

# Maintain VLAN.DAT File on Catalyst Switches

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## Introduction

Viewing VLAN Information

This document describes how Catalyst switches maintain VLAN information in the special `vlan.dat` file.

## Prerequisites

### Requirements

Cisco recommends that you have knowledge of this topic:

- Cisco Catalyst switches

### Components Used

The information in this document is based on these software and hardware versions:

- Cisco Catalyst 6500 switch that runs Cisco IOS® Software Release 12.1(26)E1
- Cisco Catalyst 2950 switch that runs Cisco IOS Software Release 12.1(22)EA9

The information in this document was created from the devices in a specific lab environment. All of the devices used in this document started with a cleared (default) configuration. If your network is live, ensure that you understand the potential impact of any command.

### Related Products

This document can also be used with these hardware and software versions:

- Cisco Catalyst 6000, 4500, 4000 series switches that run Cisco IOS.
- Cisco Catalyst 3750, 3750E, 3560, 3560E, 3550, 2970, 2960, 2955, 2950, and 2940 series switches.

## Conventions

Refer to [Cisco Technical Tips Conventions](#) for more information on document conventions.

## Background Information

Cisco Catalyst switches that run Cisco IOS software releases maintain the VLAN information in a special file named **vlan.dat**. This document discusses the purpose of this file, and ways to manage the file.

VLAN or VTP configuration changes in CatOS are written to NVRAM immediately after a change is made. In contrast, Cisco IOS software does not save configuration changes to NVRAM unless you issue the **copy run start** command.

VTP client and server systems require VTP updates from other VTP servers to be immediately saved in NVRAM without user intervention. The VTP update requirements are met by the default CatOS operation, but the Cisco IOS software update model requires an alternative update operation. For this, a VLAN database was introduced to Cisco IOS software for Catalyst switches as a method to immediately save VTP updates for VTP clients and servers. This VLAN database is in the form of a separate file in NVRAM called the **vlan.dat** file.

## Managing vlan.dat File

### During Switch Bootup

During boot up, the switch compares the content in the **vlan.dat** file and the configuration in **startup-config** to determine if it must use the configuration in **vlan.dat** or **startup-config**. When you save VTP mode, domain name, and VLAN configurations in the switch startup configuration file and reboot the switch, the VTP and VLAN configurations are selected by these conditions:

- If both the VLAN database and the configuration file show the VTP mode as transparent and the VTP domain names match, the VLAN database is ignored. The VTP and VLAN configurations in the startup configuration file are used. The VLAN database revision number remains unchanged in the VLAN database.
- If the startup VTP mode is server mode, or the startup VTP mode or domain names do not match the VLAN database, VTP mode and VLAN configuration for the first 1005 VLANs are selected by VLAN database information, such as the **vlan.dat** file. VLANs greater than 1005 are configured from the switch configuration file.

If there is no **vlan.dat** file, or if the **vlan.dat** cannot be read, the switch boots with these characteristics:

Attribute	Default Values
VTP Mode	Server
VTP Domain Name	(no name / empty)
VLANs	1, 1002-1005

## Filename and Location

By default, the VLAN database file name is `vlan.dat`.

You can use the `vtp file <filename>` command to rename the file. You cannot use the `vtp file` command to load a new database. You can use it only to rename the file in which the existing database is stored.

This example shows how to specify the IFS file system file where the VTP configuration is stored:

```
<#root>

Switch(config)#
vtp file vtpconfig

Setting device to store VLAN database at filename vtpconfig.
Switch(config)#
```

The `vlan.dat` stored in NVRAM alone can be accessed by the switch. The `vlan.dat` file can be copied from its location for backup purposes. The memory location name where the `vlan.dat` file is stored varies from device to device. Refer to the respective product documentation before you issue the `copy` command.

In Cisco Catalyst 6500/6000 series switches, it is `const_nvram:`. Similarly for Catalyst 4500/4000 switches, it is `cat4000_flash:`. In Cisco Catalyst 29xx series and Cisco Catalyst 35xx, 3750 series, it is referred to as **flash:**.

```
<#root>

Cat6K-Cisco IOS#dir const_nvram:  Directory of const_nvram:/ 1 -rwx 856 <no date>

vlan.dat

129004 bytes total (128148 bytes free)
```

## Viewing VLAN Information

In order to display all the VLAN configurations, the VLAN ID, name, and so forth, that are stored in the binary `vlan.dat` file, you must issue the `show vlan` command.

