

R for Machine Learning

Allison Chang

1 Introduction

It is common for today's scientific and business industries to collect large amounts of data, and the ability to analyze the data and learn from it is critical to making informed decisions. Familiarity with software such as R allows users to visualize data, run statistical tests, and apply machine learning algorithms. Even if you already know other software, there are still good reasons to learn R:

1. **R is free.** If your future employer does not already have R installed, you can always download it for free, unlike other proprietary software packages that require expensive licenses. No matter where you travel, you can have access to R on your computer.
2. **R gives you access to cutting-edge technology.** Top researchers develop statistical learning methods in R, and new algorithms are constantly added to the list of packages you can download.
3. **R is a useful skill.** Employers that value analytics recognize R as useful and important. If for no other reason, learning R is worthwhile to help boost your résumé.

Note that R is a programming language, and there is no intuitive graphical user interface with buttons you can click to run different methods. However, with some practice, this kind of environment makes it easy to quickly code scripts and functions for various statistical purposes. To get the most out of this tutorial, follow the examples by typing them out in R on your own computer. A line that begins with `>` is input at the command prompt. We do not include the output in most cases, but you should try out the commands yourself and see what happens. If you type something at the command line and decide not to execute, press the down arrow to clear the line; pressing the up arrow gives you the previous executed command.

1.1 Getting Started

The R Project website is <http://www.r-project.org/>. In the menu on the left, click on CRAN under “Download, Packages.” Choose a location close to you. At MIT, you can go with University of Toronto under Canada. This leads you to instructions on how to download R for Linux, Mac, or Windows.

Once you open R, to figure out your current directory, type `getwd()`. To change directory, use `setwd` (note that the “C:” notation is for Windows and would be different on a Mac):

```
> setwd("C:\\Datasets")
```

1.2 Installing and loading packages

Functions in R are grouped into packages, a number of which are automatically loaded when you start R. These include “base,” “utils,” “graphics,” and “stats.” Many of the most essential and frequently used functions come in these packages. However, you may need to download additional packages to obtain other useful functions. For example, an important classification method called Support Vector Machines is contained in a package called

“e1071.” To install this package, click “Packages” in the top menu, then “Install package(s)...” When asked to select a CRAN mirror, choose a location close to you, such as “Canada (ON).” Finally select “e1071.” To load the package, type `library(e1071)` at the command prompt. **Note that you need to install a package only once, but that if you want to use it, you need to load it each time you start R.**

1.3 Running code

You could use R by simply typing everything at the command prompt, but this does not easily allow you to save, repeat, or share your code. Instead, go to “File” in the top menu and click on “New script.” This opens up a new window that you can save as a .R file. To execute the code you type into this window, highlight the lines you wish to run, and press Ctrl-R on a PC or Command-Enter on a Mac. If you want to run an entire script, make sure the script window is on top of all others, go to “Edit,” and click “Run all.” Any lines that are run appear in red at the command prompt.

1.4 Help in R

The functions in R are generally well-documented. To find documentation for a particular function, type `?<function name>` followed directly by the function name at the command prompt. For example, if you need help on the “sum” function, type `?sum`. The help window that pops up typically contains details on both the input and output for the function of interest. **If you are getting errors or unexpected output, it is likely that your input is insufficient or invalid, so use the documentation to figure out the proper way to call the function.**

If you want to run a certain algorithm but do not know the name of the function in R, doing a Google search of R plus the algorithm name usually brings up information on which function to use.

2 Datasets

When you test any machine learning algorithm, you should use a variety of datasets. R conveniently comes with its own datasets, and you can view a list of their names by typing `data()` at the command prompt. For instance, you may see a dataset called “cars.” Load the data by typing `data(cars)`, and view the data by typing `cars`.

Another useful source of available data is the UCI Machine Learning Repository, which contains a couple hundred datasets, mostly from a variety of real applications in science and business. The repository is located at <http://archive.ics.uci.edu/ml/datasets.html>. These data are often used by machine learning researchers to develop and compare algorithms. We have downloaded a number of datasets for your use, and you can find the text files in the [Datasets](#) section. These include:

Name	Rows	Cols	Data
Iris	150	4	Real
Wine	178	13	Integer, Real
Haberman’s Survival	306	3	Integer
Housing	506	14	Categorical, Integer, Real
Blood Transfusion Service Center	748	4	Integer
Car Evaluation	1728	6	Categorical
Mushroom	8124	119	Binary
Pen-based Recognition of Handwritten Digits	10992	16	Integer

You are encouraged to download your own datasets from the UCI site or other sources, and to use R to study the data. Note that for all except the Housing and Mushroom datasets, there is an additional class attribute column that is not included in the column counts. Also note that if you download the Mushroom dataset from the UCI site, it has 22 categorical features; in our version, these have been transformed into 119 binary features.

