

Introduction to Programming with R

Dries Debeer & Benjamin Becker

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Zurich University

Agenda

Day 1

- RStudio setup
- Basic elements & data types of the R language
- Flow & conditional programming
- Loops & iteration
- Writing & using functions (part I)

Day 2

- Writing & using functions (part II)
- Debugging
- Good programming practices

Open questions from day 1?

Functions II

Why write functions?

- Readability
 - Shortens the code
 - Removes distractions, like references in a paper
 - Avoids repetition (DRY)
 - Easier understanding
- Transferability
 - Other use cases
 - Other projects
 - Other persons

Writing a function:

```
mean(mtcars$mpg)
```

```
[1] 20.09062
```

Not writing a function:

```
sum(mtcars$mpg)/dim(mtcars)[1]
```

```
[1] 20.09062
```

Writing a function:

```
summary(mtcars$mpg)
```

#	Min.	1st Qu.	Median	Mean	3rd Qu.	Max.
#	10.40	15.43	19.20	20.09	22.80	33.90

Not writing a function:

```
round(c("Min." = min(mtcars$mpg),  
      "1st Qu." = as.numeric(quantile(mtcars$mpg)[2]),  
      "Median" = median(mtcars$mpg),  
      "Mean" = mean(mtcars$mpg),  
      "3rd Qu." = as.numeric(quantile(mtcars$mpg)[4]),  
      "Max." = max(mtcars$mpg)), 2)
```

#	Min.	1st Qu.	Median	Mean	3rd Qu.	Max.
#	10.40	15.43	19.20	20.09	22.80	33.90

Default arguments

What happens if the user omits an argument?

```
add_things_def <- function(x) {  
  x + 10  
}  
add_things_def()
```

```
# Error in add_things_def(): argument "x" is missing,  
with no default
```

Default arguments

Default arguments are made for such instances!

```
add_things_def <- function(x = 1) {  
  x + 10  
}  
add_things_def()
```

```
[1] 11
```

Lazy Evaluation

Sometimes missing arguments are irrelevant!

```
add_things3 <- function(x, y) {  
  x + 10  
}  
add_things3(2)
```

```
[1] 12
```

Functions usually return a single object.

- (Standard) The last evaluated object
- Object defined by `return()`
- An error via `stop()`
- Additional: Warnings + Messages
- Additional: Console output
- Additional: Output to graphic device

Output

```
return()
```

```
add_things_return <- function(x = 1) {  
  x2 <- x*2  
  return(x)  
  out <- x + x2  
  out  
}  
add_things_return(2)
```

```
[1] 2
```

Output

Error: stop()

```
add_things_stop <- function(x = 1) {  
  x2 <- x*2  
  stop("My own error message")  
  out <- x + x2  
  out  
}  
add_things_stop(2)
```

```
# Error in add_things_stop(2): My own error message
```

Abbreviation for `if(!test)` and `stop()`:

```
mean2 <- function(x, na.rm = FALSE) {  
  stopifnot(is.numeric(x))  
  sum(x)/length(x)  
}  
mean2("a")
```

```
# Error in mean2("a"): is.numeric(x) is not TRUE
```

Output

Warnings: warning()

```
add_things_warning <- function(x = 1) {  
  x2 <- x*2  
  warning("My own warning message")  
  out <- x + x2  
  out  
}  
add_things_warning(2)
```

```
# Warning in add_things_warning(2):  My own warning  
message
```

```
[1] 6
```


Output

Messages: message()

```
add_things_message <- function(x = 1) {  
  x2 <- x*2  
  message("My own message")  
  out <- x + x2  
  out  
}  
add_things_message(2)  
  
# My own message
```

```
[1] 6
```

Output

Console output: cat() and print()

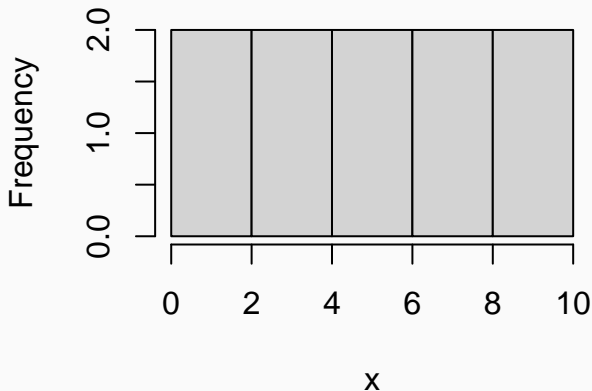
```
add_things_console <- function(x = 1) {  
  x2 <- x*2  
  print("My own console output")  
  cat("The output is not", x2)  
  out <- x + x2  
  out  
}  
add_things_console(2)  
  
# [1] "My own console output"  
# The output is not 4  
# [1] 6
```

