Taking Advantage of Online Communities

Getting the most out of StackExchange and StackOverflow Q&A Sites

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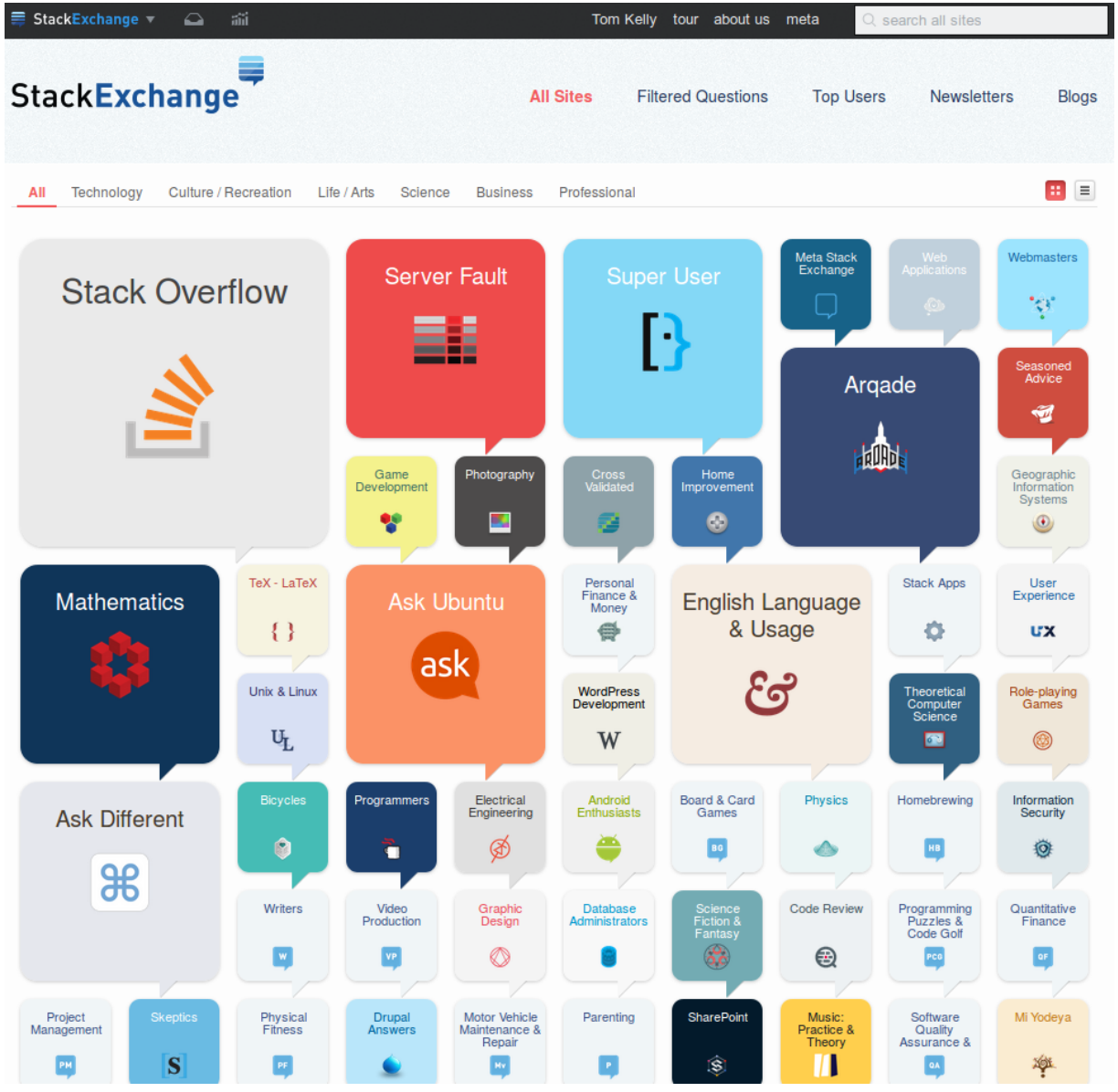
Lightning SYSKA - Otago Mozilla Study Group

Online Help Communities

- A resource to troubleshoot common errors
- To engage with the open-source community, give feedback to package developers, and showcase skills to future employers
- Where "googling an error message" will likely send you

StackExchange Sites



Online Help Communities

- Many of these people are volunteers who want to help
- They are a valuable resource for expertise
- Many of them aren't patient if you appear to waste their time
- Pay **careful** attention to the community guidelines
- It's ok to be a newbie but not a troll
- Help them to help you (and others with similar issues)

Before You Ask

- Try to find an answer by searching the archives of the forum or mailing list you plan to post to.

Search then Ask

"Let me Google that for you"

- Try to find an answer by searching the Web.

"STFW"

