



DATA SCIENCE

# How to do visualization using Matplotlib and Seaborn library from scratch

A step-by-step guide using Matplotlib and Seaborn library

Sharan Kumar Ravindran

Nov 8, 2020 10 min read

LATEST

EDITOR'S PICKS

DEEP DIVES

CONTRIBUTE

NEWSLETTER

Sign in

## Hands-on Tutorials

Contributor Portal



Visualization is an important skill set for a data scientist. A good visualization can help in clearly communicating insights identified in the analysis also it is a good technique to better understand the dataset. Our brain is wired in a way that makes it easy for us to extract patterns or trends from visual data as compared to extracting details based on reading or other means.

In this article, I will be covering the visualization basics using python. Below are the steps to learn basic,

- **Step 1: Importing data**
- **Step 2: Basic visualization using Matplotlib**
- **Step 3: More advanced visualizations, still using Matplotlib**
- **Step 4: Building quick visualizations for data using Seaborn**
- **Step 5: Building interactive charts**

By the end of this journey, you would be equipped with the knowledge that is required to build a visualization. Though we are not covering every single visualization that can be built, but by learning the concepts behind building a chart and understanding the libraries, it is easy for you to build any new charts that are not covered in this article.

The scripts and the data used in this article can be found in a git repository [here](#). All data used in this article can be found [here](#).

LATEST

EDITOR'S PICKS

DEEP DIVES

CONTRIBUTE

---

NEWSLETTER

Sign in

Contributor Portal

"Data" folder within the mentioned git repository and the scripts are available in the folders 'Day23, Day 24, and Day25'.

## Importing Data

The first step is to read the required datasets. We can use pandas to read the data. Below is a simple command that can read data from a CSV file

On reading the dataset it is important to transform the data into a suitable format for the visualization we would apply. For example, if we have sales details at the customer level and if we want to build a chart that shows the day-wise sales trend, we need to group the data and aggregate them at the day level to build a trend chart.

## Basic Visualization using Matplotlib

Let us start with some basic visualization. It is better to use the code 'fig,ax=plt.subplots()', where 'plt.subplots()' will return a tuple with figure and axes objects as variables 'fig' and 'ax' respectively. Without using this, we can print a chart but by using this you would be able to make changes to figure like you would be able to re-size the figure depending on how it looks and to save the chart as an image. The 'ax' variable here can be used to provide labels to the axes. Below is a simple example where I have passed title and have print it as a chart directly

In the above code at first, the required libraries are imported, then the 'plt.subplots()' function is used to generate a figure and axes objects.

LATEST

EDITOR'S PICKS

DEEP DIVES

CONTRIBUTE

NEWSLETTER

Sign in

Contributor Portal

the axes objects and then the data is directly passed as an array to the axes object to print the chart. In the second chart, the axes variable 'ax' has taken inputs for labels specific to the x-axis, y-axis, and the title.

## Trend Charts

Now, let's start using some real data and learn about interesting charts and about customizing them to be more intuitive. As explained, in most real-life use-cases, data requires some transformation to make it usable for visualization. Here is an example where I have used the Netflix data to transform the data to consolidate the number of shows by year wise. And then I have used the 'plt' function but I have also added few additional details to make the chart more intuitive and self-explanatory.

[LATEST](#)

[EDITOR'S PICKS](#)

[DEEP DIVES](#)

[CONTRIBUTE](#)

---

[NEWSLETTER](#)

[Sign in](#)

[Contributor Portal](#)

## Loading

```
In [1]: import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
import numpy as np
import pandas as pd
```

```
In [2]: netflix_data = pd.read_csv('../Data/netflix_titles.csv')
```

```
In [3]: n_data = netflix_data.groupby(['release_year', 'type'])
n_data.columns = ['release_year', 'type', 'count']
n_data_pivot = n_data.pivot(index='release_year', columns='type')
n_data_pivot.fillna(0, inplace = True)
n_data_pivot.head()
```

```
Out[3]:
```

	type	release_year	Movie	TV Show
0		1925	0.0	1.0
1		1942	2.0	0.0
2		1943	3.0	0.0
3		1944	3.0	0.0
4		1945	3.0	0.0

LATEST

EDITOR'S PICKS

DEEP DIVES

CONTRIBUTE

NEWSLETTER

Sign in

Contributor Portal

VisualizationArticle\_02.ipynb hosted with ❤ by GitHub

There are a few more customization that can be done in a bar chart like creating a dual-axis. In the above case, the difference between the number of movies and TV data appears OK, if there has been a huge difference then the chart will not be very clear in those case of dual-axis so that the attribute with smaller value is scaled in line with the other one.

