



# R Code – Asking better coding questions

Ken Mwai



# Pointers

- R is free software
- Constructed and maintained by volunteers
- The R-spirit is kept alive by the community

Remember : We (They) have limited time



# Golden Rule

- The Golden Rule: Imagine You're Trying To Answer The Question

(And yes, this does smack somewhat of Matthew 7:12.)



Why do you ask a question ::

- Solve an existing problem
- Debug an error
- ....



# Before you ask

1. Search, and research –> keep track of what you find.
  1. <https://stackoverflow.com/tags/r/info>
  2. <https://rseek.org/>
  3. <https://www.r-project.org/help.html>
  4. ? Many more
  5. <https://epirhandbook.com/en/index.html>
2. Write a title that summarizes the specific problem
  - Remember you are talking to a busy colleague
  - Spelling, grammar and punctuation are important! (Impression).



Kindly assist, I get this error

'Not all of the characters in D:/Academia/R-Programming/Notes\_2/Vectors\_Exercise\_1.R could be encoded using ASCII. To save using a different encoding, choose "File | Save with Encoding..." from the main menu.'

'Not all of the characters in D:/Academia/R-Programming/Notes\_2/Vectors\_Exercise\_1.R could be encoded using ISO8859-1. To save using a different encoding, choose "File | Save with Encoding..." from the main menu.'

What encoding should be used? Or what is the issue?



**Dennis Wamalabe Mukhebi** 1:25 PM

```
assign("y",1,3,5,2,4,15,13,21)
```

Error in assign("y", 1, 3, 5, 2, 4, 15, 13, 21) :  
unused arguments (15, 13, 21)



[3 replies](#) Last reply today at 3:13 PM



**Dennis Wamalabe Mukhebi** 3:12 PM

```
y[3,4,8]
```

Error in y[3, 4, 8] : incorrect number of dimensions  
>



[2 replies](#) Last reply today at 4:10 PM

- Important to highlight what language and platform you're using.

*The basics should usually be communicated through tags*

The screenshot shows a Stack Overflow question page. The question is titled "How do I undo the most recent local commits in Git?" and is marked as "PUBLIC". It has 24141 views and -43 votes. The question text is: "I accidentally committed the wrong files to `Git` but didn't push the commit to the server yet. How can I undo those commits from the local repository?" The answer provided is: "The only way seems to be to copy the edits in some kind of GUI text editor, then wipe the whole local clone, then re-clone the repository, then re-applying the edits. However, 

- This can cause data loss.
- It's very hard to do this when only an accidental `git commit` was run.

 Is there a better way?" The tags are `git`, `version-control`, `git-commit`, and `undo`. The question was asked 12 years, 10 months ago, modified 1 month ago, and viewed 10.8m times. The answer was edited on Jan 7 at 20:23 by Peter Mortensen, a community wiki member with 89 revisions and 60 users (13% of the community).

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Asked 12 years, 10 months ago Modified 1 month ago Viewed 10.8m times

How do I undo the most recent local commits in Git?

24141 -43

I accidentally committed the wrong files to `Git` but didn't push the commit to the server yet. How can I undo those commits from the local repository?

The only way seems to be to copy the edits in some kind of GUI text editor, then wipe the whole local clone, then re-clone the repository, then re-applying the edits. However,

- This can cause data loss.
- It's very hard to do this when only an accidental `git commit` was run.

Is there a better way?

`git` `version-control` `git-commit` `undo`

Share Edit Follow Flag edited Jan 7 at 20:23 community wiki 89 revs, 60 users 13% Peter Mortensen

The Overflow Blog

- Give us 23 minutes, we'll give you some flow state (Ep. 428)
- Best practices to increase the speed for Next.js apps

Featured on Meta

- Stack Exchange Q&A access will not be restricted in Russia
- Staging Ground Workflow: Question Details & Actions
- Ask Wizard for New Users Feature Test is now Live
- Calling up moderators from the 2021 election - welcome, Dharman & Ryan M!

```
x <- "3"  
x*2
```

```
## Error in x * 2: non-numeric argument to binary operator
```

Examples:

Bad: multiplication error

Good: Why does x\*2 evaluation in R return an error when x is set to "2"?

- A question such as “Why doesn’t this work?” makes absolutely no sense without the rest of the question.





3. Introduce the problem before you post any code (Well, what did you expect it to do? What are you trying to accomplish? What have you already tried? )

- Expand on the summary put on the title
- Explain the path to the problem
- Explain the difficulties

```
I am trying to multiply an object in R but I get an evaluation error.  
I first define an object `x="3"` then  
multiply that by 2 as shown below. I tried ...
```

4. Help others reproduce the problem (Sample code and data)
- Include some code if the problem is code related.
    - **NB: don't just copy in your entire script!**
    - **Include just enough code to allow error reproducibility**
  - Point out differences between your situation and other common ones
  - **DO NOT** post images of code, data, error messages, etc.



I am trying to multiply an object in R but I get an evaluation error.  
I first define an object `x="3"` then  
multiply that by 2 as shown below. I tried ...

Below is the code I was working with.

```
x <- "3"  
x*2
```

```
## Error in x * 2: non-numeric argument to binary operator
```



5. Proof-read before posting!
6. Look for help asking for help
7. Post the answer if you get it before someone answers.



# Making a good impression

- Register as a user and give yourself a meaningful name.

The screenshot shows the Stack Overflow profile page for a user named Keniajin. The profile includes a header with the user's name, a profile picture, and navigation links for 'Edit profile' and 'Profiles'. Below the header, there's a 'Summary' section with a reputation graph showing growth from 947 in 2019 to 1,579 in 2022. The 'BADGES' section shows 2 gold, 21 silver, and 41 bronze badges. The 'IMPACT' section shows ~137k people reached and 10 posts edited. The 'Questions' and 'Answers' sections are visible at the bottom, showing recent activity.

**Stack Overflow** Products  1,579 2 21 41

**Keniajin** [Edit profile](#) [Profiles](#)

Member for 9 years, 9 months Last seen this week Visited 1437 days, 3 consecutive  
keniajin.com Kilifi, Kenya

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**Summary**

**REPUTATION**  
1,579  
top 24% overall  
+70

1.6k 1.3k 947  
2019 2020 2021 2022

**BADGES**  
2 21 41

**IMPACT**  
~137k people reached 10 posts edited  
0 helpful flags 41 votes cast

**Questions**  
View all 36 questions

Score	Activity	Newest	Views
0	shinyAppDir not adjusting height	Apr 5, 2021	
2	Error take() does not accept boolean...	Mar 25, 2021	

**Answers**  
View all 32 answers

Score	Activity	Newest
0	shinyAppDir not adjusting height	Apr 13, 2021
1	From two selectInputs in the server, ho...	Apr 9, 2021



- Keep an eye on your question.
- Don't add your own answer unless it really is an answer.
- There's no need to include greetings and sign-offs
  - such as "Hi everyone!" and "Thanks – hope to get an answer soon" in the question.
- Above all, be polite. On community websites that:  
Remember no-one is getting paid to answer your question.