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Computer Statistics with R

3. Probability Distributions and Simulation Basics



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Info _

These tutorials are likely to contain bugs and typos. In case you find any don't hesitate to *contact us*! Thanks in advance!

3.1. Preliminaries

3.1.1. Basic probability distributions

R has a built-in support for calculating e.g. the values of functions related to the following well-known probability distributions:

Distribution	Name	Parameters	Identifier
Bin(n,p)	Binomial	$n \in \mathbb{N}, p \in (0,1)$	*binom
Geom(p)	Geometric	$p \in (0,1)$	*geom
$\mathrm{Hyp}(m,n,k)$	Hypergeometric	$m, n, k \in \mathbb{N}, k \leq m$	*hyper
$\operatorname{NegBin}(n,p)$	Negative Binomial	$n \in \mathbb{N}, p \in (0,1)$	*nbinom
$Poi(\lambda)$	Poisson	$\lambda > 0$	*pois
B(a,b)	Beta	a > 0, b > 0	*beta
C(l=0, s=1)	Cauchy	$l \in \mathbb{R}, s > 0$	*cauchy
χ^2_{d}	Chi-square	$d \in \mathbb{N}$	*chisq
$\operatorname{Exp}(\lambda = 1)$	Exponential	$\lambda > 0$	*exp
$\mathbf{F}^{[d_1,d_2]}$	Snedecor's F	$d_1,d_2\in\mathbb{N}$	*f
$\Gamma(a,s)$	Gamma	a > 0, s > 0	*gamma
$Logis(\mu = 0, s = 1)$	Logistic	$\mu \in \mathbb{R}, s > 0$	*logis
$LogN(\mu = 0, \sigma = 1)$	Log-normal	$\mu \in \mathbb{R}, \sigma > 0$	*lnorm
$N(\mu = 0, \sigma = 1)$	Normal	$\mu \in \mathbb{R}, \sigma > 0$	*norm
U(a=0,b=1)	Uniform	a < b	*unif
$t^{[d]}$	Student's t	$d \in \mathbb{N}$	*t
Wei(a, s = 1)	Weibull	a > 0, s > 0	*weibull

The function prefix, *, may be one of the following:

•	Prefix	Meaning
	d	density (PDF) $f(x)$ or
	p	probability mass function (PMF) $P(X = x)$ cumulative probability distribution function (CDF) $F(x) = P(X \le x)$
	q	quantile function $\simeq F^{-1}(p)$
	r	generation of random deviates

where X is a random variable.



Info

For convenience, some distributions have default parameters (see the *Distribution* column). For example, pnorm(3) is the same as pnorm(3,0,1), i.e. the value of the CDF of the N(0,1) (standardized normal) distribution at 3.

3.1.1.1. Cumulative distribution function

The value of the CDF, F(x), of a chosen probability distribution may be calculated by choosing the prefix p, e.g.

```
pnorm(0) # CDF of the standard normal distribution at 0
## [1] 0.5
pnorm(c(1, 2, 3)) # CDF of the standard normal distribution at 1,2, and 3
## [1] 0.8413 0.9772 0.9987
```

Further function arguments determine parameters of the distribution, e.g.:

```
pnorm(0, 2, 1) # CDF of the N(2,1) distribution at 0
## [1] 0.02275
ppois(10, 3) # CDF of the Poi(3) distribution at 10
## [1] 0.9997
```

Also, the so-called *survival function*, defined as S(x) = 1 - F(x) = P(X > x), may be computed by using the lower.tail=F parameter:

```
pnorm(0.2, lower.tail = F) # survival fun. of the std. normal distrib. at 0
## [1] 0.4207
```

Obviously, the above is equivalent to:

```
1 - pnorm(0.2)
## [1] 0.4207
```

3.1.1.2. Density function

The prefix d preceding the distribution identifier stands for a probability density function (in case of continuous random variables) or a probability mass function (in case of discrete distributions), e.g.:

```
dexp(0) # the value of f(0), where f is the PDF of Exp(1)
## [1] 1
dexp(c(0, 0.5, 1), 0.5) # f(0), f(0.5), f(1) for Exp(0.5)
## [1] 0.5000 0.3894 0.3033
pr <- dbinom(0:8, 8, 0.25) # Pr(X=i) for X~Bin(8, 1/4), i=0,1,...,8
round(pr, 3) # print the results rounded to 3 decimal places
## [1] 0.100 0.267 0.311 0.208 0.087 0.023 0.004 0.000 0.000</pre>
```

