

# A consequence of the weird wReserved value at the start of the DECIMAL structure

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Not too long ago, I explained why [why there is a weird wReserved value at the start of the DECIMAL structure](#). Markus Grohs pointed out [in a comment](#) that the way that `decVal` is overlaid on top of a `VARIANT` means that you have to be careful about the order in which you set the fields.

Given

```
DECIMAL value = [ some value ];  
VARIANT var;  
VariantClear(&var);
```

then you have to remember to set the `vt` *last* because it is overwritten by the `wReserved` inside the `DECIMAL`.

```
// Wrong  
var.vt = VT_DECIMAL;  
var.decVal = value; // oops, the wReserved overwrites the var.vt.
```

```
// Better  
var.decVal = value; // the wReserved overwrites var.vt  
var.vt = VT_DECIMAL; // but we fix it up immediately
```

The extra `wReserved` in the `DECIMAL` is like a bulky backpack that you wear as you go about your daily business. You usually forget that you have it on, until you turn around in a tight spot and accidentally knock something over.