

Chapter 246

s Charts

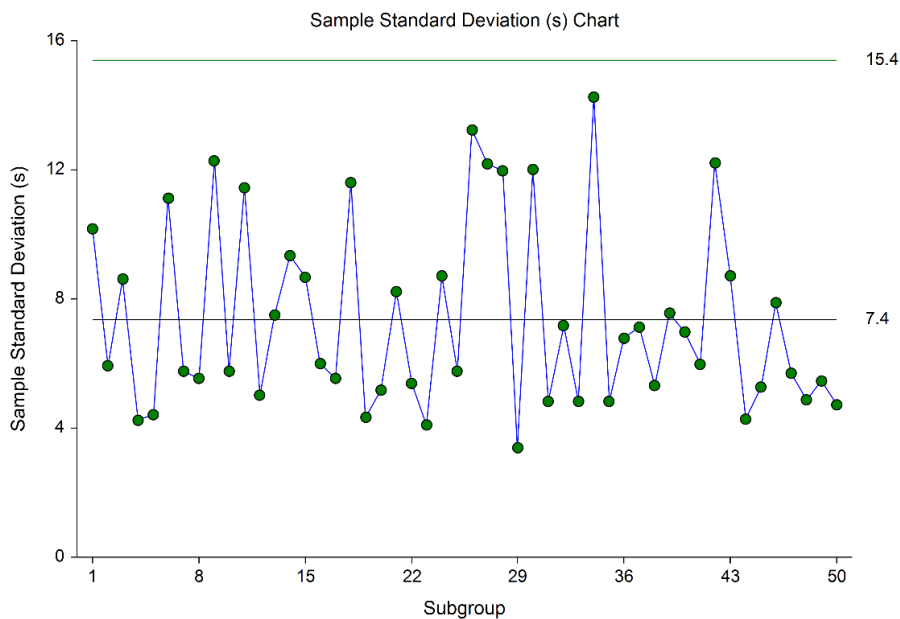
Introduction

This procedure generates s control charts for variables. The format of the control charts is fully customizable. The data for the subgroups can be in a single column or in multiple columns. This procedure permits the defining of stages. Sigma may be estimated from the data or a standard sigma value may be entered. A list of out-of-control points can be produced in the output, if desired, and standard deviations may be stored to the spreadsheet.

s Control Charts

The s chart is used to monitor the variation of a process based on samples taken from the process at given times (hours, shifts, days, weeks, months, etc.). The measurements of the samples at a given time constitute a subgroup. Typically, an initial series of subgroups is used to estimate the standard deviation of a process. The standard deviation is then used to produce control limits for the range of each subgroup. During this initial phase, the process should be in control. If points are out-of-control during the initial (estimation) phase, the assignable cause should be determined, and the subgroup should be removed from estimation. Determining the process capability (see R & R Study and Capability Analysis procedures) may also be useful at this phase.

Once the control limits have been established for the s chart, these limits may be used to monitor the variation of the process going forward. When a point is outside these established control limits, it indicates that the variation of the process is out-of-control. An assignable cause is suspected whenever the control chart indicates an out-of-control process.



Other Control Charts for the Variation of a Process

A very similar chart to the s chart is the R chart. The R chart uses the range of the subgroups rather than the standard deviation for estimating the standard deviation (σ). The s chart is generally recommended over the R chart when the subgroup sample size is moderately large ($n > 10$), or when the sample size is variable from subgroup to subgroup (Montgomery, 2013).

When only a single response is available at each time point, then the individuals and moving range (I-MR) control charts can be used for early phase monitoring of the mean and variation.

Control Chart Formulas

Suppose we have k subgroups, each of size n . Let x_{ij} represent the measurement in the j^{th} sample of the i^{th} subgroup.