3.1.1.3. Quantile function

Theoretical quantiles may be calculated using the q prefix. The first argument of each such function is the quantile order, e.g.

```
qt(0.95, 5) # 0.95-quantile of the t distribution with 5 degrees of freedom
## [1] 2.015
qt(0.95, c(1, 5, 10, 15)) # many degrees of freedom at a time
## [1] 6.314 2.015 1.812 1.753
qt(0.95, Inf) # the standard normal distribution
## [1] 1.645
qnorm(0.95)
## [1] 1.645
qt(0.95, 1) # the standard Cauchy distribution
## [1] 6.314
qcauchy(0.95)
## [1] 6.314
qt(c(0.95, 0.975, 0.99, 0.995), 5)
## [1] 2.015 2.571 3.365 4.032
qt(c(0.95, 0.975, 0.99, 0.995), c(1, 5, 10, 15)) # and what is that?
## [1] 6.314 2.571 2.764 2.947
```

If the selected probability distribution of a random variable X is not continuous, then the quantile function at q returns the smallest number $x \in \text{supp}(X)$, for which $P(X \le x) \ge q$, where supp(X) is the support of X.

```
qbinom(c(0.4, 0.5, 0.6), 5, 0.5)
## [1] 2 2 3
pbinom(0:5, 5, 0.5) # (for comparison)
## [1] 0.03125 0.18750 0.50000 0.81250 0.96875 1.00000
```

3.1.1.4. Generation of random deviates

The prefix **r** stands for a procedure for generation of (pseudo¹-)random numbers. The desired number of observations to be generated should be passed as the first function argument, e.g.:

```
runif(5) # 5 random observations from the uniform distribution on [0,1]
## [1] 0.93595 0.05763 0.71548 0.24401 0.62898
runif(10, 0, 5) # 10 random deviates from U([0,5])
## [1] 0.6642 1.0883 3.6624 1.4793 0.3366 3.1328 4.7619 4.9935 0.2220 3.0148
rpois(20, 4)
## [1] 4 7 3 5 8 6 4 2 5 7 5 5 9 3 3 3 1 5 4 4
```

Many useful information on R-built-in pseudo-random number generators may be found in the manual, see ?set.seed.

It is worth noting that a generator may be initialized with a given seed by using the set.seed() function. This leads to repeatable results, which may be sometimes desirable. By default, the seed is current-time based and hence the generated deviates appear as "random".

3.1.2. Sampling with and without replacement

To take a random sample (without replacement) of specified size n from a set S, we call sample(S, n). Sampling with replacement may be done by using additional replace=TRUE parameter.

For example, n = 15 coin tosses may be simulated by calling:

The parameter n may be omitted — then we get a random permutation of a given set, e.g.:

```
sample(1:10)
## [1] 1 7 5 6 10 8 4 9 2 3
```

¹Anyone who considers arithmetical methods of producing random digits is, of course, in a state of sin. For, as has been pointed out several times, there is no such thing as a random number — there are only methods to produce random numbers, and a strict arithmetic procedure of course is not such a method (John von Neumann, 1951). However, such numbers behave just as they were random (with respect to several testable criteria). The reader interested in algorithmic pseudo-random number generators is referred to [1; 2].

3.1.3. ★ Special functions

3.1.3.1. ★ Gamma function

The gamma function was first defined by Legendre as

$$\Gamma(x) = \int_0^\infty t^{x-1} e^{-t} dt, \tag{3.1}$$

for x > 0.

Here are some of its basic properties.

- 1. $\Gamma(1) = 1$,
- 2. $\Gamma(x+1) = x\Gamma(x)$,
- 3. $n \in \mathbb{N} \Rightarrow \Gamma(n) = (n-1)!$,
- 4. $\Gamma(x) = \int_0^1 \left(\ln \frac{1}{t} \right)^{x-1} dt$.

