

Book Review

Reviewed by Janet E. Stuelpner

Title: The Little SAS Book: A Primer

Authors: Lora D. Delwiche & Susan Slaughter

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Tired of reading manuals to learn SAS? You don't need to do that anymore. The Little SAS Book is just the book you need to get started. It takes you through the basics of the language with concrete examples. With this book you will learn about Base SAS from concepts of the language to using various procedures to debugging the programs once you've written them.

The first part of the book helps you to get started using the SAS system. Along with defining the difference between a DATA step and a procedure, you learn how to execute a program interactively as well as in a batch environment.

From there you are shown how to get data into and out of SAS data sets. There is a large section on reading in raw data files. The next section is devoted to data manipulation. You learn all about creating and redefining variables, SAS functions, grouping and subsetting data, and the intricacies of SAS datetime values.

Of course, there is a whole chapter devoted to simple, useful procedures such as PROC PRINT, PROC SORT and PROC FREQ. For those of you that want to learn a bit about the basic statistical procedures, there is a chapter that includes those. To complete the book there is a chapter on debugging a program. There are helpful hints as to the error messages, what they really mean and how to correct your programs if you see them.

The book is very easy to read. Each section is presented in a format that is two pages with an explanation of the terms, examples, cross-references and other documentation for further reading. It is the book of choice for many elementary SAS courses. In a step by step manner, all of the basic concepts are discussed. The examples are very simple to follow and easy to repeat. It is geared to appeal to beginning and elementary users.

By the way, in 1999 the book was revised and updated to include the new features found in version 7. If you need to get started with version 7, look for the second edition of the book.