

Setting up your own Abbreviations in dBASE™ PLUS 11

Abbreviations were introduced in dBASE™ PLUS 9 and allow blocks of text to be inserted into the dBASE™ Editor or Command Window. You can read all about them in our online help at http://www.dbase.com/help/11_1/Command_win/Abbreviation_Expansion.htm.

Note: To use abbreviations in the Command Window in dBASE™ PLUS 11 you must use the pulldown menus to activate them (Edit -> Insert Abbreviation).

They are great at allowing you to store and then insert code blocks for standard functions or even for entire templates for programs. We have provided many new ones for dBASE™ PLUS 11. The file can be found, if the default install directories were used, at the location of

C:\Users\<USER>\Documents\dBASE\Plus11\Properties\abbrev.properties. The <USER> token is replaced with the user name that you login with.

The **abbrev.properties** file is a text file that is loaded when dBASE™ PLUS 11 starts up. If you make any changes to the file, you must start dBASE™ PLUS 11 for those changes to be seen in dBASE™.

The simplest abbreviation is date. It inserts a single line of text consisting of:

```
oDate = new Date()
```

This is a simplistic example but if you deal with dates repeatedly it'll come in handy.

Now open the **abbrev.properties** in the dBASE™ PLUS 11 Editor or any Windows text editor. I recommend Notepad++ because it's based on the same code as the dBASE™ PLUS 11 Editor.

Please download Notepad++ at <https://notepad-plus-plus.org/download/v7.3.1.html> if you don't already have it, we'll need it later in this tutorial.

The abbreviations are in a rough alphabetical order so scroll down until you see the date abbreviation, it should look like this:

```
date=ODate = new Date()
```

The formulae for adding abbreviations is very simple.

<abbreviation>=<expansion>

- The abbreviations names can have any character (except control chars), including high ASCII chars (accented chars).
- Names have limits: they cannot start with sharp (#) or space or tab (but can have spaces inside); and they cannot have '=' character inside.
- Names cannot end in a space. The name must be immediately followed by an equal sign (=) without any spaces before or after:
 - Wrong: `myName = Paul McGee`
 - Correct: `myName=Paul McGee`
- Abbreviations names are limited to 32 characters.
- An expansion may contain new line characters indicated by '\n'
- An expansion may contain a caret position indicated by the '|' character. To include a literal '|' character, use '||'.
- When expanding, the names don't need to be separated from the previous text, i.e. if you define e as '&execute;', you can expand it inside a word.
- When multiple abbreviation names match, the longest matching name will be expanded.
- When a directory is being used, you need to include '\\' for each \ in a directory string
 - Example "C:\dBASE\Applications" will not work it must be:
"C:\\dBASE\\Applications"

Multi-lined abbreviations are a little tougher as noted above. You must end each line of the text that you want on a separate line with a newline characters (\n) and then combine everything into one long line.

For example, enter this text into a blank page in Notepad++:

