

DataGuard 3 How to Format Dates with Prompted Variables

DOCUMENT DETAILS

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PRODUCT DETAILS

Vector 5, 6

DataGuard 3

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

www.progressive-id.co.uk

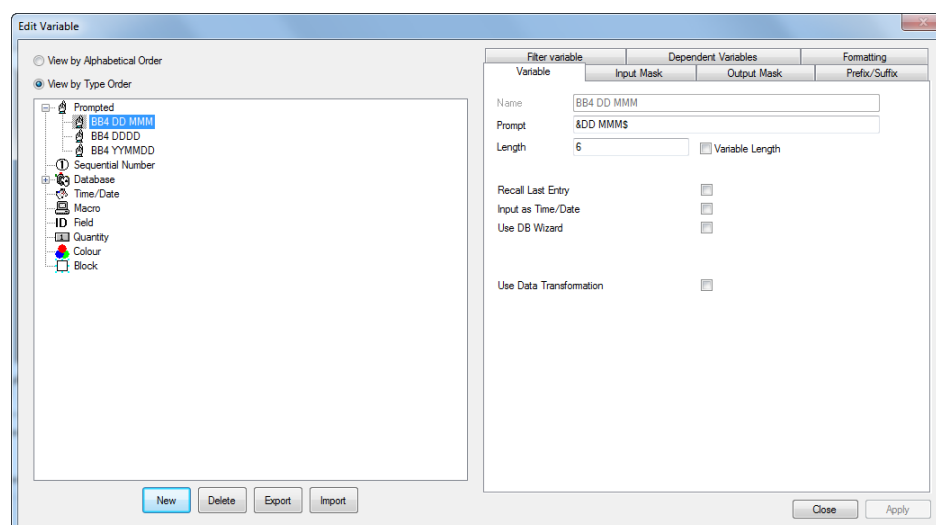
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A key feature of DataGuard 3 is to automate the process of printing any date on a label. The *format* of the date (what it looks like) and what *type* of date is calculated (display until, best before) are both controlled by using **Prompted Variables**. Typically a prompted variable only allows users to enter free text at print time - for things like batch numbers or purchase order references; however DataGuard uses a special prompt language so the user only has to select the delivery date to the customers depot and nothing more.

Overview of prompted variables

Prompted variables are found in the same pop up as database variables. To access either click on the **Variables** button then **Edit variables...** or right-click any where on the label and select **Edit variable...**



For each prompted variable there are three key settings:

- **Name** is the name of variable and must be unique.
- **Prompt** is where you enter the prompt language to control the type of date and the format.
- **Length** is either an exact length (default length is 1) or variable. If variable length is enabled, the variable will also display in the same way that database variables do with a single blue V.

The prompt language

The prompt language uses several key characters and always starts with either the @, & or % symbol. This tells the variable what type of date to calculate.

@	display until
&	best before
%	depot delivery date

Each of these can be followed by an optional #n where n is number of days to add or subtract from the calculated date.

#n	add n number of days
#-n	subtract n number of days

The second part of the prompt is more flexible and controls the format of the date using a combination of the following characters:

D	day
M	month
Y	year
W	weekday and week number
Q	quarter

These characters when combined in certain sequences produce a variety of different formats:

NEED A BATCH NUMBER?

There is a special prompt **0** that produces the total number of days since 1 January 1900. For example 17 December 2015 is day 42353. Handy for a batch number or as part of a traceability process.

PROMPT	RESULT	LENGTH	NOTES
D	1 to 31	variable	
DD	01 to 31	2	
DDD	Mon to Sun	variable	
DDDD	Monday to Sunday	variable	
M	1 to 12	variable	
MM	01 to 12	2	
MMM	Jan to Dec	3	
MMMM	January to December	variable	
Y	1 to 366	variable	julian date
YY	00 to 99	2	
YYYY	0000 to 9999	4	
W	1 to 7	1	weekday number Sun to Sat
WW	1 to 53	variable	week number

It is also possible to combine different characters together in a single variable - for example **DD MMM** will produce 21 Dec. You can also use other characters such as **/** or **-** and spaces to separate parts of the prompt. For example to produce 21/12/2015 you would use the prompt **DD/MM/YYYY**. Just remember to include the slashes in the length of the variable! An optional **\$** symbol can also be added to the end of prompt to force any letters to uppercase - for example Saturday will become SATURDAY.