Formulas for the Points on the Chart

The i^{th} subgroup standard deviation is calculated using

$$s_i = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{j=1}^n (x_{ij} - \bar{x}_i)^2}{n-1}}$$

Estimating Sigma – Mean of Standard Deviations

The true standard deviation (σ) may be input directly, or it may be estimated from the standard deviations by

$$\hat{\sigma} = \frac{\bar{s}}{c_4}$$

where

$$\bar{s} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^k s_i}{k}$$

$$c_4 = \frac{E(s)}{\sigma} = \frac{\mu_s}{\sigma}$$

The calculation of $E(s)$ requires the knowledge of the underlying distribution of the x_{ij} 's. Making the assumption that the x_{ij} 's follow the normal distribution with constant mean and variance, the values for c_4 are obtained from

$$c_4 = \sqrt{\frac{2}{n-1}} \frac{\Gamma\left(\frac{n}{2}\right)}{\Gamma\left(\frac{n-1}{2}\right)}$$

Estimating Sigma – Weighted Approach

When the sample size is variable across subgroups, a weighted approach is recommended for estimating sigma (Montgomery, 2013):

$$\hat{\sigma} = \bar{s} = \left[\frac{\sum_{i=1}^k (n_i - 1) s_i^2}{\sum_{i=1}^k n_i - k} \right]^{1/2}$$

Estimating the s Chart Center Line

If a standard sigma (standard deviation) value is entered by the user, the s Chart center line is computed using

$$\bar{s} = c_4 \sigma$$

If the standard deviation is estimated from a series of subgroups, the s chart center line is given by \bar{s} , whether computed by the mean of standard deviations approach, or by the weighted approach.

s Chart Limits

The lower and upper control limits for the s chart are calculated using the formula

$$LCL = \bar{s} - m\hat{\sigma} \sqrt{1 - c_4^2}$$

$$UCL = \bar{s} + m\hat{\sigma} \sqrt{1 - c_4^2}$$

where m is a multiplier (usually set to 3) chosen to control the likelihood of false alarms, and c_4 is defined above, and is based on the assumption of normality.

Runs Tests

The strength of the s control chart comes from its ability to detect sudden changes in a process that result from the presence of assignable causes. Unfortunately, this chart is poor at detecting drifts (gradual trends) or small shifts in the process. For example, there might be a positive trend in the last ten subgroups, but until a range goes above the upper control limit, the chart gives no indication that a change has taken place in the process.

Runs tests can be used to check control charts for unnatural patterns that are most likely caused by assignable causes. Runs tests are sometimes called “pattern tests”, “out-of-control” tests, or “zones rules”.

In order to perform the runs tests, the control chart is divided into six equal zones (three on each side of the centerline). Since the control limit is three sigma limits (three standard deviations of the mean) in width, each zone is one sigma wide and is labeled A, B, or C, with the C zone being the closest to the centerline. There is a lower zone A and an upper zone A. The same is true for B and C. The runs tests look at the pattern in which points fall in these zones.

The runs tests used in this procedure are described below.

Test 1: Any Single Point Beyond Zone A

This runs test simply indicates a single point is beyond one of the two three-sigma limits.

Test 2: Two of Three Successive Points in Zone A or Beyond

This usually indicates a shift in the process average. Note that the two points have to be in the same Zone A, upper or lower. They cannot be on both sides of the centerline. The third point can be anywhere.

Test 3: Four of Five Successive Points in Zone B or Beyond

This usually indicates a shift in the process average. Note that the odd point can be anywhere.

Test 4: Eight Successive Points in Zone C or Beyond

All eight points must be on one side of the centerline. This is another indication of a shift in the process average.

Test 5: Fifteen Successive Points Fall in Zone C on Either Side of the Centerline

Although this pattern might make you think that the variation in your process has suddenly decreased, this is usually not the case. It is usually an indication of stratification in the sample. This happens when the samples come from two distinct distributions having different means. Perhaps there are two machines that are set differently. Try to isolate the two processes and check each one separately.

Test 6: Eight of Eight Successive Points Outside of Zone C

This usually indicates a mixture of processes. This can happen when two supposedly identical production lines feed a single production or assembly process. You must separate the processes to find and correct the assignable cause.

There are, of course, many other sets of runs tests that have been developed. You should watch your data for trends, zig-zags, and other nonrandom patterns. Any of these conditions could be an indication of an assignable cause and would warrant further investigation.

Issues in Using Control Charts

There are several additional considerations surrounding the use of control charts that will not be addressed here. Some important questions are presented below without discussion. For a full treatment of these issues, you should consider a statistical quality control text such as Ryan (2011) or Montgomery (2013).