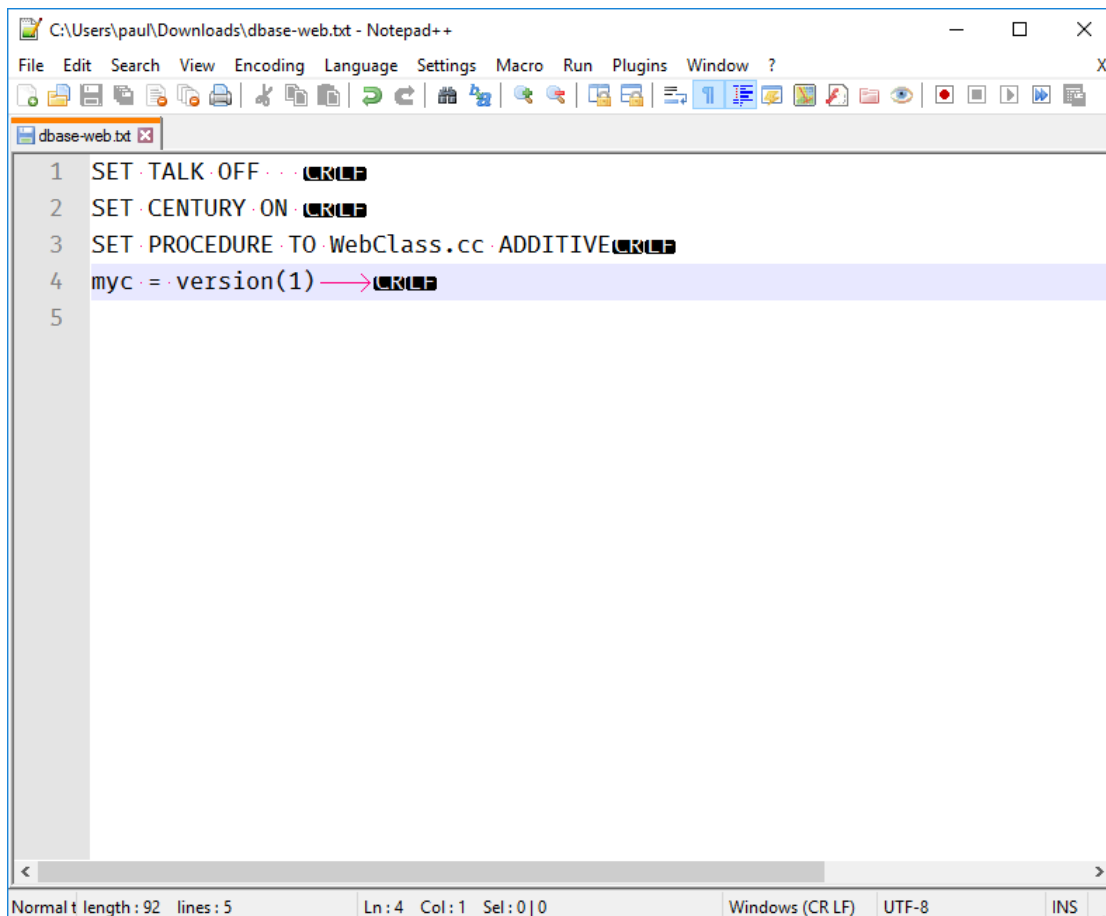
```
SET TALK OFF
SET CENTURY ON
SET PROCEDURE TO WebClass.cc ADDITIVE
myc = version(1)
```

When we finish it becomes:

```
SET TALK OFF\nSET CENTURY ON\nSET PROCEDURE TO WebClass.cc ADDITIVE\nmyc = version(1)\n
```

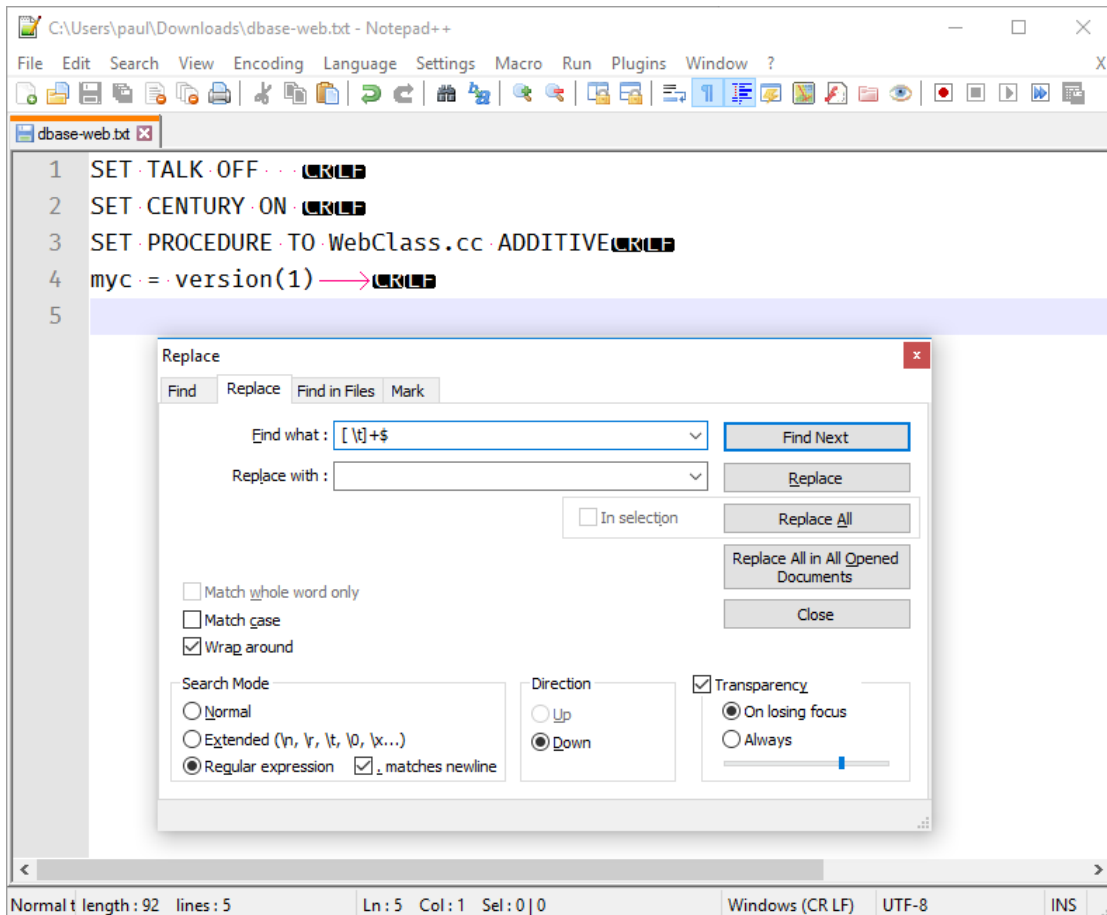
Let's explore how to accomplish this in Notepad++.

