<code>plot</code> a data file	<code>plot 'fspec'</code>
<code>load</code> in a macro file	<code>load 'fspec'</code>
<code>save</code> command buffer to a macro file	<code>save 'fspec'</code>
<code>save settings</code> for later reuse	<code>save set 'fpec'</code>

PLOT & SPLOT commands

`plot` and `splot` are the primary commands `plot` is used to plot 2-d functions and data, while `splot` plots 3-d surfaces and data.

Syntax:

`plot {ranges} <function> {title}{style} {, <function> {title}{style}...}`

`splot {ranges} <function> {title}{style} {, <function> {title}{style}...}`

where <function> is either a mathematical expression, the name of a data file enclosed in quotes, or a pair (`plot`) or triple (`splot`) of mathematical expressions in the case of parametric functions. User-defined functions and variables may also be defined here. Examples will be given below.

Plotting Data

Discrete data contained in a file can displayed by (in quotes) on the `plot` or `splot` command line. Data lines beginning with # (or ! on VMS) will be ignored. Each data point represents an (x,y) pair. For `splot` each data point represents an (x,y,z) pair. For `splot` with error bars (see `plot errorbars`), each data point is represented by (x,y,xlow,xhigh), (x,y,xdelta,ydelta), or (x,y,xlow,yhigh), each line of a data file must be separated by blank columns.

For `plots` the x value may be omitted, and for `splots` either case the omitted values are assigned the current value start at 0 and are incremented for each data point.

Surface Plotting

Implicitly, there are two types of 3-d datafiles. If a datafile is assumed to be a grid data, i.e., the data has a grid in the x-y direction (the ith cross isoline passes thru the ith column) drawn for grid data. (Note contouring is available for `splot` the same length, no cross isolines will be drawn across the surface.)

For `splot` if 3-d datafile and using format (see `splot format`) a non parametric mode must be specified. If, otherwise, a parametric mode should be selected (see `set plot parametric`).

example of plotting a 3-d datafile: `splot 'datafile' parametric`
 example of plotting explicit: `splot 'datafile' parametric`

Using Pipes

On some computer systems with a `popen` function, a shell command by starting the file name with a '<' character:
`pop(x) = 103*exp(x/10) plot "< awk '{ print $1-$2 }'`
 would plot the same information as the first `popen` command on the x axis.

Similarly, output can be piped to another application:
`set out "|lpr -Pmy_laser_printer"`

Plot With Style

Plots may be displayed in one of twelve styles: **lines**, **points**, **linespoints**, **impulses**, **dots**, **steps**, **errorbars** (or **yerrorbars**), **xerrorbars**, **xyerrorbars**, **boxes**, **boxerrorbars**, or **boxxyerrorbars**. The **lines** style connects adjacent points with lines. The **points** style displays a small symbol at each point. The **linespoints** style does both **lines** and **points**. The **impulses** style displays a vertical line from the x axis (or from the grid base for **splot**) to each point. The **dots** style plots a tiny dot at each point; this is useful for scatter plots with many points. The **steps** style is used for drawing staircase-like functions. The **boxes** style may be used for barcharts.

The **errorbars** style is only relevant to 2-d data file plotting. It is treated like **points** for **splots** and function **plots**. For data **plots**, **errorbars** is like **points**, except that a vertical error bar is also drawn: for each point (x,y), a line is drawn from (x,y_{low}) to (x,y_{high}). A tic mark is placed at the ends of the error bar. The y_{low} and y_{high} values are read from the data file's columns, as specified with the **using** option to plot. The **xerrorbars** style is similar except that it draws a horizontal error bar from x_{low} to x_{high}. The **xyerrorbars** or **boxxyerrorbars** style is used for data with errors in both x and y. A barchart style may be used in conjunction with y error bars through the use of **boxerrorbars**. See **plot errorbars** for more information.

Default styles are chosen with the **set function style** and **set data style** commands.

By default, each function and data file will use a different line type and point type, up to the maximum number of available types. All terminal drivers support at least six different point types, and re-use them, in order, if more than six are required. The LaTeX driver supplies an additional six point types (all variants of a circle), and thus will only repeat after twelve curves are plotted with points.

