Data Bootcamp: Project Guide
Revised: September 5, 2017

Overview

One of our goals is for you to produce a piece of work you can use to demonstrate your data and programming skills to potential employers. That work will come in the form of a Jupyter notebook, a format that combines code, text, and graphics in one user-friendly document. The end product should be posted on your GitHub account in a repository so that you show others what you've done. You will also be able to see what your classmates have done.

The relatively loose structure in self-directed projects like this makes them more challenging than most things you do in school. We think that also makes them more interesting. They give you a chance to indulge your curiosity and show off your creativity.

We have divided the project into components to keep you on track. The intent is to make the project easier by breaking it down into a number of small, manageable sub-projects. The early steps are graded only on whether you do them: you get 5 points if you do them, none if you don't. We start with individual work. Partway along, we encourage you to form **groups of two or three**, but if you'd prefer to do this on your own, that's ok, too.

Project outline

The components of the project are

Assignment	Format	Individual/Group	Points
Three Project Ideas	Paper (hand-written)	Individual	0
Three Revised Project Ideas	Paper (professional)	Individual	5
Project Proposal	Paper (professional)	Group	5
Data Report	Paper (professional)	Group	5
Final Project	Jupyter notebook	Group	85

The due dates are posted on the course website.

The components consist of:

- **Three project ideas.** Write down three project ideas in class. One or two sentences each is enough. Use your imagination. Be creative. Speak to others. Write down things that interest you. This will not be graded, but it will give you something to work with later on.

  Over the coming weeks, we recommend you keep your ears open for possible **project ideas** — and **data sources**.

- **Three revised project ideas.** After giving this more thought, write down three project ideas in (a little) more detail. **Include likely data sources.** Ask questions; we have a lot of experience with this, especially data. All together this should be roughly one paragraph per idea and one page overall. Like all work in this course, it should be clean and professional. We will keep the copy you hand in to use in class, so keep a separate copy for yourself.

  We will not give you written feedback on your ideas, but **we would be happy to talk in person**, either before class or another time. Our experience is that exchanges like this work much better in person, where we can bounce ideas around in ways that are hard to replicate in writing.

- **Project proposal.** Form a group of between one and three — no more — and choose a single project from those you submitted — or perhaps some other idea if you get a sudden flash of inspiration. Flesh out the project in more detail, **including the data source** and two figures you plan to produce with it. Total length should be no more than two pages.

  On the off-chance you missed the point: you should **be clear about the data you plan to use**. If you can't get the data, your whole project can be derailed.

- **Data report.** Describe your data and how you accessed it in enough detail that someone else could do it. Yes, that's "accessed," past tense. You should have done this already to make sure you have it. Include your Python code. Internet sources are preferred, because it allows others to use your code and follow up on your work.

- **Final project.** You post your **Jupyter notebook** to your GitHub account by the due date listed on the course website. You should create a repository called `Data-Bootcamp-Final-Project` and then post your Jupyter notebook. Exact protocol of naming file will be announced soon.

  Your project should include:

  - Description cell. Put a Markdown cell at the top of your notebook that includes the title of your project, a list of authors, and a short summary of what you do. Think of the last one as an advertisement to potential readers.

  - Data. Description of data sources and the code to read the data into Python and reformat it as needed. This should be done in enough detail that someone else can reproduce what you've done.

  - Graphics. A series of figures that tell us something interesting. Three or four would be enough, but do what you think works best for your project. Think about the narrative: What story do you want to tell?

  Here are a few past examples.

Free advice

Some things to keep in mind:

- **Keep it simple.** Most project ideas turn out to be too big. You're generally well-advised to carve out a manageable subset of what you think you can do. There's no reason to worry about this at the idea generation stage, but as you develop your project you may find that you need to focus more narrowly on a part of it.

- **Find data.** Make sure you can get the data you need. One way to assure this is to start with data and ask what you can do with it. Ideally you want the intersection (picture a Venn diagram) of an interesting idea and good data. You can start with either one, but ideas are often easier to find than data. Or start with an existing project that uses data you can access yourself and extend it in some way.

- **Ask for help.** We have years of experience with this kind of thing. If you're stuck, let us know and we'll try to help. You can also post questions on the class discussion board.

Grading

Projects will be graded on their overall quality. This includes, but is not restricted to, these categories:

- Quality of the idea. Is the question clearly articulated? Is it interesting? Does it have general appeal?

- Quality of the data. Does the data support the idea? Is it the best data for this question?

- Quality of the code. Is the code readable? Could someone else understand what you were doing and why?

- Degree of difficulty. Some ideas are harder than others to implement. As in Olympic diving, you get credit for taking on a challenge.

- Professional look. Does your project look professional? Are the graphs easy to understand? Are they clearly labeled?

Data Bootcamp: Project Grade Sheet
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Overall

- Clear idea and message?

- Appropriate data?

- Documentation of sources?

- Effective graphics?

- Professional appearance?

Idea

Data

Graphics

Difficulty

Professional look