

any typographical errors. If you find a mistake, you can click on “edit” to fix it or “delete” to remove it from the database. If you have a slow internet connection or you suspect that your observation did not get into the AAVSO database, please wait a few minutes then look for your observation in the QuickLook file and be sure it is not there before you assume something went wrong and attempt to send it again. Many duplicate observations have been sent to the database this way!

## Upload a File of Observations

The second way to submit data is to create a text file in standard AAVSO format then upload it using the WebObs “Upload a file of observations” option. This option is often a good choice for people who do not wish to stay connected to the internet very long and/or have a large file of observations to submit. Once your file has been uploaded, the observations you just sent can be displayed if desired.

There are a number of ways to produce the text file of data for submission. What is very important is that it has to be in the “AAVSO Visual Format” which is described on the AAVSO website and will be examined in detail in the section which follows.

To help you create a file of observations in the approved format, a few software tools have been developed (and continue to be developed) by other AAVSO observers which you are welcome to use. These programs can be found on the AAVSO website here: <http://www.aavso.org/software-directory>

## AAVSO Visual Format

No matter which method you decide to use for creating your variable star reports, it is required that the data adhere to AAVSO report formatting standards. Specifically, for visual observations, you should use the “AAVSO Visual Format” the description which follows comes from the AAVSO website (<http://www.aavso.org/aavso-visual-file-format>) A description of each field in the visual format follows. *Note: For CCD and PEP observations you must use the “AAVSO Extended File Format” for your reports.*

## General

The visual format has two components; *parameters* and *data*. The format is not case sensitive.

## Parameters

The parameters are specified at the top of the file and are used to describe the data that follow. Parameters must begin with a pound sign (#) at the start of the line. There are six specific parameters that are required to exist at the top of the file. Personal comments may also be added as long as they follow a pound sign (#). These comments will be ignored by the software and are not loaded into the database. However, they will be retained when the complete file is stored in the AAVSO permanent archives.

The six required parameters are:

```
#TYPE=Visual
#OBSCODE=
#SOFTWARE=
#DELIM=
#DATE=
#OBSTYPE=
```

*TYPE:* Should always say Visual for this format.

*OBSCODE:* The official AAVSO Observer Code which was previously assigned to you by the AAVSO.

*SOFTWARE:* Name and version of software you used to create your report. If it is private software, put some type of description here. For example: “#SOFTWARE=Excel Spreadsheet by Gary Poyner.”

*DELIM:* The delimiter used to separate fields in the report. Suggested delimiters are: comma (,) semi-colon(;), exclamation point(!), and pipe(|). The only character that cannot be used is the pound (#) and the “ ” (space). If you want to use a tab, use the word “tab” instead of an actual tab character. Note: Excel users who want to use a comma will have to type “comma” here instead of a “,”. Otherwise Excel will export the field incorrectly.

*DATE:* The format of the date used in the report. There are two options for this entry; JD or EXCEL. The EXCEL format gives the time in UT and looks

like this: MM/DD/YYYY HH:MM:SS AM (or PM). Seconds are optional.

*OBSTYPE*: The type of observation in the data file. It can be Visual or PTG (for Photographic). If absent, it is assumed to be Visual. If PTG, place a description of your film response and any filter(s) used in the notes field of each observation.

## Data

After the parameters come the variable star observations themselves. There should be one observation per line and the fields should be separated by the same character that is defined in the DELIM parameter field. The list of fields are:

*NAME*: The star's identifier. This can be any of the names for a star listed in VSX. See Chapter 4, page 20 for more on variable star names.

*DATE*: The date of the observation, in the format specified by the DATE parameter. See Chapter 5 for an explanation on how to compute UT and JD.

*MAGNITUDE*: The magnitude of the observation. Put a "<" symbol in front of the magnitude if the observation is a "fainter-than".

*COMMENTCODE*: A one-letter code or series of codes you can use to describe any special circumstances associated with your observation. If you have no comment to make, please type "na" in this field. Possible codes are listed in Table 7.1, page 43.

Multiple comment codes should be separated by spaces or not separated at all. (Ex: "A Z Y" or "AZY").

*COMP1*: The label of the first comparison star used. Could be the magnitude label on the chart, an auid, or the star's name.

*COMP2*: The label of the second comparison star used. Could be the magnitude label on the chart, an auid, etc. (if none, use "na".)

*CHART*: This should be the "chart ID" given in the upper right-hand corner of your chart.

*NOTES*: Comments or notes about your observation. This field has a maximum length of 100 characters.

***Please double-check your report before submitting it to AAVSO Headquarters!***

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Some examples of properly formatted reports which are ready for upload:

**Example 1:**

```
#TYPE=VISUAL
#OBSCODE=TST01
#SOFTWARE=WORD
#DELIM=,
#DATE=JD
SS CYG,2454702.1234,<11.1,U,110,113,070613,Partly cloudy
```

**Example 2:**

```
#TYPE=VISUAL
#OBSCODE=TST01
#SOFTWARE= TextMate
#DELIM=,
#DATE=JD
#NAME,DATE,MAG,COMMENTCODE,COMP1,COMP2,CHART,NOTES
SS CYG,2454702.1234,10.9,na,110,113,070613,na
SS CYG,2454703.2341,<11.1,B,111,na,070613,na
```

*Note the existence of the #NAME,DATE,MAG,COMMENTCODE,COMP1... line in the above format. Since it is prepended with a pound sign and doesn't start with any of the special parameter keywords, it will be ignored by the software as a comment. Feel free to do this if it makes writing and reading the format easier for you.*

**Example 3:**

```
#TYPE=VISUAL
#OBSCODE=TST01
#SOFTWARE=WORD
#DELIM=;
#DATE=JD
#OBSTYPE=Visual
OMI CET;2454704.1402; 6.1;na;59;65;1755eb;na
EPS AUR;2454704.1567;3.3;IZ;32;38;1755dz;my first observation of this star
SS CYG;2454707.1001;9.3;Y;93;95;070613;OUTBURST!
#DELIM=|
#DATE=EXCEL
SS CYG|1/1/2010 11:59 PM|9.3|L|90|95|070613|first obs using UT
SS CYG|1/2/2010 06:15 AM|9.3|na|90|95|070613|na
```

*In this example, the observer changes the delimiter and the date format in the middle of the report.*