Subgroup Size

How many items should be sampled for each subgroup? Some common values are 5, 10, and 20. How does the subgroup size affect my use of control charts? What about unequal subgroup sizes?

Dealing with Out-of-Control Points

How do you deal with out-of-control points once they have been detected? Should they be included or excluded in the process average and standard deviation?

Control Limit Multiplier

Three-sigma limits are very common. When should one consider a value other than three?

Startup Time

How many subgroups should be used to establish control for my process?

Normality Assumption

How important is the assumption of normality? How do I check this? Should I consider a transformation? (See also the Box-Cox Transformation and Capability Analysis procedures in NCSS.)

Data Structure

In this procedure, the data may be in either of two formats. The first data structure option is to have the data in several columns, with one subgroup per row.

Example Dataset

S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
2	6	3	8	5
8	8	7	7	9
6	2	2	4	3
5	6	7	6	10
48	2	6	5	0
.
.
.

The second data structure option uses one column for the response data, and either a subgroup size or a second column defining the subgroups.

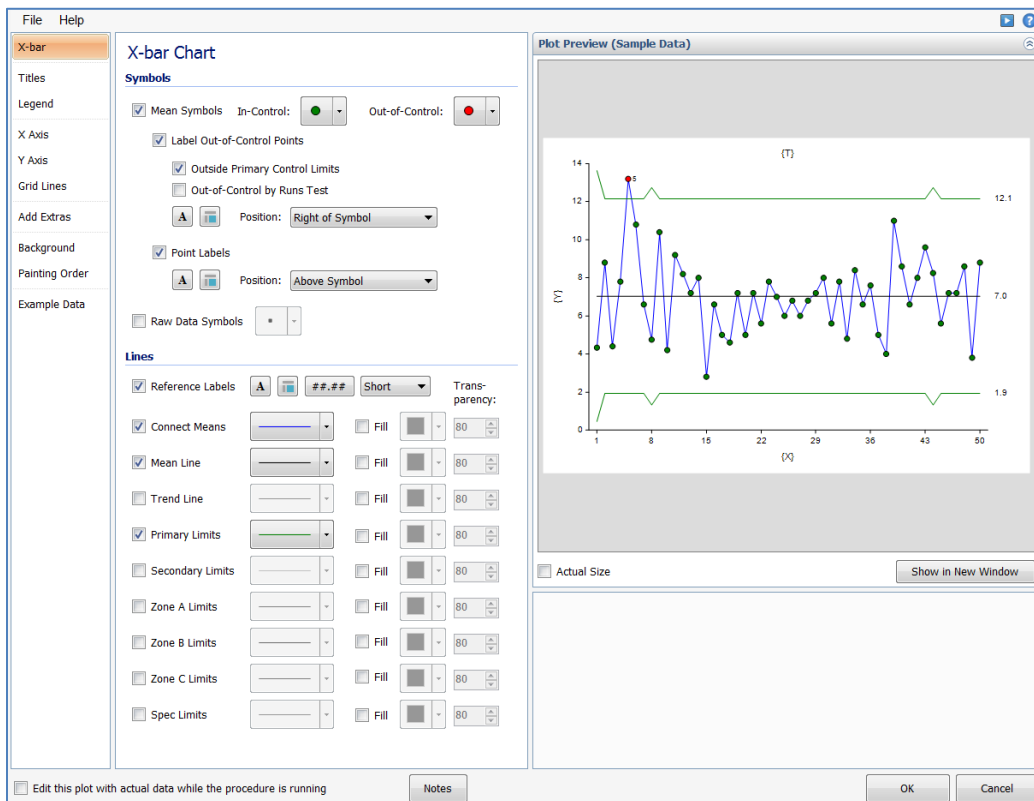
Alternative Example Dataset

Response	Subgroup
2	1
6	1
3	1
8	1
5	1
8	2
8	2
7	2
7	2
9	2
6	3
2	3
.	.
.	.
.	.

In the alternative example dataset, the Subgroup column is not needed if every subgroup is of size 5 and the user specifies 5 as the subgroup size. If there are missing values, the Subgroup column should be used, or the structure of the first example dataset.