3 Basic Functions

In this section, we cover how to create data tables, and analyze and plot data. We demonstrate by example how to use various functions. To see the value(s) of any variable, vector, or matrix at any time, simply enter its name in the command line; you are encouraged to do this often until you feel comfortable with how each data structure is being stored. To see all the objects in your workspace, type `ls()`. Also note that the arrow operator `<-` sets the left-hand side equal to the right-hand side, and that a comment begins with `#`.

3.1 Creating data

To create a variable `x` and set it equal to 1, type `x <- 1`. Now suppose we want to generate the vector `[1, 2, 3, 4, 5]`, and call the vector `v`. There are a couple different ways to accomplish this:

```
> v <- 1:5
> v <- c(1,2,3,4,5)           # c can be used to concatenate multiple vectors
> v <- seq(from=1,to=5,by=1)
```

These can be row vectors or column vectors. To generate a vector `v0` of six zeros, use either of the following. Clearly the second choice is better if you are generating a long vector.

```
> v0 <- c(0,0,0,0,0,0)
> v0 <- seq(from=0,to=0,length.out=6)
```

We can combine vectors into matrices using `cbind` and `rbind`. For instance, if `v1`, `v2`, `v3`, and `v4` are vectors of the same length, we can combine them into matrices, using them either as columns or as rows:

```
> v1 <- c(1,2,3,4,5)
> v2 <- c(6,7,8,9,10)
> v3 <- c(11,12,13,14,15)
> v4 <- c(16,17,18,19,20)
> cbind(v1,v2,v3,v4)
> rbind(v1,v2,v3,v4)
```

Another way to create the second matrix is to use the `matrix` function to reshape a vector into a matrix of the right dimensions.

```
> v <- seq(from=1,to=20,by=1)
> matrix(v, nrow=4, ncol=5)
```

Notice that this is not exactly right—we need to specify that we want to fill in the matrix by row.

```
> matrix(v, nrow=4, ncol=5, byrow=TRUE)
```

It is often helpful to name the columns and rows of a matrix using `colnames` and `rownames`. In the following, first we save the matrix as `matrix20`, and then we name the columns and rows.

```
> matrix20 <- matrix(v, nrow=4, ncol=5, byrow=TRUE)
> colnames(matrix20) <- c("Col1", "Col2", "Col3", "Col4", "Col5")
> rownames(matrix20) <- c("Row1", "Row2", "Row3", "Row4")
```

You can type `colnames(matrix20)/rownames(matrix20)` at any point to see the column/row names for `matrix20`. To access a particular element in a vector or matrix, index it by number or by name with square braces:

```
> v[3]                # third element of v
> matrix20[, "Col2"]  # second column of matrix20
> matrix20["Row4", ]  # fourth row of matrix20
> matrix20["Row3", "Col1"] # element in third row and first column of matrix20
> matrix20[3, 1]      # element in third row and first column of matrix20
```

You can find the length of a vector or number of rows or columns in a matrix using `length`, `nrow`, and `ncol`.

```
> length(v1)
> nrow(matrix20)
> ncol(matrix20)
```

Since you will be working with external datasets, you will need functions to read in data tables from text files. For instance, suppose you wanted to read in the Haberman's Survival dataset (from the UCI Repository). Use the `read.table` function:

```
dataset <- read.table("C:\\Datasets\\haberman.csv", header=FALSE, sep=",")
```

The first argument is the location (full path) of the file. If the first row of data contains column names, then the second argument should be `header = TRUE`, and otherwise it is `header = FALSE`. The third argument contains the delimiter. If the data are separated by spaces or tabs, then the argument is `sep = " "` and `sep = "\t"` respectively. The default delimiter (if you do not include this argument at all) is “white space” (one or more spaces, tabs, etc.). Alternatively, you can use `setwd` to change directory and use only the file name in the `read.table` function. If the delimiter is a comma, you can also use `read.csv` and leave off the `sep` argument:

```
dataset <- read.csv("C:\\Datasets\\haberman.csv", header=FALSE)
```

Use `write.table` to write a table to a file. Type `?write.table` to see details about this function. If you need to write text to a file, use the `cat` function.

A note about matrices versus data frames: A data frame is similar to a matrix, except it can also include non-numeric attributes. For example, there may be a column of characters. Some functions require the data passed in to be in the form of a data frame, which would be stated in the documentation. You can always coerce a matrix into a data frame using `as.data.frame`. See Section 3.6 for an example.

A note about factors: A factor is essentially a vector of categorical variables, encoded using integers. For instance, if each example in our dataset has a binary class attribute, say 0 or 1, then that attribute can be represented as a factor. Certain functions require one of their arguments to be a factor. Use `as.factor` to encode a vector as a factor. See Sections 4.5 and 4.9 for examples.

