Character to Number in SPSS[1]

It is sometimes necessary to create numeric variables out of character variables. Following is an example of how that can be done. The key commands are in bold. Be sure to check your results carefully. As you will see, how you specify the format in the command that converts to a number makes a difference in the result that you get.

```
* charnum.spss - example of how to change a character variable into a number.
DATA LIST list / v1char (a6) .
BEGIN DATA .
1101.3
2
a
end data.
execute .
* The number function is used to create a numeric variable from a .
* character variable.  The "F6" tells spss that the number will be .
* up to five digits long (up to 99999) and there are not implied .
* digits to the right of the decimal.  But, as you will see, if a decimal
* is included in the character variable, spss will interpret it correctly .
* f6.1 means that the number will be 6 characters long, including .
* the decimal point, and one number will be to the right of the decimal.
compute v1num = number(v1char,f6) .
format v1num (f6.0) .
compute v2num = number(v1char,f6.1) .
format v2num (f6.1) .
execute .
display dictionary .
list var = all .
```

OUTPUT - NOTE WARNING BECAUSE ‘a’ CANNOT BE CONVERTED TO A NUMBER:

```
>Warning # 1102
>An invalid numeric field has been found.  The result has been set to the
>system-missing value.

>Command line: 25  Current case: 3  Current splitfile group: 1
>Field contents: 'a     '

  Name                                                                Position
V1CHAR                                                                     1
          Measurement Level: Nominal
          Column Width: 8  Alignment: Left
          Print Format: A6
          Write Format: A6
V1NUM                                                                      2
          Measurement Level: Scale
          Column Width: 8  Alignment: Right
          Print Format: F6.1
          Write Format: F6.1
V2NUM                                                                      3
          Measurement Level: Scale
          Column Width: 8  Alignment: Right
          Print Format: F6.1
          Write Format: F6.1

V1CHAR  V1NUM  V2NUM

1101.3 1101.3 1101.3
2         2.0     .2
a          .      .

Number of cases read:  3    Number of cases listed:  3
```

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[1]**Prepared by Patty Glynn, University of Washington. October 8, 2001** C:\all\help\helpnew\charnum.wpd