

## 1.1. Introduction to Protein Data Bank Format

Protein Data Bank (PDB) format is a standard for files containing atomic coordinates. Structures deposited in the Protein Data Bank at the Research Collaboratory for Structural Bioinformatics (RCSB) are written in this standardized format. The short description provided here will suffice for most users. However, those actually creating PDB files should consult the definitive description (see [http://www.rcsb.org/pdb/info.html#File\\_Formats\\_and\\_Standards](http://www.rcsb.org/pdb/info.html#File_Formats_and_Standards)).

The complete PDB file specification provides for a wealth of information, including authors, literature references, and the identification of substructures such as disulfide bonds, helices, sheets, and active sites. Users should bear in mind that modeling programs can be unforgiving of incorrect input formats.

### 1.1.1. Description

Protein Data Bank format consists of lines of information in a text file. Each line of information in the file is called a *record*. A file generally contains several different types of records, which are arranged in a specific order to describe a structure.

| Selected Protein Data Bank Record Types |  |
|---|--|
| Record Type                             |  |
| <b>ATOM</b>                             | atomic coordinate record containing the x,y,z orthogonal Angstrom coordinates for atoms in standard residues (amino acids and nucleic acids).  |
| <b>HETATM</b>                           | atomic coordinate record containing the x,y,z orthogonal Angstrom coordinates for atoms in nonstandard residues. Nonstandard residues include inhibitors, cofactors, ions, and solvent. The only functional difference from ATOM records is that HETATM residues are by default not connected to other residues. Note that water residues should be in HETATM records. |
| <b>TER</b>                              | indicates the end of a chain of residues. For example, a hemoglobin molecule consists of four subunit chains which are not connected. TER indicates the end of a chain and prevents the display of a connection to the next chain.   |
| <b>SSBOND</b>                           | defines disulfide bond linkages between cysteine residues.   |
| <b>HELIX</b>                            | indicates the location and type (right-handed alpha, <i>etc.</i> ) of helices. One record per helix.   |
| <b>SHEET</b>                            | indicates the location, sense (anti-parallel, <i>etc.</i> ) and registration with respect to the previous strand in the sheet (if any) of each strand in the model. One record per strand.   |

The following table describes the format for selected record types. Older PDB files may not adhere completely to the newer format specification. From the standpoint of most users, the most notable differences between older and newer files occur in the fields following the temperature factor in ATOM and HETATM records. These fields are not included in the examples in the subsequent sections. Furthermore, some fields are frequently blank, such as the alternate location indicator when an atom does not have alternate locations.

| Protein Data Bank Format |         |                                      |               |           |
|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Record Type              | Columns | Data                                 | Justification | Data Type |
| ATOM                     | 1-4     | “ATOM”                               | left          | character |
|                          | 7-11    | Atom serial number                   | right         | integer   |
|                          | 13-16   | Atom name                            | left*         | character |
|                          | 17      | Alternate location indicator         |               | character |
|                          | 18-20   | Residue name                         | right         | character |
|                          | 22      | Chain identifier                     |               | character |
|                          | 23-26   | Residue sequence number              | right         | integer   |
|                          | 27      | Code for insertions of residues      |               | character |
|                          | 31-38   | X orthogonal Angstrom coordinate     | right         | floating  |
|                          | 39-46   | Y orthogonal Angstrom coordinate     | right         | floating  |
|                          | 47-54   | Z orthogonal Angstrom coordinate     | right         | floating  |
|                          | 55-60   | Occupancy                            | right         | floating  |
|                          | 61-66   | Temperature factor                   | right         | floating  |
|                          | 73-76   | Segment identifier (optional)        | left          | character |
|                          | 77-78   | Element symbol                       | right         | character |
|                          | 79-80   | Charge (optional)                    |               | character |
| HETATM                   | 1-6     | “HETATM”                             |               |           |
|                          | 7-80    | same as ATOM records                 |               |           |
| TER                      | 1-3     | “TER”                                |               | character |
|                          | 7-11    | Serial number                        | right         | integer   |
|                          | 18-20   | Residue name                         | right         | character |
|                          | 22      | Chain identifier                     |               | character |
|                          | 23-26   | Residue sequence number              | right         | integer   |
|                          | 27      | Code for insertions of residues      |               | character |
| SSBOND                   | 1-6     | “SSBOND”                             |               | character |
|                          | 8-10    | Serial number                        | right         | integer   |
|                          | 12-14   | Residue name (CYS)                   | right         | character |
|                          | 16      | Chain identifier                     |               | character |
|                          | 18-21   | Residue sequence number              | right         | integer   |
|                          | 22      | Code for insertions of residues      |               | character |
|                          | 26-28   | Residue name (CYS)                   | right         | character |
|                          | 30      | Chain identifier                     |               | character |
|                          | 32-35   | Residue sequence number              | right         | integer   |
|                          | 36      | Code for insertions of residues      |               | character |
|                          | 60-65   | Symmetry operator for first residue  | right         | integer   |
|                          | 67-72   | Symmetry operator for second residue | right         | integer   |

