

4.4.2.8 Checksum Keywords

The checksum keywords described here provide an integrity check on the information contained in *FITS* HDUs. The CHECKSUM keyword is defined to have a value that forces the 32-bit 1's complement checksum accumulated over all the 2880-byte *FITS* logical records in the HDU to equal negative 0. (Note that 1's complement arithmetic has both positive and negative zero elements). Verifying that the accumulated checksum is still equal to -0 provides a fast and fairly reliable way to determine that the HDU has not been modified by subsequent data processing operations or corrupted while copying or storing the file on physical media. The checksum does not guard against organized transformations or malicious tampering, however, because simple transformations, such as rearranging the order of 32-bit words in the file, do not affect the computed checksum value. The checksum also does not provide any information on the authenticity of the file because the CHECKSUM keyword can always be updated after making modifications to the file, leaving no trace that the file is not the same as the original.

Two *FITS* keywords are reserved to record the checksum information in an HDU: DATASUM and CHECKSUM. Normally both keywords will be present in the header if either is present, but this is not required. These keywords apply *only* to the HDU in which they are contained. If the CHECKSUM keywords are written in one HDU of a multi-HDU *FITS* file then it is *strongly recommended* that they also be written to every other HDU in the file. In that case the checksum accumulated over the entire file will equal -0 as well. It is *recommended* that the current date and time be written into the comment field of both keywords to document when the checksum was computed (or more precisely, the time that the checksum computation process was started). It is also highly *recommended* that if a *FITS* file is intended for public distribution, then the checksum keywords, if present, should contain valid values.

DATASUM Keyword. The value field of the DATASUM keyword *shall* consist of a character string containing the unsigned integer value of the 32-bit 1's complement checksum of the data records in the HDU (i.e., excluding the header records). For this purpose, each 2880-byte *FITS* logical record should be interpreted as consisting of 720 32-bit unsigned integers. The 4 bytes in each integer *must* be interpreted in order of decreasing significance where the most significant byte is first, and the least significant byte is last. Accumulate the sum of these integers using 1's complement arithmetic in which any overflow of the most significant bit is propagated back into the least significant bit of the sum.

The DATASUM value is expressed as a character string (i.e., enclosed in single quote characters) because support for the full range of 32-bit unsigned integer keyword values is problematic in some software systems. This string may be padded with non-significant leading or trailing blank characters or leading zeros. A string containing only 1 or more consecutive ASCII blanks may be used to represent an undefined or unknown value for the DATASUM keyword. The DATASUM keyword may be omitted in HDUs that have no data records, but it is preferable to include the keyword with a value of 0. Otherwise, a missing DATASUM keyword asserts no knowledge of the checksum of the data records.

CHECKSUM Keyword. The value field of the CHECKSUM keyword *shall* consist of an ASCII character string whose value forces the 32-bit 1's complement checksum accumulated over the entire *FITS* HDU to equal negative 0. There are a vast number of possible character strings that could satisfy this requirement, but for the sake of consistency and uniformity it is *recommended* that the particular 16-character string generated by the algorithm described in Appendix J be used. A string containing only 1 or more consecutive ASCII blanks may be used to represent an undefined or unknown value for the CHECKSUM keyword.

The CHECKSUM keyword value *must* be expressed in fixed format, when the algorithm in Appendix J is used, otherwise the usage of fixed format is *recommended* for analogy.

4.4.3. Additional keywords

New keywords *may* be devised in addition to those described in this standard, so long as they are consistent with the generalized rules for keywords and do not conflict with mandatory or reserved keywords. Any keyword that refers to or depends upon the existence of other specific HDUs in the same or other files should be used with caution because the persistence of those HDUs cannot always be guaranteed.

Appendix C: Summary of keywords

This Appendix is not part of the FITS standard, but is included for convenient reference.

All of the mandatory and reserved keywords that are defined in the standard, except for the reserved WCS keywords that are discussed separately in Sect. 8, are listed in Tables C.1, C.2, and C.3. **An alphabetized list of these keywords and their definitions is available online: http://heasarc.gsfc.nasa.gov/docs/fcg/standard_dict.html.**

Table C.1: Mandatory *FITS* keywords for the structures described in this document.

