

How non-programmers can make permanent changes to an indicator or EA

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Every time you add an indicator to a chart it shows you a small window with variables that you can change. The indicator comes with default values. If you want something different, you have to make that change every time you add the indicator to a chart. However, this simple method allows anyone to make permanent changes to these input variables so you don't have to set the variables each time you use the indicator. Of course, using templates will save your changes for you and reopen them automatically, but that is another subject. If you want to make permanent changes, try this simple procedure.

First, you must have the source code for the indicator or EA. Most custom indicators come with this source code. If the indicator does not have source code available, you will not be able to open it and make changes.

Second, you must make changes using Metatrader's Metaeditor rather than a word processor or text editor. This applies to either custom indicators or EAs but I will only talk about indicators. Use the same technique for EAs. To open an indicator, look in the custom indicator tab of Metatrader and select the indicator with a right click of the mouse. This should open a pop up menu with a "Modify" entry. Release the click on Modify and Metaeditor should open with the source of that indicator visible on screen.

Now, we only make changes to the input variables. Anything more than this requires the experience of a programmer to make changes without causing problems. These input variables are all indicated with a line of code near the start of the file and they ALWAYS start with the word "extern".

```
extern type name="something";
```

"extern" is just a way of saying this variable will show up in the list of external values that are given to the user to change in the small window.

"type" is the type of variable and that can be int, bool, double, string, color or datetime and maybe a few more. You should never change the "type".

"name" is the internal name of the value you want to change. Never change the name.

"something" is the actual value that needs to change. THIS IS THE ONLY THING you should ever change in one of these source files. You can generally make changes and not cause problems with the actual program. However, the new value may not be a good one for the program and you will get poor or faulty behavior. Generally, you can see the change in the indicator and make changes by trial and error.

Be very careful when you edit these source files. Any typo will cause the file to be non-functional. So only make simple changes to the numbers or word strings that you see in the "something" position of the extern line.

Once you have made a change, you have to compile the file. That is simple to do. Hit the "Compile" button in the tools bar of Metaeditor. If everything is ok, the file will compile and will be saved into the proper place. If you have an error in the small "Errors" tab or window at the bottom of MetaEditor

then a typo has been made and must be fixed before it can be compiled.

Common typos are

- Removing one of the quote marks around a string of characters in the “something” position.

- Inserting a character somewhere it should not be.

- Adding a character like \$ to a number.

- Including a decimal point when the original number did not have a decimal point.

- Using a capital where it is not required.

- Letting your cursor go outside the “something” position and inserting a character there by accident.

Another option is to change the name of an indicator so you can have multiple copies with different values in each file. Say you want a Moving average of 54 bars and another of 24 bars. You make the changes inside to the period of the moving average

```
extern int MA_period=24;
```

And then save the file with a new name such as MovingAverage_24.mq4 before you compile it. Then when you do compile it, a new indicator will be created with the new name and the new value inside.

I hope this will help you make simple changes to your tools. Always work on a copy or change the name before you make internal changes. Especially if you don't have access to the original file. If you can download it from some website, that will protect you from making bad changes to your only copy.