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A Quick Introduction to Matplotlib

```
In [1]: import datetime
    print(f"Last updated: {datetime.datetime.now()}")

Last updated: 2024-04-26 12:34:50.042711
```

What is matplotlib?

Matplotlib is a visualization library for Python.

As in, if you want to display something in a chart or graph, matplotlib can help you do that programmatically.

Many of the graphics you'll see in machine learning research papers or presentations are made with matplotlib.

Table of contents

What is matplotlib?

Why matplotlib?

What does this notebook cover?

Where can I get help?

- 0. Importing matplotlib
- 1. 2 ways of creating plots

Anatomy of a Matplotlib Figure

A quick Matplotlib Workflow

2. Making the most common type of plots using NumPy arrays

Creating a line plot

Creating a scatter plot

Creating bar plots

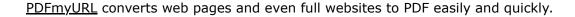
Creating a histogram plot

Creating Figures with multiple Axes with Subplots

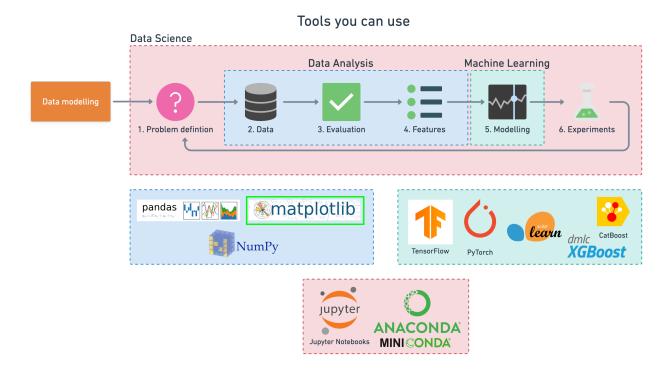
3. Plotting data directly with pandas

Line plot from a pandas DataFrame

Working with actual data







Scatter plot from a pandas DataFrame

Bar plot from a pandas

Why matplotlib?

Matplotlib is part of the standard Python data stack (pandas, NumPy, matplotlib, Jupyter).

It has terrific integration with many other Python libraries.

pandas uses matplotlib as a backend to help visualize data in DataFrames.



What does this notebook cover?

A central idea in matplotlib is the concept of a "plot" (hence the name).

So we're going to practice making a series of different plots, which is a way to visually represent data.

Since there are basically limitless ways to create a plot, we're going to focus on a making and customizing (making them look pretty) a few common types of plots.

Where can I get help?

If you get stuck or think of something you'd like to do which this notebook doesn't cover, don't fear!

The recommended steps you take are:

- 1. **Try it** Since matplotlib is very friendly, your first step should be to use what you know and try figure out the answer to your own question (getting it wrong is part of the process). If in doubt, run your code.
- 2. **Search for it** If trying it on your own doesn't work, since someone else has probably tried to do something similar, try searching for your problem in the following places (either via a search engine or direct):
 - matplotlib documentation the best place for learning all of the vast functionality of matplotlib. Bonus: You can see a series of matplotlib cheatsheets on the matplotlib website.



- Stack Overflow this is the developers Q&A hub, it's full of questions and answers of different problems across a wide range of software development topics and chances are, there's one related to your problem.
- ChatGPT ChatGPT is very good at explaining code, however, it can make mistakes. Best to verify the code it writes first before using it. Try asking "Can you explain the following code for me? {your code here}" and then continue with follow up questions from there.

An example of searching for a matplotlib feature might be:

"how to colour the bars of a matplotlib plot"

Searching this on Google leads to this documentation page on the matplotlib website: https://matplotlib.org/stable/gallery/lines_bars_and_markers/bar_colors.html

The next steps here are to read through the post and see if it relates to your problem. If it does, great, take the code/information you need and **rewrite it** to suit your own problem.

3. **Ask for help** - If you've been through the above 2 steps and you're still stuck, you might want to ask your question on Stack Overflow or in the ZTM Discord chat. Remember to be specific as possible and provide details on what you've tried.

Remember, you don't have to learn all of these functions off by heart to begin with.

What's most important is remembering to continually ask yourself, "what am I trying to visualize?"

Start by answering that question and then practicing finding the code which does it.

Let's get to visualizing some data!



0. Importing matplotlib

We'll start by importing matplotlib.pyplot.

Why pyplot?

Because pyplot is a submodule for creating interactive plots programmatically.

pyplot is often imported as the alias plt.

Note: In older notebooks and tutorials of matplotlib, you may see the magic command %matplotlib inline. This was required to view plots inside a notebook, however, as of 2020 it is mostly no longer required.

```
In [2]: # Older versions of Jupyter Notebooks and matplotlib required this magic command
# %matplotlib inline

# Import matplotlib and matplotlib.pyplot
import matplotlib
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt

print(f"matplotlib version: {matplotlib.__version__}")

matplotlib version: 3.6.3
```

1. 2 ways of creating plots

There are two main ways of creating plots in matplotlib.



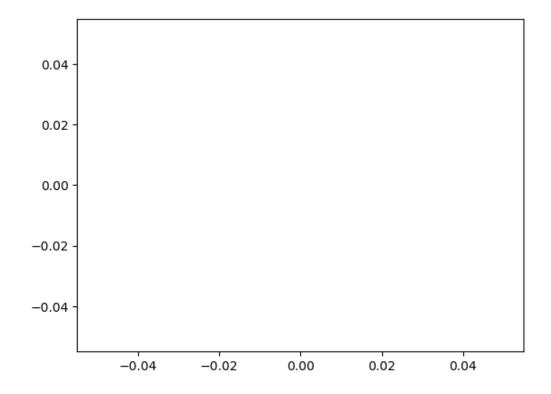
- 1. matplotlib.pyplot.plot() Recommended for simple plots (e.g. x and y).
- 2. matplotlib.pyplot.XX (where XX can be one of many methods, this is known as the object-oriented API) Recommended for more complex plots (for example plt.subplots() to create multiple plots on the same Figure, we'll get to this later).