Primary HDU	Conforming extension	Image extension	ASCII table extension	Binary table extension	Compressed images ⁶	Compressed tables ⁶	Random groups records
SIMPLE	XTENSION	XTENSION ¹	XTENSION ²	XTENSION ³			SIMPLE
BITPIX	BITPIX	BITPIX	BITPIX = 8	BITPIX = 8			BITPIX
NAXIS	NAXIS	NAXIS	NAXIS = 2	NAXIS = 2			NAXIS
NAXISn ⁴	NAXISn ⁴	NAXISn ⁴	NAXIS1	NAXIS1			NAXIS1 = 0
END	PCOUNT	PCOUNT = 0	NAXIS2	NAXIS2			NAXISn ⁴
	GCOUNT	GCOUNT = 1	PCOUNT = 0	PCOUNT			GROUPS = T
	END	END	GCOUNT = 1	GCOUNT = 1			PCOUNT
			TFIELDS	TFIELDS			GCOUNT
			TFORMn ⁵	TFORMn ⁵			END
			TBCOLn ⁵	END			
			END				

⁽¹⁾XTENSION=␣'IMAGE␣␣␣' for the image extension. ⁽²⁾XTENSION=␣'TABLE␣␣␣' for the ASCII table extension. ⁽³⁾XTENSION=␣'BINTABLE' for the binary table extension. ⁽⁴⁾Runs from 1 through the value of NAXIS. ⁽⁵⁾Runs from 1 through the value of TFIELDS.

Table C.2: Reserved *FITS* keywords for the structures described in this document.

All ¹ HDUs	Array ² HDUs	ASCII table extension	Binary table extension	Compressed images	Compressed tables	Random groups records
DATE	EXTNAME	BSCALE	TSCALn	TSCALn		PTYPEn
DATE-OBS	EXTVER	BZERO	TZEROn	TZEROn		PSCALn
ORIGIN	EXTLEVEL	BUNIT	TNULLn	TNULLn		PZEROn
AUTHOR	EQUINOX	BLANK	TTYPEn	TTYPEn		
REFERENC	EPOCH ³	DATAMAX	TUNITn	TUNITn		
COMMENT	BLOCKED ³	DATAMIN	TDISPn	TDISPn		
HISTORY	EXTEND ⁴			TDIMn		
␣␣␣␣␣␣	TELESCOP			THEAP		
OBJECT	INSTRUME					
OBSERVER						
CHECKSUM						
DATASUM						

⁽¹⁾These keywords are further categorized in Table C.3. ⁽²⁾Primary HDU, image extension, user-defined HDUs with same array structure. ⁽³⁾Deprecated. ⁽⁴⁾Only permitted in the primary HDU.

Table C.3: General reserved *FITS* keywords described in this document.

Production	Bibliographic	Commentary	Observation
DATE	AUTHOR	COMMENT	DATE-OBS
ORIGIN	REFERENC	HISTORY	TELESCOP
BLOCKED ¹		␣␣␣␣␣␣	INSTRUME
			OBSERVER
			OBJECT
			EQUINOX
			EPOCH ¹

⁽¹⁾Deprecated.

- The last paragraph of Sect. 4.1.2.3 was corrected to state that the ASCII text characters have hexadecimal values 20 through 7E, not 41 through 7E.

H.3. List of modifications to the latest FITS standard

The checksum keywords described in Sect. 4.4.2.8 were originally introduced as a *FITS* convention since 1994, and registered in 2007. The text of the original convention is reported at <http://fits.gsfc.nasa.gov/registry/checksum.html>. The differences with this standard concern:

- The omission of some additional implementation guidelines
- The omission of a discussion on alternate algorithms and relevant additional references.

DRAFT

Appendix J: CHECKSUM Implementation Guidelines

This Appendix is not part of the FITS standard, but is included for informational purposes.

J.1. Recommended CHECKSUM Keyword Implementation

The *recommended* CHECKSUM keyword algorithm described here generates a 16-character ASCII string that forces the 32-bit 1's complement checksum accumulated over the entire *FITS* HDU to equal negative 0 (all 32 bits equal to 1). In addition, this string will only contain alphanumeric characters within the ranges 0–9, A–Z, and a–z to promote human readability and transcription. If the present algorithm is used, the CHECKSUM keyword value *must* be expressed in fixed format, with the starting single quote character in column 11 and the ending single quote character in column 28 of the *FITS* keyword record, because the relative placement of the value string within the keyword record affects the computed HDU checksum. The steps in the algorithm are as follows:

1. Write the CHECKSUM keyword into the HDU header with an initial value consisting of 16 ASCII zeros ('0000000000000000') where the first single quote character is in column 11 of the *FITS* keyword record. This specific initialization string is required by the encoding algorithm described in Sect. J.2 The final comment field of the keyword, if any, must also be written at this time. It is recommended that the current date and time be recorded in the comment field to document when the checksum was computed.
2. Accumulate the 32-bit 1's complement checksum over the *FITS* logical records that make up the HDU header in the same manner as was done for the data records by interpreting each 2880-byte logical record as 720 32-bit unsigned integers.
3. Calculate the checksum for the entire HDU by adding (using 1's complement arithmetic) the checksum accumulated over the header records to the checksum accumulated over the data records (i.e., the previously computed DATASUM keyword value).
4. Compute the bit-wise complement of the 32-bit total HDU checksum value by replacing all 0 bits with 1 and all 1 bits with 0.
5. Encode the complement of the HDU checksum into a 16-character ASCII string using the algorithm described in Sect. J.2
6. Replace the initial CHECKSUM keyword value with this 16-character encoded string. The checksum for the entire HDU will now be equal to negative 0.

J.2. Recommended ASCII Encoding Algorithm

The algorithm described here is used to generate an ASCII string which, when substituted for the value of the CHECKSUM keyword, will force the checksum for the entire HDU to equal negative 0. It is based on a fundamental property of 1's complement arithmetic that the sum of an integer and the negation of that integer (i.e. the bitwise complement formed by replacing all 0 bits with 1s and all 1 bits with 0s) will equal negative 0 (all bits set to 1). This principle is applied here by constructing a 16-character string which, when interpreted as a byte stream of 4 32-bit integers, has a sum that is equal to the complement of the sum accumulated

0 ₃₀	1 ₃₁	2 ₃₂	3 ₃₃	4 ₃₄	5 ₃₅	6 ₃₆	7 ₃₇	8 ₃₈	9 ₃₉
: _{3a}	; _{3b}	< _{3c}	= _{3d}	> _{3e}	? _{3f}	@ ₄₀	A ₄₁	B ₄₂	C ₄₃
D ₄₄	E ₄₅	F ₄₆	G ₄₇	H ₄₈	I ₄₉	J _{4a}	K _{4b}	L _{4c}	M _{4d}
N _{4e}	O _{4f}	P ₅₀	Q ₅₁	R ₅₂	S ₅₃	T ₅₄	U ₅₅	V ₅₆	W ₅₇
X ₅₈	Y ₅₉	Z _{5a}	[_{5b}	\ _{5c}] _{5d}	^ _{5e}	_ _{5f}	' ₆₀	a ₆₁
b ₆₂	c ₆₃	d ₆₄	e ₆₅	f ₆₆	g ₆₇	h ₆₈	i ₆₉	j _{6a}	k _{6b}
l _{6c}	m _{6d}	n _{6e}	o _{6f}	p ₇₀	q ₇₁	r ₇₂			

Figure 1. Only ASCII alpha-numeric are used to encode the checksum — punctuation is excluded.

over the rest of the HDU. This algorithm also ensures that the 16 bytes that make up the 4 integers all have values that correspond to ASCII alpha-numeric characters in the range 0–9, A–Z, and a–z.

1. Begin with the 1's complement (replace 0s with 1s and 1s with 0s) of the 32-bit checksum accumulated over all the *FITS* records in the HDU after first initializing the CHECKSUM keyword with a fixed-format string consisting of 16 ASCII zeros ('0000000000000000').
2. Interpret this complemented 32-bit value as a sequence of 4 unsigned 8-bit integers, A, B, C and D, where A is the most significant byte and D is the least significant. Generate a sequence of 4 integers, A1, A2, A3, A4, that are all equal to A divided by 4 (truncated to an integer if necessary). If A is not evenly divisible by 4, add the remainder to A1. The key property to note here is that the sum of the 4 new integers is equal to the original byte value (e.g., $A = A1 + A2 + A3 + A4$). Perform a similar operation on B, C, and D, resulting in a total of 16 integer values, 4 from each of the original bytes, which should be rearranged in the following order:

A1 B1 C1 D1 A2 B2 C2 D2 A3 B3 C3 D3 A4 B4 C4 D4

Each of these integers represents one of the 16 characters in the final CHECKSUM keyword value. Note that if this byte stream is interpreted as 4 32-bit integers, the sum of the integers is equal to the original complemented checksum value.