\*The chemical symbols of atoms are right-justified in columns 13-14. For example, the symbol “FE” for iron appears in columns 13-14, whereas the symbol “C” for carbon appears in column 14.

| Protein Data Bank Format<br>(continued) |         |   |               |           |
|---|---------|---|---------------|-----------|
| Record Type                             | Columns | Data  | Justification | Data Type |
| HELIX                                   | 1-5     | “HELIX”   | left          | character |
|   | 8-10    | Helix serial number   | right         | integer   |
|   | 12-14   | Helix identifier  | right         | character |
|   | 16-18   | Initial residue name  | right         | character |
|   | 20      | Chain identifier  |               | character |
|   | 22-25   | Residue sequence number   | right         | integer   |
|   | 26      | Code for insertions of residues   |               | character |
|   | 28-30   | Terminal residue name   | right         | character |
|   | 32      | Chain identifier  |               | character |
|   | 34-37   | Residue sequence number   | right         | integer   |
|   | 38      | Code for insertions of residues   |               | character |
|   | 39-40   | Type of helix <sup>†</sup>  | right         | integer   |
| SHEET                                   | 41-70   | Comment   | left          | character |
|   | 72-76   | Length of helix   | right         | integer   |
|   | 1-5     | “SHEET”   |               | character |
|   | 8-10    | Strand number (in current sheet)  | right         | integer   |
|   | 12-14   | Sheet identifier  | right         | character |
|   | 15-16   | Number of strands (in current sheet)  | right         | integer   |
|   | 18-20   | Initial residue name  | right         | character |
|   | 22      | Chain identifier  |               | character |
|   | 23-26   | Residue sequence number   | right         | integer   |
|   | 27      | Code for insertions of residues   |               | character |
|   | 29-31   | Terminal residue name   | right         | character |
|   | 33      | Chain identifier  |               | character |
|   | 34-37   | Residue sequence number   | right         | integer   |
|   | 38      | Code for insertions of residues   |               | character |
|   | 39-40   | Strand sense with respect to previous <sup>‡</sup>  | right         | integer   |
|   |         | The following fields identify two atoms, the first in the current strand and the second in the previous strand, which are hydrogen bonded to each other. These fields should be blank for strand 1. |               |           |
|   | 42-45   | Atom name (as per ATOM record)  | left          | character |
|   | 46-48   | Residue name  | right         | character |
|   | 50      | Chain identifier  |               | character |
|   | 51-54   | Residue sequence number   | right         | integer   |
|   | 55      | Code for insertions of residues   |               | character |
|   | 57-60   | Atom name (as per ATOM record)  | left          | character |
|   | 61-63   | Residue name  | right         | character |
|   | 65      | Chain identifier  |               | character |
|   | 66-69   | Residue sequence number   | right         | integer   |
|   | 70      | Code for insertions of residues   |               | character |

