

Reading Data into R

Aug 09, 2023

Dataframes and Tibbles are frequently employed data structures in R for storing and manipulating data. They facilitate the organization, exploration, and analysis of data.

Dataframes

1. A dataframe is a two-dimensional table-like data structure in R that stores data in rows and columns, with distinct data types for each column.
2. Similar to a spreadsheet or a SQL table, it is one of the most frequently employed data structures in R. Each column in a `data.frame` is a constant-length vector, and each row represents an observation or case.
3. Using the `data.frame()` function or by importing data from external sources such as CSV files, Excel spreadsheets, or databases, dataframe objects can be created in R.
4. dataframe objects have many useful built-in methods and functions for manipulating and summarizing data, including subsetting, merging, filtering, and aggregation. [1]

Creating a dataframe using raw data

5. The following code generates a `data.frame` named `df` containing three columns - `names`, `ages`, and `heights`, and four rows of data for each individual.

```
# Create input data as vectors
names <- c("Ashok", "Bullu", "Charu", "Divya")
ages <- c(72, 49, 46, 42)
heights <- c(170, 167, 160, 166)

# Combine input data into a data.frame
people <- data.frame(Name = names, Age = ages, Height = heights)

# Print the resulting dataframe
```

```
print(people)
```

	Name	Age	Height
1	Ashok	72	170
2	Bullu	49	167
3	Charu	46	160
4	Divya	42	166

Reading Inbuilt datasets in R

1. R contains a number of built-in datasets that can be accessed without downloading or integrating from external sources. Here are some of the most frequently used built-in datasets in R:
 - **women**: This dataset includes the heights and weights of a sample of 15,000 women.
 - **mtcars**: This dataset contains information on 32 distinct automobile models, including the number of cylinders, engine displacement, horsepower, and weight.
 - **diamonds**: This dataset includes the prices and characteristics of approximately 54,000 diamonds, including carat weight, cut, color, and clarity.
 - **iris**: This data set measures the sepal length, sepal width, petal length, and petal breadth of 150 iris flowers from three distinct species.

The women dataset

As an illustration, consider the **women** dataset inbuilt in R, which contains information about the heights and weights of women. It has just two variables:

1. **height**: Height of each woman in inches
2. **weight**: Weight of each woman in pounds
3. The **data()** function is used to import any inbuilt dataset into R. The **data(women)** command in R loads the **women** dataset

```
data(women)
```

4. The **str()** function gives the dimensions and data types and also previews the data.

```
str(women)
```

```
'data.frame':  15 obs. of  2 variables:
 $ height: num  58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 ...
 $ weight: num  115 117 120 123 126 129 132 135 139 142 ...
```

5. The `summary()` function gives some summary statistics.

```
summary(women)
```

height	weight
Min. :58.0	Min. :115.0
1st Qu.:61.5	1st Qu.:124.5
Median :65.0	Median :135.0
Mean :65.0	Mean :136.7
3rd Qu.:68.5	3rd Qu.:148.0
Max. :72.0	Max. :164.0

The `mtcars` dataset

The `mtcars` dataset inbuilt in R comprises data on the fuel consumption and other characteristics of 32 different automobile models. Here is a concise description of the 11 `mtcars` data columns:

1. `mpg`: Miles per gallon (fuel efficiency)
2. `cyl`: Number of cylinders
3. `disp`: Displacement of the engine (in cubic inches)
4. `hp`: gross horsepower
5. `drat`: Back axle ratio wt: Weight (in thousands of pounds)
6. `wt`: Weight (in thousands of pounds)
7. `qsec`: 1/4 mile speed (in seconds)
8. `vs`: Type of engine (0 = V-shaped, 1 = straight)
9. `am`: Type of transmission (0 for automatic, 1 for manual)
10. `gear`: the number of forward gears
11. `carb`: the number of carburetors

```
data(mtcars)
str(mtcars)
```

```
'data.frame':  32 obs. of  11 variables:
 $ mpg : num  21 21 22.8 21.4 18.7 18.1 14.3 24.4 22.8 19.2 ...
 $ cyl : num   6  6  4  6  8  6  8  4  4  6 ...
 $ disp: num  160 160 108 258 360 ...
 $ hp  : num  110 110 93 110 175 105 245 62 95 123 ...
 $ drat: num   3.9 3.9 3.85 3.08 3.15 2.76 3.21 3.69 3.92 3.92 ...
 $ wt  : num   2.62 2.88 2.32 3.21 3.44 ...
 $ qsec: num   16.5 17 18.6 19.4 17 ...
 $ vs  : num   0  0  1  1  0  1  0  1  1  1 ...
 $ am  : num   1  1  1  0  0  0  0  0  0  0 ...
 $ gear: num   4  4  4  3  3  3  3  4  4  4 ...
 $ carb: num   4  4  1  1  2  1  4  2  2  4 ...
```

Reading different file formats into a dataframe

1. We examine how to read data into a dataframe in R when the original data is stored in prominent file formats such as CSV, Excel, and Google Sheets.
2. Before learning how to accomplish this, it is necessary to comprehend how to configure the Working Directory in R.

Working Directory

1. The working directory is the location where R searches for and saves files by default.
2. By default, when we execute a script or import data into R, R will search the working directory for files.
3. Using R's `getwd()` function, we can examine our current working directory:

```
getwd()
```

```
[1] "/cloud/project"
```

4. We are running R in the Cloud and hence we are seeing that the working directory is specified as `/cloud/project/DataAnalyticsBook101`. If we are doing R programming on a local computer, and if our working directory is the Desktop, then we may see a different response such as `C:/Users/YourUserName/Desktop`.
5. Using R's `setwd()` function, we can change our current working directory. For example, the following code will set our working directory to the Desktop:

```
setwd("C:/Users/YourUserName/Desktop")
```

6. We should choose an easily-remembered and accessible working directory to store our R scripts and data files. Additionally, we should avoid using spaces, special characters, and non-ASCII characters in file paths, as these can cause file handling issues in R. [2]

Reading a CSV file into a dataframe

1. CSV is the abbreviation for “Comma-Separated Values.” A CSV file is a plain text file that stores structured tabular data.
2. Each entry in a CSV file represents a record, whereas each column represents a field. The elements in each record are separated by commas (hence the name Comma-Separated Values), semicolons, or tabs.
3. Before proceeding ahead, it is imperative that the file that we wish to read is located in the Working Directory.
4. Suppose we wish to import a CSV file named `mtcars.csv`, located in the Working Directory. We can use the `read.csv()` function, illustrated as follows.

```
df_csv <- read.csv("mtcars.csv")
```

4. In this example, the `read.csv()` function reads the `mtcars.csv` file into a data frame named `df_csv`.
5. If the file is not in the current working directory, the complete file path must be specified in the `read.csv()` function argument; otherwise, an error will occur.

Reading an Excel (xlsx) file into a dataframe

1. Suppose we wish to import a Microsoft Excel file named `mtcars.xlsx`, located in the Working Directory.
2. We can use the `read_excel` function in the R package `readxl`, illustrated as follows.

```
library(readxl)
df_xlsx <- read_excel("mtcars.xlsx")
```

Reading a Google Sheet into a dataframe

1. Google Sheets is a ubiquitous cloud-based spreadsheet application developed by Google. It is a web-based application that enables collaborative online creation and modification of spreadsheets.
2. We can import data from a Google Sheet into a R dataframe, as follows.
 - Consider a Google Sheet whose preferences have been set such that anyone can view it using its URL. If this is not done, then some authentication would become necessary.
 - Every Google Sheet is characterized by a unique Sheet ID, embedded within the URL. For example, consider a Google Sheet containing some financial data concerning S&P500 index shares.
 - Suppose the Sheet ID is: `11ahk9uWxBkDqrhNm7qYmiTwrlSC53N1zvXYfv7ttOCM`
 - We can use the function `gsheet2tbl` in package `gsheet` to read the Google Sheet into a dataframe, as demonstrated in the following code.

```
# Read S&P500 stock data present in a Google Sheet.
library(gsheet)

prefix <- "https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/"
sheetID <- "11ahk9uWxBkDqrhNm7qYmiTwrlSC53N1zvXYfv7ttOCM"

# Form the URL to connect to
url500 <- paste(prefix, sheetID)

# Read the Google Sheet located at the URL into a dataframe called sp500
sp500 <- gsheet2tbl(url500)
```

No encoding supplied: defaulting to UTF-8.

