Creating Your First Data Entry System
Using PROC FSEDIT

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Abstract
The SAS/FSP® product contains two useful procedures, PROC FS\text{EDIT} and PROC FS\text{BROWSE}, which allow SAS System® users to edit and browse a SAS data set in a full-screen, interactive mode. Fully customizable screens may also be built via these procedures for presenting the data. When these screens are properly designed and implemented, they allow you to create a fully functioning data entry system.

However, knowledge of thePROC FS\text{EDIT} procedure alone is not really enough for you to be able to create a data entry system. There are other aspects that must be considered such as design, maintenance, user acceptance, and ease of use. By following these ten, easy steps, you will be able to create a fully functioning data entry system.

10 Easy Steps
1) Design
2) Create an Empty Data Set
3) Save the Data Set Attributes
4) Start PROC FS\text{EDIT}
5) Create FS\text{EDIT} Screen
6) Set FS\text{EDIT} Keys
7) End PROC FS\text{EDIT}
8) Save FS\text{EDIT} Code
9) Create User Access
10) Use Your System

Introduction
When using PROC FS\text{EDIT}, users may enter new observations into a SAS data set as well as modify existing observations in a SAS data set. This procedure also allows the construction of screens to display the data in any format you desire, giving you the ability to create custom data entry screens.

While the majority of issues discussed in this paper concern PROC FS\text{EDIT} basics, there are other issues that must be addressed to turn a PROC FS\text{EDIT} screen into a data entry system. This paper will show you how to develop a simple data entry system using the SAS System. In ten (10) simple steps a basic, stand-alone data entry system will be designed that can be used without any knowledge of the SAS System.

Another important feature available for use with PROC FS\text{EDIT} screens is the SAS Screen Control Language (SCL). SCL allows you to control actions to be performed as data is entered into the screen. Only a minimal amount of SCL is discussed in this paper.

Mock-up a dummy screen on paper. This helps you design a good data entry screen before starting to build it on the computer. Review this paper copy with the end user and obtain approval.

Determine what data sources need to be accessed to obtain data elements to display on the screen.

2) Create an Empty Data Set
Write a simple SAS DATA step to create an empty data set. This step is only necessary when you do not have an existing data set for which you are building a screen.
Note that although you can create a new SAS data set within PROC FSEDIT, I prefer this method because source code is generated that can be later re-used.

- The code below creates an empty data set containing 5 variables. Type this code into your program window and submit it to SAS for execution.

3) Save Data Set Attributes
- It is important to save the created DATA step in case you realize, during testing, that your data set is inadequate.

- The easiest way to do this is to RECALL the previously submitted code and FILE it to an external file (file in a DOS directory).

Source Code Notes:
- A LIBNAME statement is required to store your data set in a SAS library other than SASUSER.
- The ATTRIB statement allows you to define variables in the created data set.
  - LENGTH defines the number of bytes for storage.
  - FORMAT defines a SAS format used for displaying the variable’s value on the screen.
  - INFORMAT defines a SAS informat used for reading data as it is entered into the screen.
- The STOP statement causes the data set to have zero (0) observations.
- Alternative code could be written if you want to pull data from elsewhere, merge the data with other data sources, or perform other types of pre-processing on the data prior to making it available to be edited. Care should be taken in these situations to prevent someone else from updating the data while the data entry system is in use.

■ If the created data set needs modified during development or testing, you can recall this saved code, modify it and then re-create an empty data set.

■ To keep any existing data in the data set when modifying it, simply change the STOP statement to a SET statement that reads in the data set. It is important that the ATTRIB statements come before the SET statement so any changes to the variables’ attributes will be defined in the newly created data set.

■ After filing the DATA step code, CLEAR the Program Editor window.
4) **Initiate PROC FSEDIT**

- PROC FSEDIT is the SAS System procedure for creating user friendly data entry screens.

- You must specify both the existing SAS data set and the FSEDIT screen that is to be used. If the specified screen does not exist, a default screen will be displayed that shows all variables in the data set.

- The LABEL option of the PROC FSEDIT statement is often useful when creating the default screen. This option causes PROC FSEDIT to use the variable labels instead of the variable names when creating a default screen.

- A screen name has four (4) parts:
  
  SCREEN = libref.catalog.entry.entry-type

  The catalog entry-type (the 4th level of the name) must be SCREEN

- The screen naming tips:
  
  Keep the created screen in the same SAS library as the data set it is used with. This is illustrated in the above example.

  eg.

  SCREEN = SASUSER.SUGIDEM.SCREEN.SCREEN

5) **Create the Screen**

- If the specified screen does not exist, a default screen is created and displayed. Usually you will want to enhance this default screen.

- Notice that the default screen has default data entry fields, denoted by the underscores (_) on the screen. These fields are of an appropriate length to display the formatted value of a variable.

- From the default PROC FSEDIT screen, issue the MODIFY (or MOD) command.

