

Data Analysis Coursebook

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Welcome

This is the online version of *Mastering Shiny*, a book **currently under early development** and intended for a late 2020 release by O'Reilly Media.

Shiny is a framework for creating web applications using R code. It is designed primarily with data scientists in mind, and to that end, you can create pretty complicated Shiny apps with no knowledge of HTML, CSS, or JavaScript. On the other hand, Shiny doesn't limit you to creating trivial or prefabricated apps: its user interface components can be easily customized or extended, and its server uses reactive programming to let you create any type of back end logic you want. Shiny is designed to feel almost magically easy when you're getting started, and yet the deeper you get into how it works, the more you realize it's built out of general building blocks that have strong software engineering principles behind them.

Today, Shiny is used in almost as many niches and industries as R itself is. It's used in academia as a teaching tool for statistical concepts, a way to get undergrads excited about learning to write code, a splashy medium for showing off novel statistical methods or models. It's used by big pharma companies to speed collaboration between scientists and analysts during drug development. It's used by Silicon Valley tech companies to set up realtime metrics dashboards that incorporate advanced analytics.

This book is designed to take you from knowing nothing about Shiny to being an expert developer who can write large complex apps that are still maintainable and performant. You'll gain a deep understanding of the reactive programming model that underlies Shiny, as well as building a tool box of useful techniques to solve common app challenges.

License

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Syllabus

Table 1: Outline of Topics

Week	Lecture Topic	Seminar Topic	Homework/Exam
1		Introduction to R	
2		Functional programming, RMarkdown	
3		Tibble, Dplyr	
4		Ggplot2	
5		Statistical analysis, purrr	
6		Statistical analysis, broom	
7			

Week 1

Introduction

The following chapters give you a grab bag of useful techniques. I think everyone should start with Chapter ??, because it gives you important tools for developing and debugging apps, and getting help when you're

stuck.

After that, there's no prescribed order and relatively few connections between the chapters: I'd suggest quickly skimming to get the lay of the land (and so you might remember these tools if related problems crop up in the future), and otherwise only deeply reading the bits that you currently need. Here's a quick run down of the main topics:

Let's begin by working on your workflow for developing apps.

1 Lecture 1

You can often make your app more usable by giving the user more insight into what is happening. This might take the form of better messages when inputs don't make sense, or progress bars for operations that take a long time. Some feedback occurs naturally through outputs, which you already know how to use, but you'll often need something else. The goal of this chapter is to show you some of your other options.

We'll start with techniques for **validation**, informing the user when an input (or combination of inputs) is in an invalid state. We'll then continue on to **notification**, sending general messages to the user, and **progress bars**, which give details for time consuming operations made up of many small steps. We'll finish up by discussing dangerous actions, and how you give your users peace of mind with **confirmation** dialogs or the ability to **undo** an action.

2 Introduction to R

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter we will discuss the basics of R programming. R is a free software, used by millions in the field of statistics, data science, economics and many others.

2.2 Setup

You can download R and RStudio from the official site of RStudio. Please install the appropriate version based on your OS, and do not forget that you also have to install R as well.

RStudio Desktop 1.4.1717 - [Release Notes](#)

1. Install R. RStudio requires **R 3.0.1+** ←
2. Download RStudio Desktop. Recommended for your system:



Requires Windows 10 (64-bit)



All Installers

Linux users may need to [import RStudio's public code-signing key](#) prior to installation, depending on the operating system's security policy.

RStudio requires a 64-bit operating system. If you are on a 32 bit system, you can use an [older version of RStudio](#).



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The Comprehensive R Archive Network

Download and Install R

Precompiled binary distributions of the base system and contributed packages, **Windows and Mac** users most likely want one of these versions of R:

- [Download R for Linux](#) (Debian, Fedora/Redhat, Ubuntu)
- [Download R for macOS](#)
- [Download R for Windows](#)

R is part of many Linux distributions, you should check with your Linux package management system in addition to the link above.