3. Add 48 (hex 30), which is the value of an ASCII zero character, to each of the 16 integers generated in the previous step. This places the values in the range of ASCII alphanumeric characters '0' (ASCII zero) to 'r'. This offset is effectively subtracted back out of the checksum when the initial CHECKSUM keyword value string of 16 ASCII 0s is replaced with the final encoded checksum value.
4. To improve human readability and transcription of the string, eliminate any non-alphanumeric characters by considering the bytes a pair at a time (e.g., $A1 + A2$, $A3 + A4$, $B1 + B2$, etc.) and repeatedly increment the first byte in the pair by 1 and decrement the 2nd byte by 1 as necessary until they both correspond to the ASCII value of the allowed alphanumeric characters 0–9, A–Z, and a–z shown in Figure 1. Note that this operation conserves the value of the sum of the 4 equivalent 32-bit integers, which is required for use in this checksum application.
5. Cyclically shift all 16 characters in the string one place to the right, rotating the last character (D4) to the beginning of the string. This rotation compensates for the fact that the fixed format *FITS* character string values are not aligned on 4-byte word boundaries in the *FITS* file. (The first character of the string starts in column 12 of the header card image, rather than column 13).

6. Write this string of 16 characters to the value of the CHECKSUM keyword, replacing the initial string of 16 ASCII zeros.

To invert the ASCII encoding, cyclically shift the 16 characters in the encoded string one place to the left, subtract the hex 30 offset from each character, and calculate the checksum by interpreting the string as 4 32-bit unsigned integers. This can be used, for instance, to read the value of CHECKSUM into the software when verifying or updating a file.

J.3. Encoding Example

This example illustrates the encoding algorithm given in Sect. J.2 Consider a *FITS* HDU whose 1's complement checksum is 868229149, which is equivalent to hex 33C0201D. This number was obtained by accumulating the 32-bit checksum over the header and data records using 1's complement arithmetic after first initializing the CHECKSUM keyword value to '0000000000000000'. The complement of the accumulated checksum is 3426738146, which is equivalent to hex CC3DFE2. The steps needed to encode this hex value into ASCII are shown schematically below:

Byte				Preserve byte alignment																
A	B	C	D	A1	B1	C1	D1	A2	B2	C2	D2	A3	B3	C3	D3	A4	B4	C4	D4	
CC	3F	DF	E2	->	33	0F	37	38	33	0F	37	38	33	0F	37	38	33	0F	37	38
+ remainder					0	3	3	2												
= hex					33	12	3A	3A	33	0F	37	38	33	0F	37	38	33	0F	37	38
+ 0 offset					30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
= hex					63	42	6A	6A	63	3F	67	68	63	3F	67	68	63	3F	67	68
ASCII					c	B	j	j	c	?	g	h	c	?	g	h	c	?	g	h

		Eliminate punctuation characters																		
initial values	c	B	j	j	c	?	g	h	c	?	g	h	c	?	g	h	c	?	g	h
.	c	C	j	j	c	>	g	h	c	@	g	h	c	>	g	h	c	>	g	h
.	c	D	j	j	c	=	g	h	c	A	g	h	c	=	g	h	c	=	g	h
.	c	E	j	j	c	<	g	h	c	B	g	h	c	<	g	h	c	<	g	h
.	c	F	j	j	c	:	g	h	c	C	g	h	c	:	g	h	c	:	g	h
.	c	G	j	j	c	:	g	h	c	D	g	h	c	:	g	h	c	:	g	h
final values	c	H	j	j	c	9	g	h	c	E	g	h	c	9	g	h	c	9	g	h

final string "hcHj jc9ghcEghc9g" (rotate 1 place to the right)

In this example byte B1 (originally ASCII B) is shifted higher (to ASCII H) to balance byte B2 (originally ASCII ?) being shifted lower (to ASCII 9). Similarly, bytes B3 and B4 are shifted by opposing amounts. This is possible because the two sequences of ASCII punctuation characters that can occur in encoded checksums are both preceded and followed by longer sequences of ASCII alphanumeric characters. This operation is purely for cosmetic reasons to improve readability of the final string.

This is how these CHECKSUM and DATASUM keywords would appear in a *FITS* header (with the recommended time stamp in the comment field):

```
DATASUM = '2503531142' / 2015-06-28T18:30:45
CHECKSUM= 'hcHj jc9ghcEghc9g' / 2015-06-28T18:30:45
```

J.4. Incremental Updating of the Checksum

The symmetry of 1's complement arithmetic also means that after modifying a *FITS* HDU, the checksum may be incrementally updated using simple arithmetic without accumulating the checksum for portions of the file that have not changed. The

new checksum is equal to the old total checksum plus the checksum accumulated over the modified records, minus the original checksum for the modified records.

An incremental update provides the mechanism for end-to-end checksum verification through any number of intermediate processing steps. By *calculating* rather than *accumulating* the intermediate checksums, the original checksum test is propagated through to the final data file. On the other hand, if a new checksum is accumulated with each change to the file, no information is preserved about the file's original state.