Both of these methods are still often created by building off import matplotlib.pyplot as plt as a base.

Let's start simple.

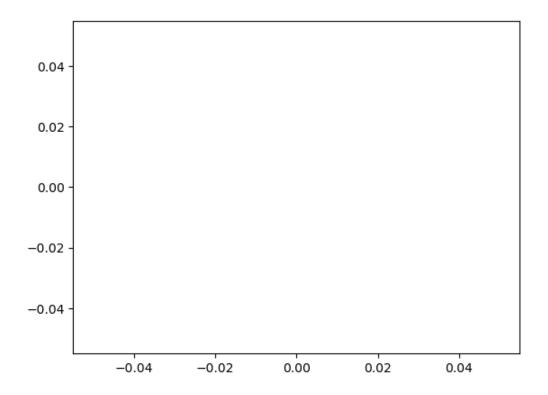
```
In [3]: # Create a simple plot, without the semi-colon
   plt.plot()
Out[3]: []
```





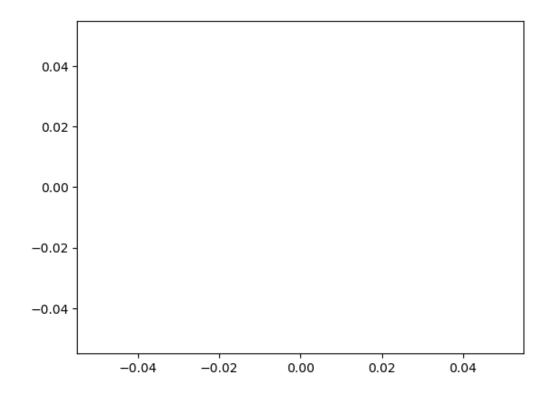
```
In [4]: # With the semi-colon
    plt.plot();
```





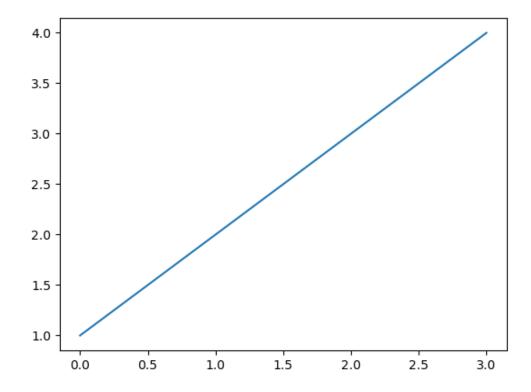
```
In [5]: # You could use plt.show() if you want
    plt.plot()
    plt.show()
```





```
In [6]: # Let's add some data plt.plot([1, 2, 3, 4]);
```





```
In [7]: # Create some data

x = [1, 2, 3, 4]

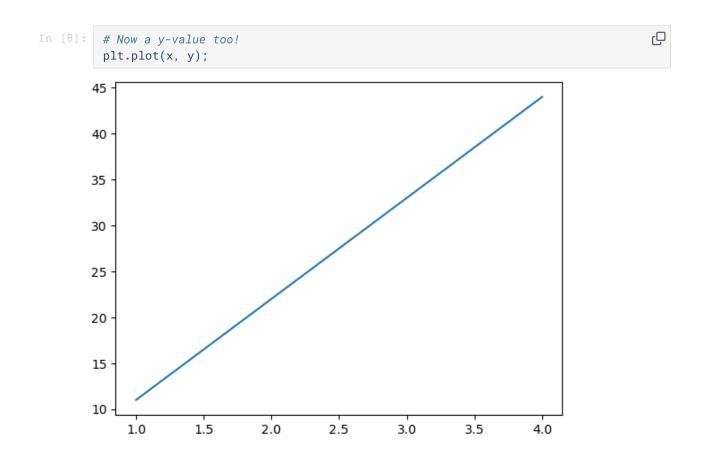
y = [11, 22, 33, 44]
```

A few quick things about a plot:

- x is the horizontal axis.
- y is the vertical axis.
- In a data point, x usually comes first, e.g. (3, 4) would be (x=3, y=4).



• The same is happens in matplotlib.pyplot.plot(), x comes before y, e.g. plt.plot(x, y).



Now let's try using the object-orientated version.

We'll start by creating a figure with plt.figure().

And then we'll add an axes with add_subplot.

```
Q
 # Creating a plot with the object-orientated verison
 fig = plt.figure() # create a figure
 ax = fig.add_subplot() # add an axes
 plt.show()
1.0
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0.0 +
               0.2
                             0.4
                                          0.6
                                                       0.8
  0.0
                                                                    1.0
```

A note on the terminology:

- A Figure (e.g. fig = plt.figure()) is the final image in matplotlib (and it may contain one or more Axes), often shortened to fig.
- The Axes are an individual plot (e.g. ax = fig.add_subplot()), often shorted to ax.

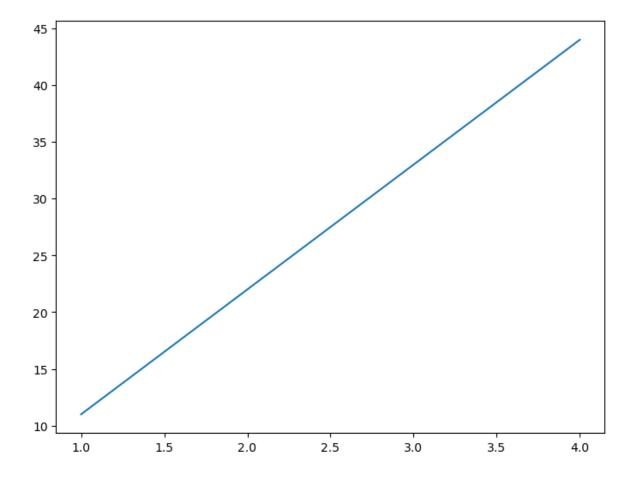


- One Figure can contain one or more Axes.
- The Axis are x (horizontal), y (vertical), z (depth).