If desired, the style and (optionally) the line type and point type used for a curve can be specified.

with <style> {<linetype> {<pointtype>}}

where <style> is either **lines**, **points**, **linespoints**, **impulses**, **dots**, **steps**, **errorbars** (or **yerrorbars**), **xerrorbars**, **xyerrorbars**, **boxes**, **boxerrorbars**, **boxxyerrorbars**.

The <linetype> & <pointtype> are positive integer constants or expressions and specify the line type and point type to be used for the plot. Line type 1 is the first line type used by default, line type 2 is the second line type used by default, etc.

plots sin(x) with impulses	plot sin(x) with impulses
plots x*y with points, x**2 + y**2 default	splot x*y w points, x**2 + y**2
plots tan(x) with default function style	plot [] [-2:5] tan(x)
plots "data.1" with lines	plot "data.1" with l
plots "leastsq.dat" with impulses	plot 'leastsq.dat' w i
plots "exper.dat" with errorbars & lines connecting points	plot 'exper.dat' w l, 'exper.dat' w err

Here 'exper.dat' should have three or four data columns.

plots x**2 + y**2 and x**2 - y**2 with the same line type	splot x**2 + y**2 w l 1, x**2 - y**2 w l 1
plots sin(x) and cos(x) with linespoints, using the same line type but different point types	plot sin(x) w linesp 1 3, \ cos(x) w linesp 1 4
plots file "data" with points style 3	plot "data" with points 1 3

Note that the line style must be specified when specifying the point style, even when it is irrelevant. Here the line style is 1 and the point style is 3, and the line style is irrelevant.

See **set style** to change the default styles.

Plot Title

A title of each plot appears in the key. By default the title is placed on the plot command line. The title can be changed with the **title** option. The title can be changed with the **with** option.

title "<title>"

where <title> is the new title of the plot and must be placed on the plot command line. The title can be changed with the **with** option.

plots y=x with the title 'x'

plots the "glass.dat" file

with the title 'revolution surface'

plots x squared with title "x^2" and "data.1"

with title 'measured data'

Set-Show Commands

all commands below begin with set
set mapping of polar angles
arrows from point to

force autoscaling of an axis
enter/exit parametric mode
display border
clip points/line near boundaries
specify parameters for contour plots
enable splot contour plots
default plotting style for data
specify dummy variable
tic-mark label format specification
function plotting style
draw a grid at major tick marks & minor tics
(optional)
enables hiddenline removal
specify number of isolines
enables key of curves in plot
logscaling of an axes (optionally giving base)
mapping 3D coordinates
offsets from center of graph
mapping 2D coordinates
set radial range
set sampling rate of functions
set scaling factors of plot
control display of isolines of surface
control graphics device
change direction of tics
adjust relative height of vertical axis
adjust size of tick marks
turn on time/date stamp
set centered plot title
set parametric range
set surface parametric ranges
sets the view point for **splot**
sets x-axis label
set horizontal range
change horizontal tics

adjust number of minor tick marks
draw x-axis
sets y-axis label
set vertical range
change vertical tics

draw y-axis
set default threshold for values near 0
draw axes
sets z-axis label
set vertical range
change vertical tics

draw z-axis

```
set
angles [degrees|radians]
arrow [<tag>][from <sx>,<sy>,<sz>]
  [to <ex>,<ey>,<ez>][nohead]
autoscale [<axes>]
[no]parametric
[no]border
[no]clip <clip-type>
cntrparam [spline][points][order][levels]
[no]contour [base|surface|both]
data style <style-choice>
dummy <dummy1>,<dummy2>...
format [<axes>]["format-string"]
function style <style-choice>
[no]grid [mgrid OR mygrid]

[no]hidden3d
isosamples <expression>
key <x>,<y>,<z>
logscale <axes> [<base>]
mapping [cartesian|spherical|cylindrical]
offsets <left>,<right>,<top>,<bottom>
[no]polar
rrange [<rmin>:<rmax>]
samples <expression>
size <xsize>,<ysize>
[no]surface
terminal <device>
tics <direction>
ticslevel <level>
ticscale [<size>]
[no]time
title "title-text" <xoff>,<yoff>
trange [<tmin>:<tmax>]
urange or vrange
view <rot_x>,<rot_z>,<scale>,<scale_z>
xlabel "<label>" <xoff>,<yoff>
xrange [<xmin>:<xmax>]
xtics <start>,<incr>,<end>,
"<label>" <pos>
[no]mxtics OR [no]mytics [<freq>]
[no]xzeroaxis
ylabel "<label>" <xoff>,<yoff>
yrange [<ymin>:<ymax>]
ytics <start>,<incr>,<end>,
"<label>" <pos>
[no]yzeroaxis
zero <expression>
[no]zeroaxis
zlabel "<label>" <xoff>,<yoff>
zrange [<zmin>:<zmax>]
ztics <start>,<incr>,<end>,
"<label>" <pos>
[no]zzeroaxis
```