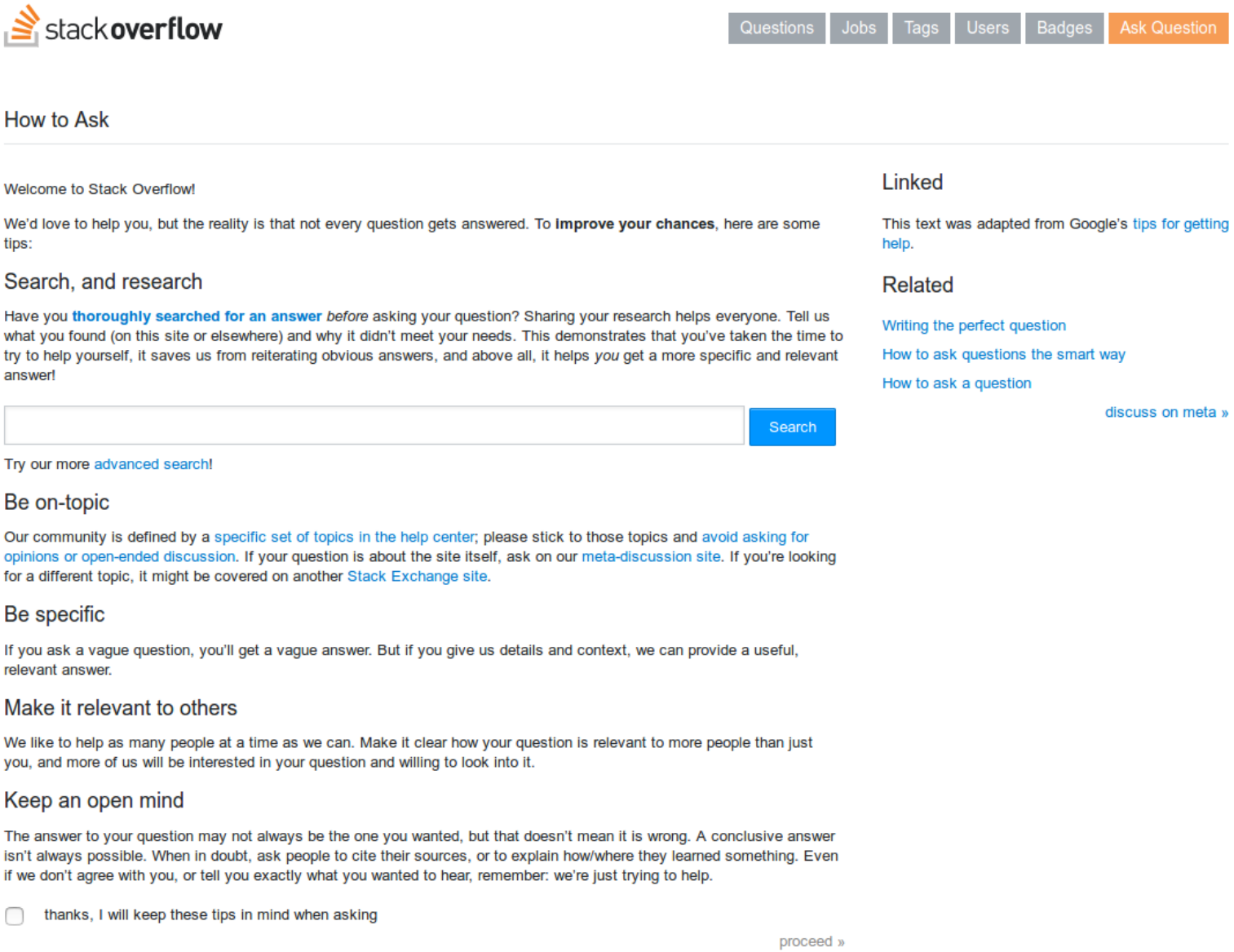
- Try to find an answer by reading the manual.

"RTFM"

- Try to find an answer by reading a FAQ.
- Try to find an answer by inspection or experimentation.
- Try to find an answer by asking a skilled friend or co-worker.
- Try to find an answer by reading the source code[1].

[1] If you're a programmer

How to Ask (Nicely)



stackoverflow

Questions | Jobs | Tags | Users | Badges | Ask Question

How to Ask

Welcome to Stack Overflow!

We'd love to help you, but the reality is that not every question gets answered. To **Improve your chances**, here are some tips:

Search, and research

Have you **thoroughly searched for an answer** *before* asking your question? Sharing your research helps everyone. Tell us what you found (on this site or elsewhere) and why it didn't meet your needs. This demonstrates that you've taken the time to try to help yourself, it saves us from reiterating obvious answers, and above all, it helps *you* get a more specific and relevant answer!

Search

Try our more advanced search!

Be on-topic

Our community is defined by a specific set of topics in the help center; please stick to those topics and avoid asking for opinions or open-ended discussion. If your question is about the site itself, ask on our meta-discussion site. If you're looking for a different topic, it might be covered on another Stack Exchange site.

Be specific

If you ask a vague question, you'll get a vague answer. But if you give us details and context, we can provide a useful, relevant answer.

Make it relevant to others

We like to help as many people at a time as we can. Make it clear how your question is relevant to more people than just you, and more of us will be interested in your question and willing to look into it.

Keep an open mind

The answer to your question may not always be the one you wanted, but that doesn't mean it is wrong. A conclusive answer isn't always possible. When in doubt, ask people to cite their sources, or to explain how/where they learned something. Even if we don't agree with you, or tell you exactly what you wanted to hear, remember: we're just trying to help.

thanks, I will keep these tips in mind when asking

proceed »

Linked

This text was adapted from Google's tips for getting help.