<sup>†</sup>Helix types are:

- |   |                              |    |                   |
|---|------------------------------|----|-------------------|
| 1 | Right-handed alpha (default) | 6  | Left-handed alpha |
| 2 | Right-handed omega           | 7  | Left-handed omega |
| 3 | Right-handed pi              | 8  | Left-handed gamma |
| 4 | Right-handed gamma           | 9  | 2/7 ribbon/helix  |
| 5 | Right-handed 3/10            | 10 | Polyproline       |

<sup>‡</sup>Parallel is indicated with “1,” anti-parallel with “-1.” Strand 1 has sense indicator “0.”

For those who are familiar with the FORTRAN programming language, the following format descriptions will be meaningful. For those users unfamiliar with FORTRAN, ignore this gibberish:

**ATOM**            Format ( A6,I5,1X,A4,A1,A3,1X,A1,I4,A1,3X,3F8.3,2F6.2,6X,A4,A2,A2 )  
**HETATM**

**SSBOND**        Format ( A6,1X,I3,1X,A3,1X,A1,1X,I4,A1,3X,A3,1X,A1,1X,I4,A1,23X,2I3,1X,2I3 )

**HELIX**         Format ( A6,1X,I3,1X,A3,2(1X,A3,1X,A1,1X,I4,A1),I2,A30,1X,I5 )

**SHEET**         Format ( A6,1X,I3,1X,A3,I2,2(1X,A3,1X,A1,I4,A1),I2,2(1X,A4,A3,1X,A1,I4,A1) )

### 1.1.2. Examples of PDB Format

Fields following the temperature factor in ATOM and HETATM records are not shown in any of the examples.

Glucagon is a small protein of 29 amino acids in a single chain. The first residue is the amino-terminal amino acid, histidine, which is followed by a serine residue and then a glutamine. The coordinate information starts with:

|      |    |     |     |   |        |        |        |      |       |
|------|----|-----|-----|---|--------|--------|--------|------|-------|
| ATOM | 1  | N   | HIS | 1 | 49.668 | 24.248 | 10.436 | 1.00 | 25.00 |
| ATOM | 2  | CA  | HIS | 1 | 50.197 | 25.578 | 10.784 | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 3  | C   | HIS | 1 | 49.169 | 26.701 | 10.917 | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 4  | O   | HIS | 1 | 48.241 | 26.524 | 11.749 | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 5  | CB  | HIS | 1 | 51.312 | 26.048 | 9.843  | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 6  | CG  | HIS | 1 | 50.958 | 26.068 | 8.340  | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 7  | ND1 | HIS | 1 | 49.636 | 26.144 | 7.860  | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 8  | CD2 | HIS | 1 | 51.797 | 26.043 | 7.286  | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 9  | CE1 | HIS | 1 | 49.691 | 26.152 | 6.454  | 1.00 | 17.00 |
| ATOM | 10 | NE2 | HIS | 1 | 51.046 | 26.090 | 6.098  | 1.00 | 17.00 |
| ATOM | 11 | N   | SER | 2 | 49.788 | 27.850 | 10.784 | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 12 | CA  | SER | 2 | 49.138 | 29.147 | 10.620 | 1.00 | 15.00 |
| ATOM | 13 | C   | SER | 2 | 47.713 | 29.006 | 10.110 | 1.00 | 15.00 |
| ATOM | 14 | O   | SER | 2 | 46.740 | 29.251 | 10.864 | 1.00 | 15.00 |
| ATOM | 15 | CB  | SER | 2 | 49.875 | 29.930 | 9.569  | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 16 | OG  | SER | 2 | 49.145 | 31.057 | 9.176  | 1.00 | 19.00 |
| ATOM | 17 | N   | GLN | 3 | 47.620 | 28.367 | 8.973  | 1.00 | 15.00 |
| ATOM | 18 | CA  | GLN | 3 | 46.287 | 28.193 | 8.308  | 1.00 | 14.00 |
| ATOM | 19 | C   | GLN | 3 | 45.406 | 27.172 | 8.963  | 1.00 | 14.00 |

Notice that each line or *record* begins with the record type, ATOM. The atom serial number is the next item in each record.