Source Code for all Platforms

Windows and Mac users most likely want to download the precompiled binaries listed in the upper box, not the source code. The sources have to be compiled before you can use them. If you do not know what this means, you probably do not want to do it!

- The latest release (2021-08-10, Kick Things) [R-4.1.1.tar.gz](#), read [what's new](#) in the latest version.
- Sources of [R alpha and beta releases](#) (daily snapshots, created only in time periods before a planned release).
- Daily snapshots of current patched and development versions are [available here](#). Please read about [new features and bug fixes](#) before filing corresponding feature requests or bug reports.
- Source code of older versions of R is [available here](#).
- Contributed extension [packages](#)

Questions About R

- If you have questions about R like how to download and install the software, or what the license terms are, please read our [answers to frequently asked questions](#) before you send an email.

What are R and CRAN?

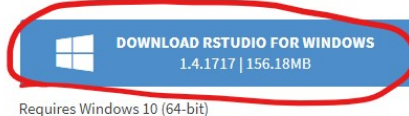
R is 'GNU S', a freely available language and environment for statistical computing and graphics which provides a wide variety of statistical and graphical techniques: linear and nonlinear modelling, statistical tests, time series analysis, classification, clustering, etc. Please consult the [R project homepage](#) for further information.

CRAN is a network of ftp and web servers around the world that store identical, up-to-date, versions of code and documentation for R. Please use the CRAN [mirror](#) nearest to you to minimize network load.

Run R's installer file after the downloading process is finished. Next, we will also need the RStudio.

RStudio Desktop 1.4.1717 - Release Notes

1. Install R. RStudio requires R 3.0.1+.
2. Download RStudio Desktop. Recommended for your system:



Requires Windows 10 (64-bit)



All Installers

Linux users may need to [import RStudio's public code-signing key](#) prior to installation, depending on the operating system's security policy.

RStudio requires a 64-bit operating system. If you are on a 32 bit system, you can use an [older version of RStudio](#).

If the installation process of R and RStudio is finished, then we can open RStudio and start to learn the software.

2.3 Bootstrap

To continue your app customisation journey, you'll need to learn a little more about the Bootstrap framework used by Shiny. Bootstrap is a collection of HTML conventions, CSS styles, and JS snippets bundled up into a convenient form. Bootstrap grew out of a framework originally developed for Twitter and over the last 10 years has grown to become one of the most popular CSS frameworks used on the web. Bootstrap is also popular in R — you've undoubtedly seen many documents produced by `rmarkdown::html_document()` and used many package websites made by pkgdown, both of which also use Bootstrap.

As a Shiny developer, you don't need to think too much about Bootstrap, because Shiny functions automatically generate bootstrap compatible HTML for you. But it's good to know that Bootstrap exists because then:

- You can use `bslib::bs_theme()` to customise the visual appearance of your code, Section 2.4.
- You can use the `class` argument to customise some layouts, inputs, and outputs using Bootstrap class names, as you saw in Section ??.
- You can make your own functions to generate Bootstrap components that Shiny doesn't provide, as explained in "Utility classes".

It's also possible to use a completely different CSS framework. A number of existing R packages make this easy by wrapping popular alternatives to Bootstrap:

- `shiny.semantic`, by Appsilon, builds on top of formantic UI.
- `shinyMobile`, by RInterface, builds on top of framework 7, and is specifically designed for mobile apps.
- `shiny.material`, by Eric Anderson, is built on top of Google's Material design framework.
- `shinydashboard`, also by RStudio, provides a layout system designed to create dashboards.

You can find a fuller, and actively maintained, list at <https://github.com/nanxstats/awesome-shiny-extensions>.

2.4 Themes

Bootstrap is so ubiquitous within the R community that it's easy to get style fatigue: after a while every Shiny app and Rmd start to look the same. The solution is theming with the `bslib` package. `bslib` is relatively new package that allows you to override many Bootstrap defaults in order to create an appearance that is uniquely yours. As I write this, `bslib` is mostly applicable only to Shiny, but work is afoot to bring its enhanced theming power to RMarkdown, pkgdown, and more.