Related

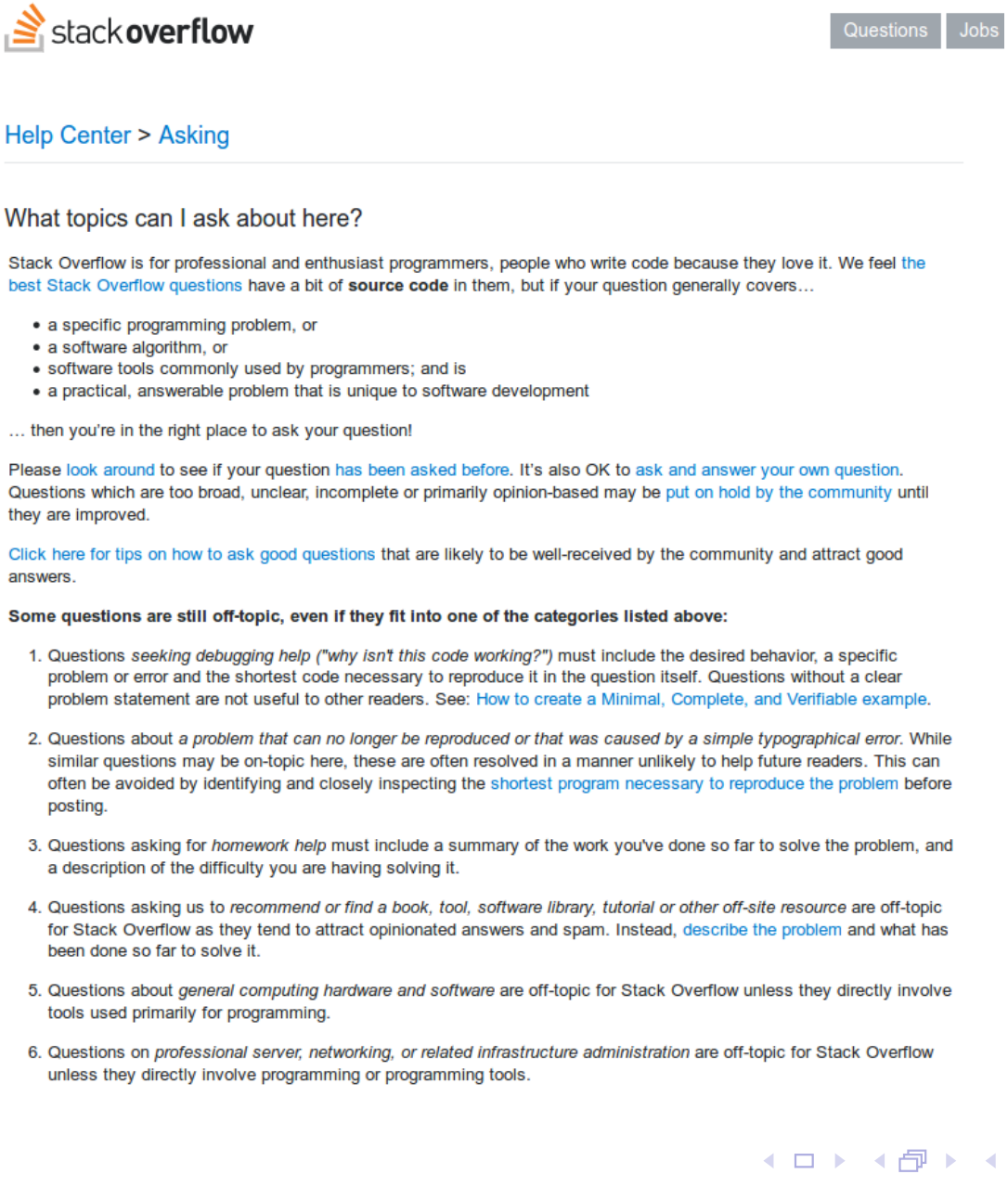
Writing the perfect question

How to ask questions the smart way

How to ask a question

discuss on meta »

Finding the Right Forum



stackoverflow

Questions Jobs

Help Center > Asking

What topics can I ask about here?

Stack Overflow is for professional and enthusiast programmers, people who write code because they love it. We feel the best Stack Overflow questions have a bit of **source code** in them, but if your question generally covers…

- a specific programming problem, or
- a software algorithm, or
- software tools commonly used by programmers; and is
- a practical, answerable problem that is unique to software development

… then you're in the right place to ask your question!

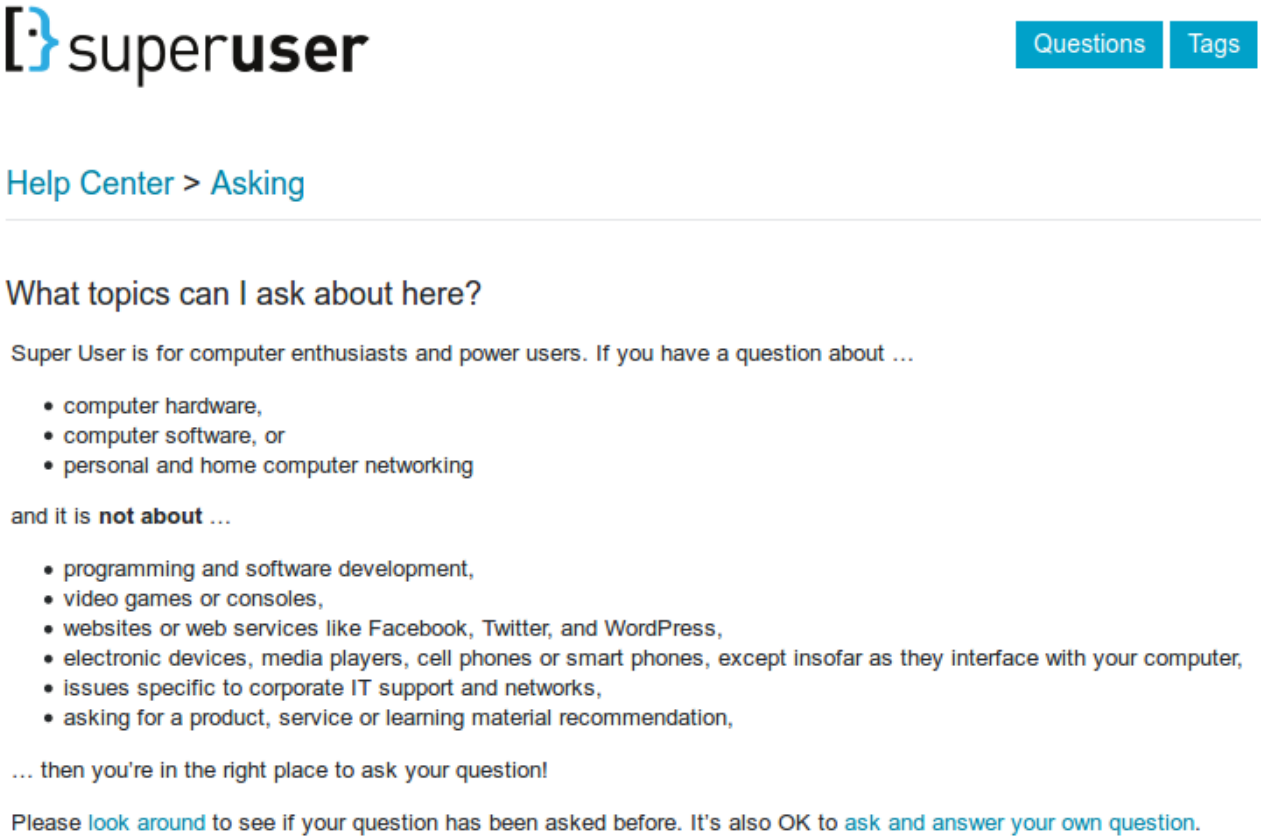
Please look around to see if your question has been asked before. It's also OK to ask and answer your own question. Questions which are too broad, unclear, incomplete or primarily opinion-based may be put on hold by the community until they are improved.

