It is sometimes necessary to compute a new variable, condensing several raw data points into one. For example, when using standardised questionnaires you often need to calculate a total and/or several sub-scale scores rather than analysing every question separately.

1. Enter all your raw data and complete all data recoding (e.g. reverse scoring) if required before you begin computing scores. The compute variable function does not automatically update when you enter new data or modify existing data.

For this example, I have 10 questions, two of which have been reverse scored (Q4Rev, Q7Rev). Questions 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 form one sub-scale. Questions 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 form a second sub-scale.

2. Go to Transform – Compute Variable

a. A summed score: If you need to add up all the answers within a sub-scale...
   In the Numeric Expression box, type `SUM`. Then in brackets, move across all the variables included in this calculation, using the reverse scored variables where necessary (e.g. Q4Rev in this example), and insert a comma in between each variable.
b. A mean score: If you need to calculate the mean answer for a sub-scale...
As above but type MEAN, rather than SUM.

4. Press OK. SPSS will calculate each participant’s sub-scale score. These new data will appear in a new column at the far right of the data file.

5. Repeat the above procedure if necessary for any remaining calculations.