

DATA Step

How do I remove consecutive blanks from a text string?

While the COMPRESS function in SAS will remove, by default, every instance of the blank space, sometimes it is desirable to remove all-but-one of the blank spaces - such as when data has additional embedded blanks when un-trimmed strings have been concatenated.

Consider the code:

```
data names ;
  set sashelp.class (keep = name sex) ;
  if sex = 'M' then sal = 'Master' ;
  else sal = 'Miss' ;
  surname = 'Smith' ;
  fullname = sal !! ' ' !! name !! surname ;
run ;
```

which generates the fullname variable in the form:

Master	Alfred	Smith
Miss	Alice	Smith
Miss	Barbara	Smith
Miss	Carol	Smith
Master	Henry	Smith
Master	James	Smith
Miss	Jane	Smith
Miss	Janet	Smith
Master	Jeffrey	Smith
Master	John	Smith
Miss	Joyce	Smith
Miss	Judy	Smith
Miss	Louise	Smith
Miss	Mary	Smith
Master	Philip	Smith
Master	Robert	Smith
Master	Ronald	Smith
Master	Thomas	Smith
Master	William	Smith

Using the COMPBL function iteratively removes repeated blanks, but leaves the last one.

```
data names ;
  set sashelp.class (keep = name sex) ;
  if sex = 'M' then sal = 'Master' ;
  else sal = 'Miss' ;
```

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```
surname = 'Smith' ;  
fullname = compbl(sal !! ' ' !! name !! surname) ;  
run ;
```

which generates the more acptable result:

```
Master Alfred Smith  
Miss Alice Smith  
Miss Barbara Smith  
Miss Carol Smith  
Master Henry Smith  
Master James Smith  
Miss Jane Smith  
Miss Janet Smith  
Master Jeffrey Smith  
Master John Smith  
Miss Joyce Smith  
Miss Judy Smith  
Miss Louise Smith  
Miss Mary Smith  
Master Philip Smith  
Master Robert Smith  
Master Ronald Smith  
Master Thomas Smith  
Master William Smith
```

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