Click here for tips on how to ask good questions that are likely to be well-received by the community and attract good answers.

Some questions are still off-topic, even if they fit into one of the categories listed above:

1. Questions *seeking debugging help ("why isn't this code working?")* must include the desired behavior, a specific problem or error and the shortest code necessary to reproduce it in the question itself. Questions without a clear problem statement are not useful to other readers. See: How to create a Minimal, Complete, and Verifiable example.
2. Questions about *a problem that can no longer be reproduced or that was caused by a simple typographical error.* While similar questions may be on-topic here, these are often resolved in a manner unlikely to help future readers. This can often be avoided by identifying and closely inspecting the shortest program necessary to reproduce the problem before posting.
3. Questions asking for *homework help* must include a summary of the work you've done so far to solve the problem, and a description of the difficulty you are having solving it.
4. Questions asking us to *recommend or find a book, tool, software library, tutorial or other off-site resource* are off-topic for Stack Overflow as they tend to attract opinionated answers and spam. Instead, describe the problem and what has been done so far to solve it.
5. Questions about *general computing hardware and software* are off-topic for Stack Overflow unless they directly involve tools used primarily for programming.
6. Questions on *professional server, networking, or related infrastructure administration* are off-topic for Stack Overflow unless they directly involve programming or programming tools.

Finding the Right Forum



superuser

Questions Tags

Help Center > Asking

What topics can I ask about here?

Super User is for computer enthusiasts and power users. If you have a question about …

- computer hardware,
- computer software, or
- personal and home computer networking

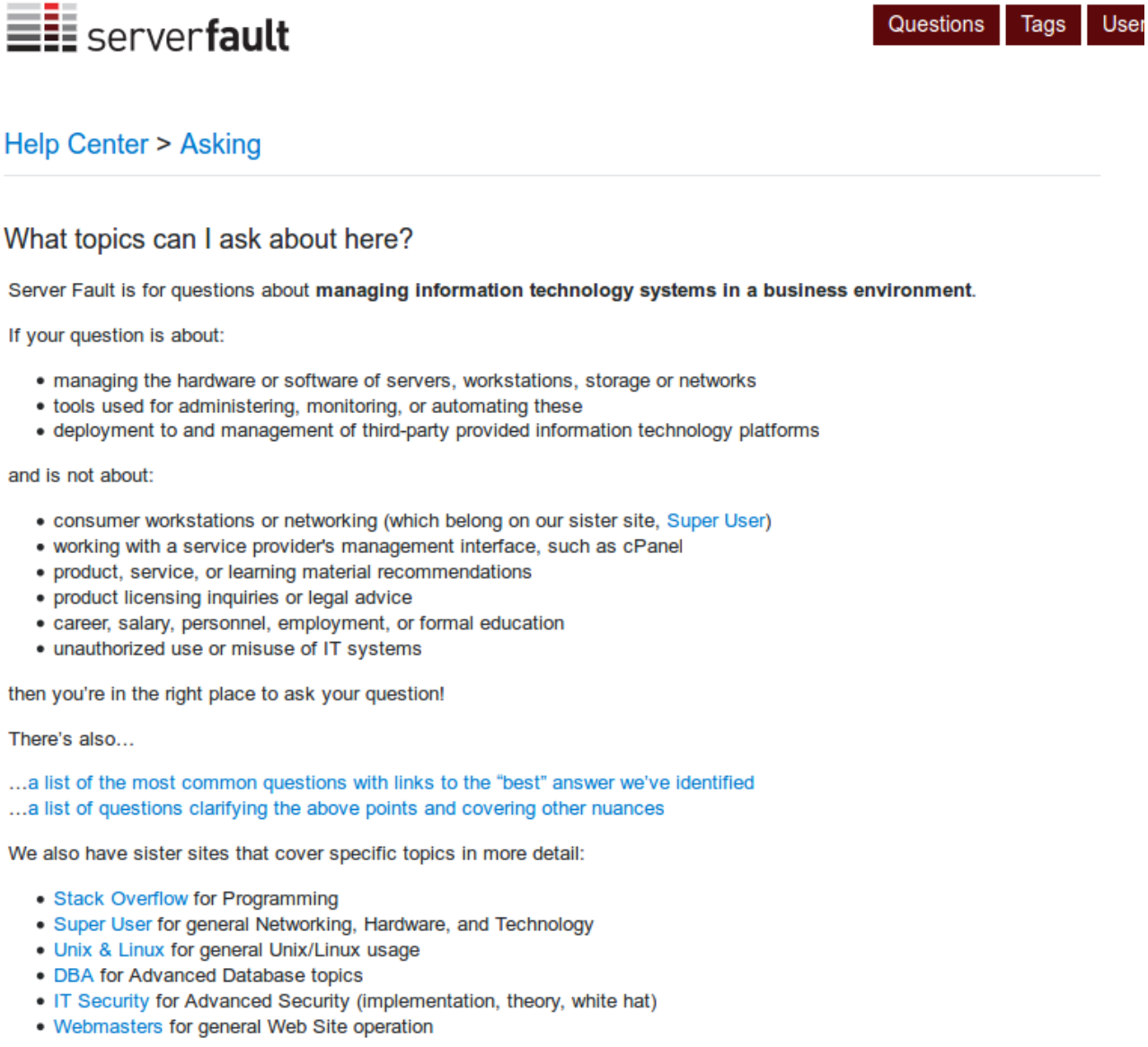
and it is **not about** …

- programming and software development,
- video games or consoles,
- websites or web services like Facebook, Twitter, and WordPress,
- electronic devices, media players, cell phones or smart phones, except insofar as they interface with your computer,
- issues specific to corporate IT support and networks,
- asking for a product, service or learning material recommendation,