The atom name is the third item in the record. Notice that the first one or two characters of the atom name consists of the chemical symbol for the atom type. All the atom names beginning with “C” are carbon atoms; “N” indicates a nitrogen and “O” indicates oxygen. The next character is the remoteness indicator code, which is transliterated according to:

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| $\alpha$   | A |
| $\beta$    | B |
| $\gamma$   | G |
| $\delta$   | D |
| $\epsilon$ | E |
| $\zeta$    | Z |
| $\eta$     | H |

The last character of the atom name is a branch indicator, if required.

The next data field is the residue type. Notice that *each* record contains the residue type. In this example, the first residue in the chain is HIS (histidine) and the second residue is a SER (serine).

The next data field contains the residue sequence number. Notice that as the residue changes from histidine to serine, the residue number changes from “1” to “2.” Two like residues may be adjacent to one another, so the residue number is very important for distinguishing between them.

The next three data fields contain the X, Y, and Z coordinate values, respectively. The next data field is the occupancy. The final field shown is the temperature factor (B value).

The glucagon data file continues in this manner until the final residue is reached:

|      |     |     |     |    |       |        |        |      |       |
|------|-----|-----|-----|----|-------|--------|--------|------|-------|
| ATOM | 239 | N   | THR | 29 | 3.391 | 19.940 | 12.762 | 1.00 | 21.00 |
| ATOM | 240 | CA  | THR | 29 | 2.014 | 19.761 | 13.283 | 1.00 | 21.00 |
| ATOM | 241 | C   | THR | 29 | .826  | 19.943 | 12.332 | 1.00 | 23.00 |
| ATOM | 242 | O   | THR | 29 | .932  | 19.600 | 11.133 | 1.00 | 30.00 |
| ATOM | 243 | CB  | THR | 29 | 1.845 | 20.667 | 14.505 | 1.00 | 21.00 |
| ATOM | 244 | OG1 | THR | 29 | 1.214 | 21.893 | 14.153 | 1.00 | 21.00 |
| ATOM | 245 | CG2 | THR | 29 | 3.180 | 20.968 | 15.185 | 1.00 | 21.00 |
| ATOM | 246 | OXT | THR | 29 | -.317 | 20.109 | 12.824 | 1.00 | 25.00 |
| TER  | 247 |     | THR | 29 |       |        |        |      |       |

Note that this residue includes the extra oxygen atom, “OXT,” on the terminal carboxyl group. The “TER” record terminates the amino acid chain.

A more complicated protein, fetal hemoglobin, consists of two amino acid chains (alpha and gamma) and two heme groups. The first ten lines of coordinates for this molecule are:

|      |    |     |     |   |   |        |        |       |      |      |
|------|----|-----|-----|---|---|--------|--------|-------|------|------|
| ATOM | 1  | N   | VAL | A | 1 | 6.280  | 17.225 | 4.929 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 2  | CA  | VAL | A | 1 | 6.948  | 18.508 | 4.671 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 3  | C   | VAL | A | 1 | 8.436  | 18.338 | 4.977 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 4  | O   | VAL | A | 1 | 8.813  | 17.657 | 5.941 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 5  | CB  | VAL | A | 1 | 6.317  | 19.598 | 5.527 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 6  | CG1 | VAL | A | 1 | 6.959  | 20.999 | 5.376 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 7  | CG2 | VAL | A | 1 | 4.819  | 19.636 | 5.383 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 8  | N   | LEU | A | 2 | 9.259  | 18.958 | 4.152 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 9  | CA  | LEU | A | 2 | 10.715 | 18.872 | 4.330 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 10 | C   | LEU | A | 2 | 11.156 | 20.058 | 5.187 | 1.00 | 0.00 |