## Scatter Plots

We can also make use of the Scatter Plot, to bring the relationship between the variables that we are plotting. It helps in bringing the correlation between variable

happens to one attribute when the other attribute is increasing/decreasing.

## More advanced visualizations, still using Matplotlib

Once you are comfortable with the simple trend-lines covered so far you are ready to move to slightly more complex charts and functionalities to better customization

### Bar Charts

The Bar Charts help us to compare multiple values by plotting them side-to-side. There are different types of Bar Charts,

- Vertical Bar Chart
- Horizontal Bar Chart
- Stacked Bar Chart

Below is an example of a Bar Chart, there are a number of customizations added to this plot. They are,

- Axis labels and title are added
- Font size has been provided
- Figure size is provided as well (default chart window is smaller and cluttered)
- A function is used to generate and add values to the bars to help the viewers get the actual data

LATEST

EDITOR'S PICKS

DEEP DIVES

CONTRIBUTE

NEWSLETTER

Sign in

Contributor Portal

## Loading

```
In [2]: import pandas as pd
import numpy as np
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
```

```
In [4]: # Data from: https://www.kaggle.com/shivamb/netflix-shows
# With transformations
netflix_data = pd.read_csv('../Data/netflix_titles.csv')
netflix_data['year_added'] = netflix_data['date_added'].dt.year
n_data_added = netflix_data.groupby(['year_added', 'type']).count()
n_data_added.columns = ['year_added', 'type', 'count']
n_data_added = n_data_added.pivot(index='year_added', columns='type')
n_data_added.fillna(0, inplace=True)
n_data_added.head()
```

```
Out[4]:
```

	type	year_added	Movie	TV Show
0		2008	1.0	1.0
1		2009	2.0	0.0
2		2010	1.0	0.0
3		2011	13.0	0.0
4		2012	4.0	3.0

VisualizationArticle\_03.ipynb hosted with ❤ by GitHub

## Horizontal and Stacked Bar Chart

Vertical Bar charts are most common but we can use the horizontal bar charts especially when the data labels are long and it is very difficult to print them below the bars. In the case of the stacked bar chart, the bars will be stacked on top of each other within a category. Below is the example of horizontal and stacked bar charts. The below code shows the customization to the chart color.

LATEST

EDITOR'S PICKS

DEEP DIVES

CONTRIBUTE

NEWSLETTER

Sign in

Contributor Portal

```
In [6]: data = pd.DataFrame(dict(Year = n_data_added['year_added'],
                                Movie = n_data_added['Movie'], TVshow=n_data_added[

ind = np.arange(len(data))
width = 0.4

fig1, ax1 = plt.subplots()
ax1.barh(ind, data.Movie, width, color='red', label='Movies')
ax1.barh(ind + width, data.TVshow, width, color='green', label='TV Shows')

ax1.set(yticks=ind + width, yticklabels=data.Year, y:
ax1.set_ylabel('Year added on Netflix')
ax1.set_xlabel('Count of Number of Movies/TV Shows')
ax1.set_title('Number of movies and TV Shows by year

ax1.legend()
fig1.set_size_inches(10, 10)
plt.show()
```



VisualizationArticle\_04.ipynb hosted with ❤ by GitHub

LATEST

EDITOR'S PICKS

DEEP DIVES

CONTRIBUTE

NEWSLETTER

Sign in

Contributor Portal

## Pie and Donut Chart

Pie charts are useful to show the proportion of data in the data and these pie charts can easily be modified into a donut chart by covering the center part of the pie chart and re-aligning the text/values to suit the donut chart. In this example, I have implemented the pie chart and converted it into a donut chart.