Quality Control Chart Format Window Options

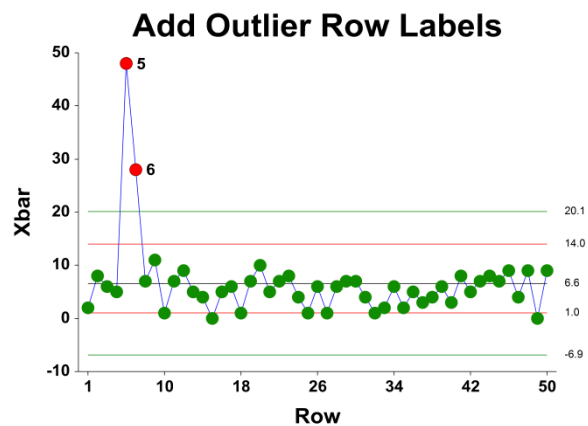
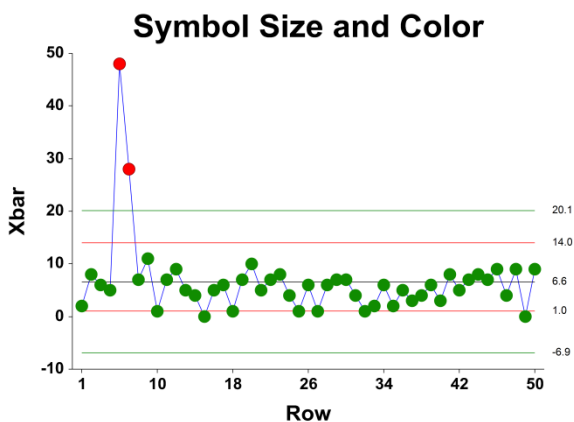
This section describes a few of the specific options available on the first tab of the control chart format window, which is displayed when a quality control chart format button is pressed. Common options, such as axes, labels, legends, and titles are documented in the Graphics Components chapter.



[Xbar] / [Range] Chart Tab

Symbols Section

You can modify the attributes of the symbols using the options in this section.

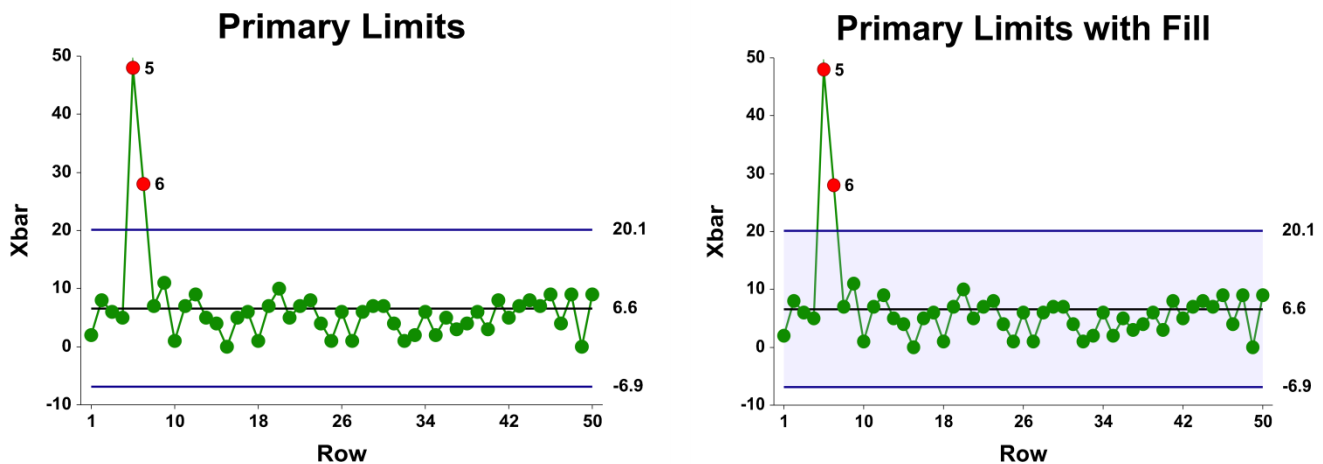


A wide variety of sizes, shapes, and colors are available for the symbols. The symbols for in-control and out-of-control points are specified independently. There are additional options to label out-of-control points. The label for points outside the primary control limits is the subgroup number. The label for points that are out-of-control based on the runs test is the number of the first runs test that is signaled by this point.

