

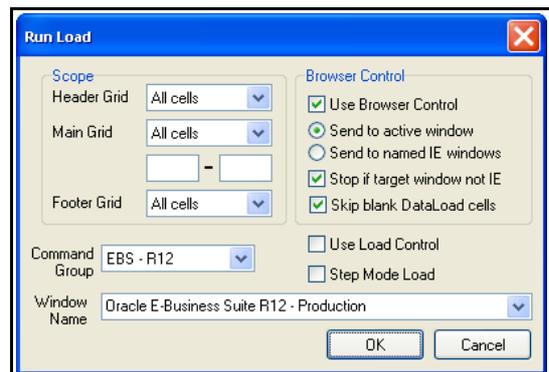
Enhancing Self Service Loads with Browser Control

Browser Control is a simple and dramatic way to improve the performance and reliability of loads in browsers. This paper explains how to use Browser Control and how it works.

Browsers are increasingly used to deliver applications to users. That has many benefits but presents some challenges for those attempting to load data through browser-based forms. First, many of the keystroke shortcuts used in conventional forms are not available in browsers. Second, and more importantly, the performance of browser-based applications is more variable. The performance doesn't just vary between sessions but also within a session, for example one record may load normally yet the system works more slowly when the next record is loaded. That causes issues for loads which are controlled by fixed time delays and the load may either be unreliable or, in an effort to make it reliable, slow.

Browser Control enables DataLoad to integrate with Internet Explorer and directly control everything within the form, for example enter data in fields, select values from droplists and click buttons. DataLoad also knows what Internet Explorer is doing and will wait for the previous action to complete before processing the next spreadsheet cell. Thus fixed time delays become dynamic and variable. The replacement of fixed time delays with dynamic timing and the direct control of forms significantly improves the performance and reliability of Macro loads.

Using Browser Control is straightforward. A normal Macro load is created that loads in to Internet Explorer. When the load is started the Run Load window appears, see screenshot, and this contains a check box called "Use Browser Control". Ticking that checkbox activates Browser Control and DataLoad then handles everything else – nothing further is required from the user. Having enabled Browser Control the load's time delays can be reduced or removed altogether.



Browser Control loads can be further significantly improved. Each DataLoad column may be linked to something (e.g. field, drop list, check box, button, etc) in the target form in Internet Explorer. To do that, open DataLoad's Column Setup window using the link on the Edit menu or with the Ctrl + T shortcut or by double clicking on the spreadsheet's title row. Move the Column Setup window to one side of the screen and position the Internet Explorer window so it is also visible. Click in a Internet Explorer field and the field's details will be shown in the "Current IE Field Details" section of the DataLoad Window. To associate that field with a DataLoad column, select the column and click the populate button. That will insert the IE field details in the Browser Control section of the setup window. Whenever DataLoad loads a cell in this column it will use those details to directly control the IE form.

Clicking on anything within the IE form will cause DataLoad to show the details in the setup window and enable the user to load those to a DataLoad column. However, some

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things cause an action to occur when clicked and that can make it difficult to capture the details. For example, this happens with buttons and hyperlinks. With such components the user should click somewhere nearby and then use the Tab key to navigate to it. That enables the user to activate the component and capture the details but without causing anything to happen in the form.

The process just described is usually sufficient for linking DataLoad columns with IE form components. However, the details can be manually edited in DataLoad if needed. One reason for doing that is where the form component's details may change between or even within loads. In that case some of the details may be edited to include wildcard characters to ensure a match is always made even if the details change. The * wildcard can be used to match with any number of characters while the ? Matches with any single character.

Linking each column with an IE form component ensures DataLoad always inserts the data or performs the click correctly. This also means the usual navigation commands used in Macros loads, for example to tab between fields, are not required. These can now be safely removed and the load will still work correctly. That further improves reliability and performance and also simplifies the DataLoad spreadsheet(s).

Where DataLoad is to enter a value in a form field or select a value from a drop list that value should be entered in the DataLoad cell. However, sometimes it is necessary to click something in the form, for example a button, checkbox or hyperlink. Entering *ml in the cell will cause DataLoad to perform that click. With checkboxes it is normally more useful to positively set the checkbox status, i.e. ticked or un-ticked, rather than just click it to toggle that status. To ensure a checkbox is ticked enter any value other than *ml in the DataLoad cell. Conversely, if the "Skip blank DataLoad cells" option on the Run Load window is not checked then the cell should be left blank and DataLoad will un-tick the checkbox. If that option is ticked then DataLoad ignores blank cells; in that case enter *CLEAR in the cell and that tells DataLoad to un-tick the checkbox.

There is one more significant benefit in linking each DataLoad column to IE form components. With this setup DataLoad and IE can be in the background on the PC and the load will still continue to run. Thus the user can work in other applications while the load runs. That is different to normal Macro loads where the target window must stay active for the load to work. This functionality is controlled by two radio buttons on DataLoad's Run Load window. If "Send to active window" is selected then DataLoad's default functionality applies, which is to load all data in to the active window. However, if "Send to named IE windows" is selected then DataLoad will load in to the named window(s) instead. The load starts with the window named in DataLoad's window name drop list. DataLoad will continue to use that window, regardless of whether it is active or not, until it is directed to load in a different window. To change the target window use the *CW(*window name*) command in a DataLoad cell.

Without Browser Control, loading in to browser forms can be extremely difficult, slow and unreliable. By enabling this functionality browser loads can run surprisingly quickly and reliability is regained. Thus it is recommended that Browser Control is used by default whenever loading in to browser-based forms.

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