## Loading

```
In [4]: # Small modification to data to suit for the Pie Chart
n_data_added['Total'] = n_data_added['Movie'] + n_data_added['TV Show']
# To select last few rows only
n_data_added_flt = n_data_added[-4:]
n_data_added_flt = n_data_added_flt.reset_index(drop=True) # For resetting
n_data_added_flt.head()
```

```
Out[4]:
```

	type	year_added	Movie	TV Show	Total
0		2017	913.0	387.0	1300.0
1		2018	1290.0	492.0	1782.0
2		2019	1546.0	803.0	2349.0
3		2020	147.0	37.0	184.0

```
In [5]: # Pie chart
labels = n_data_added_flt['year_added']
sizes = n_data_added_flt['Total']
explode = (0, 0.1, 0, 0) # only "explode" the 2nd slice

fig2, ax2 = plt.subplots()
ax2.pie(sizes, explode=explode, labels=labels, autopct=True,
        shadow=True, startangle=90)
```

LATEST

EDITOR'S PICKS

DEEP DIVES

CONTRIBUTE

NEWSLETTER

Sign in

Contributor Portal

VisualizationArticle\_05.ipynb hosted with ❤ by GitHub

## Why is it important to learn Matplotlib?

Matplotlib is a very important visualization library many other visualization libraries in python are dependent on matplotlib. Some of the advantages/benefits of learning matplotlib are,

- It is easy to learn
- It is efficient
- It allows a lot of customizations hence possible to create any kind of visuals
- Libraries like Seaborn are built on top of Matplotlib

I have covered only the most essential visualization in Matplotlib but the important factor is by practicing these charts you would have acquired the knowledge for building much more visualization. Matplotlib supports a number of visualization [here](#) is the link to the gallery of all supported charts.

## Building quick visualizations for data using Seaborn

We have covered a variety of visualization using the library. I am not sure if you have noticed, though high customization it involves a lot of coding and time-consuming especially when you are working on analysis and would want to make a few quick plots of the data better and make the decisions faster. The offered by Seaborn library, here are some benefits of seaborn library,

- Default themes are still attractive
- Simple and quick to build visualizations especially analysis
- Its declarative API allows us to just focus on the charts

There are few downsides too like it doesn't offer high customization and it could lead to memory issues if we work on large datasets. But still, the benefit outweighs the disadvantages.

### Visualizations with just one line code

LATEST

EDITOR'S PICKS

DEEP DIVES

CONTRIBUTE

NEWSLETTER

Sign in

Contributor Portal

Below are some simple visualizations that are implemented with just a single code using the seaborn library.

Loading

Preparing Dataset

```
In [2]: # Data from: https://www.kaggle.com/andrewmvd/heart-failure-clinical-data
heart_failure_data = pd.read_csv('../Data/heart_failure_data.csv')
heart_failure_data.head()
```

Out[2]:

	age	anaemia	creatinine_phosphokinase	diabetes	ejec
0	75	0	582	0	
1	55	0	7861	0	
2	65	0	146	0	
3	50	1	111	0	
4	65	1	160	1	

```
In [3]: # transforming data for visualization
agg_data = heart_failure_data.groupby(['age', 'DEATH_EVENT']).count()
agg_data.columns = ['Age', 'Death_Event', 'Count']
agg_data.head()
```

VisualizationArticle\_06.ipynb hosted with ❤ by GitHub

As shown in the above snapshot the visualization just a single line of code and they look quite pres The Seaborn library is widely used in the data and can build charts quickly with ease and with minin make the charts presentable. Visualization is key as they help in bringing out patterns in the data a library fits apt for the purpose.

Heatmaps

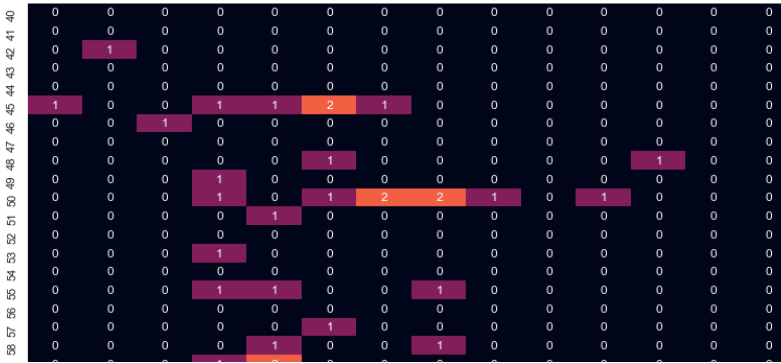
Heatmaps are another interesting visualization that is widely used on time-series data to bring out the seasonalities and other patterns in the dataset. However to build a heatmap we need to transform the data into a specific format to support heatmap plotting. Below is a sample code to transform the data to suit the heatmap plot and seaborn library used to build the heatmap