The recipe for updating the CHECKSUM keyword following some change to the file is: $C' = C - m + m'$, where C and C' represent the file's checksum (that is, the complement of the CHECKSUM keyword) before and after the modification and m and m' are the corresponding checksums for the modified *FITS* records or keywords only. Since the CHECKSUM keyword contains the complement of the checksum, the correspondingly complemented form of the recipe is more directly useful: $\sim C' = \sim(C + \sim m + m')$, where \sim (tilde) denotes the (1's) complement operation. See Braden et al. (1988); Mallory & Kullberg (1990); Rijsinghani (1994). Note that the tilde on the right hand side of the equation cannot be distributed over the contents of the parentheses due to the dual nature of zero in 1's complement arithmetic (Rijsinghani 1994).

J.5. Example C Code for Accumulating the Checksum

The 1's complement checksum is simple and fast to compute. This routine assumes that the input records are a multiple of 4 bytes long (as is the case for *FITS logical records*), but it is not difficult to allow for odd length records if necessary. To use this routine, first initialize the CHECKSUM keyword to '0000000000000000' and initialize sum32 = 0, then step through all the *FITS* logical records in the FITS HDU.

```
void checksum (
    unsigned char *buf, /* Input array of bytes to be checksummed */
                    /* (interpret as 4-byte unsigned ints) */
    int length, /* Length of buf array, in bytes */
                    /* (must be multiple of 4) */
    unsigned int *sum32) /* 32-bit checksum */
{
    /*
    Increment the input value of sum32 with the 1's complement sum
    accumulated over the input buf array.
    */
    unsigned int hi, lo, hicarry, locarry, i;

    /* Accumulate the sum of the high-order 16 bits and the */
    /* low-order 16 bits of each 32-bit word, separately. */
    /* The first byte in each pair is the most significant. */
    /* This algorithm works on both big and little endian machines.*/
    hi = (*sum32 >> 16);
    lo = *sum32 & 0xFFFF;
    for (i=0; i < length; i+=4) {
        hi += ((buf[i] << 8) + buf[i+1]);
        lo += ((buf[i+2] << 8) + buf[i+3]);
    }

    /* fold carry bits from each 16 bit sum into the other sum */
    hicarry = hi >> 16;
    locarry = lo >> 16;
    while (hicarry || locarry) {
        hi = (hi & 0xFFFF) + locarry;
        lo = (lo & 0xFFFF) + hicarry;
        hicarry = hi >> 16;
        locarry = lo >> 16;
    }

    /* concatenate the full 32-bit value from the 2 halves */
    *sum32 = (hi << 16) + lo;
}
```

J.6. Example C Code for ASCII Encoding

This routine encodes the complement of the 32-bit HDU checksum value into a 16-character string. The byte alignment of the string is permuted one place to the right for *FITS* to left justify the string value starting in column 12.

```

unsigned int exclude[13] = {0x3a, 0x3b, 0x3c, 0x3d, 0x3e, 0x3f, 0x40,
                          0x5b, 0x5c, 0x5d, 0x5e, 0x5f, 0x60 };

int offset = 0x30; /* ASCII 0 (zero) */
unsigned long mask[4] = { 0xff000000, 0xff0000, 0xff00, 0xff };

void char_encode (
    unsigned int value, /* 1's complement of the checksum */
    /* value to be encoded */
    char *ascii) /* Output 16-character encoded string */
{
    int byte, quotient, remainder, ch[4], check, i, j, k;
    char asc[32];

    for (i=0; i < 4; i++) {
        /* each byte becomes four */
        byte = (value & mask[i]) >> ((3 - i) * 8);
        quotient = byte / 4 + offset;
        remainder = byte % 4;
        for (j=0; j < 4; j++)
            ch[j] = quotient;

        ch[0] += remainder;

        for (check=1; check;) /* avoid ASCII punctuation */
            for (check=0, k=0; k < 13; k++)
                for (j=0; j < 4; j+=2)
                    if (ch[j]==exclude[k] || ch[j+1]==exclude[k]) {
                        ch[j]++;
                        ch[j+1]--;
                        check++;
                    }

        for (j=0; j < 4; j++) /* assign the bytes */
            asc[4*j+i] = ch[j];
    }

    for (i=0; i < 16; i++) /* permute the bytes for FITS */
        ascii[i] = asc[(i+15)%16];

    ascii[16] = 0; /* terminate the string */
}

```

References

Note: Many of these *FITS* references are available electronically from the NASA Astrophysics Data System (ADS) and/or the *FITS* Support Office web sites at <http://adswwww.harvard.edu> and http://fits.gsfc.nasa.gov/fits_documentation.html.

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