… then you're in the right place to ask your question!

Please look around to see if your question has been asked before. It's also OK to ask and answer your own question.

Finding the Right Forum



serverfault

Questions Tags User

Help Center > Asking

What topics can I ask about here?

Server Fault is for questions about **managing information technology systems in a business environment**.

If your question is about:

- managing the hardware or software of servers, workstations, storage or networks
- tools used for administering, monitoring, or automating these
- deployment to and management of third-party provided information technology platforms

and is not about:

- consumer workstations or networking (which belong on our sister site, Super User)
- working with a service provider's management interface, such as cPanel
- product, service, or learning material recommendations
- product licensing inquiries or legal advice
- career, salary, personnel, employment, or formal education
- unauthorized use or misuse of IT systems

then you're in the right place to ask your question!

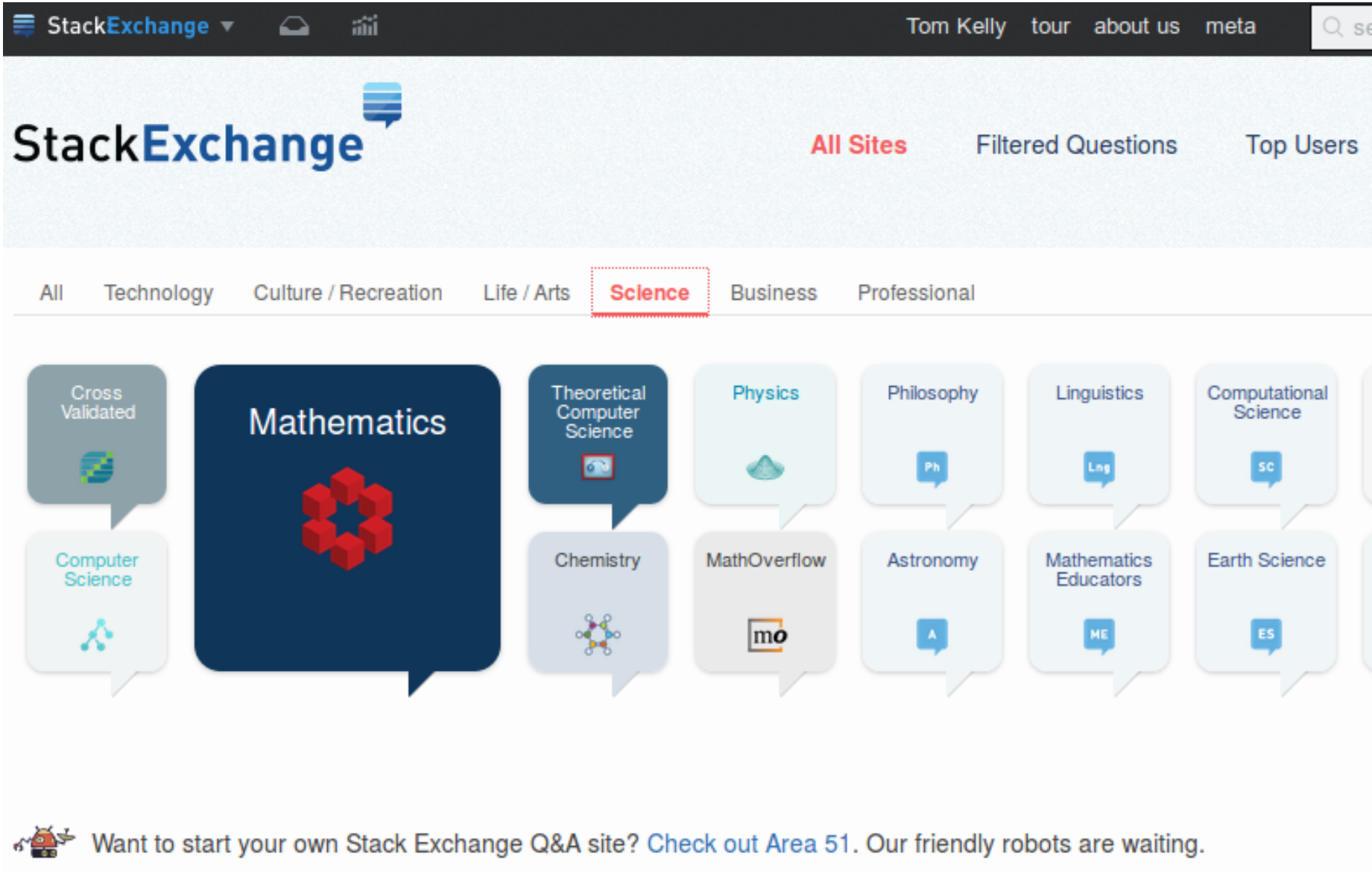
There's also...

