

Specifying Lengths for Variables

When creating a new character variable in an assignment statement, SAS allocates as many bytes of storage space (length) as there are characters in the first value that it encounters for that variable. Any values that are longer than the first value will be truncated. To avoid this, you need to use length statement to specify the lengths for variables.



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You can use a LENGTH statement to specify a length (the number of bytes) for the new character variable before the first value is referenced elsewhere in the DATA step to accommodate the longest value of the variable.

General form, LENGTH statement:

LENGTH variable(s) <\$> length;

Example: length gender_full \$7;

where

- variable(s) is the variable(s) to be assigned a length
- \$ is specified if the variable is a character variable
- length is an integer that specifies the length of the variable.

Additional Note Make sure the LENGTH statement appears before any other reference to the variable in the DATA step. If the variable has been created by another statement, then a later use of the LENGTH statement will not change its length.