You can display the VTP information, the mode, domain, and so forth, with use of the `show vtp status` command.

The VLAN information and the VTP information are not displayed in the `show running-config` command output when the switch is in the VTP server/client mode. This is normal behavior of the switch.

```
<#root>

Switch#

show run

| include vlan
```

```
vlan internal allocation policy ascending
Switch#

Switch#

show run

| include vtp
Switch#
```

Switches that are in VTP transparent mode display the VLAN and VTP configurations in the `show running-config` command output because this information is also stored in the configuration text file.

```
<#root>

Switch#

show run

| include vlan
vlan internal allocation policy ascending
vlan 1
  tb-vlan1 1002
  tb-vlan2 1003
vlan 20-21,50-51
vlan 1002
  tb-vlan1 1
  tb-vlan2 1003
vlan 1003
  tb-vlan1 1
  tb-vlan2 1002
vlan 1004
vlan 1005

Switch#

show run

| include vtp
vtp domain cisco
vtp mode transparent
```

## Reset VLAN Information to Defaults

Complete this procedure to reset the VLAN configuration on a Cisco Catalyst switch that runs Cisco IOS software.

In this example, a Cisco Catalyst 6500 switch is in VTP client mode. In order to reset the VLAN information, you have to remove the `vlan.dat` file and reload the switch.

1. Issue the `show vtp status` and `show vlan` commands to determine the original VTP/VLAN information.

```
<#root>

Cat6K-IOS#
```

```

show vtp status

VTP Version                : 2
Configuration Revision     : 0
Maximum VLANs supported locally : 1005

Number of existing VLANs   : 12
VTP Operating Mode        : Client
VTP Domain Name           : Cisco123

VTP Pruning Mode          : Enabled
VTP V2 Mode               : Disabled
VTP Traps Generation      : Disabled
MD5 digest                : 0xDF 0xCE 0x47 0x0B 0xD0 0x3F 0xEA 0x18
Configuration last modified by 0.0.0.0 at 0-0-00 00:00:00
Local updater ID is 172.16.5.12 on interface Vl1 (lowest numbered VLAN interface found)
Cat6K-IOS#

```

```
<#root>
```

```
Cat6K-IOS#
```

```
show vlan
```

VLAN	Name	Status	Ports
1	default	active	Fa3/11, Fa3/16
5	VLAN0005	active	Fa3/1
10	VLAN0010	active	Fa3/5
20	Management_Vlan	active	Fa3/7, Fa3/9, Fa3/24
30	SW-3_PCs_Vlan	active	
40	SW-1_PCs_Vlan	active	
50	IP_Phone_Voice_Vlan	active	
60	Guest_Fail_Vlan	active	
1002	fddi-default	act/unsup	
1003	token-ring-default	act/unsup	
1004	fddinet-default	act/unsup	
1005	trnet-default	act/unsup	

VLAN	Type	SAID	MTU	Parent	RingNo	BridgeNo	Stp	BrdgMode	Trans1	Trans2
1	enet	100001	1500	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
5	enet	100005	1500	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
10	enet	100010	1500	-	-	-	-	-	0	0

```
!--- Rest of the output elided.
```

## 2. Verify the vlan.dat file status.

```
<#root>
```

```
Cat6K-IOS#
```

```
dir const_nvram:
```

```
Directory of const_nvram:/
  1  -rw-          976                <no date>

vlan.dat

129004 bytes total (128028 bytes free)
Cat6K-IOS#
```

---

**Note:** The memory location where the vlan.dat file is stored varies from device to device. See the [Filename and Location](#) section in this document for more information.

---

### 3. Remove the vlan.dat file from NVRAM.

---

**Note:** Before you delete the file from NVRAM, it is recommended to make a backup of the file. See the [Backup and Restore of vlan.dat File](#) section for the procedure.

