

You Could Be a SAS® Nerd If . . .

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Abstract

Are you a SAS® nerd? Wiktionary, a wiki-based Open Content dictionary, defines “nerd” as a person who has good technical or scientific skills, but is generally introspective or introverted. Another definition is a person who is intelligent but socially and physically awkward. Obviously there are other definitions for “nerd”, many of which are associated with derogatory terms or stereotypes. This presentation focuses not on the negative descriptions, but on the many positive aspects and traits SAS users possess. So let’s see how nerdy you actually are using the mostly unscientific, but fun, “Nerd” detector.

Introduction

Could you be a SAS nerd? Here are a few questions to ponder. Do you find that you have an intense interest in technical things related to the SAS software? Do you consider yourself adept at technical matters, particularly when it comes to SAS software? And finally, would you rather be working on a piece of SAS code or solving a technical SAS problem than being at a social gathering? If you found yourself answering “yes” to these questions, then perhaps, there’s a little SAS nerd in you. At least that’s what some people would say.

You Could Be a SAS Nerd If . . .

The following scenarios offer you with a way to determine whether you could be a SAS nerd. They are real scenarios based on comments directly heard from others or actual events and/or situations experienced by the author. Could you be a SAS nerd? Let’s see.

1. You own every SAS manual ever written dating back to SAS 76.
2. You own a personal copy of the SAS 76 manual, and you protect it along with your other valuables.
3. You refuse to part with any of your SAS manuals even if they reference several earlier versions of SAS software.
4. When you discovered that your wife/husband placed an ad on ebay to sell your SAS manuals you responded by submitting the “winning” bid.
5. You’re convinced that the most important date in recorded history is January 1st, 1960.
6. You celebrate January 1st, 1960 each year with friends and family.
7. You not only enjoy reading the SAS Log, but you purposely make coding mistakes to examine the different types of errors received along with a description of the error messages.
8. You blog SAS-related comments and technical solutions frequently.
9. You have more than 5 SAS blogs in your RSS feed.
10. You have connected with no fewer than a dozen other SAS Nerds on your LinkedIn®, Facebook®, and Twitter® accounts.
11. Your home page is support.sas.com, sasCommunity.org, SAS-L, or www.sas.com.
12. You know more than 10 SAS keyboard shortcuts.
13. You get excited when you find a new match-merge technique that performs better than the one you found or developed the week before.
14. You set your computer alarm to alert you to any new messages on SAS-L.
15. You keep a notepad and pen in the master bathroom or in your top dresser drawer so as you think of a new idea or solve a technical problem you can do so without drawing too much attention from your spouse.

16. You wake up in the middle of the night working out minute details on match-merging, table lookup using hash and indexing techniques.
17. Your dog or cat's name has something to do with the SAS software.
18. Your spouse's nickname is "SASSYpoo", "SASGladiator", "SASinator", or some other endearing name.
19. Your screen name or nickname is "Macro Maven", "SASMan", "SASGuru" or some other alias containing or referencing SAS software.
20. You have more than one version of SAS on your machine or network so you can compare and contrast program, processing and output differences.
21. You performed a Hash join on your wedding, or your son's or daughter's wedding invitations.
22. You automatically find yourself rewriting code even when the owner just wanted you to look at sample output.
23. You can't help but to look over a colleague's shoulder while they write code, and no matter how proficient they are, you're pretty sure you can do it better.
24. You have set up one or more alerts on the whereabouts and doings of your favorite "power" users and SAS experts.
25. You have bookmarked several published papers listed on Lex Jansen's website.
26. You provided one or more colleagues who attended SGF 2010 in Seattle with a completely sorted and catalogued dataset of all the Starbucks with their proximity to the Seattle Convention Center and their hotel.
27. You spend your Friday evenings and weekends responding to SAS-L and blog posts.
28. You wear Conference Name badges and those precious ribbons like a badge of honor.
29. You carefully arrange your conference ribbons so no two colors clash with another.
30. You save all your Conference Name badges and ribbons from the many conferences you've attended.
31. You anxiously agree to be a conference Code Doctor so you can dazzle and impress your colleagues with your SAS skills.
32. Your favorite everyday clothing is one of the many conference t-shirts you've collected over the years.
33. Rather than part with your conference t-shirts due to space issues, you purchase a rolling storage rack with zippered cover and relocate everything to the garage.
34. You spend 60 minutes writing a macro routine to do something you could have done by hand in fewer than two minutes and don't think it was a waste of time.
35. You're aware that "(*)%*(*)*/," sequence of characters may offer a way to kick-start the SAS interpreter when it stops responding to program steps that have been submitted.
36. With all the reality shows on television, you wonder why there isn't one highlighting SAS users.
37. You prefer being called "SASMan", "MacroMaven" or "SASGuru" by your colleagues rather than by your real name.
38. You see your colleague's code and think, "hmmmmm what an amateur!".
39. You devote no less than an entire room in your house or apartment to store your SAS memorabilia.
40. You read more SAS books and manuals than your spouse reads novels.