COMMON PROMPTED DATES

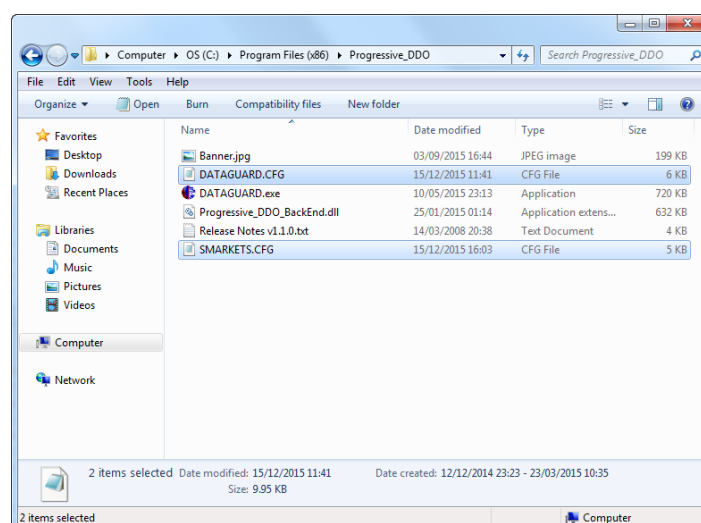
PROMPT	RESULT	LENGTH	USE CASE
YYMMDD	151221	6	Date format used in EAN-128 (GS1-128) barcodes
DD MMM	21 Dec	6	Common display until or best before format on pack labels
DD/MM/YY	21/12/15	8	Common format used on box end and tray end labels
DDDD	Saturday	variable	

Alternate prompts for non-standard dates

Sometimes a date format cannot be achieved with the prompt language. To accommodate this there are three *alternate prompts* for month (**MA**), day (**DA**) and week (**AW**).

NOT ONE BUT TWO
There are actually two config files **dataguard.cfg** for DataGuard and **smarkets.cfg** for Vector. Some settings are the same in both files but they are independent config files.

The alternate prompts work differently, as they reference a config file (Dataguard. cfg) which controls the format. The same config file also controls many other settings within DataGuard, so some caution is advised if you intend to edit any of the settings. The DataGuard.cfg file is found at C:\Program Files (x86)\Progressive_DDO and can be edited with any text editor such as Notepad.



Month Alternate prompt

The month alternate works by listing a value for each month of the year (1 to 12) in the config file under the section AlternateMonths. The text on the right hand side is the literal text that will be output when the variable is used. There are no restrictions to what text can be entered.

[AlternateMonths]

```
1 = Jan
2 = Feb
3 = Mar
4 = Apr
5 = May
6 = June
7 = July
8 = Aug
9 = Sept
10 = Oct
11 = Nov
12 = Dec
```

To use the month alternate in the prompted variable use the following prompt:

PROMPT	LENGTH	USE CASE
@MA	variable	display until
&MA	variable	best before

A common use for this are on Sainsburys pack labels where June, July and September are printed as 4-characters long - June, July and Sept - but all the other months are 3-characters long.

Day Alternate prompt

The day alternate works in a similar way to the month alternate by listing a value for each day of the week. Again the text on the right hand side is the literal text that is output when the variable is used.

[AlternateWeekdays]

```
1 = 07
2 = 01
3 = 02
4 = 03
5 = 04
6 = 05
7 = 06
```

The order in the config file represents Sunday (1) to Monday (7). To use the day alternate use either of the following prompts:

PROMPT	LENGTH	USE CASE
@DA	variable	display until
&DA	variable	best before

A common use is to produce the date format for Aldi and Lidl.

Week Alternate prompt

Unlike the month and day alternates, the week alternate does not list for each week of the year. Instead the start date for the year is listed and the week number is calculated automatically from this date.

[AlternateYearStarts]

```
2014 = 30-Dec-2013
2015 = 29-Dec-2014
2016 = 04-Jan-2016
```

Note that at least three years need to be listed: the current year; next year and the previous year. To use the week alternate use either of the following prompts:

PROMPT	RESULT	LENGTH	USE CASE
@AW	01 to 53	2	display until
&AW	01 to 53	2	best before

A common use for the weekday alternate is to produce week numbers for a different calendar system. For example both Aldi and Lidl use the ISO 8601 week calendar and not the Gregorian calendar.

Retailer specific settings

The settings for each alternate prompt by default are global settings and will work on any label format that uses an alternate prompt. This can cause undesirable results if two or more retailers both use the same alternate, but need different settings.

Each alternate prompt can be limited to a specific retailer by adding the retailer prefix. For example `[AlternateYearStarts-al]` and `[AlternateMonth-js]` will only apply to Aldi and Sainsburys labels respectively.