

Transferring Files to the NARSTO Shared-Access FTP Site - ASCII or Binary Mode ???

When transferring files with File Transport Protocol (FTP) to the NARSTO collaborative FTP site, it is important to use the appropriate mode of transfer. FTP allows transfers in either ASCII or binary mode.

Text files must be transferred in ASCII mode (there is one exception allowed, discussed below). This includes NARSTO Data Exchange Standard files, which are ASCII files in comma-separated-value (.csv) format. This also usually includes files ending in .txt, .dat, .html, .xml, .sgml, or .sas, which are typical ASCII file extensions. Transfer these ASCII files in ASCII mode.

Most files in a proprietary format must be transferred in binary mode. This includes Excel (.xls), Word (.doc), WordPerfect (.wpd), Rich Text Format (.rtf), netCDF (.cdf), and Adobe Portable Document Format (.pdf) files, and many others. Transfer these in binary mode.

Here are some hints for command-driven FTP software: To specify the mode, type the mode you want: "ascii" for ASCII or "bin" for binary. The "put" command copies one file at a time. The "mput" command will copy all the files, prompting you about each one. Issuing a "prompt off" command somewhere before issuing the "mput" command will prevent it from asking you about each file. FTP understands wildcards. The "mput *.csv" command will copy all the .csv files at once, without copying other files. "quit" ends your FTP session. Typing "?" gets you a terse list of commands.

ONE EXCEPTION TO TRANSFER MODES: The NARTSO FTP site is a Unix-based system (running Linux). Therefore, if you are FTPing to it from another Unix-based system, you may if you wish transfer all of your files in binary mode, even the ASCII files. ASCII files will be processed faster this way. However, if you are not SURE you are coming from a Unix machine, follow the main directions above. It will work just as well, even if you are using a Unix system, just a bit slower.

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