Contour Plots

Enable contour drawing for surfaces. This option
Syntax: set contour { base | surface | both } set n
If no option is provided to **set contour**, the def
to draw the contours: **base** draws the contours
surface draws the contours on the surfaces them
base and the surface.

See also **set cntrparam** for the parameters that

Contour Parameters

Sets the different parameters for the contouring p
set cntrparam

5 automatic levels
3 discrete levels at 10%, 37% and 90%
5 incremental levels at 0, .1, .2, .3 and .4
sets n = 10 retaining current setting of auto, s
incr., or discr.
set start = 100 and increment = 50, retaining s
old n

This command controls the way contours are plo
pression and <z1>, <z2> any constant expressio

linear, **cubicspline**, **bspline** - Controls type of
the contours are drawn piecewise linear, as extra
then piecewise linear contours are interpolated to
may undulate. The third option is the uniform b
linear data but is guaranteed to be smoother.

points - Eventually all drawings are done with
the number of points used to approximate a curve
only.

order - Order of the bspline approximation to be
resulting contour. (Of course, higher order bspline
piecewise linear data.) This option is relevant for
in the range from 2 (linear) to 10.

levels - Number of contour levels, 'n'. Selection
'discrete', and 'incremental'. For 'auto', if the surf
will be generated from zmin+dz to zmax-dz in
(levels + 1). For 'discrete', contours will be genera
discrete levels is limited to MAX_DISCRETE_LEV
contours are generated at <n> values of z beginni

Specifying Labels

Arbitrary labels can be placed on the plot using the **set label** command. If the z coordinate is given on a **plot** it is ignored; if it is missing on a **splot** it is assumed to be 0.

```
set label {<tag>}{" <label'text> "}          {at <x>, <y> {, <z>}}
                                           {<justification>}
set nlabel {<tag>}
show label
```

The text defaults to "", and the position to 0,0,0. The <x>, <y>, and <z> values are in the graph's coordinate system. The tag is an integer that is used to identify the label. If no <tag> is given, the lowest unused tag value is assigned automatically. The tag can be used to delete or change a specific label. To change any attribute of an existing label, use the **set label** command with the appropriate tag, and specify the parts of the label to be changed.

By default, the text is placed flush left against the point x,y,z. To adjust the way the label is positioned with respect to the point x,y,z, add the parameter <justification>, which may be **left**, **right** or **center**, indicating that the point is to be at the left, right or center of the text. Labels outside the plotted boundaries are permitted but may interfere with axes labels or other text.

```
label at (1,2) to "y=x"                set label "y=x" at 1,2
label "y=x^2" w right of the text at (2,3,4), set label 3 "y=x^2" at 2,3,4 right
& tag the label number 3
change preceding label to center justification set label 3 center
delete label number 2                  set nlabel 2
delete all labels                       set nlabel
show all labels (in tag order)         show label
```

(The EEPIC, Imagen, LaTeX, and TPIC drivers allow \\ in a string to specify a newline.)

Miscellaneous Commands

For further information on these commands, print out a copy of the GNUPLOT manual.

```
change working directory                cd
erase current screen or device          clear
exit GNUPLOT                           exit or quit or EOF
display text and wait                   pause <time> ["<string>"]
print the value of <expression>        print <expression>
print working directory                 pwd
repeat last plot or splot            replot
spawn an interactive shell              ! (UNIX) or $ (VMS)
```

Environment Variables

A number of shell environment variables are understood but may be useful.

If GNUTERM is defined, it is used as the name of any terminal type sensed by GNUPLOT on start-up (equivalent) start-up file (see **start-up**), and of course

On Unix, AmigaOS, and MS-DOS, GNUHELP must be in the file (gnuplot.gih).