1. We need to see what we're going to be working with so select the "View" pulldown menu and then the "Show Symbol" item and then click on the "Show All Characters" option

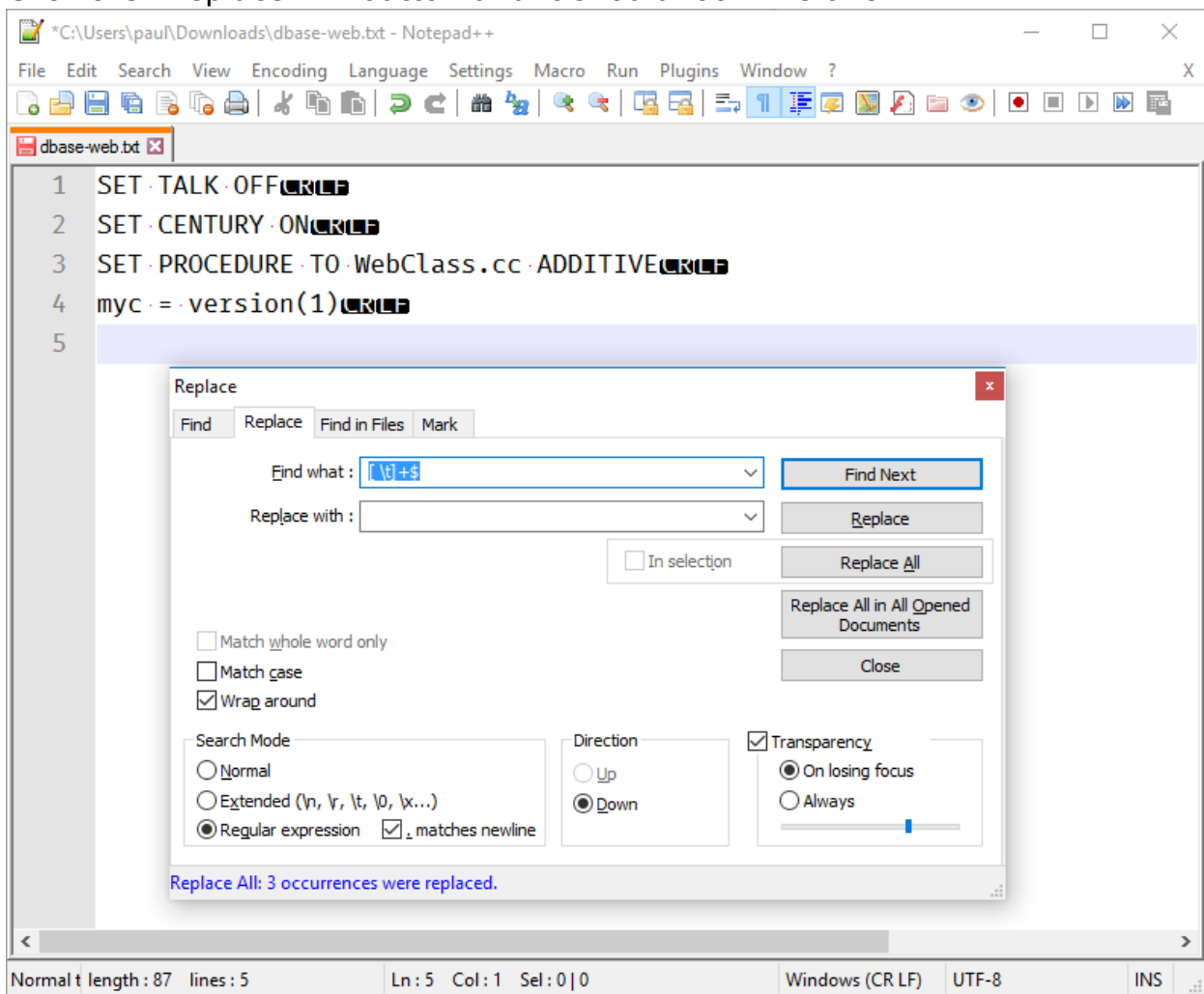


You can see the CRLF (Carriage Return/Line Feed) characters and the tab (---->) are visible now.

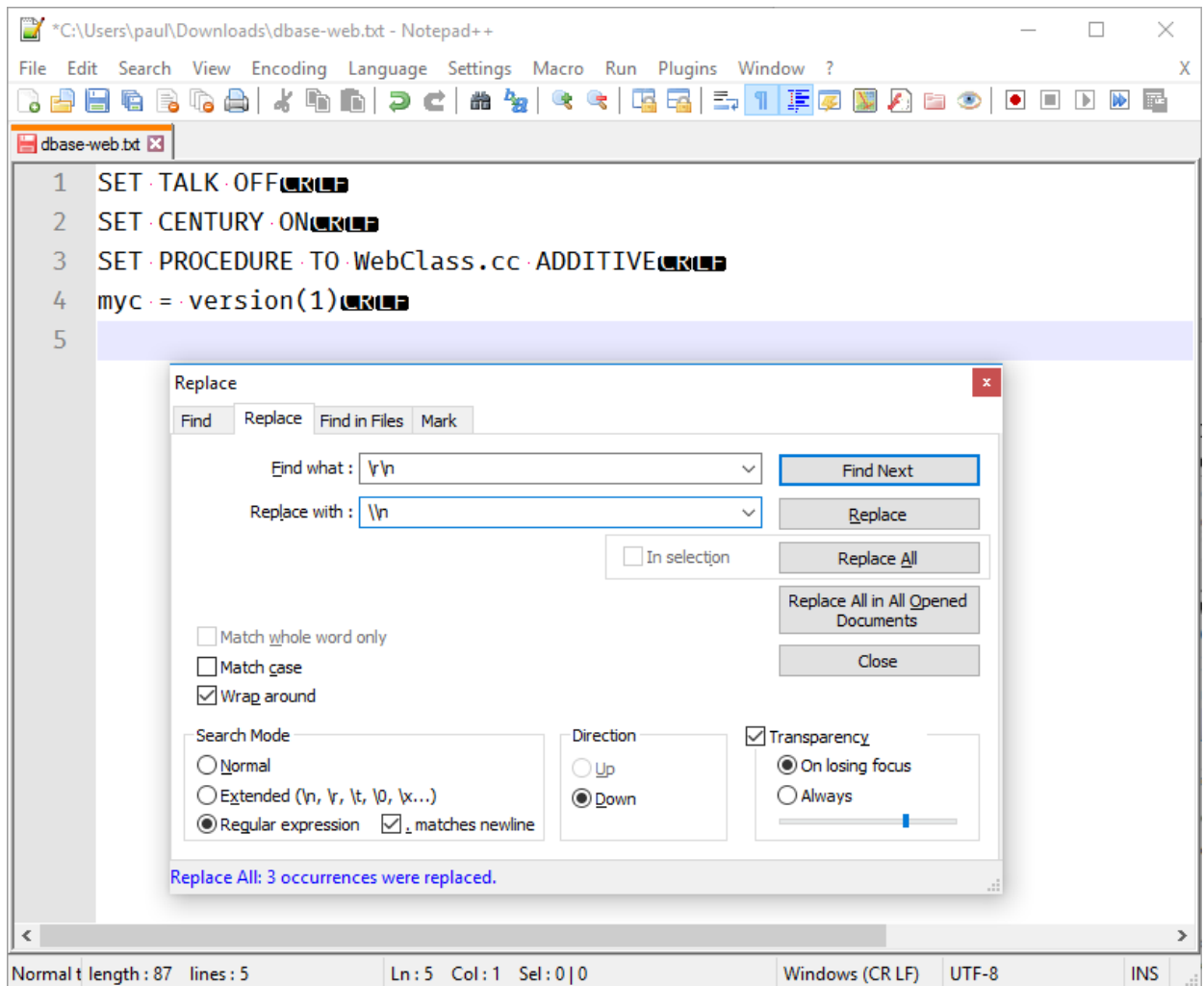
2. Remove all extra spaces and tabs at the end of each line.
 - a. We will use Notepad++ Search and Replace function so press the <CTRL> and <H> keys together
 - b. In the "Find what" field put the text `[ \t]+$`
 - i. The `\t` represents a tab and the `[ \t]+` means one or more spaces or tabs
 - ii. The `$` means right before the end of the line
 - c. In the "Replace with" field, clear everything so it is empty
 - d. In the "Search Mode" box select the "Regular Expression" radio button and check the "matches newline" box



