

# H5edit User Guide

## 1 Introduction

The h5edit tool is an HDF5 file editor. It supports commands to modify the contents of an existing HDF5 file. It enables HDF5 users to modify an HDF5 file without resorting to technical programming. Its intent is for small scale modification of the file. Data intensive changes to the file, such as those involving hundreds of data points, may not be executed in an efficient speed.

Here are some simple examples of using the H5edit tool.

```
$ h5edit -c "DELETE /sta1/month12/temperature;" greenland.h5
```

This deletes the attribute *temperature* from dataset */sta1/month12* in the HDF5 data file *greenland.h5*.

```
$ h5edit -c "CREATE /sta1/month12/temperature {{-40.0}};" greenland.h5
```

This creates in dataset */sta1/month12*, a new attribute *temperature*, which is of the datatype of H5T\_NATIVE\_FLOAT and dataspace of SCALAR (single data) with the value of -40.0, in the HDF5 data file *greenland.h5*. Note that if the above two commands are executed in sequence, they have the net effect of changing the value of the attribute *temperature*. (The CHANGE command is not supported but will be implemented in the future.)

This first release supports commands for the creation and deletion of attributes of datasets and groups only. Supports for more commands and other HDF5 objects will be implemented in future releases.

## 2 Commands Supported

This version of H5edit supports two kinds of commands, CREATE and DELETE.

The CREATE command creates an attribute and attaches it to a specified target dataset or group in the HDF5 data file. The user needs to specify the name, datatype, dataspace, and data value of the attribute. Each command is terminated with a semicolon. Note that the CREATE example above looks so simple because it makes use of the default values of the datatype and dataspace. Here is an example that specifies the values of datatype and dataspace explicitly. Note that even the attribute name, *temperature*, is defined separately from its intended target-object, */sta1/month12*.

```
$ h5edit --command "CREATE /sta1/month12 temperature {DATATYPE  
H5T_FLOAT_NATIVE DATASPACE SCALAR DATA {-40.0}};" greenland.h5
```

The DELETE command deletes an existing attribute from a specified dataset or group in the HDF5 data file. The user needs to specify the name of the attribute.

### 2.1 Dataspaces Supported

The attribute may have one of the following dataspaces. If not given, the default value is *scalar*.

### 2.1.1 Scalar space

This is indicated by the keyword, **SCALAR**, and it means the attribute has a single data element.

### 2.1.2 Dimension space

This is indicated by the keyword, **SIMPLE**, followed by the dimension sizes enclosed in a pair of parenthesis. The rank of the dimension is deduced from the number of dimension sizes specified. It means the attribute is a multiple dimensional array. For example,

**SIMPLE (2,3,4)**

is a 3-dimensional array of 24 data elements total.

### 2.1.3 Other dataspace

The HDF5 library supports the **NULL** dataspace and also unlimited dimension sizes. Neither of them is supported by this version of H5edit.

## 2.2 Datatypes Supported

The attribute may have one of the following datatypes. If not given, the default value is *H5T\_NATIVE\_FLOAT*.

### 2.2.1 Integer Types

The following integer types are supported and are indicated by the corresponding keywords:

**H5T\_STD\_I8BE, H5T\_STD\_I16BE, H5T\_STD\_I32BE, H5T\_STD\_I64BE, H5T\_STD\_I64BE:**

Signed big endian 8, 16, 32 and 64 bits integers.

**H5T\_STD\_I8LE, H5T\_STD\_I16LE, H5T\_STD\_I32LE, H5T\_STD\_I64LE, H5T\_STD\_I64LE:**

Signed little endian 8, 16, 32 and 64 bits integers.

**H5T\_STD\_U8BE, H5T\_STD\_U16BE, H5T\_STD\_U32BE, H5T\_STD\_U64BE, H5T\_STD\_U64BE:**

Unsigned big endian 8, 16, 32 and 64 bits integers.

**H5T\_STD\_U8LE, H5T\_STD\_U16LE, H5T\_STD\_U32LE, H5T\_STD\_U64LE, H5T\_STD\_U64LE:**

Unsigned little endian 8, 16, 32 and 64 bits integers.

The following integer types are of the C programming language and are machine dependent. They are indicated by the following keywords:

**H5T\_NATIVE\_CHAR, H5T\_NATIVE\_UCHAR:**

Native char and unsigned char types.

**H5T\_NATIVE\_SHORT, H5T\_NATIVE\_INT, H5T\_NATIVE\_LONG, H5T\_NATIVE\_LLONG:**

Native signed short, int, long and long long type.

