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Advisor Answers

FoxPro 2.x and Visual FoxPro

Q: Is the following behavior a bug? SET DATE TO AMERICAN and then run the following program. Both cases show 1903 as the answer. Why?

```
?year({01/02/03})  
set date to ymd  
?year({01/02/03})
```

–Pradip Acharya (via Compuserve)

A: This behavior is not a bug, but it is confusing. The reason you see these results is that date constants are evaluated at compile-time. In your example, since DATE is set to AMERICAN when you compile this program, {01/02/03} is seen as January 2, 1903. The programmatic change to MDY affects the output format used in the program and the interpretation of dates entered after the program is run (though, of course, any program which changes the date setting should be polite enough to change it back when done).

If you use a date variable instead, things go much more smoothly. For example, this program produces the results you'd expect:

```
dDate=DATE()  
?dDate, year(dDate)  
SET DATE YMD  
?dDate, year(dDate)
```

On the whole, it's a good idea to avoid using date constants in programs. If you must do so, make sure you SET DATE appropriately prior to compiling the program.

Of course, it's best if your programs respect the date settings the user chooses in the Windows Control Panel. In VFP5, it's easy to do so by using SET DATE TO SHORT or SET DATE TO LONG, which use the short date and long date settings from Control Panel respectively or SET SYSFORMATS ON, which SETs DATE SHORT and detects Control Panel changes. In older versions, it can take a little work to extract the user's settings, but it's worth it. Keep in mind, too, that in Visual FoxPro, SET DATE is scoped to the data session.

–Tamar