

# DEFINE DATA - General

This chapter covers the following topics:

- Function
  - Rules
  - Programming Modes
  - Further Information
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## Function

The `DEFINE DATA` statement offers a number of clauses to declare data definitions for use within a Natural program, either by referencing predefined data definitions contained in a local data area (LDA), global data area (GDA) or parameter data area (PDA), or by writing in-line definitions.

## Rules

- When a `DEFINE DATA` statement is used, it must be the first statement of the program/routine.
- An "empty" `DEFINE DATA` statement is not allowed; in other words, at least one clause (`LOCAL`, `GLOBAL`, `PARAMETER`, `INDEPENDENT`, `CONTEXT` or `OBJECT`) must be specified and at least one field must be defined.
- You may specify more than one clause; in this case, the clauses must be specified in the order shown in the syntax diagrams.
- The Natural reserved word `END-DEFINE` must be used to end the `DEFINE DATA` statement.

## Programming Modes

The `DEFINE DATA` statement is available in structured mode and in reporting mode. Differences are marked accordingly in the `DEFINE DATA` statement description.

Generally, the following applies:

- Structured Mode
- Reporting Mode

### Structured Mode

All variables to be used, except application-independent variables (AIVs), must be defined in the `DEFINE DATA` statement; they must not be defined elsewhere in the program. If a `DEFINE DATA INDEPENDENT` statement is used, AIVs must not be defined elsewhere in the program.

## Reporting Mode

The `DEFINE DATA` statement is not mandatory since variables may be defined in the body of the program. However, if a `DEFINE DATA LOCAL` statement is used in reporting mode, variables, except application-independent variables (AIVs), must not be defined elsewhere in the program; and if a `DEFINE DATA INDEPENDENT` statement is used, application-independent variables (AIVs) must not be defined elsewhere in the program.

## Further Information

For further information on the `DEFINE DATA` statement, see the following sections in the *Programming Guide*:

- *Use and Structure of DEFINE DATA Statement*
- *Use of Data Areas*
- *Storage Alignment*