

Ask and Ye Shall Receive: Getting the Most from SAS-L

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· Access alternatives

For SAS-L, newsgroup, web interfaces

· Newsgroup and LISTSERV mechanisms

How-to references

· Typical exchange

- A [problem](#)

- A [solution](#)

· Questions

- Have you done your homework?
- Is SAS-L the best place?
- Will it be noticed?
- Can it be understood?
- Will it be understood?
- Can people easily replicate your results, and do experiments?

· Homework: Resources

Online info; experimentation

· Homework: Reality check

You may not find the answer. Explain (briefly) where you looked and what you tried.

· Is SAS-L the best place?

Yes, if it's a SAS question. Otherwise, consider other lists and newsgroups.

· Will it be noticed?

Depends much on "Subject:" header

· Can it be understood?

- Define the environment.
- Describe the problem.
- Illustrate the problem.

· Define the environment

Software, hardware, network, situation

· Describe the problem

- Data
- Requirements
- Efforts made
- Difficulties encountered

· Illustrate the problem

- with real or fabricated data
- Include data, code, log excerpts, results, expected results

- Will it be understood?

- Miniaturize

- “Zoom in

- Abstract

- **Miniaturize**

- Fewer observations, variables, keys, BY groups

- Subset “real” data or fabricate

- But don’t lose generality

- Note actual scale

- **Zoom in**

- On steps where problem arises

- Compensate for lost context

- **Abstraction**

- Generic variable names

- Note subject matter context.

- Will it be understood?: The tradeoffs

- Miniaturization vs.

- Generality

- Scale

- Zoom-in vs. process context

- Abstraction vs. subject matter context

- **Can people experiment?:**

- CPR (copy/paste/run) helps

- Include data

- **Follow up**

- **Reality check**

- Don’t follow all of these suggestions.

- Recognize the trade-offs.

- You almost need to know the answer in order to frame the question optimally.

- Do your best.

<http://howles.com/schreier/saspapers/>

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