- The FSEDIT screen modification menu appears below.

- The screen modification menu options perform the following actions:
  1. Help for screen modification
  2. Design screen layout and identify variables to be displayed
  3. Enter and compile Screen Control Language (SCL) code
4) Field attributes are attributes that can be assigned to each variable displayed on the screen. These attributes include minimum and maximum values, initial values, and can indicate which variables are required or protected.

5) General parameters are attributes that control overall screen settings.

6) Browse any entered SCL code.

Each menu item on this FSEDIT Modification Menu is discussed in the following sub-steps.

5) **Create the Screen - Screen Modification**

- Select Item 2 (Screen Modification and Field Identification).

- The data entry screen is displayed in the SAS text editor. You have complete freedom to enter any text on the screen.

- Turn NUMS on to allow the use of various line editing commands, if desired.

- Space for variables to be displayed must be represented by using an underscore (_). Use one underscore for each character of the variable value to be displayed.

- The variable field must have a leading and a trailing blank space.

- A screen may use more space than can be displayed on a physical screen. In otherwords, an FSEDIT logical screen may be comprised of one or more physical screens that the user may scroll through using the LEFT and RIGHT commands.

- For character variables, the underscores for a field do not have to be contiguous. Use an asterisk (*) at the end of a series of underscores to indicate that the character field continues in the next set of underscores encountered to the right or below the current field. This is also useful for fields that are longer than the physical screen, as seen for the COMMENT variable field on the default screen. For example:

  SSN: ___ * - ___ * - ___

- Important hard coded text to include on your screen:
  - Instructions for data entry
  - Description of function keys
  - Appropriate appearance

- On the PC, text may be enhanced by using the COLOR TEXT PINK command to color the text entered after issuing the command. Other colors are available, but for the sake of clarity, do not use more than three colors on a screen.

- After the screen is built, END the screen modification session.
Answer N to the following prompt, unless, of course, you have created a computed or repeated field on the screen (see SAS/FSP Software documentation).

Computed fields are fields that display values that are computed, using Screen Control Language, as data is loaded and/or modified into the screen.

Reposted fields are used when the same variable is to be displayed on multiple physical screens.

5) Create the Screen - Field Identification

Upon exiting the Screen Modification Mode, you will be asked to identify the placement of each variable on the modified screen. This identification is only necessary for those fields that SAS cannot identify. SAS will be unable to identify any fields on a line that has been modified.

Two particularly important commands are available for use while in the Field Identification Mode:

- UNWANTED
  This is a command that can be used when asked to identify a variable that you do not wish to display on the built screen. When used, the variable will remain in your data set but will never be displayed by the screen.

- WANT
  Issue the WANT command to display variables that have been previously identified as unwanted.

The Field Identification Mode screen is shown below:

When all fields have been identified, END the Field Identification Mode. You will be returned to the FSEDIT screen modification menu.

5) Create the Screen - Field Attributes

Select option 4 (Assign Special Attributes to Fields). This allows you to customize each field appearing on the screen.
The first field attribute is the INITIAL screen. This allows specification of an initial value to be automatically entered when a new observation is added. This INITIAL field attribute screen is shown below.

When finished entering field attributes, END the field attribute assignment screen to return to the FSEDIT screen modification menu.

In the example below, a minimum value for date has been specified on our sample screen.

5) Create the Screen - Screen Attributes

Select option 5 (Modification of General Attributes) to allow the specification of screen attributes.

Most important among these attributes are the following:

- **Name Command Variable**
  Specify the variable that will most often be used to locate an observation in the data set as the Name Command Variable.

- **String Command Variables**
  Specify variables that will be used for searching through the data set in the String Command Variables list.

- **Keys Name**
  Specify a function key catalog entry that contains the function keys desired for use with this data entry screen (see Step 6). This catalog entry must be contained in the same catalog as the data entry screen and can be used by multiple screens.
Other options include specifying the AUTOSAVE value, disabling the ADD, DUPLICATE, DELETE, and/or OVERRIDE commands, and specifying screen size.

Screen colors can also be specified here, but some host systems do not work well with these specifications.

When finished with the general attributes, END back to the Screen Modification menu.

5) Create the Screen - SCL Program

You may optionally select option 3 (Edit Program Statements and Compile) to enter Screen Control Language (SCL) for custom data entry actions.

SCL is an extremely powerful SAS-like language that allows you to control actions to be performed as data is entered into a screen. Almost any kind of processing imaginable can be performed using SCL, but I recommend starting off slowly with SCL - the learning curve can be substantial.

Use NUMS command to get line numbers on the FSEDIT Program screen.

All SCL program must have three (3) labeled sections:

INIT: Actions performed as new observation brough into the screen

TERM: Actions performed as an observation leaves the screen

Additional labeled sections are available in an FSEDIT screen:

FSEINIT: Actions performed when FSEDIT is started

FSETERM: Actions performed when ending FSEDIT

Only the most elementary usage of SCL is shown below. This shows how to code SCL to perform data entry verification.

