USING AN 'EDIT MASK' TO REFORMAT VARIABLES

Edit masks take the following form:

\[
\text{NewVariable/Newformat} = \text{EDIT(OldVariable, 'mask')};
\]

For example, to extract the first character of the NAME field,

\[
\text{FIRSTCHAR/A1} = \text{EDIT(NAME, '9$\cdots$')};
\]

If the character in the mask is a 9, the corresponding character of the
OldVariable is used. If the character in the mask is a $, the corresponding
character is ignored. If the character is something other than a 9 or $, it is
inserted and the other characters are moved to the right.

For example,

\[
\text{EMP_ID_100/A11} = \text{EDIT(EMP_ID_100, '999-99-9999')};
\]

would produce an employee SSAN like 123-45-6789 instead of 123456789.

When extracting the left-most, consecutive characters from a field using the
EDIT mask, you do not have to use a mask that includes 9's or $'s for each
class.

For example, if you wanted to extract the first 6 characters from the
LAST_NAME field (a 25 character field), the following would suffice:

\[
\text{FIRST_CHAR/A6} = \text{EDIT(LAST_NAME, '999999')};
\]

EDIT can also be used to convert an alpha field into a numeric and vice versa.

For example, say that STUDENT_CHG is the number of credit hours that the
student is taking but the value in the field is in alpha format. You cannot SUM
this field to get the total credit hours of a group of students. However, you can
use a DEFINE as in the following:

\[
\text{CHG/16} = \text{EDIT(STUDENT_CHG)};
\]

The new field, CHG, can be used to SUM up the credit hours. Note, that no
'mask' is used.