41. The first thing you read in the morning is the “Tip of the Day”.
42. You’ve created a Google or Bing search called “My SAS Search”.
43. Your employer won’t allow you to install games on the office computer, so instead you write your own using SAS software.
44. You become visibly upset when a colleague omits an “ELSE” condition in a series of IF-THEN or an “OTHERWISE” condition in SELECT-WHEN logic scenarios.
45. You use a semi-colon in emails to end a sentence.
46. You can’t wait to read the SAS book you won at a conference give-away on the plane home.
47. You proudly drive your car to work, to school, to your child’s school, and everywhere else with a license plate that reads “SASMAN”, “SASMAN1”, “SASGURU”, “ILUVSAS”, “SASNERD” or some other SAS alias.
48. You subscribe to five or more SAS groups on LinkedIn, sasCommunity, and Facebook and you use a tabbed browser so you can be online with all of them at the same time.
49. You excuse yourself frequently from your spouse and family for long periods of time while on vacation, from the dinner table, during family time, and special events to read and post responses to SAS-L topics.
50. You spend your evenings and weekends SAS-L’ing, Googling and Binging looking for elegant SAS technical solutions.
51. You proclaim that Universities everywhere should offer a degree in SASology.
52. You first look at the upcoming SAS conference schedule before scheduling your family’s vacation.
53. You not only know the number of SAS System options there are in SAS 9.2, but you’ve personally experimented with each.
54. You cringe at the thought of someone performing a Cartesian Product join on a Library of 200 tables, hundreds of columns, and millions of rows.
55. You proudly proclaim that you’re a SAS programmer when asked by a fellow passenger, “What do you do for a living?”
56. You’re dismayed and a little disappointed when a fellow passenger replies, “What is a “SAS programmer?”.
57. When your wife says, “IF you don’t shut down SAS and come to bed, THEN I’m going to leave you!”, and you chastise her for omitting the ELSE clause.

Conclusion

Prior to reading this paper you probably thought, “no way I’m a SAS nerd.” In fact you may still feel that way. But for the rest of us, the prospect of sharing one or more of the scenarios presented in this paper puts a different perspective on the topic. Whether you’re a totally hip SAS user with no hint of being a nerd, a little bit of a SAS nerd, or a complete SAS nerd, the important thing to remember is that you’ve found something you can devote such passion to. So be happy and enjoy the journey.

References

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Kirk Paul Lafler is consultant and founder of Software Intelligence Corporation and has been using SAS since 1979. Kirk provides IT consulting services and training to SAS users around the world. As a SAS Certified Professional, Kirk has written four books including PROC SQL: Beyond the Basics Using SAS, and more than four hundred peer-reviewed papers and articles. He has also been an Invited speaker and trainer at more than three hundred SAS International, regional, local, and special-interest user group conferences and meetings throughout North America. Kirk's current interests include serving on the sasCommunity.org Advisory Board; contributing SAS- and SQL-related topics; writing and supporting a SAS Tips column called, "Kirk's Korner of Quick and Simple Tips" for numerous SAS User Group newsletters and websites; and sharing his fun-filled SASword Puzzles in SAScommunity.org.

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