It is preferable to perform as much edit checking as possible by using informats or defining field attributes (MIN, MAX, etc.). Since a minimum value was specified as a field attribute for DATE, there is no need to verify that the DATE is greater than the minimum acceptable date.

After entering your SCL program, END the FSEDIT Program screen. The SCL code will be compiled and checked for errors. You will be notified if any problems are encountered.

END the FSEDIT screen modification menu. Your new screen will now be displayed. Your screen is now complete, and this is the end of Step 5, Creating the FSEDIT Screen.
6) **Set FSEDIT Keys**

- Issue the `KEYS` command to view the function key settings for your screen.

If no keys entry was made in the Screen Attributes section, then the screen will use the user's default FSEDIT keys. This is usually not desirable since these keys will be used in all default FSEDIT sessions.

When a new keys entry has been defined in the Screen Attributes, a blank keys window will appear. It is recommended that you set these function keys to perform useful functions while using the created screen. My newly assigned function FSEDIT keys are shown below.

These function key definitions will only be used by this screen (or any other screen that have these keys assigned). This is much cleaner because you can customize the keys to match the screen rather than relying on the user's default FSEDIT key settings.

Important commands should have function keys. At a minimum, these commands should be assigned to function keys in an FSEDIT screen:

- `HELP`
- `END`
- `FORWARD`
- `BACKWARD`
- `ADD`
- `DUP`
- `LEFT`
- `RIGHT`

7) **End FSEDIT**

Now that your screen is built and the FSEDIT keys have been set, you can exit the FSEDIT procedure. Simply issue the `END` command (or press the appropriate function key). This ends the FSEDIT procedure and returns you to the SAS Display Manager.

8) **Save FSEDIT Code**

As in Step 3, RECALL the previously submitted code and FILE it to an external file.
9) Create User Access - Single User System

- CLEAR the Program Editor window and issue the KEYS command.

- Assign a function key as shown below in the key definition for function key F2. This allows the user to press F2 to execute the previously saved PROC FSEDIT code. Thus, the user is not required to type the SAS programming statements needed to access the FSEDIT screen.

- END the keys window when the user access key for the data entry screen has been defined. This function key is only available to the user for whom it was defined, thus, this is not a good solution for data entry systems that are used by multiple personnel.

9) Create User Access - Multiple Users

- Other options are available that would allow you to provide easy user access for a data entry system that is used by numerous people. This would include the option of setting up a Windows icon to place on the user's Windows desktop or creating a command file (CLIST, EXEC, SCRIPT, etc.) to invoke the system. In both cases, the method of invoking the data entry system would simply invoke SAS and specify an AUTOEXEC file to be executed at SAS initialization. The AUTOEXEC file would contain the code used to invoke the data entry application (Step 8), and then ENDSAS.

10) Use Your System

- Press the function key or execute the command file associated with your application to start working!

- Creating a 'tip sheet' for end users is recommended. This tip sheet would include instructions for logging into the data entry system, as well as helpful commands that are available for use while in PROC FSEDIT. The FSEDIT tips could be hard coded on the screen on a physical 'help screen' that would be part of the created screen.

- Use the ADD and DUP commands to enter new observations into your data set.

- Use FORWARD and BACKWARD to scroll through the observations in your data set. Use LEFT and RIGHT to scroll through the physical screens for an observation.

- When attempting to enter data, but the terminal beeps at you and refuses your keystrokes, check to be sure that the terminal INSERT mode is off.
Use the FIND (F) command to find observations meeting specific criteria. Note that the searching moves forward from the current observation.

ex. 
COMMAND ===> F DATE = .
to find observations with missing dates

Use the LOCATE (L) command to search forward for exact values of the variable specified as the Name Command Variable in the screen attributes.

ex. 
COMMAND ===> L 12345678
to locate the next observation where ID = 12345678

Use the SEARCH (S) command to search forward for partial values of any of the variables specified as String Command Variables in the screen attributes.

ex. 
COMMAND ===> S 12345678
to locate the next observation where any variable listed in the String Command Variables list contains the character string ‘12345678’.

Enter a number on the command line to go to the specified observation number. This is very useful to go to the first observation when you want to search forward using FIND, LOCATE, or SEARCH, and when going to the last observation

ex. 
COMMAND ===> 1
to go to observation 1
COMMAND ===> 9999
to go to observation 9999 (or last observation if fewer than 9999 observations)

Use the WHERE command to subset the data set to allow editing of only those observations that have a missing DATE variable.

COMMAND ===> WHERE
would reset any previously defined WHERE, allowing all observations to be edited.

Conclusion
As shown in this paper, PROC FSEDIT, combined with some minimal data management techniques, allows you to quickly and easily create custom data entry systems for use by non-SAS programmers.

References


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