...a list of the most common questions with links to the "best" answer we've identified
...a list of questions clarifying the above points and covering other nuances

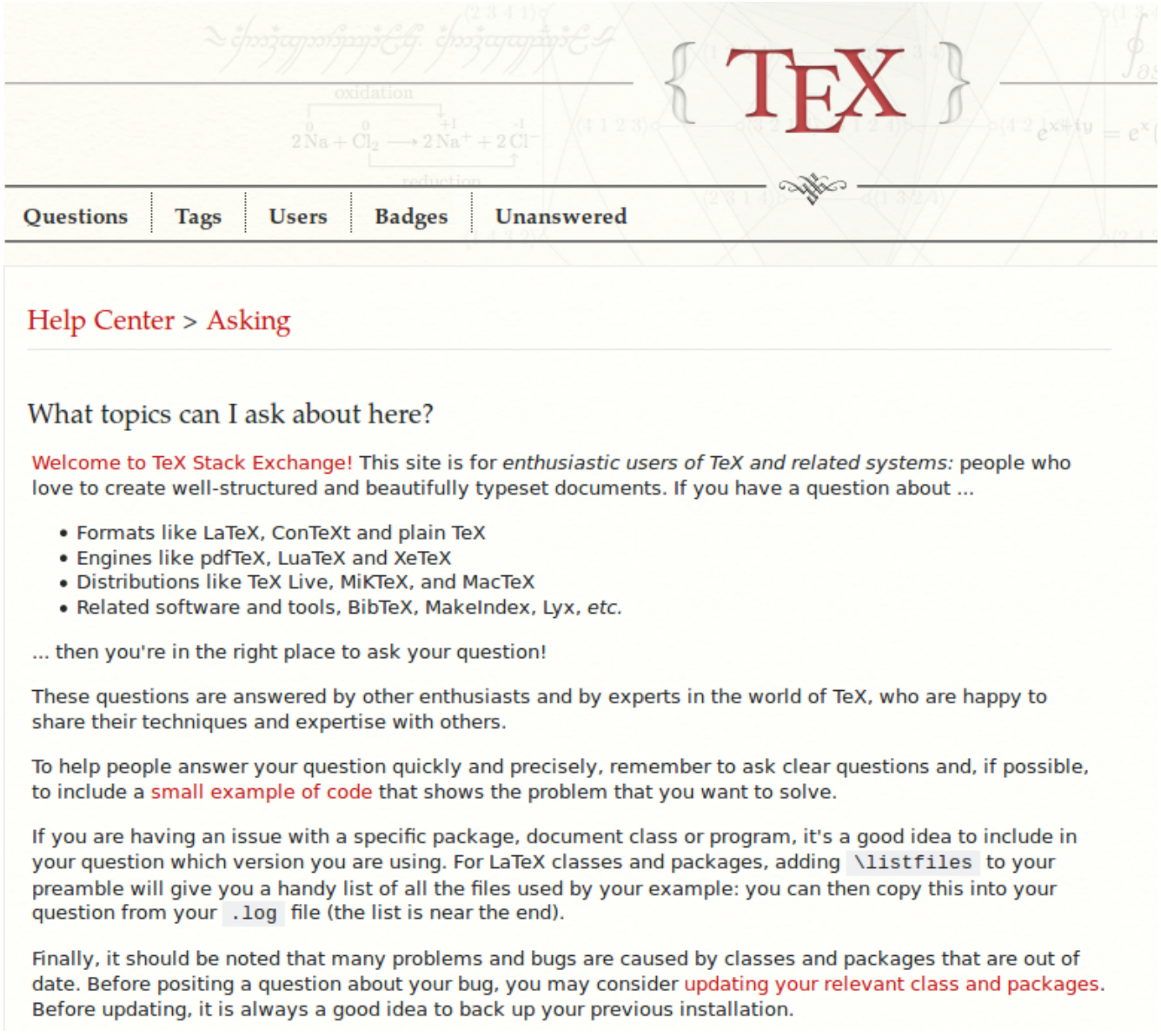
We also have sister sites that cover specific topics in more detail:

- Stack Overflow for Programming
- Super User for general Networking, Hardware, and Technology
- Unix & Linux for general Unix/Linux usage
- DBA for Advanced Database topics
- IT Security for Advanced Security (implementation, theory, white hat)
- Webmasters for general Web Site operation

Finding the Right Forum



Finding the Right Forum



{ TEX }

Questions | Tags | Users | Badges | Unanswered

Help Center > Asking

What topics can I ask about here?

Welcome to TeX Stack Exchange! This site is for *enthusiastic users of TeX and related systems:* people who love to create well-structured and beautifully typeset documents. If you have a question about ...

- Formats like LaTeX, ConTeXt and plain TeX
- Engines like pdfTeX, LuaTeX and XeTeX
- Distributions like TeX Live, MiKTeX, and MacTeX
- Related software and tools, BibTeX, MakeIndex, Lyx, *etc.*

... then you're in the right place to ask your question!

