

Simplify the View

Hide, unhide, rename, and reformat fields

By Monica Pratt, ArcUser Editor

Attribute tables are fundamental to many operations and a distinguishing characteristic of GIS. However, for data obtained from many public sources, attribute tables may contain more fields (often many more fields) than those needed for a specific analysis. ArcGIS has several methods for making it easier to see a selection of fields without changing the data.

The option of minimizing column width or hiding columns entirely by dragging the column dividers between fields to the right or the left to change their width has always been available in ArcGIS. Hidden columns can be detected by the thicker column dividers. However, in ArcGIS Desktop 9.2, a table's default column widths can be restored in a single step. Simply choose Options > Restore Default Column Widths from the table window's menu to reset all columns and unhide any hidden columns.

Turning off a field is quicker than dragging column dividers to hide it. Previously, this could be accomplished by right-clicking on the layer in the Table of Contents, choosing Properties, clicking on the Fields tab, and using the check boxes to turn fields off and on.

Now, simply right-click on the field header and choose Turn Field Off. For an even faster method for turning off fields, hold down the Ctrl key and double-click on the field header. To turn all fields back on, choose Options > Turn All Fields On.

Typically, aliases are applied to layers in the Table of Contents to replace cryptic file names with descriptive names that are easily understood. The same thing can be done for fields in a table. Right-click on field header and choose Properties. In the Field Properties dialog box, change the alias from the default file name to something else. The field can be made the primary display field so it will be used for labels, and the field can be turned off and on.

Changing the font size and color was possible in early versions, but the ability to change column header heights and cell heights is new. If the table contains long text fields, such as description or comment fields, this can be handy. Increasing the header or cell height allows the text to wrap in a field if the text is longer than the column width. This can eliminate scrolling to read a long text field.

FID	Shape	AREA	PERIMETER	TOT_POP	WHITE	Z0_WHITE	BLACK	Z0_B	B_DF	BLAC	AM	Z0	AM	AM	ASIAN	Z0	ASIAN
0	Polygon	1.206	5.382	3.95	29235		28829	354	253	101	39.92	305	235	70	29	545	633
1	Polygon	0.926	4.781	8.89	10777		10209	13	2	11	550	86	58	28	48	24	24
2	Polygon	1.401	4.935	14.74	32369		28652	51	37	14	37.84	313	323	-10	-3	108	87

After dragging dividers to adjust column widths and hide columns, it is sometimes difficult to see just what is there. Unhide all columns and restore default column widths with Options > Restore Default Column Widths.

- Find & Replace...
- Select By Attributes...
- Clear Selection
- Switch Selection
- Select All
- Add Field...
- Turn All Fields On
- Restore Default Column Widths
- Related Tables
- Create Graph...
- Add Table to Layout
- Reload Cache
- Print...
- Reports
- Export...
- Appearance...

FID	Shape	AREA	PERIMETER	CITYBNDRY	CITYBNDRY1	NAME	ST_CO_CODE	TOTAL_POP	Z0_TOTAL	TOTAL_POP	TOT_POP
0	Polygon	1.206	5.382	2		1 Albany	56001	32014	30797	1217	3.95
1	Polygon	0.926	4.781	3		2 Elg Horn	56003	11461	10525	936	8.89
2	Polygon	1.401	4.935	4		3 Campbell	56005	33698	29370	4328	14.74

ZIP4	PHONE	FAX	COMMENTS
8137634128			SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA INCLUDES BIG CYPRESS, HOLLYWOOD (DANIA) RESERVATIONS & SEMINOLE TRUST LANDS
3059666300	3057923634		SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA INCLUDES BRIGHTON, HOLLYWOOD (DANIA) RESERVATIONS & SEMINOLE TRUST LANDS
3052238380	3052231011		
3059666300	3057923634		SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA INCLUDES BIG CYPRESS, BRIGHTON RESERVATIONS & SEMINOLE TRUST LANDS, HEADQUARTERS FOR SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA

- Find & Replace...
- Select By Attributes...
- Clear Selection
- Switch Selection
- Select All
- Add Field...
- Turn All Fields On
- Restore Default Column Widths
- Related Tables
- Create Graph...
- Add Table to Layout
- Reload Cache
- Print...
- Reports
- Export...
- Appearance...

PHONE	FAX	COMMENTS	CITY_ST
8137634128		SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA INCLUDES BIG CYPRESS, HOLLYWOOD (DANIA) RESERVATIONS & SEMINOLE TRUST LANDS	GLADES, FL
3059666300	3057923634	SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA INCLUDES BRIGHTON, HOLLYWOOD (DANIA) RESERVATIONS & SEMINOLE TRUST LANDS	BROWARD & HENRY, FL
3052238380	3052231011		DADE, FL
3059666300	3057923634	SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA INCLUDES BIG CYPRESS, BRIGHTON RESERVATIONS & SEMINOLE TRUST LANDS, HEADQUARTERS FOR SEMINOL	HENDRY, FL

Avoid annoying scrolling to read the contents of long comment or description fields. Choose Options > Appearance and change the font type, size, and header and cell height to make these fields easier to read.