The user may also specify a column of point labels on the procedure variables tab, to be used to label all or some of the points of the chart. The raw data may also be shown, based on customizable raw data symbols.

Lines Section

You can specify the format of the various lines using the options in this section. Note that when shading is desired, the fill will be to the bottom for single lines (such as the mean line), and between the lines for pairs of lines (such as primary limits).



Lines for the zones, secondary limits, and specification limits are also specified here.

Titles, Legend, Numeric Axis, Group Axis, Grid Lines, and Background Tabs

Details on setting the options in these tabs are given in the Graphics Components chapter. The legend does not show by default but can easily be included by going to the Legend tab and clicking the Show Legend checkbox.

Example 1 – s Chart Analysis (Phase I)

This section presents an example of how to run an initial s Chart analysis to establish control limits. The data represent 50 subgroups of size 5. The data used are in the QC dataset. We will analyze the variables D1 through D5 of this dataset.

Setup

To run this example, complete the following steps:

1 Open the QC example dataset

- From the File menu of the NCSS Data window, select **Open Example Data**.
- Select **QC** and click **OK**.

2 Specify the s Charts procedure options

- Find and open the **s Charts** procedure using the menus or the Procedure Navigator.
- The settings for this example are listed below and are stored in the **Example 1** settings file. To load these settings to the procedure window, click **Open Example Settings File** in the Help Center or File menu.

```
Variables Tab
-----
Data Variables .....D1-D5
```

3 Run the procedure

- Click the **Run** button to perform the calculations and generate the output.

Center Line Section

Center Line Section for Subgroups 1 to 50	
Number of Subgroups: 50	
Center Line	Estimate
s-bar	7.365443

This section displays the center line values that are to be used in the s chart.

s-bar

This is the average of the standard deviations.

Primary Control Limit Section

Primary Control Limit Section for Subgroups 1 to 50

These limits are based on a subgroup of size 5.

Primary Control Limits		
Chart Type	Lower	Upper
s	0	15.3864

This report gives the lower and upper limits for the chart, corresponding to a specific subgroup size.

s Lower and Upper Primary Control Limits

These limits are the primary control limits of the s chart, as defined in the sub-section s Chart Limits of the Control Chart Formulas section toward the beginning of this chapter. Since the lower limit for the s chart is less than 0, it has been reset to 0.

Sigma Estimation Section

Sigma Estimation Section for Subgroups 1 to 50

Estimation Type	Estimated Value	Estimated Sigma
Ranges (R-bar)	18.14	7.798796
Standard Deviations (s-bar)*	7.365443	7.835698
Weighted Approach (s-bar)	7.902911	7.902911

* Indicates the estimation type used in this report.

This report gives the estimation of the population standard deviation (sigma) based on three estimation techniques. The estimation technique used for the plots in this procedure is based on the ranges.

Estimation Type

The formula for estimating sigma based on the ranges is shown earlier in this chapter in the Control Chart Formulas section. The formulas for the Standard Deviations method and Weighted Approach method are shown in the X-bar and s Charts chapter.