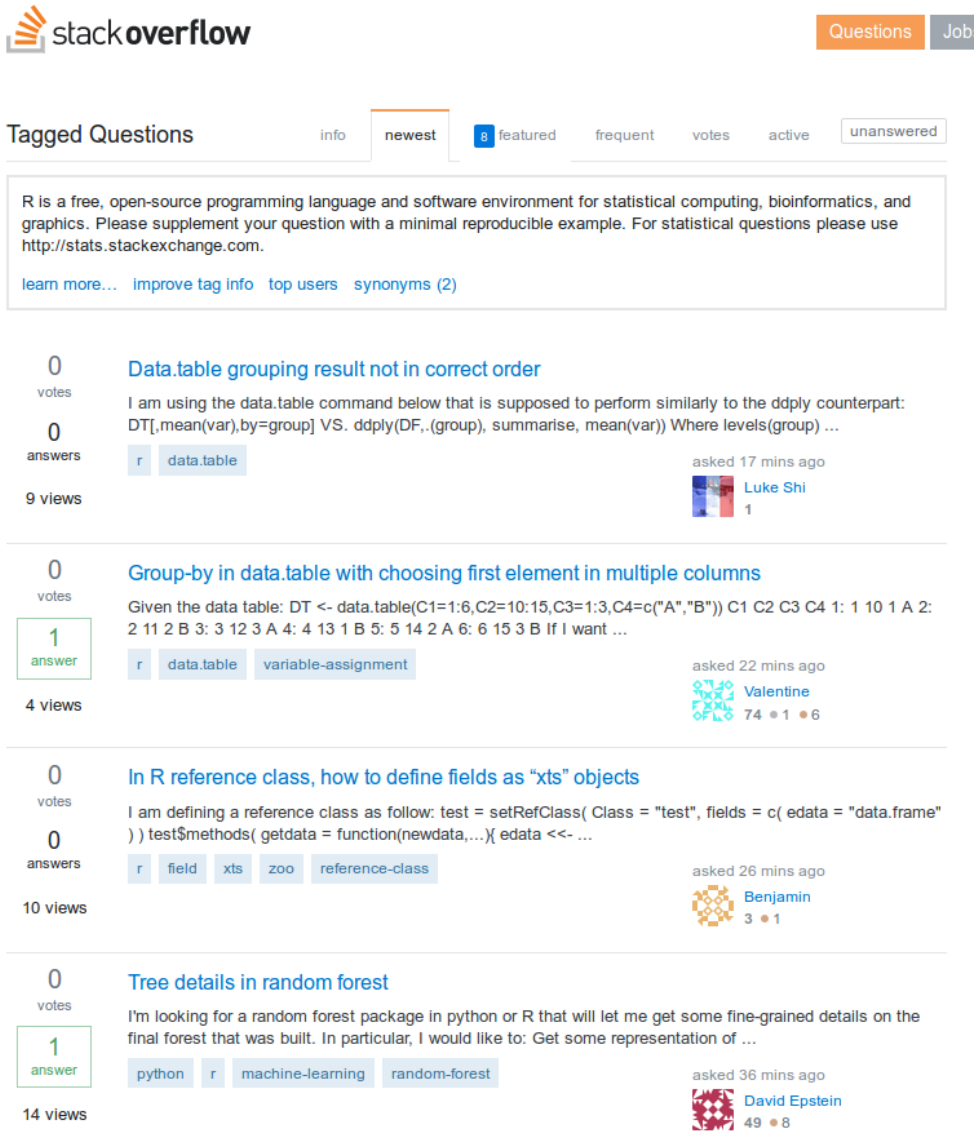
These questions are answered by other enthusiasts and by experts in the world of TeX, who are happy to share their techniques and expertise with others.

To help people answer your question quickly and precisely, remember to ask clear questions and, if possible, to include a small example of code that shows the problem that you want to solve.

If you are having an issue with a specific package, document class or program, it's a good idea to include in your question which version you are using. For LaTeX classes and packages, adding `\listfiles` to your preamble will give you a handy list of all the files used by your example: you can then copy this into your question from your `.log` file (the list is near the end).

Finally, it should be noted that many problems and bugs are caused by classes and packages that are out of date. Before positing a question about your bug, you may consider updating your relevant class and packages. Before updating, it is always a good idea to back up your previous installation.

Finding latest Questions



“Ghosting”

An existing Question will usually be able to help you

stackoverflow

Questions Jobs

Issue in Loading multiple .csv files into single dataframe in R using rbi

8

I have written the following function to combine 300 .csv files.My directory name is "specdata". I have done the following steps for execution,

step 1:

```
> x <- function(directory) {
    dir <- directory
    data_dir <- paste(getwd(),dir,sep = "/")
    files  <- list.files(data_dir,pattern = '\\.csv')
    tables <- lapply(paste(data_dir,files,sep = "/"), read.csv, header = TRUE)
    pollutantmean <- do.call(rbind , tables)
}
```

step 2:

```
>x("specdata")
```

step 3:

```
>head(pollutantmean)
```

Error in head(pollutantmean) : object 'pollutantmean' not found

What is the mistake I have done into this . Can you please anyone explain ?

Thanks in Advance.

r csv rbind

share edit

edited Oct 23 '14 at 13:28
Cerbrus
33.1k ● 8 ● 49 ● 80

asked Apr 21 '14 at 3:15
Sivanantham C
56 ● 1 ● 1 ● 6

“Ghosting”

An existing Question will usually be able to help you

31

There's a lot of unnecessary code in your function. You can simplify it to:

```
load_data <- function(path) {
  files <- dir(path, pattern = '\\.csv', full.names = TRUE)
  tables <- lapply(files, read.csv)
  do.call(rbind, tables)
}

pollutantmean <- load_data("specdata")
```

Be aware that `do.call` + `rbind` is relatively slow. You might find `dplyr::rbind_list` or `data.table::rbindlist` to be substantially faster.