If you're producing apps for your company, I highly recommend investing a little time in theming — theming your app to match your corporate style guide is an easy way to make yourself look good.

2.4.1 Getting started

Create a theme with `bslib::bs_theme()` then apply it to an app with the `theme` argument of the page layout function:

```
fluidPage(
  theme = bslib::bs_theme(...)
)
```

If not specified, Shiny will use the classic Bootstrap v3 theme that it has used basically since it was created. By default, `bslib::bs_theme()`, will use Bootstrap v4. Using Bootstrap v4 instead of v3 will not cause problems if you only use built-in components. There is a possibility that it might cause problems if you've used custom HTML, so you can force it to stay with v3 with `version = 3`.

2.4.2 Shiny themes

The easiest way to change the overall look of your app is to pick a premade "bootswatch" theme using the `bootswatch` argument to `bslib::bs_theme()`. Figure ?? shows the results of the following code, switching "darkly" out for other themes.

3 Lecture 2

You can often make your app more usable by giving the user more insight into what is happening. This might take the form of better messages when inputs don't make sense, or progress bars for operations that take a long time. Some feedback occurs naturally through outputs, which you already know how to use, but you'll often need something else. The goal of this chapter is to show you some of your other options.

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4 Seminar 2

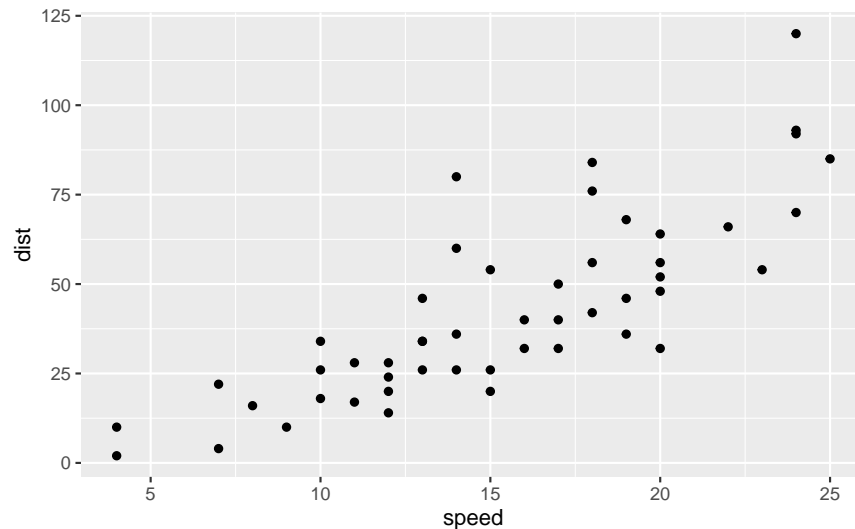
In this chapter, you'll learn how to wrap ggplot2 and dplyr function in a Shiny app. (If you don't use the tidyverse, you can skip this chapter .) The techniques for wrapping ggplot2 and dplyr functions in a functions and package, are a little different and covered in other resources like *Using ggplot2 in packages* or *Programming with dplyr*.

4.1 Motivation

Imagine I want to create an app that allows you to filter a numeric variable to select rows that are greater than a threshold. You might write something like this:

Let's begin with this call to `filter()` which uses a data-variable (`carat`) and an env-variable (`min`):

```
ggplot(cars, aes(speed, dist)) +  
  geom_point()
```



5 Lecture 3

You can often make your app more usable by giving the user more insight into what is happening. This might take the form of better messages when inputs don't make sense, or progress bars for operations that take a long time. Some feedback occurs naturally through outputs, which you already know how to use, but you'll often need something else. The goal of this chapter is to show you some of your other options.

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6 Seminar 3

Transferring files to and from the user is a common feature of apps. You can use it to upload data for analysis, or download the results as a dataset or as a report. This chapter shows the UI and server components that you'll need to transfer files in and out of your app.

6.1 Upload

We'll start by discussing file uploads, showing you the basic UI and server components, and then showing how they fit together in a simple app.

6.1.1 UI