Graphics output: Standard plots, ggplot2

```
createHist <- function(x) {  
  hist(x)  
  NULL  
}  
createHist(1:10)
```

Graphics output: Standard plots, ggplot2

Histogram of x



Programming advice

- Avoid output to the console
- Choose carefully whether something warrants a message, warning or error
- Plotting functions should return nothing or the plot as an object

Exercises



Functions III

Writing Functions

Before creating the function

- What should my function do?
- Input (Arguments)
- Output

After creating the function

- Test it
- Add input validation
- Document it

What makes a good function?

Pure functions!

- no side effects
- the only output is returned
- no dependency on global environment
- only input via arguments

Results in easier understanding and higher portability.

How can functions receive flexible numbers of inputs?

Examples:

- `sum()`
- `save()`
- ...

via dot dot dot (...)

```
add_all_things2 <- function(...) {  
  l <- list(...)  
  do.call(sum, l)  
}  
add_all_things2(2, 3, 5, 10)
```

[1] 20

on.exit()

Performing an action when the function terminates

```
add_things <- function(x, y) {  
  on.exit(cat("Sum of", x, "and", y))  
  x <- x + 20  
  x + y  
}  
out <- add_things(1, 2)
```

Sum of 21 and 2

```
out
```

```
[1] 23
```

Accessing the function call

Accessing the function call

```
showArgs <- function(x, y) {  
  match.call()  
}  
showArgs(1, 2)
```

```
showArgs(x = 1, y = 2)
```

Exercises



Debugging

- `browser()`
- `traceback()`
- `options(error = recover)`
- `options(warn = 2)`

browser()

Inspecting a function interactively

```
some_function <- function(x, y) {  
  z <- x + y  
  browser()  
  z  
}  
some_function(x = 1, y = 5)
```

browser()

```
> some_function <- function(x, y) {  
+   z <- x + y  
+   browser()  
+   z  
+ }  
> some_function(x = 1, y = 5)  
Called from: some_function(x = 1, y = 5)  
Browse[1]> |
```

browser()

Navigating within a browser:

ls() Show existing objects in the current environment

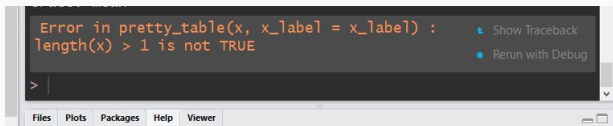
c Exit the browser and continue execution

Q Exit the browser, return to top level

where Show call stack

traceback()

Understanding the call stack:



traceback()

Understanding the call stack:

```
Error in pretty_table(x, x_label = x_label) :  
length(x) > 1 is not TRUE  
13. stop(simpleError(msg, call = if (p <- sys.parent(1L)) sys.c  
    all(p)))  
12. stopifnot(length(x) > 1)  
11. pretty_table(x, x_label = x_label)  
10. pretty_statistics(sub_dat$cy1, x_label = "cy1")  
9. FUN(data[x, , drop = FALSE], ...)  
8. FUN(x[[i]], ...)  
7. lapply(X = ans[index], FUN = FUN, ...)  
6. tapply(seq_len(32L), list('mtcars$carb' = c(4, 4, 1, 1, 2,  
    1,  
    4, 2, 2, 4, 4, 3, 3, 3, 4, 4, 4, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 2, 4, 2, 1,  
    2,  
    2, 4, 6, 8, 2)), function (x)  
    FUN(data[x, , drop = FALSE], ...), simplify = TRUE)  
5. eval(substitute(tapply(seq_len(nd), IND, FUNx, simplify = s  
    implify)),  
    data)  
4. eval(substitute(tapply(seq_len(nd), IND, FUNx, simplify = s  
    implify)),  
    data)  
3. structure(eval(substitute(tapply(seq_len(nd), IND, FUNx, si  
    mply = simplify)),  
    data), call = match.call(), class = "by")  
2. by.data.frame(mtcars, mtcars$carb, function(sub_dat) {  
    pretty_statistics(sub_dat$cy1, x_label = "cy1")  
})  
1. by(mtcars, mtcars$carb, function(sub_dat) {  
    pretty_statistics(sub_dat$cy1, x_label = "cy1")  
})  
> |
```