Estimated Value

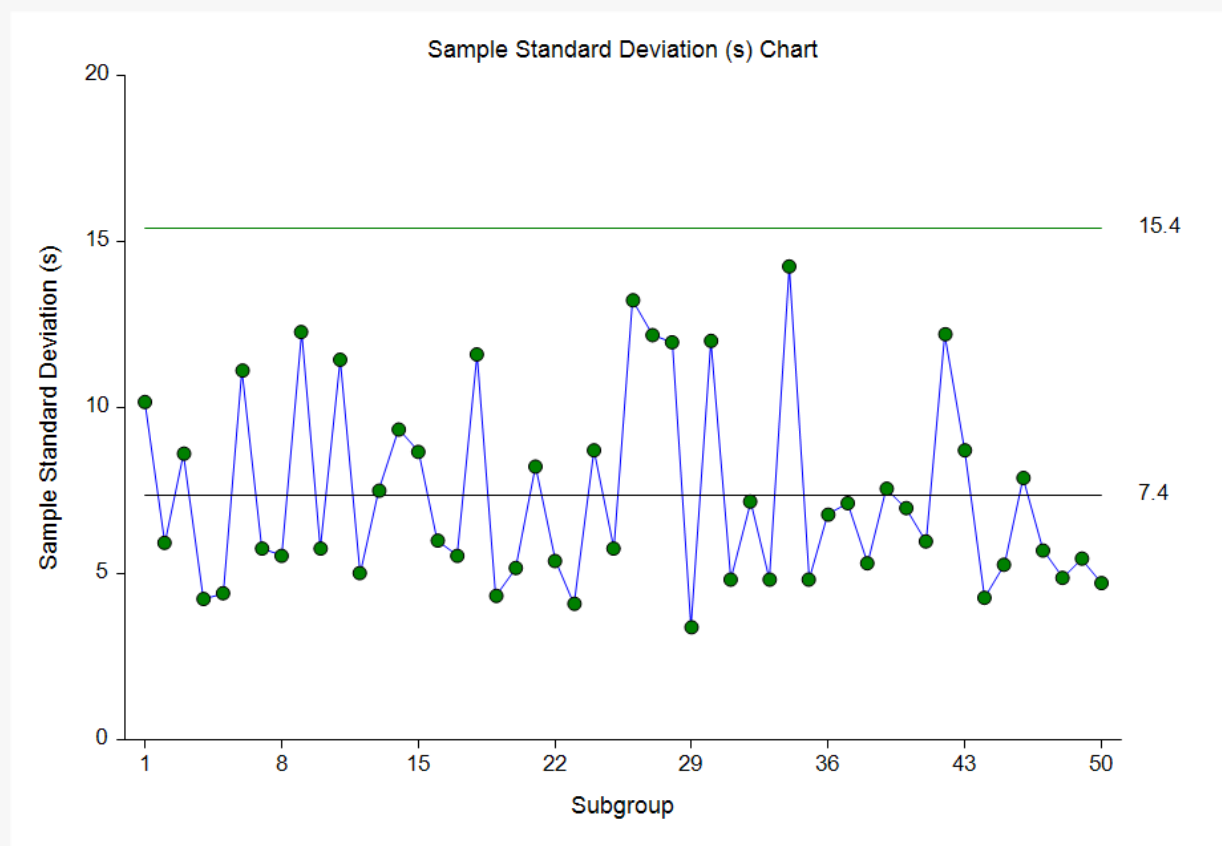
This column gives the R-bar and s-bar estimates based on the corresponding formulas.

Estimated Sigma

This column gives estimates of the population standard deviation (sigma) based on the corresponding estimation type.

s Charts

Chart Section for Subgroups 1 to 50



This plot shows the standard deviations for each subgroup, as well as the corresponding centerline and limits. The s chart seems to indicate the variation is in control.

Out-of-Control List

Out-of-Control List for Subgroups 1 to 50

Subgroup	Mean	s	Subgroup Label	Reason
30	70.4	12.01249	30	s: 4 of 5 in zone B or beyond

This report provides a list of the subgroups that failed one of the runs tests (including points outside the control limits). The report shows that subgroup 30 is the final point of 4 out of 5 points in Zone B. This run does not appear to indicate a clear shift in the process variation.

Example 2 – s Charts Analysis (Phase II)

This section presents a continuation of the previous example. In this example the limits are based on the first 50 observations, but the ranges are monitored for an additional 100 subgroups. The data are given in the columns D1ext – D5ext of the QC dataset.

Setup

To run this example, complete the following steps:

1 Open the QC example dataset

- From the File menu of the NCSS Data window, select **Open Example Data**.
- Select **QC** and click **OK**.