On VMS, the symbol GNUPLOT\$HELP should be defined in the GNUPLOT.

On Unix, HOME is used as the name of a directory, the current directory. On AmigaOS and MS-DOS, the environment variable HOME is used. See help start-up.

On Unix, PAGER is used as an output filter for help.

On Unix and AmigaOS, SHELL is used for the shell command.

On AmigaOS, GNUFONT is used for the screen font (phire/14).

On MS-DOS, if the BGI interface is used, the variable BGI is used to specify the BGI drivers directory. Furthermore SVGA is used to specify the resolution (800x600 res.), and its mode of operation as 'Name'. On MS-DOS, the environment variable C:\TC\BGI\SVGADRV.BGI and mode 3 is used for the BGI interface and 'set SVGA=SVGADRV.3'.

Expressions

In general, any mathematical expression accepted by the shell is accepted. The precedence of these operators is determined by the shell language. White space (spaces and tabs) is ignored.

Complex constants may be expressed as {<real>+<imag>}. The curly braces are explicitly required here.

Functions

The functions in GNUPLOT are the same as the corresponding functions in the Unix math library, except that all functions accept integer, real, and complex arguments, unless otherwise noted. The **sgn** function is also supported, as in BASIC.

Function	Arguments	Returns
abs(x)	any	absolute value of x , $ x $; same type
abs(x)	complex	length of x , $\sqrt{\text{real}(x)^2 + \text{imag}(x)^2}$
acos(x)	any	$\cos^{-1}x$ (inverse cosine) in radians
arg(x)	complex	the phase of x in radians
asin(x)	any	$\sin^{-1}x$ (inverse sin) in radians
atan(x)	any	$\tan^{-1}x$ (inverse tangent) in radians
besj0(x)	radians	J_0 Bessel function of x
besj1(x)	radians	J_1 Bessel function of x
besy0(x)	radians	Y_0 Bessel function of x
besy1(x)	radians	Y_1 Bessel function of x
ceil(x)	any	$\lceil x \rceil$, smallest integer not less than x (real part)
cos(x)	radians	$\cos x$, cosine of x
cosh(x)	radians	$\cosh x$, hyperbolic cosine of x
erf(x)	any	$\text{Erf}(\text{real}(x))$, error function of $\text{real}(x)$
erfc(x)	any	$\text{Erfc}(\text{real}(x))$, 1.0 - error function of $\text{real}(x)$
exp(x)	any	e^x , exponential function of x
floor(x)	any	$\lfloor x \rfloor$, largest integer not greater than x (real part)
gamma(x)	any	$\Gamma(\text{real}(x))$, gamma function of $\text{real}(x)$
ibeta(p,q,x)	any	$\text{Ibeta}(\text{real}(p, q, x))$, ibeta function of $\text{real}(p, q, x)$
igamma(a,x)	any	$\text{Igamma}(\text{real}(a, x))$, igamma function of $\text{real}(a, x)$
imag(x)	complex	imaginary part of x as a real number
int(x)	real	integer part of x , truncated toward zero
lgamma(x)	any	$\text{Lgamma}(\text{real}(x))$, lgamma function of $\text{real}(x)$
log(x)	any	$\log_e x$, natural logarithm (base e) of x
log10(x)	any	$\log_{10} x$, logarithm (base 10) of x
rand(x)	any	$\text{Rand}(\text{real}(x))$, pseudo random number generator
real(x)	any	real part of x
sgn(x)	any	1 if $x > 0$, -1 if $x < 0$, 0 if $x = 0$. $\text{imag}(x)$ ignored
sin(x)	radians	$\sin x$, sine of x
sinh(x)	radians	$\sinh x$, hyperbolic sine x
sqrt(x)	any	\sqrt{x} , square root of x
tan(x)	radians	$\tan x$, tangent of x
tanh(x)	radians	$\tanh x$, hyperbolic tangent of x

Operators

The operators in GNUPLOT are the same as the corresponding operators in the C programming language, except that all operators accept integer, real, and complex arguments, unless otherwise noted. The ****** operator (exponentiation) is supported, as in FORTRAN.

Parentheses may be used to change order of evaluation.