Loading

Heatmap

```
In [ ]: # Data for heatmap
agg_data2 = heart_failure_data.groupby(['age', 'eject
agg_data2.columns = ['Age', 'ejection_fraction', 'De
agg_data2_p = agg_data2.pivot(index='Age', columns='e
agg_data2_p.fillna(0, inplace=True)
agg_data2_p.head(20)
```

```
In [9]: plt.subplots(figsize=(20,15))
sns.heatmap(agg_data2_p, annot=True)
plt.show()
```



VisualizationArticle\_07.ipynb hosted with ❤ by GitHub

## Pair Plot – my favorite functionality of Seaborn

I consider the pair plot as one of the best feature library. It helps in comparison of each attribute in every other attribute through visuals and again in code. Below is a sample code to build pair plots.

LATEST

EDITOR'S PICKS

DEEP DIVES

CONTRIBUTE

NEWSLETTER

Sign in

Contributor Portal

plot might not be feasible when the dataset we are working on has a large number of columns. In those cases, the pair-plots can be used to analyze the relationship between a specific set of attributes alone.

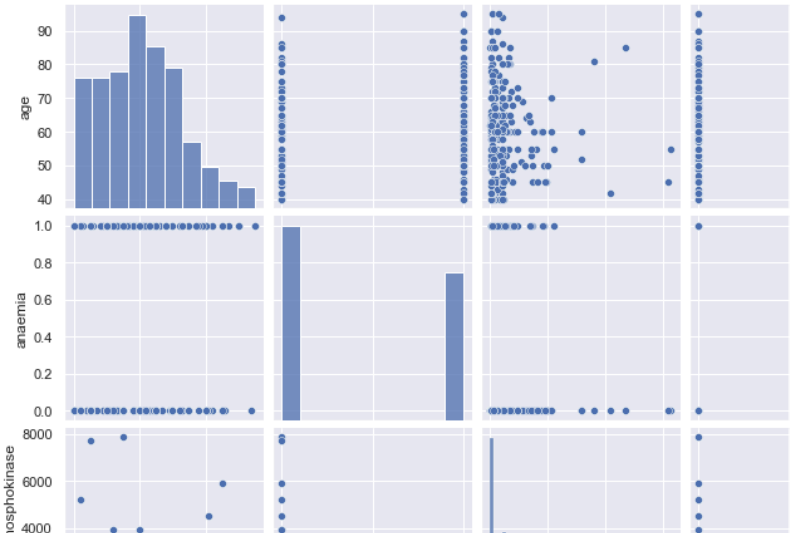
Loading

Pair Plot

```
In [ ]: subset = heart_failure_data.iloc[:,[0,1,2,3,4]]
subset.head()

In [11]: sns.pairplot(subset)
```

Out[11]: <seaborn.axisgrid.PairGrid at 0x249c7b16c10>



VisualizationArticle\_08.ipynb hosted with ❤ by GitHub

## Building interactive charts

While working on Data Science projects sometime requirement to share some visualization with the Dashboarding tools are widely used for this purpose there is an interesting pattern that you have noticed while performing data analysis and would like to share

- LATEST
- EDITOR'S PICKS
- DEEP DIVES
- CONTRIBUTE

NEWSLETTER

Sign in

Contributor Portal

user. If they are shared as an image there might not be much the business user can do but if they are shared as an interactive chart then it gives the business user power to look into the granular details by zooming in or out or use other functionality to interact with the chart. Below is an example where we are creating an HTML file as an output which includes the visualization that can be shared with any other user and they can be simply opened in a browser.

Loading

Interactive Plots

```
In [12]: from bokeh.plotting import figure, output_file, show

p = figure(title = "Age Vs Ejection Fraction")
p.xaxis.axis_label = 'Age'
p.yaxis.axis_label = 'Ejection Fraction'

p.circle(agg_data2["Age"], agg_data2["ejection_fraction"],
         fill_alpha=0.2, size=10)

output_file("test.html", title="Example")

show(p)
```

LATEST

EDITOR'S PICKS

DEEP DIVES

CONTRIBUTE

NEWSLETTER

Sign in

Contributor Portal

VisualizationArticle\_09.ipynb hosted with ❤ by GitHub

If you are keen to learn about visualizations using check out my playlist below. It includes three video tutorial length of just over one hour.

