

What are the columns and alignment options in SPSS?

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SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is a software program used for statistical analysis and data management. Within SPSS, data is organized in a table format, with columns representing variables and rows representing individual cases. The columns in SPSS can be divided into two main categories: numeric and string. Numeric columns contain numerical data, while string columns contain text or categorical data.

In terms of alignment options, SPSS allows for both left and right alignment of data within columns. Left alignment is commonly used for string variables, while numeric variables are usually right aligned. This allows for a consistent and organized display of data in the table.

Additionally, SPSS offers alignment options for column labels, allowing for customization of the appearance of the table. This includes options for vertical and horizontal alignment, as well as font size and style.

Overall, understanding the columns and alignment options in SPSS is essential for effectively organizing and analyzing data within the software.

Columns and Alignment in SPSS

In the section, we are going to learn columns and alignment options. Column and alignment don't have any statistical relevance. They are more often decorative, so they are less used and discussed in books of stats. But we quickly learn them, what they are, and how to use them. The Column refers to column width. So in the following image, we already have different column width for a different variable.

*SPSS File1.sav [DataSet1] - IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor

	Name	Type	Width	Decimals	Label	Values	Missing	Columns	Align	Measure	Role
1	Hardwork	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
2	Intelligence	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
3	Performance	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
4	Age	Restricted ...	8	0		None	None	8	Right	Scale	Input
5	Gender	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
6	Income	Comma	8	2		None	None	15	Right	Unknown	Input
7	population	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
8	name	String	8	0		None	None	13	Left	Nominal	Input
9	feedback	String	8	0		None	None	19	Left	Nominal	Input
10											
11											
12											
13											
14											
15											
16											
17											
18											
19											
20											
21											
22											
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25											
26											
27											
28											
29											
30											
31											
32											

Data View Variable View

If we create a new variable, we will have an 8 column width assign to it by default. So column width refers to a number of digits or alphabet that can be allocated for a variable. For example, we create a new variable, and name it as XYZ, and then press enter. Now in the following image, we can see by default it has been assigned the column of 8 and alignment of Right.

*SPSS File1.sav [DataSet1] - IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor

	Name	Type	Width	Decimals	Label	Values	Missing	Columns	Align	Measure	Role
1	Hardwork	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
2	Intelligence	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
3	Performance	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
4	Age	Restricted ...	8	0		None	None	8	Right	Scale	Input
5	Gender	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
6	Income	Comma	8	2		None	None	15	Right	Unknown	Input
7	population	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
8	name	String	8	0		None	None	13	Left	Nominal	Input
9	feedback	String	8	0		None	None	19	Left	Nominal	Input
10	XYZ	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
11											
12											
13											

Now, if we click on the Data View, we will find that we don't have any value for XYZ. So we will add some values like 23, 12, and 13.

*SPSS File1.sav [DataSet1] - IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor

	Hardwork	Performance	Age	Gender	Income	population	name	feedback	XYZ	var
1	8.00	78.00	00000024	.	1,500,000.00	37848333.0	John Smith	I felt very good. Thnaks	23.00	
2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	12.00	
3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	13.00	
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										

We can see its width is 8. If we increase its width by using our mouse, we can see that its width has increased substantially in the column option.

*SPSS File1.sav [DataSet1] - IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor

	Hardwork	Performance	Age	Gender	Income	population	name	feedback	XYZ
1	8.00	78.00	00000024	.	1,500,000.00	37848333.0	John Smith	I felt very good. Thnaks	23.00
2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	12.00
3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	13.00
4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
6	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
7	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
8	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
9	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
10	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

In the Variable View option, we can see its width is 36.

*SPSS File1.sav [DataSet1] - IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor

	Name	Type	Width	Decimals	Label	Values	Missing	Columns	Align	Measure	Role
1	Hardwork	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
2	Performance	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
3	Age	Restricted ...	8	0		None	None	8	Right	Scale	Input
4	Gender	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
5	Income	Comma	8	2		None	None	15	Right	Unknown	Input
6	population	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
7	name	String	100	0		None	None	12	Left	Nominal	Input
8	feedback	String	1000	0		None	None	17	Left	Nominal	Input
9	XYZ	Numeric	8	2		None	None	36	Right	Unknown	Input
10											
11											
12											
13											
14											
15											

If we want to reduce it again, we can turn it to 8 and press enter. Now we can go to the Data view option and can see the width has gone down. In the case of population, we can have more width, but for variables that can be restricted to a lesser number of digits, we can have a smaller width for them. We can see in the following image, the values of XYZ are aligned to their Right.

*SPSS File1.sav [DataSet1] - IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor

	Hardwork	Performance	Age	Gender	Income	population	name	feedback	XYZ
1	8.00	78.00	00000024	.	1,500,000.00	37848333.0	John Smith	I felt very good. Thnaks	23.00
2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	12.00
3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	13.00
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									

If we want to align them in the Center or Left, we can change their alignment. We can click on the Right option of XYZ variable and select alignment Left like this.

*SPSS File1.sav [DataSet1] - IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor

	Name	Type	Width	Decimals	Label	Values	Missing	Columns	Align	Measure	Role
1	Hardwork	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
2	Performance	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
3	Age	Restricted ...	8	0		None	None	8	Right	Scale	Input
4	Gender	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
5	Income	Comma	8	2		None	None	15	Right	Unknown	Input
6	population	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Right	Unknown	Input
7	name	String	100	0		None	None	12	Left	Nominal	Input
8	feedback	String	1000	0		None	None	17	Left	Nominal	Input
9	XYZ	Numeric	8	2		None	None	8	Left	Unknown	Input
10											
11											
12											
13											
14											
15											

If we click on the Data view option, we can see that the variable has been aligned to Left.

*SPSS File1.sav [DataSet1] - IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor

	Hardwork	Performance	Age	Gender	Income	population	name	feedback	XYZ
1	8.00	78.00	00000024	.	1,500,000.00	37848333.0	John Smith	I felt very good. Thnaks	23.00
2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	12.00
3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	13.00
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									

That's how we use the alignment and column width option. The column option is nothing but the extension of width. So once we define our column, it means we are defining the width.