**H5T\_NATIVE\_USHORT, H5T\_NATIVE\_UINT, H5T\_NATIVE\_ULONG, H5T\_NATIVE\_ULLONG:**

Native unsigned short, int, long and long long type.

### 2.2.2 Floating Point Types

The following floating point types are supported and are indicated by the corresponding keywords:

**H5T\_IEEE\_F32BE, H5T\_IEEE\_F64BE:**

IEEE big endian 32 and 64 bits floating point types.

**H5T\_IEEE\_F32LE, H5T\_IEEE\_F64LE:**

IEEE little endian 32 and 64 bits floating point types.

The following floating point types are of the C programming language and are machine dependent. They are indicated by the following keywords:

**H5T\_NATIVE\_FLOAT, H5T\_NATIVE\_DOUBLE, H5T\_NATIVE\_LDOUBLE:**

Native float, double, and long double types.

### 2.2.3 String Types

The string type is supported and is indicated by the keyword, **H5T\_STRING**. The string type consists of two more specifications, namely the size of the string and the padding mechanism.

The string size is indicated by the keyword, **STRSIZE**, followed by a positive integer value of the string size.

The padding mechanism is indicated by the keyword, **STRPAD**, following by one of the following keywords:

**H5T\_STR\_NULLTERM:**

Null terminated as in the C programming language

**H5T\_STR\_NULLPAD:**

Padded with zeros

**H5T\_STR\_SPACEPAD:**

Padded with spaces as in the Fortran programming language

Note that this version of H5edit supports only fixed size strings and null terminated padding. The other padding mechanisms will be implemented in the future.

### 2.2.4 Other HDF5 Types

HDF5 supports other types such as Compound, Opaque, Enum, etc. These types will be implemented in the future.

## 3 Command line options

### 3.1 Command File

When the H5edit commands are specified via the command line option, they must be specified as one single argument separated by semicolons. The command file feature will allow the

commands be stored in a text file in free format. This will be easier for users as they need not worry about the shell meta-character issues. For example:

```
$ h5edit --command "CREATE /stal/month12/ScalarString {DATATYPE { H5T_STRING  
{ STRSIZE 15 }} DATASPACE { SCALAR } DATA {\\"scalar string\\"}}; CREATE  
/stal/month12/ArrayString {DATATYPE { H5T_STRING { STRSIZE 10 }} DATASPACE {  
SIMPLE ( 3 ) } DATA {\\"an\\", \\"array\\", \\"string\\"}}; " greenland.h5
```

Note that the double quotes inside of the command string must be escaped so that the Unix shell will not treat them as the closing quotes. The same can be achieved by a command file which is much more readable.

```
$ h5edit --command-file strings_attributes greenland.h5
```

```
$ cat strings_attributes
```

```
CREATE /stal/month12/ScalarString  
    {DATATYPE {H5T_STRING {STRSIZE 15}}  
    DATASPACE {SCALAR}  
    DATA {"scalar string"}  
};  
CREATE /stal/month12/ArrayString  
    {DATATYPE {H5T_STRING { STRSIZE 10}}  
    DATASPACE {SIMPLE ( 3 )}  
    DATA {"an", "array", "string"}  
};
```

## 4 Other not yet Implemented Features

The following are some other features that will be implemented in the future.

### 4.1 Dryrun Option

This option will allow H5edit checks the syntax correctness of the commands without making any real change to the HDF5 data file. This will be implemented in the future.

### 4.2 Command Atomicity

It is important to users' production data file that the H5edit will execute the commands in an atomic manner, that is, it is either all success or no changes if there is any error. Otherwise, the HDF5 data file can be partially changed, which is not necessary desirable for all cases. Worse yet, if the H5edit fails in the middle of a command, the HDF5 file may be left in an unstable state, resulting in a total loss of access to the remaining information in the file. This is not an acceptable behavior for production files.

In the future version, the atomic features will be implemented.

## 5 Tool Command Syntax

### Syntax:

```
h5edit [-h | --help]
h5edit options parameter h5file
```

### Purpose:

An HDF5 file editor.

### Description:

`h5edit` is a tool for editing an HDF5 file. The tool can read in a command file, written in the H5edit Command Language, to edit the file accordingly. Commands can be given as command line option. This is intended for simple and short commands. The H5edit Command Language is defined in “Definition of the H5edit Command Language”.

### Options and Parameters:

These terms are used as follows in this section:

`-h, --help`

Prints a usage message and exits.

`-c command, --command command`

Specifies an H5edit command to apply to the file *h5file*.

