

How to Read Data in Fixed Columns Using Column Input Method



Many raw data files store information in fixed columns. This has several advantages over data values separated by delimiters.

- ▶ First, you don't have to worry about missing values. If you do not have a value, you can leave it blank.
- ▶ Next, when you write your INPUT statement, you can choose which variables to read, and in what order to read them.



The simplest method for reading data in fixed columns is called *column input*.

- ▶ This input method can read character data and standard numeric values, such as positive or negative numbers and numbers in exponential form
- ▶ Column input cannot handle values with commas or dollar signs. You can read dates only as character values when using column input method.



1234567890123456789012 ---- Columns indicator, not part of the data

Tim M14510/21/1978

Sara 13009/20/1964

Mike M18011/23/1965

Laura F13011/06/1980

Sean M16704/07/2000

The raw data file I used for this tutorial is 'data_column.txt', shown as above. I stored it in the SAS studio shared folder located on my local drive. The first line is not part of the data, it is indicating the column numbers. There are 4 variables in the data.

- ▶ Name: occupies column 1-5
- ▶ Gender: occupies column 6
- ▶ Weight: occupies column 7-9
- ▶ DOB: occupies column 10 - 19