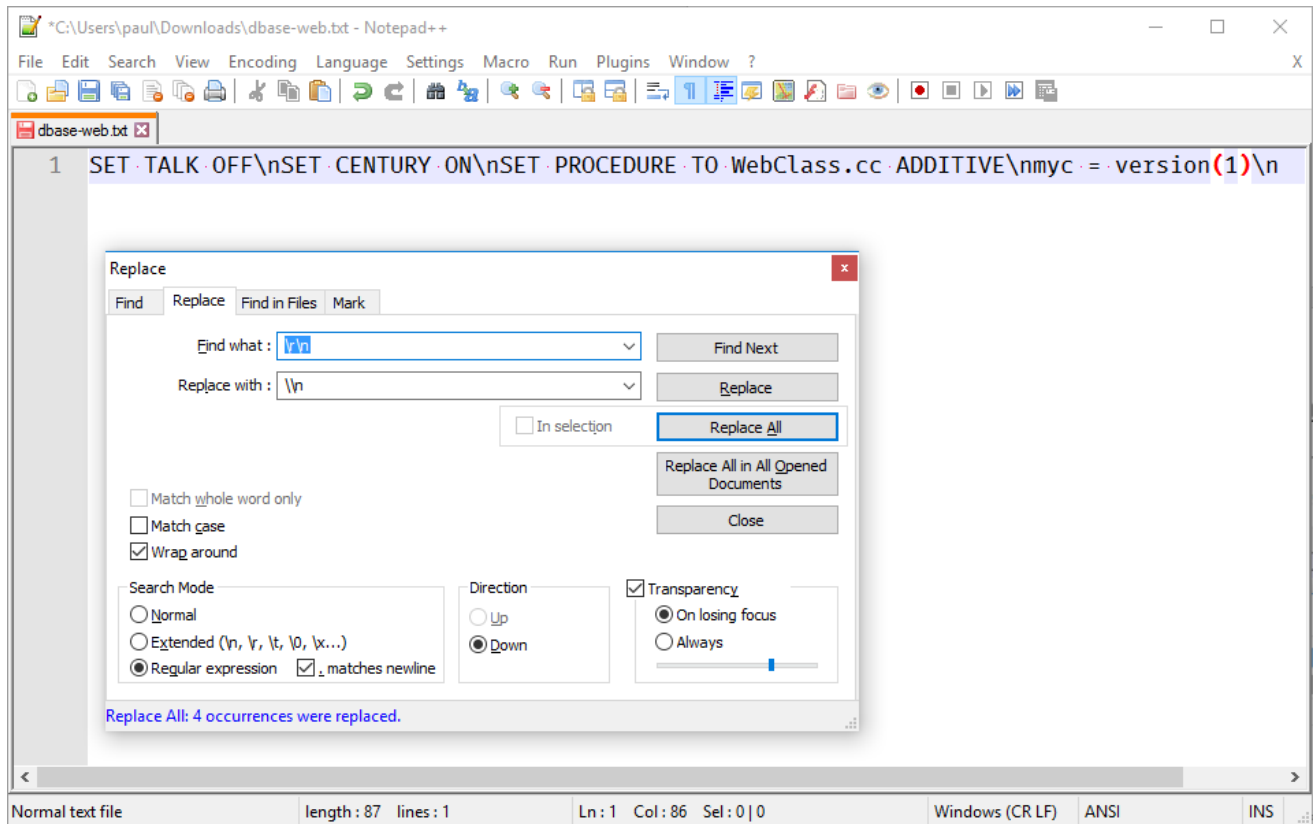
e. Click the “Replace All” button and it should look like this:



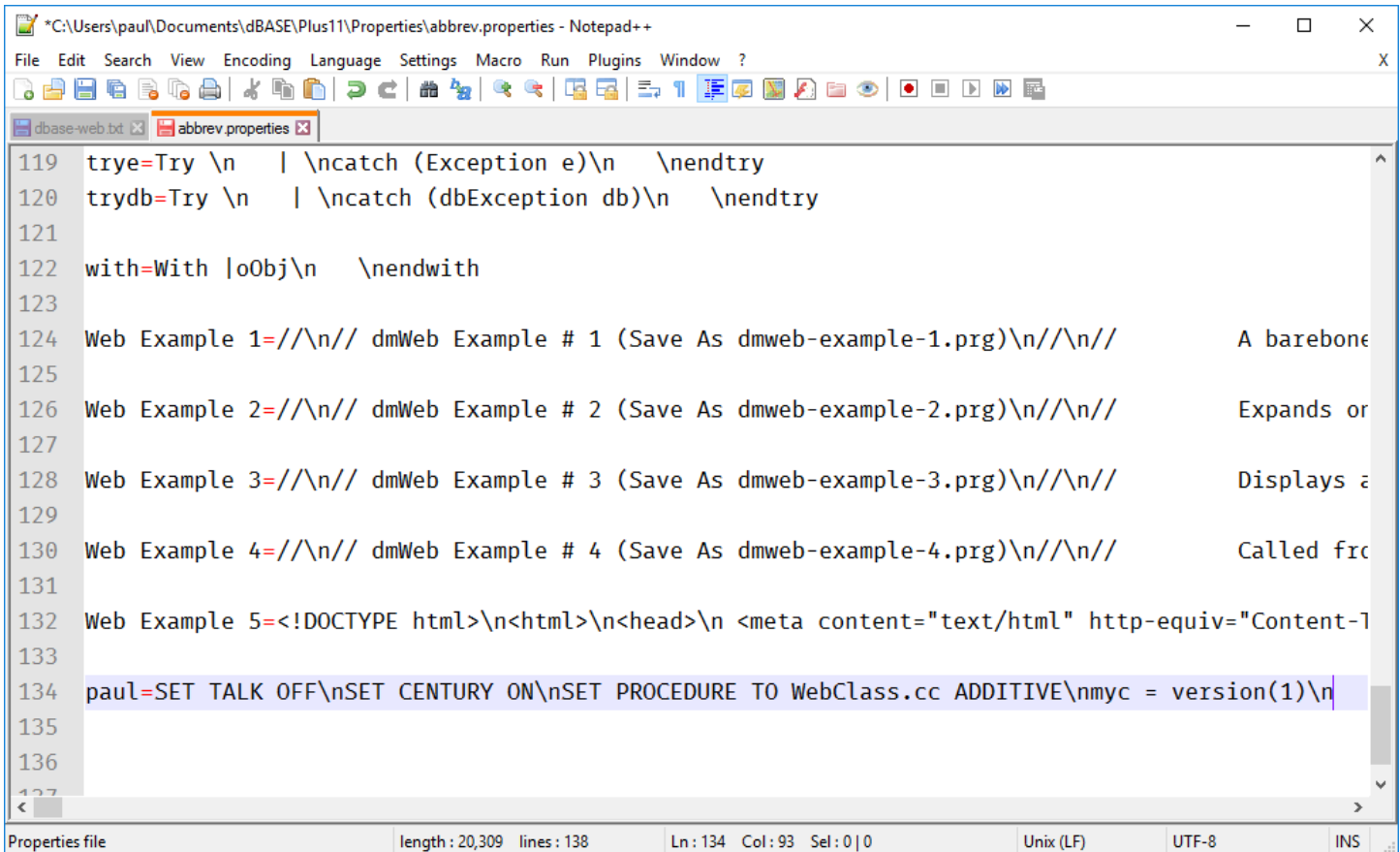
3. Next, we'll remove the CRLF (Carriage Return/Line Feed) characters and put everything into one long string.
 - a. In the "Find what" field put the text `$\r\n`
 - i. The `\n` represents a linefeed character
 - b. In the "Replace with" field put the text `\\n`
 - i. The extra slash `\"` at the start tells Notepad++ to treat the next `"\n"` as regular text and not a special character
 - c. In the "Search Mode" box select the "Regular Expression" radio button and check the "matches newline" box