3.2 Sampling from probability distributions

There are a number of functions for sampling from probability distributions. For example, the following commands generate random vectors of the user-specified length n from distributions (normal, exponential, poisson, uniform, binomial) with user-specified parameters. There are other distributions as well.

```

> norm_vec <- rnorm(n=10, mean=5, sd=2)
> exp_vec <- rexp(n=100, rate=3)
> pois_vec <- rpois(n=50, lambda=6)
> unif_vec <- runif(n=20, min=1, max=9)
> bin_vec <- rbinom(n=20, size=1000, prob=0.7)

```

Suppose you have a vector `v` of numbers. To randomly sample, say, 25 of the numbers, use the `sample` function:

```

> sample(v, size=25, replace=FALSE)

```

If you want to sample with replacement, set the `replace` argument to `TRUE`.

If you want to generate the same random vector each time you call one of the random functions listed above, pick a “seed” for the random number generator using `set.seed`, for example `set.seed(100)`.

3.3 Analyzing data

To compute the mean, variance, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, and sum of a set of numbers, use `mean`, `var`, `sd`, `min`, `max`, and `sum`. There are also `rowSum` and `colSum` to find the row and column sums for a matrix. To find the component-wise absolute value and square root of a set of numbers, use `abs` and `sqrt`. Correlation and covariance for two vectors are computed with `cor` and `cov` respectively.

Like other programming languages, you can write `if` statements, and `for` and `while` loops. For instance, here is a simple loop that prints out even numbers between 1 and 10 (`%%` is the modulo operation):

```

> for (i in 1:10){
+   if (i %% 2 == 0){
+     cat(paste(i, "is even.\n", sep=" ")) # use paste to concatenate strings
+   }
+ }

```

The `1:10` part of the `for` loop can be specified as a vector. For instance, if you wanted to loop over indices 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7, you could type `for (i in c(1:3,5:7))`.

To pick out the indices of elements in a vector that satisfy a certain property, use `which`, for example:

```

> which(v >= 0) # indices of nonnegative elements of v
> v[which(v >= 0)] # nonnegative elements of v

```

3.4 Plotting data

We use the Haberman’s Survival data (read into data frame `dataset`) to demonstrate plotting functions. Each row of data represents a patient who had surgery for breast cancer. The three features are: the age of the patient at the time of surgery, the year of the surgery, and the number of positive axillary nodes detected. Here we plot:

1. Scatterplot of the first and third features,
2. Histogram of the second feature,
3. Boxplot of the first feature.

To put all three plots in a 1×3 matrix, use `par(mfrow=c(1,3))`. To put each plot in its own window, use `win.graph()` to create new windows.

```

> plot(dataset[,1], dataset[,3], main="Scatterplot", xlab="Age", ylab="Number of Nodes", pch=20)
> hist(dataset[,2], main="Histogram", xlab="Year", ylab="Count")
> boxplot(dataset[,1], main="Boxplot", xlab="Age")

```

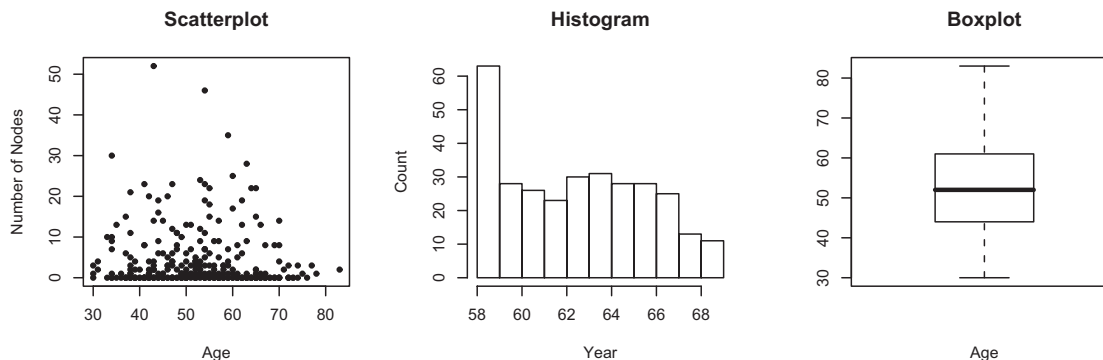


Figure 1: Plotting examples.

The `pch` argument in the `plot` function can be varied to change the marker. Use `points` and `lines` to add extra points and lines to an existing plot. You can save the plots in a number of different formats; make sure the plot window is on top, and go to “File” then “Save as.”

3.5 Formulas

Certain functions have a “formula” as one of their arguments. Usually this is a way to express the form of a model. Here is a simple example. Suppose you have a response variable y and independent variables x_1 , x_2 , and x_3 . To express that y depends linearly on x_1 , x_2 , and x_3 , you would use the formula $y \sim x_1 + x_2 + x_3$, where y , x_1 , x_2 , and x_3 are also column names in your data matrix. See Section 3.6 for an example. Type `?formula` for details on how to capture nonlinear models.