Being able to chose an environment from the call stack:

```
# on
options(error = recover)

# off
options(error = NULL)
```

Being able to choose an environment from a call stack:

```
Error in pretty_table(x, x_label = x_label) : length(x) > 1 is not TRUE
Enter a frame number, or 0 to exit

1: by(mtcars, mtcars$carb, function(sub_dat) {
  pretty_statistics(sub_dat$cy1, x_label = "Cy1")
2: by.data.frame(mtcars, mtcars$carb, function(sub_dat) {
  pretty_statistics(sub_dat$cy1, x_label = "Cy1")
3: structure(eval(substitute(tapply(seq_len(nd), IND, FUNx, simplify = simplify))), data), call =
4: eval(substitute(tapply(seq_len(nd), IND, FUNx, simplify = simplify))), data)
5: eval(substitute(tapply(seq_len(nd), IND, FUNx, simplify = simplify))), data)
6: tapply(seq_len(32), list(mtcars$carb), c(4, 4, 1, 1, 2, 1, 4, 2, 2, 4, 4, 3, 3, 3, 4, 4, 4,
7: tapply(X = ans[index], FUN = FUN, ...)
8: FUN(X[[i]], ...)
9: FUN(data[x, , drop = FALSE], ...)
10: #2: pretty_statistics(sub_dat$cy1, x_label = "Cy1")
11: #3: pretty_table(x, x_label = x_label)
12: #2: stopifnot(length(x) > 1)

Selection: |
```

Warnings

Turning warnings into errors

```
# on
options(warn = 2)

# off
options(warn = 1)
```


Exercises



Good programming practices

“Write code for humans, not for machines!”

Invest time in writing readable R-code.

- It will make collaborations easier
- It will make debugging easier
- It will help make your analyses reproducible

There is a complete *tidyverse* style-guide

<https://style.tidyverse.org/>.

Go easy on your eyes

- with spaces before and after: `- + / * = <- < == >`
- always use `<-` for assignments
- only use `=` in function calls
- use indentation (largely automatic in RStudio)
- `CamelCaseNames` vs `snake_case_names`
- be consistent!
- wrap long lines at column 70-80 (Rstudio)

White spaces

```
new_var=(var1*var2/2)-5/(var3+var4)
```

```
# versus
```

```
new_var <- (var1 * var2 / 2) - 5 / (var3 + var4)
```

Indentation

```
for(name in names){formula=as.formula(paste0("y~.",name))
fit<-lm(formula,data=my_data)
coefs[["name"]]=coef(fit)
print(name)
print(summary(fit))}
```

versus

```
for(name in names){
  formula <- as.formula(paste0("y~.", name))
  fit <- lm(formula, data = my_data)
  coefs[["name"]] <- coef(fit)
  print(name)
  print(summary(fit))
}
```

Wrap long lines

```
final_results <- data.frame(first_variable =  
  sqrt(results$mean_squared_error), second_variable =  
  paste0(results$condition, results$class, sep = ":"),  
  third_variable = results$bias)
```

versus

```
final_results <- data.frame(  
  first_variable = sqrt(results$mean_squared_error),  
  second_variable = paste0(results$condition,  
                           results$class, sep = ":"),  
  third_variable = results$bias)
```


Go easy on your mind

- use meaningful names: “self-explainable”
- always write the formal arguments in function calls (except the first)
- benefit from autocompletion (`<tab>`) => embrace longer names
- use `TRUE` and `FALSE` not `T` and `F`
- comment, comment, comment
 - not what (should be clear from the code)
 - but why
 - explain the reasoning, not the code

Use meaningful names

```
V <- myFun(m1_B)
```

```
# versus
```

```
RMSE_age_gender <- get_RMSE(lm_age_gender)
```

Programming advice

Use verbs for functions and nouns for objects.