This data file appears much the same as the file for glucagon, with the exception that the fifth data field now contains the single-character chain indicator. In this case, the chain indicator is “A,” denoting the alpha chain of the hemoglobin molecule. This field was simply blank in the glucagon example. At the end of chain A, the heme group records appear:

|        |      |     |     |     |     |         |        |         |         |      |      |
|--------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|--------|---------|---------|------|------|
| ATOM   | 1058 | N   | ARG | A   | 141 | -6.576  | 12.834 | -10.275 | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| ATOM   | 1059 | CA  | ARG | A   | 141 | -8.044  | 12.831 | -10.214 | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| ATOM   | 1060 | C   | ARG | A   | 141 | -8.186  | 14.096 | -9.365  | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| ATOM   | 1061 | O   | ARG | A   | 141 | -7.591  | 15.139 | -9.671  | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| ATOM   | 1062 | CB  | ARG | A   | 141 | -8.579  | 11.531 | -9.580  | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| ATOM   | 1063 | CG  | ARG | A   | 141 | -8.386  | 11.441 | -8.054  | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| ATOM   | 1064 | CD  | ARG | A   | 141 | -8.727  | 10.045 | -7.568  | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| ATOM   | 1065 | NE  | ARG | A   | 141 | -9.095  | 10.056 | -6.143  | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| ATOM   | 1066 | CZ  | ARG | A   | 141 | -9.268  | 8.931  | -5.414  | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| ATOM   | 1067 | NH1 | ARG | A   | 141 | -8.602  | 8.795  | -4.282  | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| ATOM   | 1068 | NH2 | ARG | A   | 141 | -10.097 | 7.962  | -5.830  | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| ATOM   | 1069 | OXT | ARG | A   | 141 | -8.973  | 13.984 | -8.310  | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| TER    | 1070 |     | ARG | A   | 141 |         |        |         |         |      |      |
| HETATM | 1071 | FE  | HEM | A   | 1   | 8.133   | 8.321  | -15.014 | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| HETATM | 1072 | CHA | HEM | A   | 1   | 8.863   | 8.752  | -18.417 | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| HETATM | 1073 | CHB | HEM | A   | 1   | 10.362  | 10.946 | -14.389 | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| HETATM | 1074 | CHC | HEM | A   | 1   | 8.482   | 7.374  | -11.743 | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| HETATM | 1075 | CHD | HEM | A   | 1   | 6.982   | 5.180  | -15.773 | 1.00    | 0.00 |      |
| HETATM | 1076 | N   | A   | HEM | A   | 1       | 9.452  | 9.545   | -16.178 | 1.00 | 0.00 |

The last residue in the alpha chain is an “ARG” (arginine). Again, the extra oxygen atom “OXT” appears in the terminal carboxyl group. The “TER” record indicates the end of the peptide chain. It is important to have “TER” records at the end of peptide chains so a bond is not drawn from the end of one chain to the start of another.

In the example above, the “TER” record is correct and should be present, but the molecule chain would still be terminated at that point even without a “TER” record, because “HETATM” residues are not connected to other residues or to each other. The heme group is a single residue made up of “HETATM” records.

