LEFT Function

Contents:

Matches the leftmost set of characters in a string, as specified by parameter. The string can be specified as a column reference or a string literal.

- Since the `LEFT` function matches based on fixed numeric values, changes to the length or structure of a data field can cause your recipe to fail to properly execute.
- The `LEFT` function requires an integer value for the number of characters to match. If you need to match strings using patterns, you should use the `STARTSWITH` transform instead. See *STARTSWITH Function* .

Basic Usage

Column reference example:

```
left(MyName,3)
```

Output: Returns the first three letters of the `MyName` column value.

String literal example:

```
left('Hello, World',5)
```

Output: Returns the string: `Hello`.

Syntax and Arguments

```
left(column_string,char_count)
```

Argument	Required?	Data Type	Description
column_string	Y	string	Name of the column or string literal to be applied to the function
char_count	Y	integer (positive)	Count of characters from the start of the value to include in the match

For more information on syntax standards, see *Language Documentation Syntax Notes*.

column_string

Name of the column or string constant to be searched.

- Missing string or column values generate missing string results.
- String constants must be quoted (`'Hello, World'`).
- Multiple columns and wildcards are not supported.

Usage Notes:

Required?	Data Type	Example Value
Yes	String literal or column reference	`myColumn`

char_count

Count of characters from the start of the string to include in the match.

- Value must a non-negative integer. If the value is `0`, then the match fails for all strings.
- If this value is greater than the length of the string, then the match is the entire string.
- References to columns of integer data type are not supported.

Usage Notes:

Required?	Data Type	Example Value
Yes	Integer (non-negative)	5

Examples

> **Tip:** For additional examples, see *Common Tasks*.

Example - Driver's License Type

Source:

A California driver license number is one alphabetical character followed by seven digits (e.g., A1234567). The following is a set of California driver's license values:

LastName	LicenseID
Able	A1234567
Baker	B5555555
Charlie	C0123456

The `LicenseID` value contains the license class as the first character of the value. For example, Baker's license is a Commercial Class B license.

Transformation:

To extract the license type into a separate column, you can use the following transformation:

Transformation Name	New formula
Parameter: Formula type	Single row formula
Parameter: Formula	left(LicenseID,1)

Results:

LastName	LicenseID	left_LicenseID
Able	A1234567	A
Baker	B5555555	B
Charlie	C0123456	C

You can rename the new column to `LicenseType`.