Now let's add some data to our pevious plot.

```
In [10]: # Add some data to our previous plot
    fig = plt.figure()
    ax = fig.add_axes([1, 1, 1, 1])
    ax.plot(x, y)
    plt.show()
```



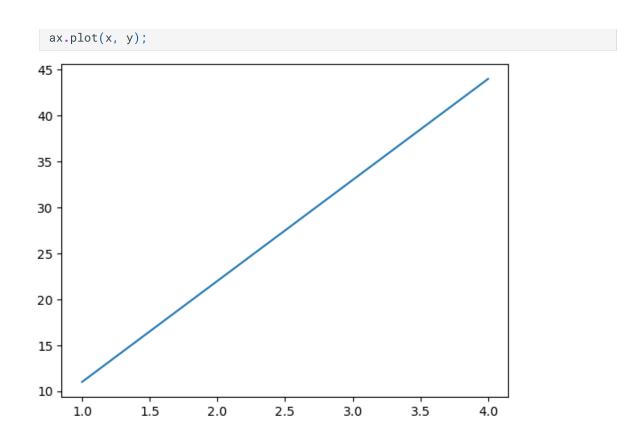


But there's an easier way we can use matplotlib.pyplot to help us create a Figure with multiple potential Axes.

And that's with plt.subplots().

```
In [11]: # Create a Figure and multiple potential Axes and add some data fig, ax = plt.subplots()
```





Anatomy of a Matplotlib Figure

Matplotlib offers almost unlimited options for creating plots.

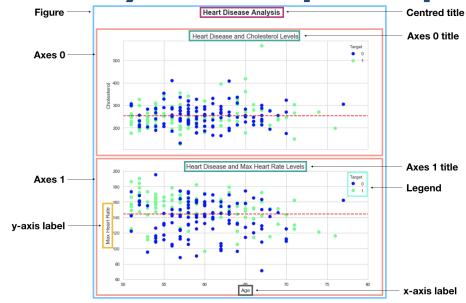
However, let's break down some of the main terms.

• **Figure** - The base canvas of all matplotlib plots. The overall thing you're plotting is a Figure, often shortened to fig.



- **Axes** One Figure can have one *or* multiple Axes, for example, a Figure with multiple suplots could have 4 Axes (2 rows and 2 columns). Often shortened to ax.
- Axis A particular dimension of an Axes, for example, the x-axis or y-axis.

Anatomy of a Matplotlib plot



```
In [12]: # This is where the object orientated name comes from type(fig), type(ax)
```

Out[12]: (matplotlib.figure.Figure, matplotlib.axes._subplots.AxesSubplot)



A quick Matplotlib Workflow

The following workflow is a standard practice when creating a matplotlib plot:

- 0. **Import matplotlib** For example, import matplotlib.pyplot as plt).
- 1. **Prepare data** This may be from an existing dataset (data analysis) or from the outputs of a machine learning model (data science).
- 2. **Setup the plot** In other words, create the Figure and various Axes.
- 3. **Plot data to the Axes** Send the relevant data to the target Axes.
- 4. Cutomize the plot Add a title, decorate the colours, label each Axis.
- 5. Save (optional) and show See what your masterpiece looks like and save it to file if necessary.

```
# A matplotlib workflow

# 0. Import and get matplotlib ready
# %matplotlib inline # Not necessary in newer versions of Jupyter (e.g. 2022 onward import matplotlib.pyplot as plt

# 1. Prepare data
x = [1, 2, 3, 4]
y = [11, 22, 33, 44]

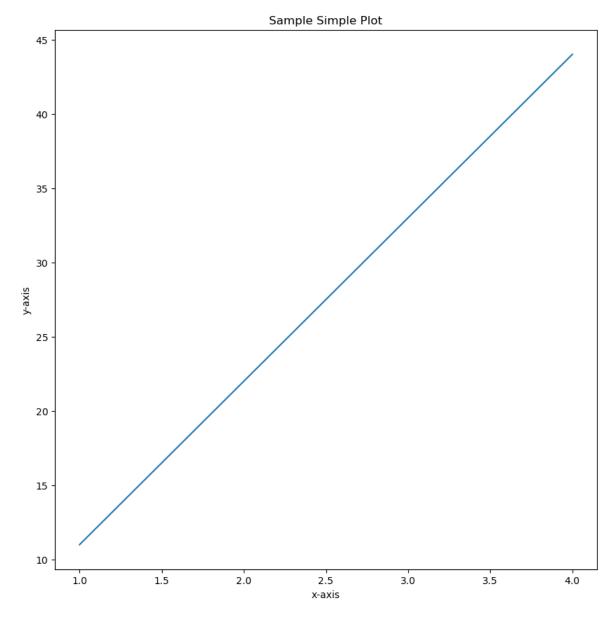
# 2. Setup plot (Figure and Axes)
fig, ax = plt.subplots(figsize=(10,10))

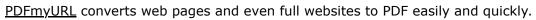
# 3. Plot data
ax.plot(x, y)
```



```
# 4. Customize plot
ax.set(title="Sample Simple Plot", xlabel="x-axis", ylabel="y-axis")
# 5. Save & show
fig.savefig("../images/simple-plot.png")
```









2. Making the most common type of plots using NumPy arrays

Most of figuring out what kind of plot to use is getting a feel for the data, then seeing what kind of plot suits it best.

