

What will this chapter tell me?

At about 5 years old I moved from nursery (note that I moved; I was not ‘kicked out’ for showing my ...) to primary school. Even though my older brother was already there, I remember being really scared about going. None of my nursery school friends were going to the same school and I was terrified about meeting all of these new children. I arrived in my classroom and, as I’d feared, it was full of scary children. In a fairly transparent ploy to make me think that I’d be spending the next 6 years building sand castles, the teacher told me to play in the sand pit. While I was nervously trying to discover whether I could build a pile of sand high enough to bury my head in it, a boy came and joined me. He was Jonathan Land, and he was really nice. Within an hour he was my new best friend (5-year-olds are fickle ...) and I loved school. Sometimes new environments seem more scary than they really are. This chapter introduces you to what might seem like a scary new environment: IBM SPSS Statistics. The SPSS environment is a generally more unpleasant environment in which to spend time than your normal environment; nevertheless, we have to spend time there if we are to analyse our data. The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to put you in a sand pit with a 5-year-old called Jonathan. I will orient you in your new home and everything will be fine. We will explore the key windows in SPSS (the *data editor*, *viewer* and the *syntax editor*) and also look at how to create variables, enter data and adjust the properties of your variables. We finish off by looking at how to load files and save them.

Versions of IBM SPSS Statistics

This book is based primarily on version 21 of *IBM SPSS Statistics* (I'm just going to call it SPSS from now on); however, don't be fooled too much by version numbers because SPSS release 'new' versions each year, and as you might imagine, not much changes in a year. Occasionally IBM have a major overhaul, but most of the time you can get by with a book that doesn't explicitly cover the latest version (or indeed the version you're using): a bit of common sense will see you through. So, this edition, although dealing with version 21, will happily cater for earlier versions (certainly back to version 18). I also suspect it'll be useful with versions 22 onwards when they appear (although it's always a possibility that IBM may decide to change everything just to annoy me).