3.6 Linear regression

One of the most common modeling approaches in statistical learning is linear regression. In R, use the `lm` function to generate these models. The general form of a linear regression model is

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \cdots + \beta_k X_k + \varepsilon,$$

where ε is normally distributed with mean 0 and some variance σ^2 .

Let y be a vector of dependent variables, and x_1 and x_2 be vectors of independent variables. We want to find the coefficients of the linear regression model $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$. The following commands generate the linear regression model and give a summary of it.

```
> lm_model <- lm(y ~ x1 + x2, data=as.data.frame(cbind(y,x1,x2)))
> summary(lm_model)
```

The vector of coefficients for the model is contained in `lm_model$coefficients`.

4 Machine Learning Algorithms

We give the functions corresponding to the algorithms covered in class. **Look over the documentation for each function on your own as only the most basic details are given in this tutorial.**

4.1 Prediction

For most of the following algorithms (as well as linear regression), we would in practice first generate the model using training data, and then predict values for test data. To make predictions, we use the `predict` function. To see documentation, go to the help page for the algorithm, and then scroll through the Contents menu on the left side to find the corresponding `predict` function. Or simply type `?predict.name`, where `name` is the function corresponding to the algorithm. Typically, the first argument is the variable in which you saved the model, and the second argument is a matrix or data frame of test data. Note that when you call the function, you can just type `predict` instead of `predict.name`. For instance, if we were to predict for the linear regression model above, and `x1_test` and `x2_test` are vectors containing test data, we can use the command

```
> predicted_values <- predict(lm_model, newdata=as.data.frame(cbind(x1_test, x2_test)))
```

4.2 Apriori

To run the Apriori algorithm, first install the `arules` package and load it. See Section 1.2 for installing and loading new packages. Here is an example of how to run the Apriori algorithm using the Mushroom dataset. Note that the dataset must be a binary incidence matrix; the column names should correspond to the “items” that make up the “transactions.” The following commands print out a summary of the results and a list of the generated rules.

```
> dataset <- read.csv("C:\\Datasets\\mushroom.csv", header = TRUE)
> mushroom_rules <- apriori(as.matrix(dataset), parameter = list(supp = 0.8, conf = 0.9))
> summary(mushroom_rules)
> inspect(mushroom_rules)
```

You can modify the parameter settings depending on your desired support and confidence thresholds.

4.3 Logistic Regression

You do not need to install an extra package for logistic regression. Using the same notation as in Section 3.6, the command is:

```
> glm_mod <- glm(y ~ x1+x2, family=binomial(link="logit"), data=as.data.frame(cbind(y,x1,x2)))
```

4.4 K-Means Clustering

You do not need an extra package. If `X` is the data matrix and `m` is the number of clusters, then the command is:

```
> kmeans_model <- kmeans(x=X, centers=m)
```

4.5 k-Nearest Neighbor Classification

Install and load the `class` package. Let `X_train` and `X_test` be matrices of the training and test data respectively, and `labels` be a binary vector of class attributes for the training examples. For `k` equal to `K`, the command is:

```
> knn_model <- knn(train=X_train, test=X_test, cl=as.factor(labels), k=K)
```

Then `knn_model` is a factor vector of class attributes for the test set.

4.6 Naïve Bayes

Install and load the `e1071` package. Using the same notation as in Section 3.6, the command is:

```
> nB_model <- naiveBayes(y ~ x1 + x2, data=as.data.frame(cbind(y,x1,x2)))
```

4.7 Decision Trees (CART)

CART is implemented in the `rpart` package. Again using the formula, the command is

```
> cart_model <- rpart(y ~ x1 + x2, data=as.data.frame(cbind(y,x1,x2)), method="class")
```

You can use `plot.rpart` and `text.rpart` to plot the decision tree.

4.8 AdaBoost

There are a number of different boosting functions in R. We show here one implementation that uses decision trees as base classifiers. Thus the `rpart` package should be loaded. Also, the boosting function `ada` is in the `ada` package. Let `X` be the matrix of features, and `labels` be a vector of 0-1 class labels. The command is

```
> boost_model <- ada(x=X, y=labels)
```

4.9 Support Vector Machines (SVM)

The SVM algorithm is in the `e1071` package. Let `X` be the matrix of features, and `labels` be a vector of 0-1 class labels. Let the regularization parameter be `C`. Use the following commands to generate the SVM model and view details:

```
> svm_model <- svm(x=X, y=as.factor(labels), kernel ="radial", cost=C)
> summary(svm_model)
```

There are a variety of parameters such as the kernel type and value of the C parameter, so check the documentation on how to alter them.

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

15.097 Prediction: Machine Learning and Statistics
Spring 2012

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.