Matplotlib visualizations are built on NumPy arrays. So in this section we'll build some of the most common types of plots using NumPy arrays.

```
• Line plot - ax.plot() (this is the default plot in matplotlib)
```

```
• Scatter plot - ax.scatter()
```

- Barplot ax.bar()
- Histogram plot ax.hist()

We'll see how all of these can be created as a method from matplotlob.pyplot.subplots().

Resource: Remember you can see many of the different kinds of matplotlib plot types in the documentation.

To make sure we have access to NumPy, we'll import it as np.

```
In [14]: import numpy as np
```

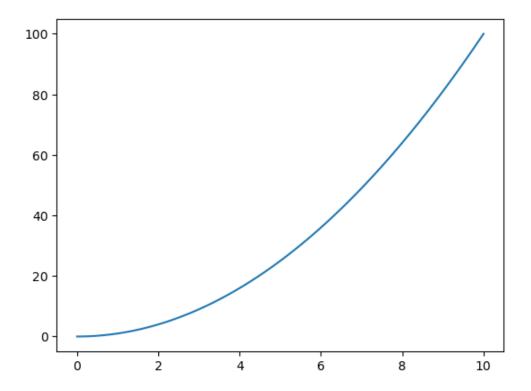
Creating a line plot



Line is the default type of visualization in Matplotlib. Usually, unless specified otherwise, your plots will start out as lines.

Line plots are great for seeing trends over time.



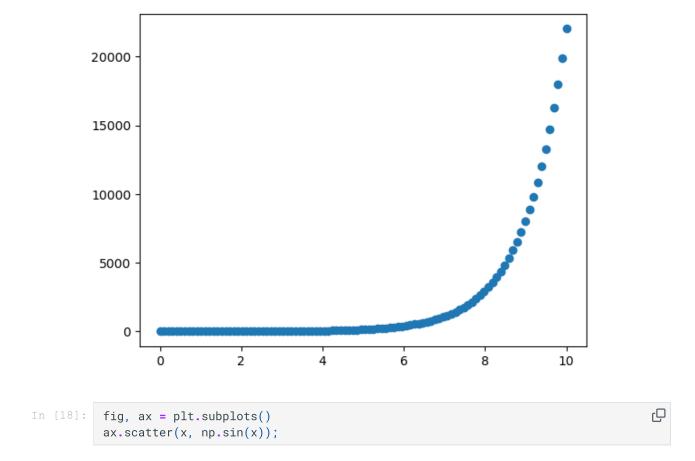


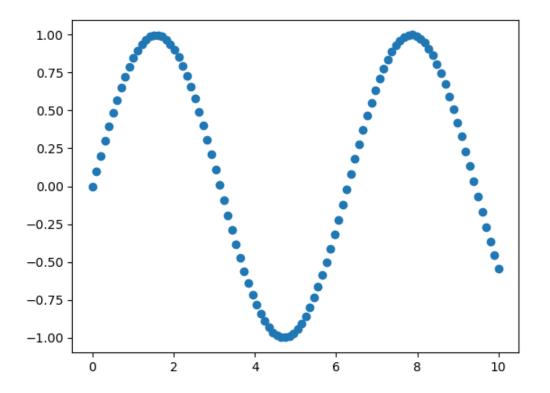
Creating a scatter plot

Scatter plots can be great for when you've got many different individual data points and you'd like to see how they interact with eachother without being connected.

```
In [17]: # Need to recreate our figure and axis instances when we want a new figure
fig, ax = plt.subplots()
ax.scatter(x, np.exp(x));
```







Creating bar plots

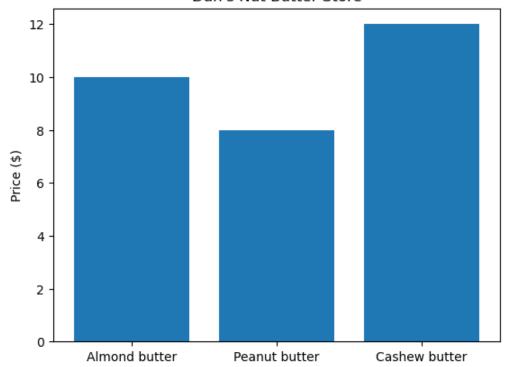
Bar plots are great to visualize different amounts of similar themed items.

For example, the sales of items at a Nut Butter Store.

You can create **vertical** bar plots with <code>ax.bar()</code> and **horizontal** bar plots with <code>ax.barh()</code>.

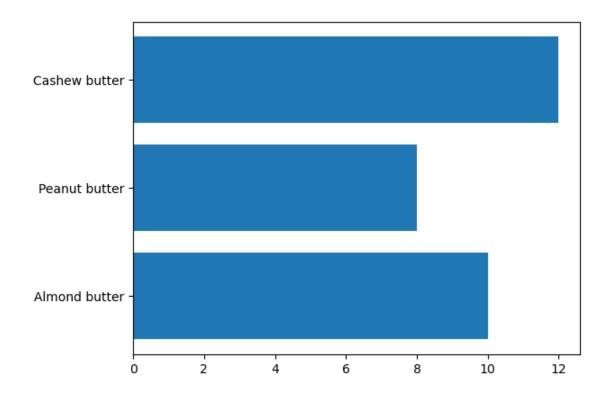


Dan's Nut Butter Store



```
In [20]: fig, ax = plt.subplots()
    ax.barh(list(nut_butter_prices.keys()), list(nut_butter_prices.values()));
```





Creating a histogram plot

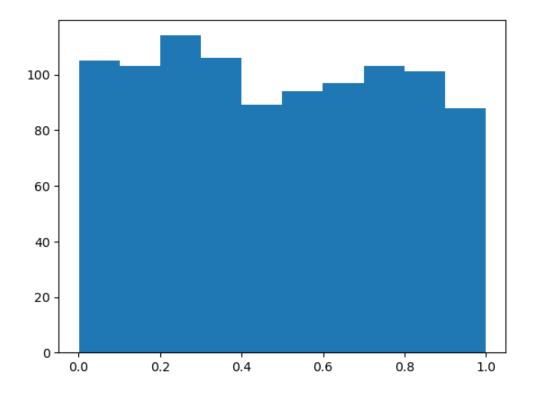
Histogram plots are excellent for showing the distribution of data.