d. Click the “Replace All” button and it should look like this:

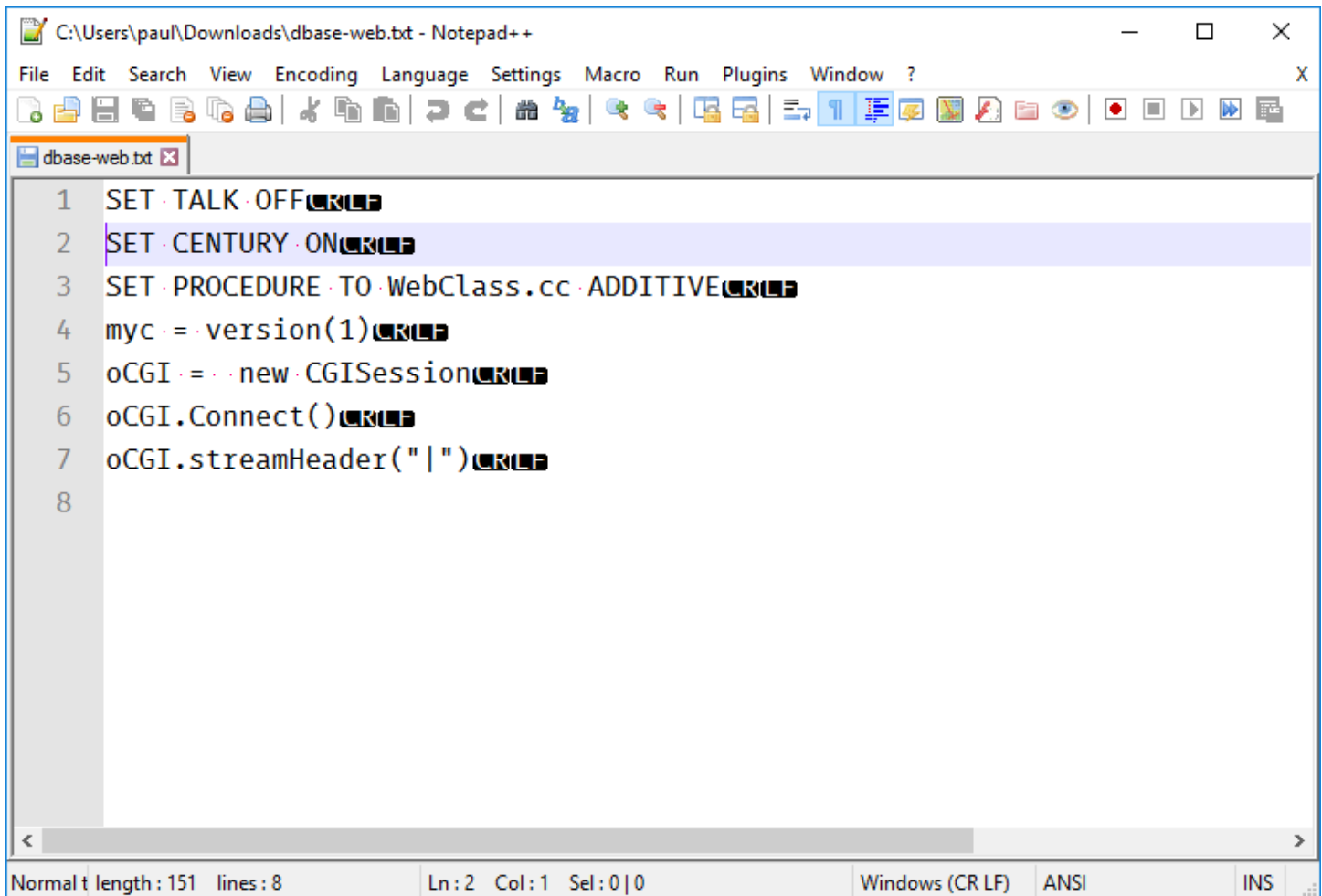


- Now to add it to the abbreviations file, just open it and add the line in alphabetical order or at the end using a unique name for your new abbreviation. Remember that each time you upgrade dBASE™ PLUS 11, you must re-add it to the newly installed abbreviations file. If you have multiple additions, then put them in a separate file and cut-and-paste between them when you want to upgrade.



```
*C:\Users\paul\Documents\dBASE\Plus11\Properties\abbrev.properties - Notepad++
File Edit Search View Encoding Language Settings Macro Run Plugins Window ?
dbase-web.txt abbrev.properties
119 trye=Try \n | \ncatch (Exception e)\n \nendtry
120 trydb=Try \n | \ncatch (dbException db)\n \nendtry
121
122 with=With |oObj\n \nendwith
123
124 Web Example 1=//\n// dmWeb Example # 1 (Save As dmweb-example-1.prg)\n//\n// A barebone
125
126 Web Example 2=//\n// dmWeb Example # 2 (Save As dmweb-example-2.prg)\n//\n// Expands or
127
128 Web Example 3=//\n// dmWeb Example # 3 (Save As dmweb-example-3.prg)\n//\n// Displays a
129
130 Web Example 4=//\n// dmWeb Example # 4 (Save As dmweb-example-4.prg)\n//\n// Called fro
131
132 Web Example 5=<!DOCTYPE html>\n<html>\n<head>\n <meta content="text/html" http-equiv="Content-1
133
134 paul=SET TALK OFF\nSET CENTURY ON\nSET PROCEDURE TO WebClass.cc ADDITIVE\nmyc = version(1)\n
135
136
137