---

```
<#root>

Cat6K-IOS#

delete const_nvram:vlan.dat

Delete filename [vlan.dat]?
Delete const_nvram:vlan.dat? [confirm]

Cat6K-IOS#

dir const_nvram:

Directory of const_nvram:/
  1  -rw-

0

                                <no date>

vlan.dat

129004 bytes total (129004 bytes free)
Cat6K-IOS#
```

Note that the size of the vlan.dat file is zero (0).

### 4. Reload the switch.

```
<#root>

Cat6K-IOS#

reload

Proceed with reload? [confirm]
```

!--- Rest of the output no displayed.

5. After the switch boots up, verify if the VLAN information is set to default values. For information on the default values, see the [Table](#) in the **During Switch Bootup** section.

```
<#root>
Cat6K-IOS#
show vtp status

VTP Version                : 2
Configuration Revision     : 0
Maximum VLANs supported locally : 1005

Number of existing VLANs   : 5
VTP Operating Mode         : Server
VTP Domain Name            :

VTP Pruning Mode           : Disabled
VTP V2 Mode                : Disabled
VTP Traps Generation       : Disabled
MD5 digest                 : 0x57 0xCD 0x40 0x65 0x63 0x59 0x47 0xBD
Configuration last modified by 0.0.0.0 at 0-0-00 00:00:00
Local updater ID is 172.16.5.12 on interface Vl1 (lowest numbered VLAN interface found)
```

```
<#root>
Cat6K-IOS#
show vlan

VLAN Name                Status    Ports
-----
1    default                active    Fa3/11, Fa3/16
1002 fddi-default           act/unsup
1003 token-ring-default    act/unsup
1004 fddinet-default       act/unsup
1005 trnet-default        act/unsup

VLAN Type  SAID      MTU   Parent  RingNo  BridgeNo  Stp   BrdgMode  Trans1  Trans2
-----
1    enet     100001   1500   -       -        -     -         0       0
1002 fddi     101002   1500   -       -        -     -         0       0
1003 tr      101003   1500   -       -        -     -         0       0
1004 fdnet  101004   1500   -       -        -     ieee      0       0
1005 trnet  101005   1500   -       -        -     ibm       0       0

Remote SPAN VLANs
-----

Primary Secondary Type          Ports
-----
```

```

Cat6K-IOS#

<#root>

Cat6K-IOS#

dir const_nvram:

Directory of const_nvram:/
  1  -rw-

0

                               <no date>

vlan.dat

129004 bytes total (129004 bytes free)
Cat6K-IOS#

```

At this point, the VTP VLAN configuration change can be triggered in two ways:

- User configuration on the device (CLI/SNMP)
- VTP update from other devices in the same VTP domain

This means that even if the switch was originally in client mode, simply applying another saved configuration does not set it back to client mode. In order to return the switch to client mode, the network administrator needs to manually configure the system with the **vtp mode client** command in global configuration mode.

## Recover the vlan.dat File

If the vlan.dat file is deleted accidentally and the switch gets reloaded, all the VLANs that were available on the switch are lost. Until the switch is reloaded, the VLAN information is present in the switch.

Complete these steps in order to recover the vlan.dat file:

1. Issue the **show vlan** command in order to confirm the availability of VLAN information.

```

<#root>

Switch#

show vlan

VLAN Name                Status    Ports
-----
1    default                 active    Fa0/1, Fa0/2, Fa0/3, Fa0/4
                                           Fa0/5, Fa0/6, Fa0/7, Fa0/8
                                           Fa0/10, Fa0/11, Fa0/12, Gi0/1
                                           Gi0/2
10   VLAN0010                active

```



```

11  VLAN0011          active
20  VLAN0020          active
21  VLAN0021          active
30  VLAN0030          active
31  VLAN0031          active
40  VLAN0040          active
41  VLAN0041          active
50  Vlan50            active
100 100thVLAN        active

```

2. If the switch is in VTP server or transparent mode, make any modifications to the VLAN database.

Modifications to the VLAN database can be any of these:

- Create any VLAN.
- Delete any VLAN.
- Modify the attributes of any existing VLAN.

If the switch is in VTP client mode, make modifications to the VLAN database at any VTP server of the same domain.

```

<#root>

Switch#

configure terminal

Enter configuration commands, one per line.  End with CNTL/Z.
Switch(config)#

vlan 50

Switch(config-vlan)#

name 50thVLAN

Switch(config-vlan)#end
Switch#

```

Once any change is done to the VLAN database, the switch automatically creates the vlan.dat file.