For example, you might want to show the distribution of ages of a population or wages of city.

```
In [21]: # Make some data from a normal distribution
x = np.random.randn(1000) # pulls data from a normal distribution
```



```
fig, ax = plt.subplots()
 ax.hist(x);
250 -
200
150
100
 50
  0
                 -2
                                                      2
        -3
                          -1
                                    0
                                             1
                                                                             Q
 x = np.random.random(1000) # random data from random distribution
 fig, ax = plt.subplots()
 ax.hist(x);
```



Creating Figures with multiple Axes with Subplots

Subplots allow you to create multiple Axes on the same Figure (multiple plots within the same plot).

Subplots are helpful because you start with one plot per Figure but scale it up to more when necessary.

For example, let's create a subplot that shows many of the above datasets on the same Figure.

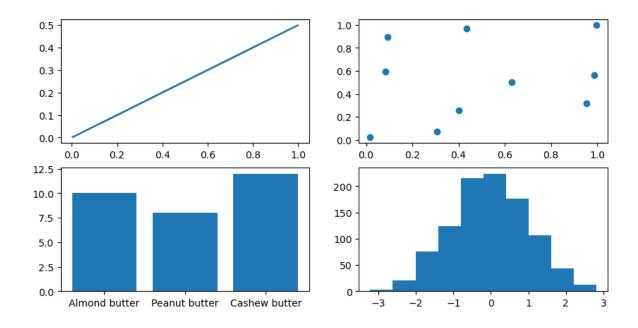
We can do so by creating multiple Axes with plt.subplots() and setting the nrows (number of rows)
and ncols (number of columns) parameters to reflect how many Axes we'd like.



nrows and ncols parameters are multiplicative, meaning plt.subplots(nrows=2, ncols=2) will create 2*2=4 total Axes.

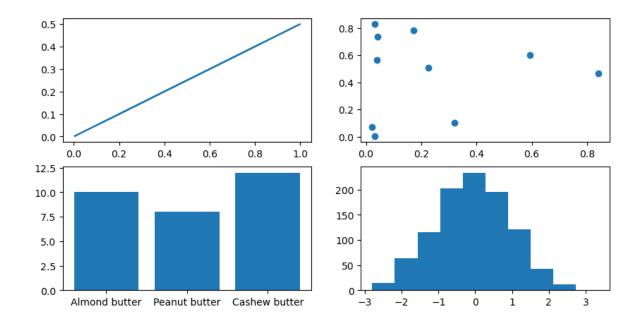
Resource: You can see a sensational number of examples for creating Subplots in the matplotlib documentation.





```
In [24]: # Option 2: Create 4 subplots with a single ax variable
    fig, ax = plt.subplots(nrows=2, ncols=2, figsize=(10, 5))

# Index the ax variable to plot data
    ax[0, 0].plot(x, x/2);
    ax[0, 1].scatter(np.random.random(10), np.random.random(10));
    ax[1, 0].bar(nut_butter_prices.keys(), nut_butter_prices.values());
    ax[1, 1].hist(np.random.random(1000));
```



3. Plotting data directly with pandas

Matplotlib has a tight integration with pandas too.

You can directly plot from a pandas DataFrame with DataFrame.plot().

Let's see the following plots directly from a pandas DataFrame:

- Line
- Scatter
- Bar



Hist

To plot data with pandas, we first have to import it as pd.

```
In [25]: import pandas as pd
```

Now we need some data to check out.

```
In [26]: # Let's import the car_sales dataset
    car_sales = pd.read_csv("../data/car-sales.csv")
    car_sales
```

Out[26]

	Make	Colour	Odometer (KM)	Doors	Price
0	Toyota	White	150043	4	\$4,000.00
1	Honda	Red	87899	4	\$5,000.00
2	Toyota	Blue	32549	3	\$7,000.00
3	BMW	Black	11179	5	\$22,000.00
4	Nissan	White	213095	4	\$3,500.00
5	Toyota	Green	99213	4	\$4,500.00
6	Honda	Blue	45698	4	\$7,500.00
7	Honda	Blue	54738	4	\$7,000.00
8	Toyota	White	60000	4	\$6,250.00
9	Nissan	White	31600	4	\$9,700.00

Line plot from a pandas DataFrame



To understand examples, I often find I have to repeat them (code them myself) rather than just read them.

To begin understanding plotting with pandas, let's recreate the a section of the pandas Chart visualization documents.

```
In [27]: # Start with some dummy data
                                                                                      СĠ
         ts = pd.Series(np.random.randn(1000),
                        index=pd.date_range('1/1/2024', periods=1000))
          # Note: ts = short for time series (data over time)
          ts
Out[27]: 2024-01-01
                      -0.195994
         2024-01-02
                      -1.022610
         2024-01-03
                      -0.202821
         2024-01-04
                      0.640333
         2024-01-05
                      -0.999877
                       . . .
         2026-09-22
                      0.096283
         2026-09-23
                      1.466828
                      -0.149209
         2026-09-24
         2026-09-25
                      -0.161122
         2026-09-26 -0.168698
         Freq: D, Length: 1000, dtype: float64
```

Great! We've got some random values across time.

