

How can I convert a character variable to a date using the SAS programming language?

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The process of converting a character variable to a date using the SAS programming language involves using the INPUT function to read the character variable and convert it to a numeric value. This numeric value can then be formatted using the appropriate date format to display the date in a desired format. This conversion can be useful for performing various data analysis and manipulation tasks in SAS.

SAS: Convert Character Variable to Date

You can use the input() function in SAS to convert a character variable to a date variable format.

This function uses the following basic syntax:

```
date_var = input(character_var, MMDDYY10.);  
format date_var MMDDYY10.;
```

The following example shows how to use this function in practice.

Example: Convert Character Variable to Date in SAS

Suppose we have the following dataset in SAS that shows the total sales made by some store during six different days:

```
/*create dataset*/  
data original_data;  
input day $ sales;
```

```
datalines;  
01012022 15  
01022022 19  
01052022 22  
01142022 11  
01152022 26  
01212022 28  
;  
run;
```

```
/*view dataset*/  
proc printdata=original_data;
```

Obs	day	sales
1	01012022	15
2	01022022	19
3	01052022	22
4	01142022	11
5	01152022	26
6	01212022	28

We can see that day is a character variable, but it needs to be represented in a date format.

We can use the following code to create a new dataset in which we convert the day variable from a character to

date format:

```
/*create new dataset where 'day' is in date format*/
```

```
data new_data;
```

```
set original_data;
```

```
new_day = input(day, MMDDYY10.);
```

```
format new_day MMDDYY10.;
```

```
drop day;
```

```
run;
```

```
/*view new dataset*/
```

```
proc printdata=new_data;
```

Obs	sales	new_day
1	15	01/01/2022
2	19	01/02/2022
3	22	01/05/2022
4	11	01/14/2022
5	26	01/15/2022
6	28	01/21/2022

Note: We used the drop function to drop the original day variable from the dataset.

We can see that the new variable we created, new_day, is in a date format.

Note that MMDDYY10. is only one possible date format that we could have used. You can find a complete list of SAS date formats .

Additional Resources

The following tutorials explain how to perform other common tasks in SAS:

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