2 Specify the s Charts procedure options

- Find and open the **s Charts** procedure using the menus or the Procedure Navigator.
- The settings for this example are listed below and are stored in the **Example 2** settings file. To load these settings to the procedure window, click **Open Example Settings File** in the Help Center or File menu.

```
Variables Tab
-----
Data Variables .....D1ext-D5ext
Specification Method .....First N rows (Enter N)
N .....50
```

3 Run the procedure

- Click the **Run** button to perform the calculations and generate the output.

Center Line, Control Limits, and Estimation Sections

Center Line Section for Subgroups 1 to 50	
Number of Subgroups: 50	
Center Line	Estimate
s-bar	7.365443

Primary Control Limit Section for Subgroups 1 to 50

These limits are based on a subgroup of size 5.

Primary Control Limits		
Chart Type	Lower	Upper
s	0	15.3864

Sigma Estimation Section for Subgroups 1 to 50

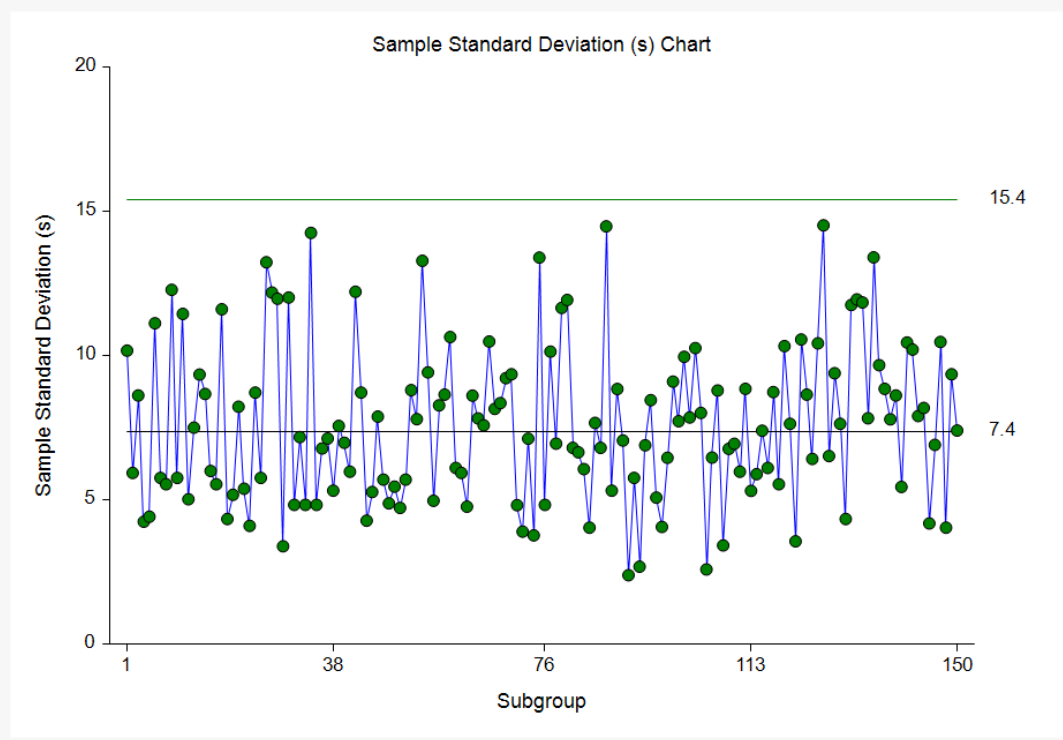
Estimation Type	Estimated Value	Estimated Sigma
Ranges (R-bar)	18.14	7.798796
Standard Deviations (s-bar)*	7.365443	7.835698
Weighted Approach (s-bar)	7.902911	7.902911

* Indicates the estimation type used in this report.

Since the first 50 subgroups are the same as those of Example 1, and since only the first 50 subgroups are used in the calculations for this run, the results for these sections are the same as those of Example 1.

s Chart

Chart Section for Subgroups 1 to 150



This plot has the same limits as those of Example 1. There does not appear to be an obvious change in the standard deviations.