Now let's add up the data cumulatively overtime with <code>DataFrame.cumsum()</code> (<code>cumsum</code> is short for cumulative sum or continually adding one thing to the next and so on).

```
In [28]: # Add up the values cumulatively ts.cumsum()
```



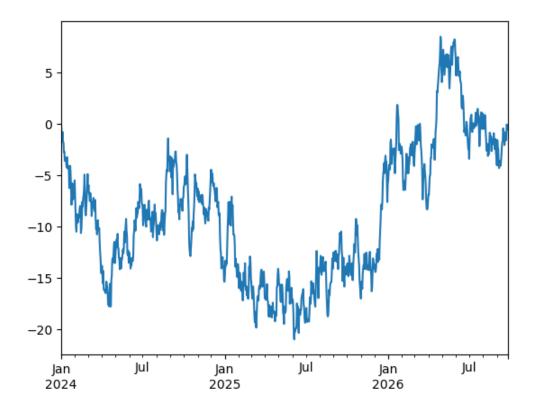
```
Out[28]: 2024-01-01
                     -0.195994
         2024-01-02
                     -1.218604
         2024-01-03
                     -1.421425
         2024-01-04 -0.781092
         2024-01-05
                     -1.780968
                       . . .
         2026-09-22
                     -1.518964
         2026-09-23
                     -0.052136
         2026-09-24 -0.201345
         2026-09-25 -0.362467
         2026-09-26 -0.531165
        Freq: D, Length: 1000, dtype: float64
```

We can now visualize the values by calling the plot() method on the DataFrame and specifying the kind of plot we'd like with the kind parameter.

In our case, the kind we'd like is a line plot, hence kind="line" (this is the default for the plot() method).

```
In [29]: # Plot the values over time with a line plot (note: both of these will return the standard standard).plot() # kind="line" is set by default ts.cumsum().plot(kind="line");
```





Working with actual data

Let's do a little data manipulation on our car_sales DataFrame.

```
In [30]: # Import the car sales data
    car_sales = pd.read_csv("../data/car-sales.csv")

# Remove price column symbols
```



```
car_sales["Price"] = car_sales["Price"].str.replace('[\$\,\.]', '',
                                                        regex=True) # Tell pandas to
car_sales
                         Make Colour Odometer (KM) Doors
                                                           Price
                                White
                                           150043
                                                         400000
                      0 Toyota
                     1 Honda
                                 Red
                                            87899
                                                         500000
                      2 Toyota
                                 Blue
                                            32549
                                                      3 700000
                         BMW
                                Black
                                            11179
                                                      5 2200000
                      4 Nissan
                                White
                                           213095
                                                      4 350000
                                            99213
                                                      4 450000
                      5 Toyota
                                Green
                      6 Honda
                                 Blue
                                            45698
                                                      4 750000
                     7 Honda
                                 Blue
                                            54738
                                                      4 700000
                               White
                                                      4 625000
                      8 Toyota
                                            60000
                               White
                                                         970000
                                            31600
                      9 Nissan
                                                                                    Q
# Remove last two zeros
car_sales["Price"] = car_sales["Price"].str[:-2]
car_sales
                          Make Colour Odometer (KM) Doors
                                                          Price
                                White
                                                          4000
                      0 Toyota
                                            150043
                      1 Honda
                                  Red
                                             87899
                                                          5000
                      2 Toyota
                                 Blue
                                             32549
                                                       3 7000
                      3 BMW
                                 Black
                                             11179
                                                       5 22000
                       4 Nissan
                                 White
                                            213095
                                                       4 3500
```

99213

4 4500

PDFmyURL converts web pages and even full websites to PDF easily and quickly.

5 Toyota Green



```
6 Honda
                                 Blue
                                             45698
                                                       4 7500
                      7 Honda
                                 Blue
                                             54738
                                                       4 7000
                       8 Toyota
                                 White
                                             60000
                                                       4 6250
                       9 Nissan White
                                             31600
                                                       4 9700
                                                                                   Q
# Add a date column
car_sales["Sale Date"] = pd.date_range("1/1/2024", periods=len(car_sales))
car_sales
                     Make Colour Odometer (KM) Doors Price Sale Date
                            White
                                                      4000 2024-01-01
                  0 Toyota
                                        150043
                  1 Honda
                             Red
                                        87899
                                                      5000 2024-01-02
                                                  3 7000 2024-01-03
                  2 Toyota
                             Blue
                                        32549
                  3 BMW
                            Black
                                                  5 22000 2024-01-04
                                        11179
                            White
                                        213095
                                                     3500 2024-01-05
                  4 Nissan
                  5 Toyota
                           Green
                                        99213
                                                      4500 2024-01-06
                                                  4 7500 2024-01-07
                  6 Honda
                             Blue
                                        45698
                  7 Honda
                             Blue
                                        54738
                                                  4 7000 2024-01-08
                  8 Toyota
                            White
                                        60000
                                                     6250 2024-01-09
                  9 Nissan
                           White
                                        31600
                                                     9700 2024-01-10
# Make total sales column (doesn't work, adds as string)
                                                                                   Q
#car_sales["Total Sales"] = car_sales["Price"].cumsum()
# Oops... want them as int's not string
car_sales["Total Sales"] = car_sales["Price"].astype(int).cumsum()
car_sales
```



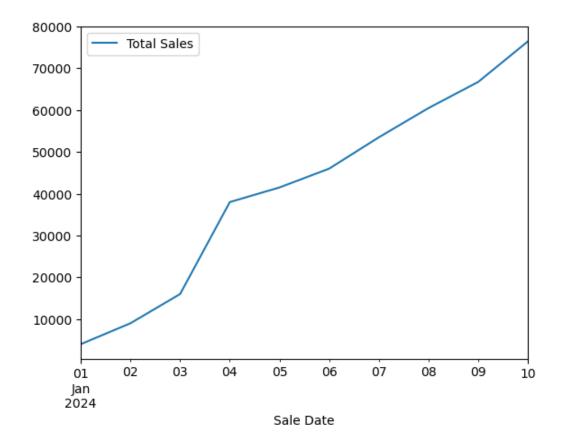
Out[331:

	Make	Colour	Odometer (KM)	Doors	Price	Sale Date	Total Sales
0	Toyota	White	150043	4	4000	2024-01-01	4000
1	Honda	Red	87899	4	5000	2024-01-02	9000
2	Toyota	Blue	32549	3	7000	2024-01-03	16000
3	BMW	Black	11179	5	22000	2024-01-04	38000
4	Nissan	White	213095	4	3500	2024-01-05	41500
5	Toyota	Green	99213	4	4500	2024-01-06	46000
6	Honda	Blue	45698	4	7500	2024-01-07	53500
7	Honda	Blue	54738	4	7000	2024-01-08	60500
8	Toyota	White	60000	4	6250	2024-01-09	66750
9	Nissan	White	31600	4	9700	2024-01-10	76450

```
In [34]: car_sales.plot(x='Sale Date', y='Total Sales');
```



C



Scatter plot from a pandas DataFrame

You can create scatter plots from a pandas DataFrame by using the kind="scatter" parameter.

However, you'll often find that certain plots require certain kinds of data (e.g. some plots require certain columns to be numeric).



```
# Note: In previous versions of matplotlib and pandas, have the "Price" column as
# return an error
car_sales["Price"] = car_sales["Price"].astype(str)
# Plot a scatter plot
car_sales.plot(x="Odometer (KM)", y="Price", kind="scatter");
 9700
 6250
 7500
  4500
 3500
22000
 7000
 5000
  4000
           25000 50000 75000 100000 125000 150000 175000 200000
                                Odometer (KM)
```

Having the Price column as an int returns a much better looking y-axis.



```
# Convert Price to int
 car_sales["Price"] = car_sales["Price"].astype(int)
 # Plot a scatter plot
 car_sales.plot(x="Odometer (KM)", y="Price", kind='scatter');
  22500 -
  20000
  17500
  15000
[ 12500
  10000
   7500
   5000
             25000 50000 75000 100000 125000 150000 175000 200000
                                 Odometer (KM)
```

Bar plot from a pandas DataFrame



Let's see how we can plot a bar plot from a pandas DataFrame.

First, we'll create some data.

```
Q
          # Create 10 random samples across 4 columns
          x = np.random.rand(10, 4)
          Х
Out[37]: array([[0.65745479, 0.42745471, 0.61990211, 0.01218935],
                 [0.10699156, 0.6546944, 0.5915984, 0.55011077],
                [0.50720269, 0.2725063 , 0.95817204, 0.67309876],
                 [0.33016817, 0.85921522, 0.02778741, 0.36043001],
                 [0.8850031 , 0.82582603, 0.58275893, 0.10393635],
                 [0.70596769, 0.15698541, 0.43727796, 0.03307697],
                 [0.55611843, 0.86959028, 0.49525034, 0.06849191],
                 [0.19340766, 0.69988787, 0.89546643, 0.368045],
                 [0.01834179, 0.74501467, 0.06589424, 0.58463789],
                 [0.31159084, 0.4001198, 0.59601375, 0.64712406]])
                                                                                           Q
In [82]: # Turn the data into a DataFrame
          df = pd.DataFrame(x, columns=['a', 'b', 'c', 'd'])
          df
                                                                    d
                                 0 1.326093 -1.179144 -1.228776 0.320765
                                 1 -0.473547 -0.226671 -0.784430 0.192451
                                 2 2.288607 -1.090920 -0.204312 0.486072
                                 3 1.591945 0.320072 2.949674 -1.306000
                                 4 -1.873583 1.132770 1.423901 0.928743
                                 5 -1.121281 -0.640948 -0.527283 0.242460
                                 6 1.302475 -0.295322 3.141830 0.558532
```

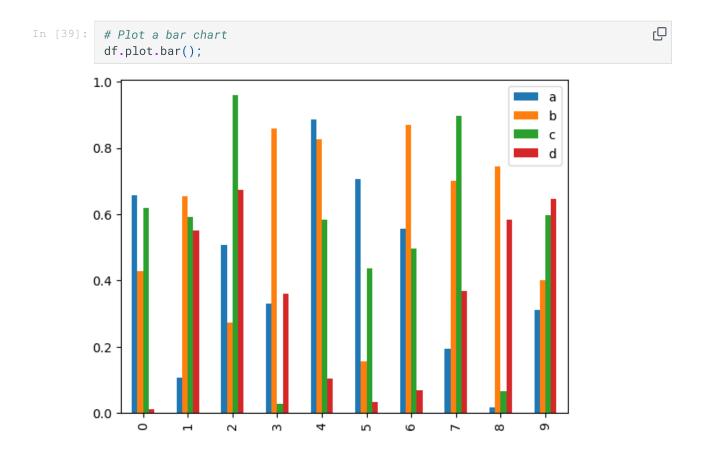


```
      7
      -1.663926
      1.767556
      -0.558923
      0.750767

      8
      -0.658601
      0.278021
      0.854262
      0.012043

      9
      -0.734160
      -1.011017
      0.842804
      -0.008819
```

We can plot a bar chart directly with the bar() method on the DataFrame.



And we can also do the same thing passing the kind="bar" parameter to DataFrame.plot().

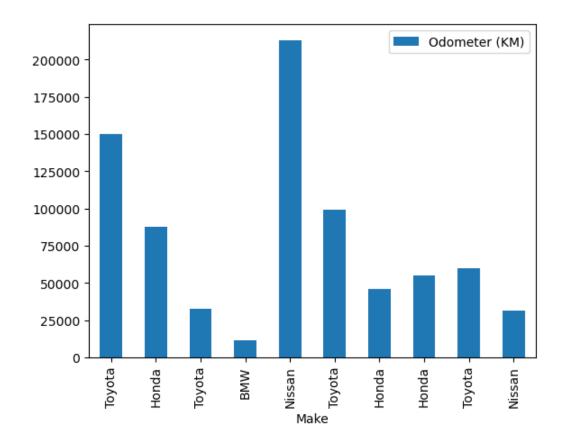


```
Q
 # Plot a bar chart with the kind parameter
 df.plot(kind='bar');
1.0
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0.0
```

Let's try a bar plot on the car_sales DataFrame.