3. Issue the **show flash:** command in order to verify the creation of the vlan.dat file.

```

<#root>

Switch#

show flash:

Directory of flash:/
 2  -rwx          5  Mar 01 1993 00:04:47  private-config.text
 3  -rwx       2980487  Mar 02 1993 06:08:14  c2950-i6q4l2-mz.121-19.EA1a.bin
 4  -rwx          1156  Mar 01 1993 01:51:27

vlan.dat

```

```
16 -rwx      1014   Mar 01 1993 00:04:47 config.text
 6 drwx      4096   Mar 02 1993 03:49:26 html
 7 -rwx     3121383 Mar 02 1993 03:47:52 c2950-i6q412-mz.121-22.EA9.bin
7741440 bytes total (65536 bytes free)
```

---

**Note:** The memory location where the vlan.dat file is stored varies from device to device. See the [Filename and Location](#) section for more information.

---

## Backup and Restore the vlan.dat File

Network administrators who want to back up the vlan.dat file, especially for the VTP server systems. The vlan.dat file can be backed up and saved to the same locations as any other file (bootflash:, disk0:, bootdisk:, tftp:, ftp:, and so on). Even though the file can be copied to any location, it can only be read from NVRAM.

In order to perform a complete backup of your configuration, include the vlan.dat file in the backup along with the configuration. Then, if the entire switch or the Supervisor Engine module requires replacement, the network administrator must upload both of these files in order to restore the complete configuration:

- The vlan.dat file
- The configuration file

This also has an effect in dual supervisor environments when running Stateful Switchover (SSO). Because the file to file sync is only available for NVRAM, if the vlan.dat is in a non-NVRAM location such as bootflash:, there cannot be vlan.dat file sync between the active and standby supervisors. Instead, when the standby SP receives the new VLAN data, it can write the config in standby vlan.dat.

Finally, if a saved vlan.dat is applied to a system that has already booted, the system must be reloaded before the newly applied vlan.dat configuration takes effect.

1. Issue the **show vtp status** and **show vlan** commands to determine the original VTP/VLAN information.

```
<#root>
Cat6K-IOS#
show vtp status

VTP Version                : 2
Configuration Revision     : 0
Maximum VLANs supported locally : 1005

Number of existing VLANs   : 12
VTP Operating Mode         : Client
VTP Domain Name            : Cisco123

VTP Pruning Mode           : Enabled
VTP V2 Mode                 : Disabled
VTP Traps Generation       : Disabled
MD5 digest                  : 0xDF 0xCE 0x47 0x0B 0xD0 0x3F 0xEA 0x18
Configuration last modified by 0.0.0.0 at 0-0-00 00:00:00
Local updater ID is 172.16.5.12 on interface Vl1 (lowest numbered VLAN interface found)
```

Cat6K-IOS#

Cat6K-IOS#

**show vlan**

VLAN	Name	Status	Ports
1	default	active	Fa3/11, Fa3/16
5	VLAN0005	active	Fa3/1
10	VLAN0010	active	Fa3/5
20	Management_Vlan	active	Fa3/7, Fa3/9, Fa3/24
30	SW-3_PCs_Vlan	active	
40	SW-1_PCs_Vlan	active	
50	IP_Phone_Voice_Vlan	active	
60	Guest_Fail_Vlan	active	
1002	fddi-default	act/unsup	
1003	token-ring-default	act/unsup	
1004	fddinet-default	act/unsup	
1005	trnet-default	act/unsup	

VLAN	Type	SAID	MTU	Parent	RingNo	BridgeNo	Stp	BrdgMode	Trans1	Trans2
1	enet	100001	1500	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
5	enet	100005	1500	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
10	enet	100010	1500	-	-	-	-	-	0	0

!--- Rest of the output elided.

## 2. Verify the vlan.dat file status.

<#root>

Cat6K-IOS#

**dir const\_nvram:**

Directory of const\_nvram:/

1 -rw-

976

<no date>

**vlan.dat**

129004 bytes total (128028 bytes free)

Cat6K-IOS#

---

**Note:** The memory location where the vlan.dat file is stored varies from device to device. See the [Filename and Location](#) section for more information.

