Cheat Sheet: Conversion Functions

TO_CHAR(number):

Converts the number or expression passed as parameter to a string of the varchar2 data type.

Syntax:
TO_CHAR(number[,format[,'nls_parameter']])

The *format* and *nls_parameter* arguments are optional. If you omit them the function uses the default parameter values for your session.

TO_NUMBER:

Converts the string passed as parameter to a value of the number data type.

Syntax:
TO_NUMBER(string [DEFAULT return_value ON CONVERSION ERROR][,format[,'nls_parameter']])

The ON CONVERSION ERROR clause is optional. If it is present and the conversion fails, the function returns *return_value*.

The *format* and *nls_parameter* arguments are optional and work in the same way as in the TO_CHAR function when applied to numbers (see above).

TO_CHAR(date):

Converts the date or expression passed as parameter to a string of the varchar2 data type.

Syntax:
TO_CHAR(date[,format[,'nls_parameter']])

The *format* and *nls_parameter* arguments are optional. If you omit them the function uses the default parameter values for your session.

TO_DATE:

Converts the string passed as parameter to a value of the date data type.

Syntax:
TO_DATE(string [DEFAULT return_value ON CONVERSION ERROR][,format[,'nls_parameter']])

The ON CONVERSION ERROR clause is optional. If it is present and the conversion fails, the function returns *return_value*.

The *format* and *nls_parameter* arguments are optional. If you omit them the function uses the default parameter values for your session.

CAST:

Converts the expression passed as parameter to a value of the specified data type.

Syntax:
CAST(expression AS type_name [DEFAULT return_value ON CONVERSION ERROR] [,format[,'nls_parameter']])

The ON CONVERSION ERROR clause is optional. If it is present and the conversion fails, the function returns *return_value*. This clause might not be allowed depending on the type conversion being performed.

The *format* and *nls_parameter* arguments are optional. If you omit them the function uses the default parameter values for your session. These parameters might not be allowed depending on the type conversion being performed.

VALIDATE_CONVERSION:

Determines whether the expression passed as parameter can be converted to the specified data type.

Syntax:
VALIDATE_CONVERSION(expression AS type_name] [,format[,'nls_parameter']])

Only some data type conversions can be tested with this function.

If *expression* can successfully be converted to *type_name* it returns 1, otherwise returns 0.

The *format* and *nls_parameter* arguments are optional. If you omit them the function uses the default parameter values for your session.