This time we'll specify the \times and y axis values.



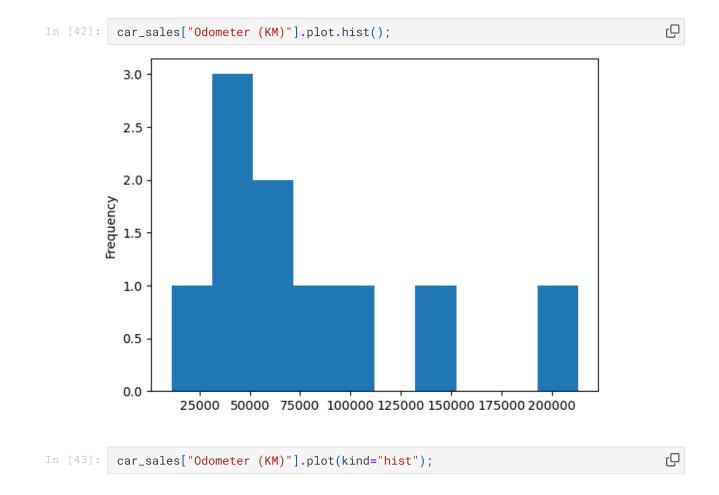


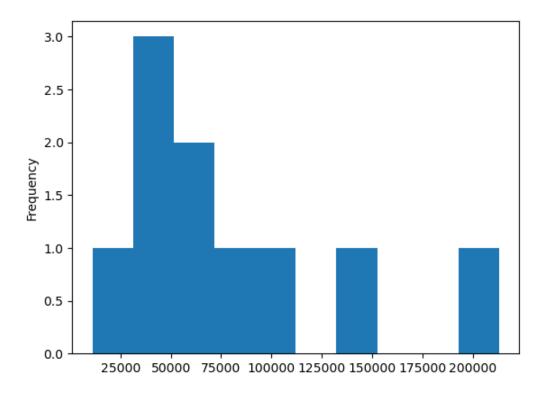
Histogram plot from a pandas DataFrame

We can plot a histogram plot from our car_sales DataFrame using DataFrame.plot.hist() or DataFrame.plot(kind="hist").

Histograms are great for seeing the distribution or the spread of data.





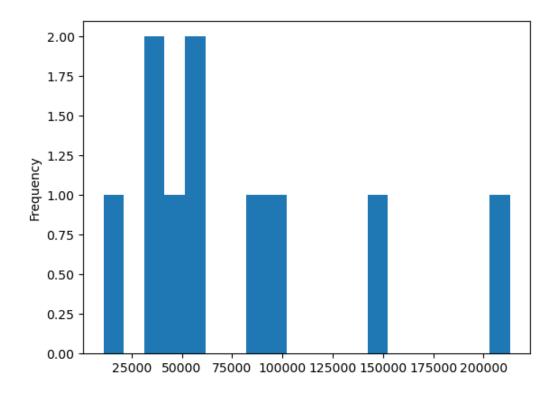


Changing the bins parameter we can put our data into different numbers of collections.

For example, by default bins=10 (10 groups of data), let's see what happens when we change it to bins=20.

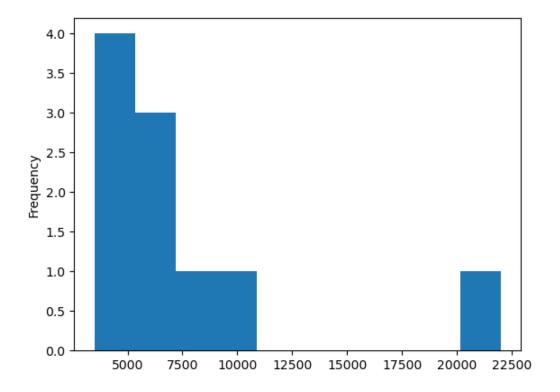
```
In [44]: # Default number of bins is 10
    car_sales["Odometer (KM)"].plot.hist(bins=20);
```





To practice, let's create a histogram of the Price column.





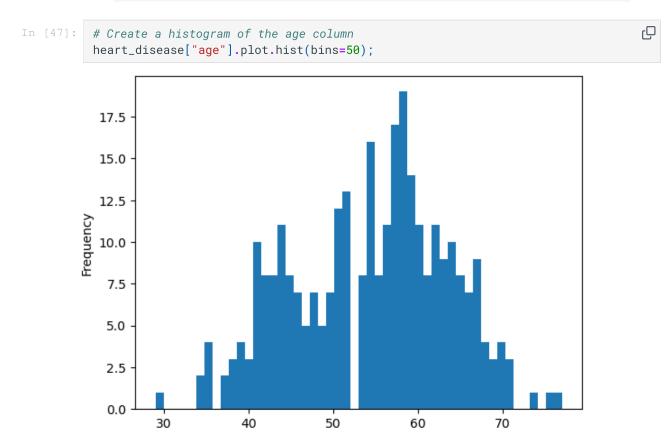
And to practice even further, how about we try another dataset?

Namely, let's create some plots using the heart disease dataset we've worked on before.





1	37	1	2	130	250	0	1	187	0	3.5	0	0	2	1
2	41	0	1	130	204	0	0	172	0	1.4	2	0	2	1
3	56	1	1	120	236	0	1	178	0	8.0	2	0	2	1
4	57	0	0	120	354	0	1	163	1	0.6	2	0	2	1



What does this tell you about the spread of heart disease data across different ages?