Properties file length: 20,309 lines: 138 Ln: 134 Col: 93 Sel: 0 | 0 Unix (LF) UTF-8 INS
```

One last feature is the ability to have the cursor positioned automatically in the text after you insert the abbreviation. You do that via the pipe (|) symbol. Place it in your abbreviation where you want the cursor position:



The screenshot shows a Notepad++ window titled "C:\Users\paul\Downloads\dbase-web.txt - Notepad++". The menu bar includes File, Edit, Search, View, Encoding, Language, Settings, Macro, Run, Plugins, Window, and ?. The toolbar contains various icons for file operations and editing. The text area shows a code file with 8 lines. The second line, "SET · CENTURY · ON", is highlighted. The eighth line, "oCGI.streamHeader(" | ")", has a cursor at the end. The status bar at the bottom shows "Normal t length: 151 lines: 8", "Ln: 2 Col: 1 Sel: 0 | 0", "Windows (CR LF)", "ANSI", and "INS".

```
1 SET · TALK · OFF
2 SET · CENTURY · ON
3 SET · PROCEDURE · TO · WebClass.cc · ADDITIVE
4 myc · = · version(1)
5 oCGI · = · new · CGISession
6 oCGI.Connect()
7 oCGI.streamHeader(" | ")
8
```

Here we have placed it in the last "oCGI.streamHeader" line so you can type in the Title of the webpage that you want displayed in the web browser. Then convert that to a single line and add it to a new abbreviation name or overwrite one of your existing abbreviations.

We hope you can see how easy it is to add your own and how much productivity you can add to your development process with this one simple feature!