Out-of-Control List

Out-of-Control List for Subgroups 1 to 150

Subgroup	Mean	s	Subgroup Label	Reason
30	70.4	12.01249	30	s: 4 of 5 in zone B or beyond
70	69	9.354143	70	s: 8 in zone C or beyond
135	61.2	13.40522	135	s: 4 of 5 in zone B or beyond
138	68.8	7.79102	138	s: 8 in zone C or beyond
139	73.4	8.619744	139	s: 8 in zone C or beyond

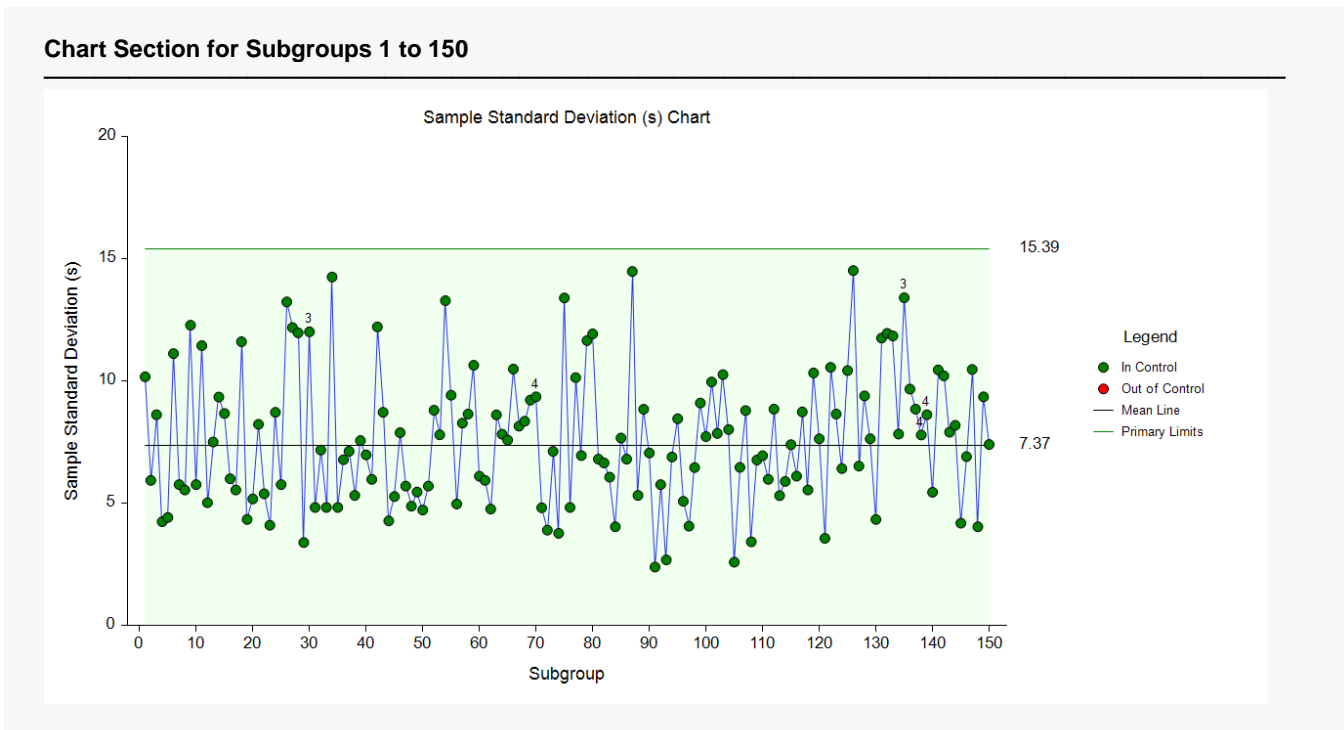
This list indicates a handful of out-of-control signals by Runs tests. There may be a signal for subgroups in the 130s.

Example 3 – s Chart with Additional Formatting

This example uses the same setup as Example 2, except that a variety of improvements are made in the plot format. These improvements are made by clicking the s Chart format button on the s Chart tab.

The settings for this example are stored in the **Example 3** settings file. To load these settings to the procedure window, click **Open Example Settings File** in the Help Center or File menu.

s Chart



As shown here, a variety of enhancements can be made to the formatting of the control charts to make the chart as easy to read as possible. The numbers above the points represent the number of the first runs test that is signaled by that point.