

Kirk's Korner



Quick & Simple Tips

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Exploring the Contents of the Dictionaries Table and VDCTNRY SASHELP View for SAS 9.2

The SAS System collects and populates valuable information about SAS libraries, data sets (tables), catalogs, indexes, macros, system options, titles, views and a collection of other read-only tables called dictionary tables. Dictionary tables serve a special purpose by providing system-related information that is known by the current SAS session about SAS databases and applications. When a query is requested against a Dictionary table, SAS automatically launches a discovery process at runtime to collect information pertinent to that table. This information is made available anytime after a SAS session is started.

Dictionary tables and SASHELP views contents permit a SAS session's activities to be easily accessed and monitored. This becomes particularly useful in the design and construction of software applications since the information can be queried and the results acted upon in a specific task such as in the allocation of filerefs or librefs.

This tip explores the purpose and use of the Dictionary table Dictionaries and SASHELP view VDCTNRY, how the content is accessed, and what information is available. SAS users can easily stay current with any new Dictionary table release by accessing the read-only Dictionaries table. The following PROC SQL code displays the contents of existing Dictionary tables using the UNIQUE keyword.

PROC SQL Code:

```
PROC SQL;
  SELECT UNIQUE MEMNAME
    FROM DICTIONARY.DICTIONARIES;
QUIT;
```

There are 29 Dictionary tables and 29 SASHELP views in SAS 9.2. The following table illustrates the name of each DICTIONARY table and SASHELP view.

DICTIONARY Tables and SASHELP Views

DICTIONARY Table	SASHELP View	Purpose
CATALOGS	VCATALG	Provides information about SAS catalogs.
CHECK_CONSTRAINTS	VCHKCON	Provides check constraints information.
COLUMNS	VCOLUMN	Provides information about column in tables.
CONSTRAINT_COLUMN_USAGE	VCNCOLU	Provides column integrity constraints information.
CONSTRAINT_TABLE_USAGE	VCNTABU	Provides information related to tables with integrity constraints defined.
DATAITEMS	VDATAIT	Provides information about known data items.
DESTINATIONS	VDEST	Provides information about known ODS destinations.
DICTIONARIES	VDCTNRY	Provides information about all the DICTIONARY tables.
ENGINES	VENGINE	Provides information about known SAS engines available to the session.
EXTFILES	VEXTFL	Provides information related to external files.
FILTERS	VFILTER	Provides information about known filters.
FORMATS	VFORMAT	Provides information related to defined formats and informats.
FUNCTIONS	VFUNC	Provides information about all known functions.
GOPTIONS	VGOPT	Provides information about currently defined SAS/GRAPH software graphics options.
INDEXES	VINDEX	Provides information related to defined indexes.
INFOMAPS	VINFOMP	Provides information about all known information maps.
LIBNAMES	VLIBNAM	Provides information related to defined SAS data libraries.
MACROS	VMACRO	Provides information related to any defined macros.
MEMBERS	VMEMBER	Provides information related to objects currently defined in SAS data libraries.
OPTIONS	VOPTION	Provides information related to SAS system options.
PROMPTS	VPROMPT	Provides information about all known SAS/GRAPH prompts.
PROMPTSXML	VPRMXML	Provides information about all known XML prompts.
REFERENTIAL_CONSTRAINTS	VREFCON	Provides information related to tables with referential constraints.
REMEMBER	VREMEMB	Provides information about all known remembered text.
STYLES	VSTYLE	Provides information related to select ODS styles.

TABLES	VTABLE	Provides information related to currently defined tables.
TABLE_CONSTRAINTS	VTABCON	Provides information related to tables containing integrity constraints.
TITLES	VTITLE	Provides information related to currently defined titles and footnotes.
VIEWS	VVIEW	Provides information related to currently defined data views.

About the Author

Kirk is senior consultant and founder of Software Intelligence Corporation and has been using SAS since 1979. He is a SAS Certified Professional, provider of IT consulting services, trainer to SAS users around the world, and sasCommunity.org Advisory Board member. As the author of four books including PROC SQL: Beyond the Basics Using SAS, Kirk has written more than four hundred peer-reviewed papers, 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, and is the recipient of 17 "Best" contributed paper awards. His popular SAS Tips column, "Kirk's Korner of Quick and Simple Tips", appears regularly in several SAS User Group newsletters and Web sites, and his fun-filled SASword Puzzles is featured in SAScommunity.org.

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