The Γ function is available in R as gamma().

3.1.3.2. ★ Euler beta function

The Euler beta function is given by:

$$B(x,y) = \int_0^1 t^{x-1} (1-t)^{y-1} dt$$
 (3.2)

for x > 0 and y > 0.

It may be shown that the following properties hold.

- 1. B(x,y) = B(y,x),
- 2. $B(x,y) = \frac{\Gamma(x)\Gamma(y)}{\Gamma(x+y)}$,
- 3. $\binom{n}{k} = \frac{1}{(n+1)B(n-k+1,k+1)}$.

The values of B may be calculated in R by means of the beta() function.

3.1.3.3. ★ Incomplete and regularized beta functions

The *incomplete beta function* is a generalization of the B function:

$$B_i(u, x, y) = \int_0^u t^{x-1} (1 - t)^{y-1} dt$$
(3.3)

for $x > 0, y > 0, u \in [0, 1]$.

Obviously, $B_i(1, x, y) = B(x, y)$.

The regularized beta function is defined as:

$$I(u, x, y) = \frac{B_i(u, x, y)}{B(x, y)}$$
 (3.4)

for x > 0, y > 0 and $u \in [0, 1]$.

It is easily seen that I(u, x, y) is equivalent to the value of the CDF of the beta B(x, y) distribution at u. Therefore, it may be calculated with the pbeta() function.

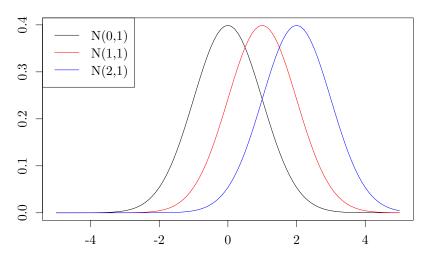
3.2. Examples

Ex. 3.1. Draw the PDF and the CDF of the following distributions: a) N(0,1), b) N(1,1), c) N(2,1).

Solution.

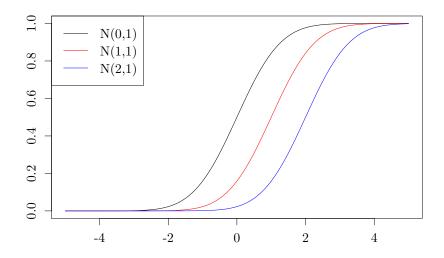
Let us plot the probability density functions for the normal distributions with different location parameters:

```
x <- seq(-5, 5, by = 0.1)
plot(x, dnorm(x), type = "1", col = 1, ylab = "", main = "")
lines(x, dnorm(x, 1, 1), col = 2)  # adds another curve
lines(x, dnorm(x, 2, 1), col = 4)  # and another one
legend("topleft", c("N(0,1)", "N(1,1)", "N(2,1)"), col = c(1, 2, 4), lty = 1)</pre>
```



The plots of the CDFs may be created in a similar way:

```
x <- seq(-5, 5, by = 0.1)
plot(x, pnorm(x), col = 1, main = "", ylab = "", type = "l")
lines(x, pnorm(x, 1, 1), col = 2)
lines(x, pnorm(x, 2, 1), col = 4)
legend("topleft", c("N(0,1)", "N(1,1)", "N(2,1)"), col = c(1, 2, 4), lty = 1)</pre>
```



 \Box

Ex. 3.2. The height of a group of people is described by the normal distribution with expectation of 173 cm and standard deviation of 6 cm.

- 1. Calculate the probability that the height of a randomly selected person is less than or equal to 179 cm.
- 2. Calculate the fraction of people of height between 167 and 180 cm.
- 3. What is the probability that a person's height is not less than 181 cm?
- 4. Calculate the height value not exceeded by 60% of the population.

Solution.