- The first line imports the `gsheet` package required to access Google Sheets into R.
- The following three lines define URL variables for Google Sheets. The `prefix` variable contains the base URL for accessing Google Sheets, the `sheetID` variable contains the ID of the desired Google Sheet.
- The `paste()` function is used to combine the `prefix`, `sheetID` variables into a complete URL for accessing the Google Sheet.
- The `gsheet2tbl()` function from the `gsheet` package is then used to read the specified Google Sheet into a dataframe called `sp500`, which can then be analyzed further in R.

Joining or Merging two dataframes

- Suppose we have a second S&P 500 data located in a second Google Sheet and suppose that we would like to join or merge the data in this dataframe with the above dataframe `sp500`.
- The ID of this second sheet is: `1F5KvFATcehrdJuGjYVqppNYC9hEKSww9rXYHck2g60A`
- We can read the data present in this Google Sheet using the following code, similar to the one discussed above, using the following code.

```
# Read additional S&P500 data that is posted in a Google Sheet.
library(gsheet)

prefix <- "https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/"
sheetID <- "1nm688a3GsPM5cadJIwu6zj336WBaduglY9TSTUaM9jk"

# Form the URL to connect to
url <- paste(prefix, sheetID)

# Read the Google Sheet located at the URL into a dataframe called gf
gf <- gsheet2tbl(url)
```

No encoding supplied: defaulting to UTF-8.

- We now have two dataframes named `sp500` and `gf` that we wish to merge or join.
- The two dataframes have a column named `Stock` in common, which will serve as the key, while doing the join.
- The following code illustrates how to merge two dataframes:

```
# merging dataframes
df <- merge(sp500, gf , id = "Stock")
```

- We now have a new dataframe named `df`, which contains the data got from merging the two dataframes `sp500` and `gf`.

Tibbles

1. A tibble is a contemporary and enhanced variant of a R data frame that is part of the tidyverse package collection.
2. Tibbles are created and manipulated using the dplyr package, which provides a suite of functions optimized for data manipulation.
3. The following characteristics distinguish a tibble from a conventional data frame:
4. Tibbles must always have unique, non-empty column names. Tibbles do not permit the creation or modification of columns using partial matching of column names. Tibbles improve the output of large datasets by displaying by default only a few rows and columns.
5. Tibbles have a more consistent behavior for subsetting, with the use of `[[` always returning a vector or NULL, and `[]` always returning a tibble.
6. Here is an example of using the `tibble()` function in dplyr to construct a tibble:

```
library(dplyr, warn.conflicts = FALSE)

# Create a tibble
my_tibble <- tibble(
  name = c("Alice", "Bob", "Charlie"),
  age = c(25, 30, 35),
  gender = c("F", "M", "M")
)

# Print the tibble
my_tibble
```

```
# A tibble: 3 x 3
  name      age gender
<chr>   <dbl> <chr>
1 Alice     25 F
```



```
2 Bob      30 M
3 Charlie  35 M
```

7. This will generate a tibble consisting of three columns (name, age, and gender) and three rows of data. Note that the column names are preserved and the tibble is printed in a compact and legible manner.

Converting a dataframe into a tibble

```
# Create a data frame
my_df <- data.frame(
  name = c("Alice", "Bob", "Charlie"),
  age = c(25, 30, 35),
  gender = c("F", "M", "M")
)

# Convert the data frame to a tibble
my_tibble <- as_tibble(my_df)

# Print the tibble
my_tibble
```

```
# A tibble: 3 x 3
  name      age gender
<chr>   <dbl> <chr>
1 Alice     25 F
2 Bob       30 M
3 Charlie   35 M
```

8. This assigns the tibble representation of the data frame `my_df` to the variable `my_tibble`.
9. Note that the resulting tibble has the same column names and data as the original data frame, but has the additional characteristics and behaviors of a tibble.