At the end of the heme group associated with the alpha chain, the gamma chain begins:

|        |      |     |     |   |   |       |         |         |      |      |
|--------|------|-----|-----|---|---|-------|---------|---------|------|------|
| HETATM | 1109 | CAD | HEM | A | 1 | 7.582 | 6.731   | -20.480 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| HETATM | 1110 | CBD | HEM | A | 1 | 8.992 | 6.848   | -20.968 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| HETATM | 1111 | CGD | HEM | A | 1 | 8.998 | 6.529   | -22.465 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| HETATM | 1112 | O1D | HEM | A | 1 | 9.693 | 5.683   | -22.895 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| HETATM | 1113 | O2D | HEM | A | 1 | 8.276 | 7.153   | -23.229 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM   | 1114 | C   | ACE | G | 0 | 7.896 | -18.462 | -1.908  | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM   | 1115 | O   | ACE | G | 0 | 7.246 | -18.839 | -.922   | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM   | 1116 | CH3 | ACE | G | 0 | 9.415 | -18.301 | -1.832  | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM   | 1117 | N   | GLY | G | 1 | 7.354 | -18.174 | -3.077  | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM   | 1118 | CA  | GLY | G | 1 | 5.904 | -18.282 | -3.283  | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM   | 1119 | C   | GLY | G | 1 | 7.139 | -19.112 | -2.930  | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM   | 1120 | O   | GLY | G | 1 | 7.026 | -20.248 | -2.448  | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM   | 1121 | N   | HIS | G | 2 | 8.300 | -18.533 | -3.176  | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM   | 1122 | CA  | HIS | G | 2 | 9.565 | -19.224 | -2.889  | 1.00 | 0.00 |

Here the “TER” card is implicit in the start of a new chain. The new chain identifier is “G.” The file continues in the same pattern as before until the entire gamma chain and its associated heme group have been specified.

The spacing of the data fields is crucial. If a data field does not apply, it should be left blank. For example, a protein which consists of a single amino acid chain has no chain identifier, and thus column 22 is blank.

From this example, it is apparent that Protein Data Bank format relies on the concept of *residues*. The rules for residues can be summarized as:

- (1) All atoms within a single residue must have unique names. For example, residue “VAL” may have only one atom named “CA.” Other residues may also have a “CA” atom but not more than one “CA” may appear in “VAL.”
- (2) Residue names are a maximum of three characters long and uniquely identify the residue type. Thus, all residues of a given name in a file will be the same type of residue and have the same structure. Each occurrence of a particular residue in the Protein Data Bank file should have the same atoms with the same connectivity.

### 1.1.3. Common Errors in PDB Format Files

If a data file fails to display correctly, it is sometimes difficult to determine where in the hundreds of lines of data the mistake occurred. This section enumerates some of the most common errors found in PDB files.

### 1.1.4. Program-Generated PDB Files

#### Spurious Long Bonds

A couple of common errors in program-generated PDB files result in the display of very long bonds between residues that should be disconnected.

One such error is the omission of TER cards at the end of molecule chains. According to the PDB standard, TER cards mark the end of molecule chains. They should be inserted in the file, if missing. Alternatively, all chains could be marked with differing chain IDs.

A second common cause of long bonds is the improper use of ATOM records instead of HETATM records. HETATM records should be employed for compounds that do not form chains, such as water or heme. Many programs generate files that fail to employ HETATM records appropriately. The first *six* columns of the ATOM record should be changed to HETATM so that the remaining columns stay aligned correctly.

#### Misaligned Atom Names

Incorrectly aligned atom names in PDB records can cause problems. Atom names are composed of an atomic symbol (such as “C”), *right*-justified in columns 13-14 of ATOM and HETATM records, and trailing identifying characters (such as “A”) *left*-justified in columns 15-16. Many programs simply left-justify the entire atom name starting in column 13. The difference can be seen clearly in a short segment of hemoglobin:

*correct*

|        |     |     |     |   |        |        |        |      |      |
|--------|-----|-----|-----|---|--------|--------|--------|------|------|
| HETATM | 976 | FE  | HEM | 1 | 12.763 | 34.157 | 9.102  | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| HETATM | 977 | CHA | HEM | 1 | 16.124 | 33.461 | 10.405 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| HETATM | 978 | CHB | HEM | 1 | 11.350 | 32.580 | 12.046 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| HETATM | 979 | CHC | HEM | 1 | 9.326  | 34.709 | 7.887  | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| HETATM | 980 | CHD | HEM | 1 | 14.138 | 35.379 | 6.119  | 1.00 | 0.00 |