`--command-file commfile`

Specifies a command file, *commfile*, which contains H5edit commands written in the H5edit Command Language, to apply to the file *h5file*.

`--dryrun`

*(To be supported in future implementation)*

Just check the syntax of the H5edit commands against the HDF5 file without making the actual changes to the HDF5 file.

`--atomic[=atomic-level]`

*(To be supported in future implementation)*

Specifies the atomic level:

*yes*: This is the default. It means the changes must be done as all or nothing. The original data file is restored in case of any command failures.

*no*: No atomicity is desired. Do as much changes as possible.

*inc*: Atomicity of changes at individual command level is desired, not the entire execution.

## 6 Examples

### 6.1 Add Attributes to a File

This command adds 4 attributes to the file SVM01\_ter\_grav\_dev.h5. First two are unsigned short (2 bytes) attributes. The third one is a string type attribute. The last one is a floating point attribute. Note that the backslash indicates a line continuation for the Unix shell. This is needed by some Unix shells such as C shell.

```
$ h5edit -c " \
CREATE /All_Data/VIIRS-M1-SDR_All/Radiance/FillValue-SOUB_UINT16_FILL
{DATATYPE H5T_STD_U16LE DATASPACE SCALAR DATA {65528}} ; \
CREATE /All_Data/VIIRS-M1-SDR_All/Radiance/FillValue-NA_UINT16_FILL {DATATYPE
H5T_STD_U16LE DATASPACE SCALAR DATA {65535}} ; \
CREATE /All_Data/VIIRS-M1-SDR_All/Radiance/MeasurmentUnits {DATATYPE
H5T_STRING {STRSIZE 6 } DATASPACE SCALAR DATA { \"W/m^2\" } } ; \
CREATE /All_Data/VIIRS-M1-SDR_All/Radiance/MaxValue {DATATYPE
H5T_NATIVE_FLOAT DATASPACE SCALAR DATA {100.00}} ; \
" \
SVM01_ter_grav_dev.h5
```

### 6.2 Delete Attributes from a File

This deletes all the attributes just created by the command above.

```
$ h5edit -c " \
DELETE /All_Data/VIIRS-M1-SDR_All/Radiance/FillValue-SOUB_UINT16_FILL; \
DELETE /All_Data/VIIRS-M1-SDR_All/Radiance/FillValue-NA_UINT16_FILL; \
DELETE /All_Data/VIIRS-M1-SDR_All/Radiance/MeasurmentUnits; \
DELETE /All_Data/VIIRS-M1-SDR_All/Radiance/MaxValue; \" \
SVM01_ter_grav_dev.h5
```

### 6.3 Using command-file option

The following 2 h5edit commands use the command-file option to do the same as the example in 6.1 and 6.2.

```
$ h5edit -command-file add_attr SVM01_ter_grav_dev.h5
$ cat add_attr
CREATE /All_Data/VIIRS-M1-SDR_All/Radiance/FillValue-SOUB_UINT16_FILL
{DATATYPE H5T_STD_U16LE DATASPACE SCALAR DATA {65528}};
CREATE /All_Data/VIIRS-M1-SDR_All/Radiance/FillValue-NA_UINT16_FILL
{DATATYPE H5T_STD_U16LE DATASPACE SCALAR DATA {65535}};
CREATE /All_Data/VIIRS-M1-SDR_All/Radiance/MeasurmentUnits
{DATATYPE H5T_STRING {STRSIZE 6 } DATASPACE SCALAR DATA { \"W/m^2\" } };
CREATE /All_Data/VIIRS-M1-SDR_All/Radiance/MaxValue
```

```
{DATATYPE H5T_NATIVE_FLOAT DATASPACE SCALAR DATA {100.00}};
```

```
$ h5edit -command-file delete_attr SVM01_ter_ grav_dev.h5  
$ cat delete_attr  
DELETE /All_Data/VIIRS-M1-SDR_All/Radiance/FillValue-SOUB_UINT16_FILL;  
DELETE /All_Data/VIIRS-M1-SDR_All/Radiance/FillValue-NA_UINT16_FILL;  
DELETE /All_Data/VIIRS-M1-SDR_All/Radiance/MeasurmentUnits;  
DELETE /All_Data/VIIRS-M1-SDR_All/Radiance/MaxValue;
```

As the above examples illustrate that it is more desirable to use the command-file option since one does not need to worry about meta-characters that are interpreted by the Unix Shell.

## 7 Comments

This is the first release of the h5edit tool. Please send us your comments and suggestions to [help@hdfgroup.org](mailto:help@hdfgroup.org).

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