## Day 23 - Python Visualization - Part 1



LATEST

EDITOR'S PICKS

DEEP DIVES

CONTRIBUTE

NEWSLETTER

Sign in

Contributor Portal

## About Me

I am a Data Science professional with over 10 years and I have authored 2 books in data science, they are available for sale [here](#). I have a YouTube channel where I teach various data science concepts. If interested, subscribe to the channel below.

### **Data Science with Sharan**

• • •

WRITTEN BY

**Sharan Kumar Ravindran**

See all from Sharan Kumar Ravindran

## Topics:

Data Science

Hands On Tutorials

Python

Visualization

Share this article:



LATEST

EDITOR'S PICKS

DEEP DIVES

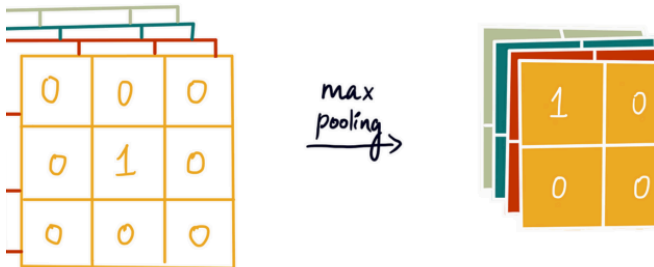
CONTRIBUTE

NEWSLETTER

Sign in

Contributor Portal

## Related Articles



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

### Implementing Convolutional Neural Networks in TensorFlow

Step-by-step code guide to building a Convolutional Neural Network

Shreya Rao

August 20, 2024 6 min read



DATA SCIENCE

### Hands-on Tin Detection using Python

Here's how to use Python to detect signals with lines of...

Piero Paialunga

August 21, 2024 1 min read



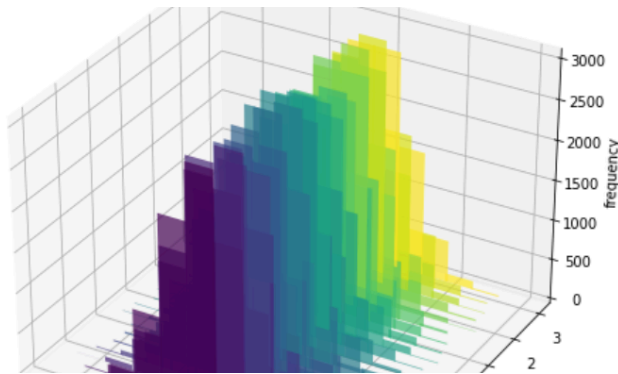
DATA SCIENCE

## Solving a Constrained Project Scheduling Problem with Quantum Annealing

Solving the resource constrained project scheduling problem (RCPSP) with D-Wave's hybrid constrained quadratic model (CQM)

Luis Fernando PÉREZ ARMAS, Ph.D.

August 20, 2024 29 min read



DATA SCIENCE

## Must-Know in Statistics: The Bivariate Normal Projection Explained

Derivation and practical examples of this powerful concept

Luigi Battistoni

August 14, 2024 7 min read



DATA SCIENCE

## Back To Basic Regression ar

An illustrated gui  
learning concept:

Shreya Rao

February 3, 2023

LATEST

EDITOR'S PICKS

DEEP DIVES

CONTRIBUTE

NEWSLETTER

Sign in

Contributor Portal



DATA SCIENCE

## Our Columns

Columns on TDS  
collections of po  
or category...

TDS Editors

November 14, 2020



DATA SCIENCE

## Optimizing Marketing Campaigns with Budgeted Multi-Armed Bandits

With demos, our new solution, and a video

Vadim Arzamasov

August 16, 2024 10 min read

LATEST

EDITOR'S PICKS

DEEP DIVES

CONTRIBUTE

---

NEWSLETTER

Sign in

Contributor Portal



Your home for data science and AI. The world's leading publication for data analytics, data engineering, machine learning, and artificial intelligence professionals.

© Insight Media Group, LLC 2025

Subscribe to Our Newsletter

[ABOUT](#) · [ADVERTISE](#) · [PRIVACY POLICY](#) · [TERMS](#)

[COOKIES SETTINGS](#)