*incorrect*

|        |     |     |     |   |        |        |        |      |      |
|--------|-----|-----|-----|---|--------|--------|--------|------|------|
| HETATM | 976 | FE  | HEM | 1 | 12.763 | 34.157 | 9.102  | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| HETATM | 977 | CHA | HEM | 1 | 16.124 | 33.461 | 10.405 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| HETATM | 978 | CHB | HEM | 1 | 11.350 | 32.580 | 12.046 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| HETATM | 979 | CHC | HEM | 1 | 9.326  | 34.709 | 7.887  | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| HETATM | 980 | CHD | HEM | 1 | 14.138 | 35.379 | 6.119  | 1.00 | 0.00 |

### 1.1.5. Hand-Edited PDB Files

#### Duplicate Atom Names

One possible editing mistake is the failure to uniquely name all atoms within a given residue. In the following example, two atoms in residue VAL are named CA:

|      |    |     |     |   |   |        |        |       |      |      |
|------|----|-----|-----|---|---|--------|--------|-------|------|------|
| ATOM | 1  | N   | VAL | A | 1 | 6.280  | 17.225 | 4.929 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 2  | CA  | VAL | A | 1 | 6.948  | 18.508 | 4.671 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 3  | C   | VAL | A | 1 | 8.436  | 18.338 | 4.977 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 4  | O   | VAL | A | 1 | 8.813  | 17.657 | 5.941 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 5  | CA  | VAL | A | 1 | 6.317  | 19.598 | 5.527 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 6  | CG1 | VAL | A | 1 | 6.959  | 20.999 | 5.376 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 7  | CG2 | VAL | A | 1 | 4.819  | 19.636 | 5.383 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 8  | N   | LEU | A | 2 | 9.259  | 18.958 | 4.152 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 9  | CA  | LEU | A | 2 | 10.715 | 18.872 | 4.330 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 10 | C   | LEU | A | 2 | 11.156 | 20.058 | 5.187 | 1.00 | 0.00 |

Depending on the display program, the residue may be shown with incorrect connectivity, or it may become evident only upon labeling that the residue is missing a “CB” atom.

#### Residues Out of Sequence

In the following example, the second residue (SER) appearing in the file is erroneously numbered residue 5. Many display programs will show residue 5 as connected to residue 1 and residue 3. This may be correct, but only if it is what was originally intended. If, however, residue number 5 was supposed to appear between residue 4 and residue 6, it should have appeared in that position in the PDB file.

|      |    |     |     |  |   |        |        |        |      |       |
|------|----|-----|-----|--|---|--------|--------|--------|------|-------|
| ATOM | 1  | C   | HIS |  | 1 | 49.169 | 26.701 | 10.917 | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 2  | CA  | HIS |  | 1 | 50.197 | 25.578 | 10.784 | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 3  | CB  | HIS |  | 1 | 51.312 | 26.048 | 9.843  | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 4  | CD2 | HIS |  | 1 | 51.797 | 26.043 | 7.286  | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 5  | CE1 | HIS |  | 1 | 49.691 | 26.152 | 6.454  | 1.00 | 17.00 |
| ATOM | 6  | CG  | HIS |  | 1 | 50.958 | 26.068 | 8.340  | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 7  | N   | HIS |  | 1 | 49.668 | 24.248 | 10.436 | 1.00 | 25.00 |
| ATOM | 8  | ND1 | HIS |  | 1 | 49.636 | 26.144 | 7.860  | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 9  | NE2 | HIS |  | 1 | 51.046 | 26.090 | 6.098  | 1.00 | 17.00 |
| ATOM | 10 | O   | HIS |  | 1 | 48.241 | 26.524 | 11.749 | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 11 | C   | SER |  | 5 | 47.713 | 29.006 | 10.110 | 1.00 | 15.00 |
| ATOM | 12 | CA  | SER |  | 5 | 49.138 | 29.147 | 10.620 | 1.00 | 15.00 |
| ATOM | 13 | CB  | SER |  | 5 | 49.875 | 29.930 | 9.569  | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 14 | N   | SER |  | 5 | 49.788 | 27.850 | 10.784 | 1.00 | 16.00 |
| ATOM | 15 | O   | SER |  | 5 | 46.740 | 29.251 | 10.864 | 1.00 | 15.00 |
| ATOM | 16 | OG  | SER |  | 5 | 49.145 | 31.057 | 9.176  | 1.00 | 19.00 |
| ATOM | 17 | C   | GLN |  | 3 | 45.406 | 27.172 | 8.963  | 1.00 | 14.00 |
| ATOM | 18 | CA  | GLN |  | 3 | 46.287 | 28.193 | 8.308  | 1.00 | 14.00 |