share edit

edited Jun 12 '14 at 19:44
Luxspes
1,950 • 14 • 21

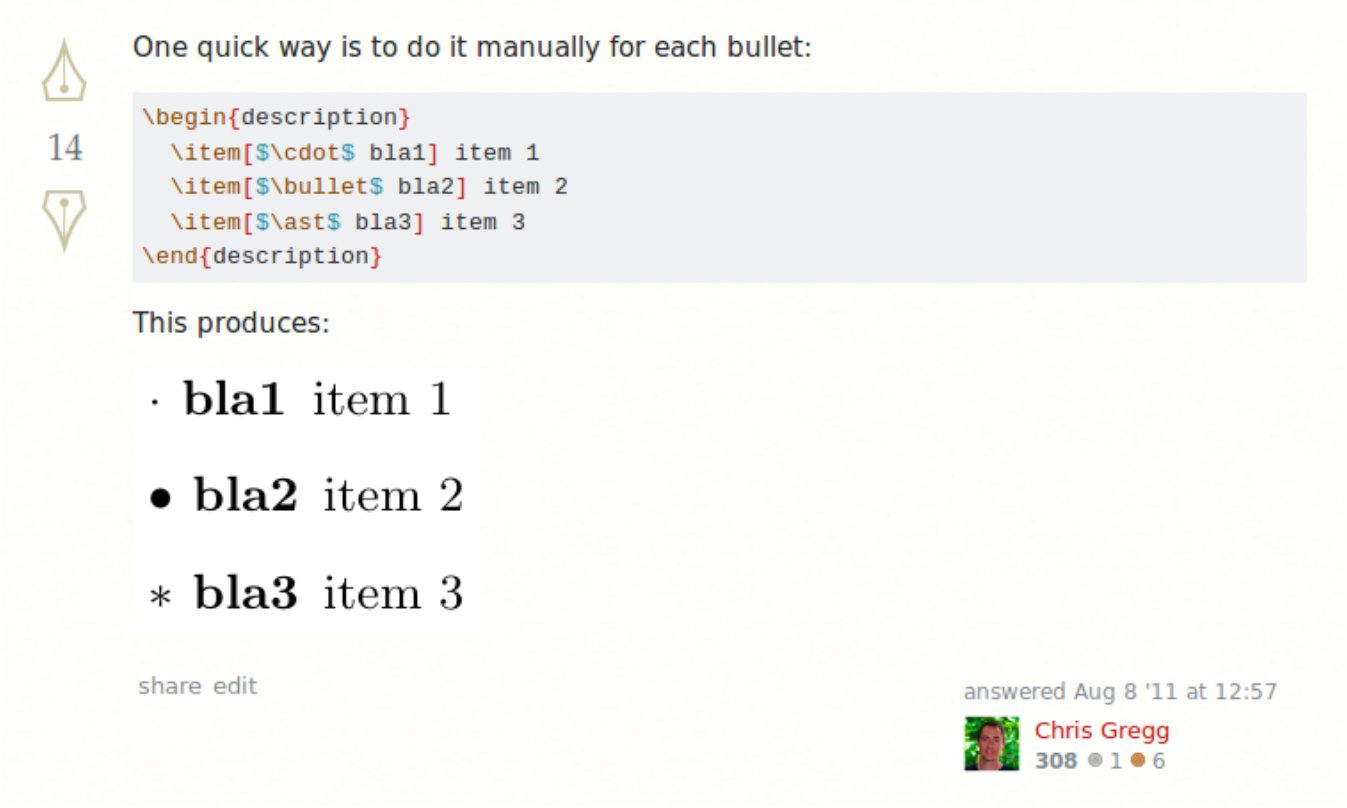
answered Apr 21 '14 at 13:04
hadley
51.9k • 13 • 101 • 166

5 Or now `dplyr::bind_rows` instead of `dplyr::rbind_list` which has been deprecated.
– Sam Firke Apr 17 '15 at 13:12

add a comment

“Ghosting”

An existing Question will usually be able to help you



14

One quick way is to do it manually for each bullet:

```
\begin{description}
  \item[$\cdot$ bla1] item 1
  \item[$\bullet$ bla2] item 2
  \item[$\ast$ bla3] item 3
\end{description}
```

This produces:

· **bla1** item 1

• **bla2** item 2

∗ **bla3** item 3

share edit

answered Aug 8 '11 at 12:57

Chris Gregg

308 ● 1 ● 6

“Ghosting”

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stackoverflow

Questions Jobs

Use slurm job id

7

When I launch a computation on the cluster, I usually have a separate program doing the post-processing at the end :

```
sbatch simulation
sbatch --dependency=afterok:JOBIDHERE postprocessing
```

3

I want to avoid mistyping and automatically have the good job id inserted. Any idea? Thanks

linux batch-processing hpc slurm

share edit

asked Nov 13 '13 at 17:23
user1824346
129 • 7

add a comment

1 Answer

active oldest votes

9

You can do something like this:

```
RES=$(sbatch simulation) && sbatch --dependency=afterok:${RES##* } postprocessing
```

The `RES` variable will hold the result of the `sbatch` command, something like `Submitted batch job 102045`. The construct `${RES##* }` isolates the last word (see more info here), in the current case the job id. The `&&` part ensures you do not try to submit the second job in the case the first submission fails.

share edit

answered Nov 16 '13 at 16:52
damienfrancois
12.1k • 4 • 20 • 41

Online Communities

Benefits

- Access to a wide range of expertise.
- Quick answers at you fingertips.
- Engaging with a wide community dealing with similar issues.
- Direct contact with developers and the latest tools.
- Contribute to a open source community.

Drawbacks

- *Caution timesink: Not your day job.*
- Overzealous moderators / editors.
- Research issues rarely "fit in the box" of a specific forum.
- Requires you to know a bit about what is wrong.
- May require odd information about your set up (esp. if Windows).
- The community uses technical jargon and may not welcome beginners.
- Reputation ~~"whoring"~~ grinding.

Don't be afraid to search for existing answers

source: `http://catb.org/esr/faqs/smart-questions.html`

"Community Etiquette"

Do's

- Answer your own question if you find an answer on your own.
- Give your Question a meaningful Heading.
- Be "nice" to the people helping you in a public forum.
- Be specific about the issues your dealing with.
- Post to the most apprpriate forum if you can.
- Use correct English if you can (Second Language is OK).

Dont's

- Give a lazy question with typo's.
- Try to guess what is wrong, describe your goal.
- Get others to do your "homework".
- Post questions about data without a reproducible example.
- Cross-post, spam, or flag questions as "Urgent" (even if it is).
- Be rude to people, if they ask "why" explain carefully.
- Get into a Flame War (Tabs vs. Spaces, Python vs. R, Vim vs. Emacs, . . .).

Don't be afraid to ask beginner questions

source: `http://catb.org/esr/faqs/smart-questions.html`