Write formal arguments

Benefit from auto completion using tab

```
m1_B <- lm(outcome ~ age*gender,  
           exp1, condition_1, freq)
```

versus

```
lm_age_gender <- lm(outcome ~ age*gender,  
                   data = exp1,  
                   subset = condition_1,  
                   weights = freq)
```

Comment, comment, comment

```
## Start every Rscript with a comment that explains
##  what the code in the script does, why it does
##  this, and to which project it belongs.
##  Your future self will be very thankful!
##
## Mention which packages you are using in this Rscript.

## Use sections to separate chunks -----

## Maybe even subsections =====

## Recode variables so that missings are coded as "NA"
dat[dat %in% c(99, 999)] <- NA # missings coded 99 or 999
```

Keep your code slim

Try to limit your *package-dependencies*.

Only load `library()` the packages that you absolutely need. If you are only using `dplyr`, it does not make sense to load the complete `tidyverse`.

Controversial: when possible, use the `::` operator (and consider not loading the package). `<package>::<function>`

- explicit dependencies
- less name conflicts

Never Attach

Forget about `attach()`!

Don't use it, unless you completely understand what happens (see `?attach`).

Use `with(data.frame, expression)` instead.

```
# using with()
n <- 2e+4
data <- data.frame(x = runif(n),
                  y = runif(n),
                  z = seq_len(n))
result <- with(data, exp(x) / log(z) + 5 * sqrt(y))
```

Testing R code

Writing code is error prone. Incorporate tests and checks in your workflow. For instance, when you do data manipulations like a complex restructuring of the data, or a complex recoding of multiple variable, write some code that allows you the check whether the obtained results are what you want them to be.

- minimal examples
- write tests and checks
- helpful packages: `testthat`, `RUnit`, `testit`, ...

“Every project should get an RStudio Project!”

Don't use `setwd("path to my local folder")`

Issues when:

- folders names are changed
- folders are moved
- a shared drive is used
- you ZIP and send the folder

Don't save work space to `.RData`.

- Tools < Global Options < Workspace < Save workspace
- Save the code instead!
- `saveRDS()` and `readRDS()` for objects that require long computations

Don't use `rm(list = ls())` at the start of an Rscript.

- Start clean, every time.
- Keep it clean. No outside code, no outside computing.
- Regularly completely clean the work space (or restart the session).

```
.rs.restartR()
```

Keep it clean

- one folder per project!
- work on different projects in different RStudio instances!
- each with own R console, working directory, ...

Working with RStudio

Organize your project folder

- R-folder with R scripts
- Data-folder with data
- split long scripts in meaningful chunks
- use relative paths (alternative: here-package)

```
# read data
this_data <- read.csv("Data\\the-correct-file.csv")

# source Rscript
source("R\\0_first-script-to-source.R")
```

Use keyboard shortcuts

- Can make working in RStudio more efficient
- Completely tunable: Tools < Modify Keyboard Shortcuts...
- Useful shortcuts (defaults):
 - jump to editor: `ctrl + 1`
 - jump to console: `ctrl + 2`
 - jump to ...: `ctrl + 3-9`
 - jump to next tab: `ctrl + tab`
 - jump to previous tab: `ctrl + shift + tab`

More useful shortcuts (defaults):

- run selection/selected line: `ctrl + enter`
- save current file: `ctrl + s`
- close current file: `ctrl + w`
- restart R: `ctrl + shift + F10`
- Show help (for function at cursor) `F1`
- Show source code (for function at cursor) `F2`

More on this [HERE](#).

Exercises



Wrap Up

General Advice

- Investing time in learning R pays off
- It's a steady learning curve
- Learn from masters
- Rewrite important code - the first attempt is usually not the best approach

General R Advice

- Document well
- Use a consistent style
- Write functions
- Split long functions in smaller ones
- Write wrappers
- Use Iteration (don't copy paste)
- Use matrix operations and vectorized functions instead of loops
- Use git

R Resources

- Advanced R Ed. 1 (<http://adv-r.had.co.nz/>)
- Advanced R Ed. 2 (<https://adv-r.hadley.nz/>)
- R Inferno (https://www.burns-stat.com/pages/Tutor/R_inferno.pdf)
- R Packages (<https://r-pkgs.org/>)
- Clean Code (<https://enos.itcollege.ee/~jpoial/oop/naited/Clean%20Code.pdf>)

Thank you for your attention!

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Questions? Remarks?