#### Common Typos

Sometimes the letter “l” is accidentally substituted for the number “1.” This has different repercussions depending on where in the file the error occurs; a grossly misplaced atom may indicate the presence of such an error in a coordinate field. These errors can be located readily if the text of the data file appears in uppercase, by invoking a text editor to search for all instances of the lowercase letter “l.”



## 1.2. Modeling Hydrogen Atoms

The conventions for hydrogen atoms in PDB files are as follows:

- (1) Hydrogen atoms appear as ATOM records following the ATOM records of all other atoms of a particular residue.
- (2) The name of each hydrogen atom is determined by the name of the atom to which it is connected:

The first space of the name (column 13) is an optional digit to be used if two or more hydrogens are attached to the same atom.

The second column, 14, is used for the chemical symbol, “H.”

The next two columns contain the remoteness and branch indicators (one or two characters) of the atom to which the hydrogen is attached.

For example,

|      |    |      |     |   |         |       |       |      |      |
|------|----|------|-----|---|---------|-------|-------|------|------|
| ATOM | 1  | N    | VAL | 1 | -13.090 | 1.966 | 9.741 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 2  | CA   | VAL | 1 | -12.852 | 3.121 | 8.892 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 3  | C    | VAL | 1 | -13.047 | 4.399 | 9.711 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 4  | O    | VAL | 1 | -12.143 | 5.228 | 9.800 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 5  | CB   | VAL | 1 | -13.753 | 3.058 | 7.658 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 6  | CG1  | VAL | 1 | -13.930 | 4.446 | 7.036 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 7  | CG2  | VAL | 1 | -13.208 | 2.063 | 6.631 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 8  | H    | VAL | 1 | -13.919 | 1.449 | 9.527 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 9  | HA   | VAL | 1 | -11.816 | 3.075 | 8.557 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 10 | HB   | VAL | 1 | -14.734 | 2.707 | 7.977 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 11 | 1HG1 | VAL | 1 | -13.951 | 4.357 | 5.950 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 12 | 2HG1 | VAL | 1 | -14.866 | 4.883 | 7.384 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 13 | 3HG1 | VAL | 1 | -13.098 | 5.085 | 7.333 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 14 | 1HG2 | VAL | 1 | -12.623 | 1.298 | 7.142 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 15 | 2HG2 | VAL | 1 | -14.039 | 1.594 | 6.104 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| ATOM | 16 | 3HG2 | VAL | 1 | -12.575 | 2.588 | 5.917 | 1.00 | 0.00 |

Note in this example that:

- All hydrogens appear after the other atoms of the residue.
- Atom 9, “HA” is attached to atom 2, “CA.” The remoteness indicator “A” is the same for these atoms.
- There are three hydrogen atoms connected to “CG1.” They all have the same remoteness and branch indicators, but contain a distinguishing digit in column 13. Thus, each has a unique name.
- It is not necessary to use a digit as a prefix to the atom name when only one hydrogen is attached to a given atom.