---

## 3. Back up the existing vlan.dat file.

```

<#root>

Cat6K-IOS#

copy const_nvram:vlan.dat bootflash:vlan.dat

Destination filename [vlan.dat]?
976 bytes copied in 0.516 secs (1891 bytes/sec)

Cat6K-IOS#

show bootflash:

-#- ED ----type---- --crc--- -seek-- nlen -length- -----date/time----- n
ame
1  .. image          C32839CA 2349AC  30 1788204 May 31 2006 18:15:50 +00:00 c
6msfc2-boot-mz.121-13.E17.bin
2  .. unknown        1D1450E8 234DFC   8    976 Dec 01 2008 01:43:18 +00:00

v
lan.dat

13414916 bytes available (1789436 bytes used)

```

#### 4. Remove the vlan.dat file from NVRAM.

```

<#root>

Cat6K-IOS#

delete const_nvram:vlan.dat

Delete filename [vlan.dat]?
Delete const_nvram:vlan.dat? [confirm]

Cat6K-IOS#

dir const_nvram:

Directory of const_nvram:/
 1  -rw-          0                    <no date>  vlan.dat
129004 bytes total (129004 bytes free)
Cat6K-IOS#

```

#### 5. Reload the switch.

```

<#root>

Cat6K-IOS#

reload

Proceed with reload? [confirm]

!--- Rest of the output elided.

```

6. Verify the reset of VTP/VLAN information after reload.

```
<#root>
Cat6K-IOS#
show vtp status

VTP Version                : 2
Configuration Revision     : 0
Maximum VLANs supported locally : 1005

Number of existing VLANs   : 5
VTP Operating Mode        : Server
VTP Domain Name           :

VTP Pruning Mode          : Disabled
VTP V2 Mode               : Disabled
VTP Traps Generation      : Disabled
MD5 digest                 : 0x57 0xCD 0x40 0x65 0x63 0x59 0x47 0xBD
Configuration last modified by 0.0.0.0 at 0-0-00 00:00:00
Local updater ID is 172.16.5.12 on interface Vl1 (lowest numbered VLAN interface found)
```

Notice that the number of existing VLANs has dropped from 12 to 5, and the Domain is now empty instead of Cisco123.

```
<#root>
Cat6K-IOS#
dir const_nvram:

Directory of const_nvram:/
  1  -rw-          0                    <no date>  vlan.dat
129004 bytes total (129004 bytes free)
Cat6K-IOS#
```

7. Copy the saved vlan.dat file to the NVRAM.

```
<#root>
Cat6K-IOS#
copy bootflash:vlan.dat const_nvram:vlan.dat

Destination filename [vlan.dat]?
976 bytes copied in 0.688 secs (1419 bytes/sec)
Cat6K-IOS#

Cat6K-IOS#dir const_nvram:
Directory of const_nvram:/
```

```
1 -rw-          976          <no date>
```

```
vlan.dat
```

```
129004 bytes total (128028 bytes free)
Cat6K-IOS#
```

8. Check if there is any change in the VTP status. There would not be any change, as the vlan.dat file is read only when the switch boots up. In order to bring the changes to effect, reload the switch.

```
<#root>
```

```
Cat6K-IOS#
```

```
show vtp status
```

```
VTP Version                : 2
Configuration Revision      : 0
Maximum VLANs supported locally : 1005

Number of existing VLANs    : 5
VTP Operating Mode         : Server
VTP Domain Name            :

VTP Pruning Mode           : Disabled
VTP V2 Mode                : Disabled
VTP Traps Generation       : Disabled
MD5 digest                  : 0x57 0xCD 0x40 0x65 0x63 0x59 0x47 0xBD
Configuration last modified by 0.0.0.0 at 0-0-00 00:00:00
Local updater ID is 172.16.5.12 on interface Vl1 (lowest numbered VLAN interface found)
Cat6K-IOS#
```

9. Reload the switch.

```
<#root>
```

```
Cat6K-IOS#
```

```
reload
```

```
Proceed with reload? [confirm]
```

```
!--- Rest of the output elided.
```