Converting a tibble into a dataframe

```
library(dplyr)

# Convert the tibble to a data frame
my_df <- as.data.frame(my_tibble)
```

```
# Print the data frame
my_df
```

	name	age	gender
1	Alice	25	F
2	Bob	30	M
3	Charlie	35	M

10. A tibble offers several advantages over a data frame in R:

- Large datasets can be printed with greater clarity and precision using Tibbles. By default, they only print the first few rows and columns, making it simpler to read and comprehend the data structure.
- Better subsetting behavior: With `[[` (always returning a vector or NULL) and `[]` (always returning a tibble), Tibbles have a more consistent subsetting behavior. This facilitates the subset and manipulation of data without unintended consequences.
- Consistent naming: Tibbles always have column names that are distinct and non-empty. This makes it simpler to refer to specific columns and prevents errors caused by duplicate or unnamed column names.
- More informative errors: Tibbles provides more informative error messages that make it simpler to diagnose and resolve data-related problems.
- Fewer surprises: Tibbles have more stringent constraints than data frames, resulting in fewer surprises and unexpected behavior when manipulating data.

Summary of Chapter 4 – Reading Data in R

In Chapter 4, we continue our exploration of data frames in R, focusing on reading various file formats into a data frame, managing the working directory, merging data frames, and the concept of tibbles, all with the overall objective of effectively reading data into R, for further analysis.

R uses the concept of a working directory to manage files. By default, R looks for and saves files in the working directory. To check the current working directory, we use the `getwd()` function. We can change the working directory using the `setwd()` function. It's advisable to choose an easily accessible working directory and avoid using spaces, special characters, and non-ASCII characters in file paths.

We then learn to read various file formats into a data frame. For a CSV file, we use the `read.csv()` function. Reading an Excel file into a data frame is accomplished using the

`read_excel` function from the `readxl` package. We also explored reading data from Google Sheets using the `gsheet2tbl` function in the `gsheet` package.

When dealing with multiple data sources, we may need to merge or join two data frames. R provides the `merge()` function to merge data frames based on a common key.

The final concept introduced in this chapter is tibbles. A tibble is a modern reimaging of the data frame, part of the tidyverse collection of packages. Tibbles are created and manipulated using the `dplyr` package. Tibbles have several distinct characteristics, such as unique, non-empty column names, better subsetting behavior, and improved output for large datasets. We learned how to create a tibble using the `tibble()` function, and convert a data frame to a tibble using the `as_tibble()` function, and vice versa with `as.data.frame()`.

In conclusion, this chapter built upon the concept of data frames and tibbles, showing how they can be used as a versatile tool for reading and storing data in various formats and getting ready to further explore the data.

References

[1]

R Core Team. (2021). R: A Language and Environment for Statistical Computing. R Foundation for Statistical Computing. <https://www.R-project.org/>

R Core Team. (2022). Vectors, Lists, and Arrays. R Documentation. <https://cran.r-project.org/doc/manuals/r-release/R-intro.html#vectors-lists-and-arrays>

Wickham, H., & Grolemund, G. (2016). R for data science: Import, tidy, transform, visualize, and model data. O'Reilly Media, Inc.

R Core Team. (2022, March 2). Data Frames. R Documentation. <https://www.rdocumentation.org/packages/b>

[2]

OpenIntro. (2022). 1.3 RStudio and working directory. In Introductory Statistics with Randomization and Simulation (1st ed.). <https://www.openintro.org/book/isrs/>

R Core Team. (2021). `getwd()`: working directory; `setwd(dir)`: change working directory. In R: A language and environment for statistical computing. R Foundation for Statistical Computing. <https://stat.ethz.ch/R-manual/R-devel/library/base/html/getwd.html>