10. Once the switch boots up, verify if the VLAN/VTP information has been properly restored.

```
<#root>
```

```
Cat6K-IOS#
```

```
show vtp status
```

```

VTP Version                : 2
Configuration Revision     : 0
Maximum VLANs supported locally : 1005

Number of existing VLANs   : 12
VTP Operating Mode        : Server
VTP Domain Name           : Cisco123

VTP Pruning Mode          : Enabled
VTP V2 Mode               : Disabled
VTP Traps Generation      : Disabled
MD5 digest                 : 0xDF 0xCE 0x47 0x0B 0xD0 0x3F 0xEA 0x18
Configuration last modified by 172.16.5.12 at 11-16-07 03:23:56
Local updater ID is 172.16.5.12 on interface Vl1 (lowest numbered VLAN interface found)
Cat6K-IOS#

```

```
<#root>
```

```
Cat6K-IOS#
```

```
show vlan
```

VLAN	Name	Status	Ports
1	default	active	Fa3/11, Fa3/16
5	VLAN0005	active	Fa3/1
10	VLAN0010	active	Fa3/5
20	Management_Vlan	active	Fa3/7, Fa3/9, Fa3/24
30	SW-3_PCs_Vlan	active	
40	SW-1_PCs_Vlan	active	
50	IP_Phone_Voice_Vlan	active	
60	Guest_Fail_Vlan	active	
1002	fddi-default	act/unsup	
1003	token-ring-default	act/unsup	
1004	fddinet-default	act/unsup	
1005	trnet-default	act/unsup	

VLAN	Type	SAID	MTU	Parent	RingNo	BridgeNo	Stp	BrdgMode	Trans1	Trans2
1	enet	100001	1500	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
5	enet	100005	1500	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
10	enet	100010	1500	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
20	enet	100020	1500	-	-	-	-	-	0	0

```
!--- Rest of the the output not shown.
```

## Archive vlan.dat with Archive Management

The Archive Management application maintains an active archive of the vlan.dat file of devices managed by Resource Manager Essentials (RME). It enables you to perform these tasks:

- Fetch, and archive, device configurations (which includes the vlan.dat file)

- Search and generate reports on archived data
- Compare and label configurations (which includes the vlan.dat file)

For more information on the Archive Management application, refer to [Archiving Configurations and Managing Them Using Archive Management](#).

The RME suite is part of the CiscoWorks LAN Management Solution (LMS), one of the bundle in the CiscoWorks family of products. It is an Enterprise solution to network management. RME is a powerful suite of web-based applications offering network management solutions for Cisco switches, access servers, and routers.

For more information on RME and its applications, refer to [RME Essentials](#).

## VLAN Information and Redundancy

Supervisor engine redundancy does not support non-default VLAN data file names or locations. Do not enter the **vtp file file\_name** command on a switch that has a redundant supervisor engine.

Before installing a redundant supervisor engine, enter the **no vtp file** command to return to the default configuration.

In Route Processor Redundancy (RPR+) redundancy, supervisor engine redundancy does not support configuration entered in VLAN database mode. Use global configuration mode with RPR+ redundancy.

In SSO, the NVRAM vlan.dat file sync from active SP to standby SP is still done so that if switchover happens in the middle of VLANs record synchronization, standby can recover by loading in the binary file from NVRAM. Because the file to file sync is only available for NVRAM, if the binary file is in a non-NVRAM location such as bootflash:, there cannot be vtp binary config file sync between active and standby. In fact, if the vlan.dat is not in NVRAM, then during standby boot up, the standby supervisor cannot come online. An error message must be displayed on the active supervisor to ask users to change vlan.dat location to NVRAM.

## Related Information

- [Creating Ethernet VLANs on Catalyst Switches](#)
- [Understand VLAN Trunk Protocol \(VTP\)](#)
- [Best Practices for Catalyst 6500/6000 Series and Catalyst 4500/4000 Series Switches Running Cisco IOS Software](#)
- [Catalyst 4500 Series Switch Software Configuration Guide, 12.2\(46\)SG](#)
- [Catalyst 6500 Release 12.2SXH and Later Software Configuration Guide](#)
- [Switches Support](#)
- [LAN Switching](#)
- [Cisco Technical Support & Downloads](#)