The height of a randomly selected person is described by a random variable $X \sim N$ (173, 6). Firstly, we are interested in calculating P ($X \le 179$):

```
pnorm(179, 173, 6)
## [1] 0.8413
```

Next we determine $P(167 \le X \le 180)$. However, as X is a continuous random variable, it holds P(X = 167) = 0. Thus, it suffices to calculate $P(167 < X \le 180)$:

```
pnorm(180, 173, 6) - pnorm(167, 173, 6)
## [1] 0.7197
```

The third question concerns $P(X \ge 181) = P(X > 181)$:

```
1 - pnorm(181, 173, 6) # or equivalently:

## [1] 0.09121

pnorm(181, 173, 6, lower.tail = F)

## [1] 0.09121
```

Lastly, the $q_{0.6}$ quantile of the N (173, 6) distribution is equal to:

```
qnorm(0.6, 173, 6)
## [1] 174.5
```

•

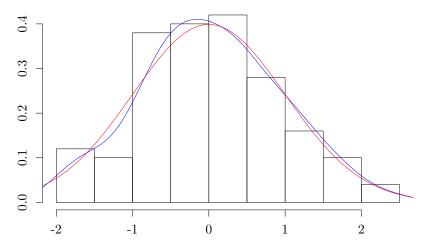
Ex. 3.3. Generate n = 100 random deviates from the standard normal distribution. Draw a histogram, a kernel density estimator, and the theoretical density. Discuss the results.

Solution.

The solution to this exercise is quite simple:

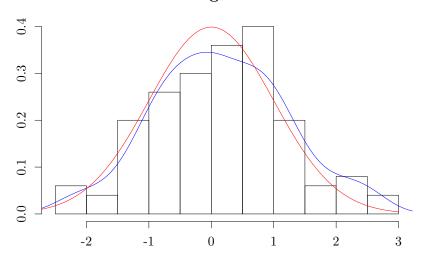
```
n <- 100
x <- rnorm(n) # n random deviates
hist(x, prob = T)
lines(density(x), col = "blue")
curve(dnorm(x), from = -3, to = 3, col = "red", add = T)</pre>
```

Histogram of x



Obviously, another random sample will (almost surely) consist of different observations. Therefore, it is advised to examine the outputs of a few replications of the experiment (by calling the above code several times).

Histogram of x



 $oldsymbol{\cdot}$

Ex. 3.4. Draw a plot of probability mass functions of the following binomial distributions: Bin(10, 0.25), Bin(100, 0.25), Bin(1000, 0.25).

Solution.

First we calculate P(X = k) for k = 0, 1, ..., 10 and $X \sim Bin(10, 0.25)$:

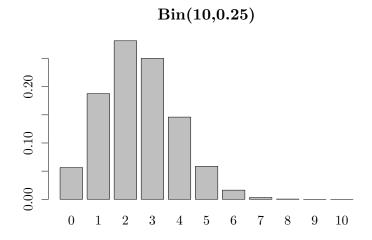
```
x \leftarrow dbinom(0:10, 10, 0.25)
```

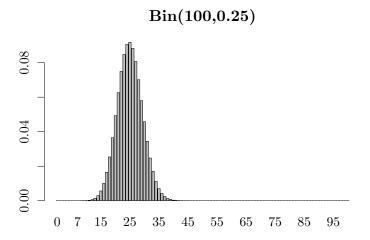
We perform similar calculations in case of the other distributions.

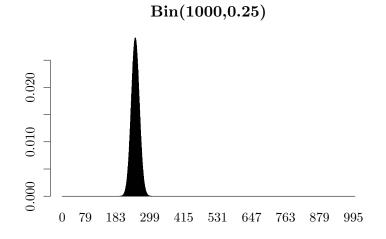
```
y <- dbinom(0:100, 100, 0.25)
z <- dbinom(0:1000, 1000, 0.25)
```

Let us draw the probability mass functions as bar plots.

```
barplot(x, names.arg = 0:10, main = "Bin(10,0.25)")
barplot(y, names.arg = 0:100, main = "Bin(100,0.25)")
barplot(z, names.arg = 0:1000, main = "Bin(1000,0.25)")
```









Task

Recall one of the Central Limit Theorems. What do these figures illustrate?

 $oldsymbol{\cdot}$

Ex. 3.5. Given a random number generator (RNG) from the uniform distribution on (0,1), generate random deviates form the Pareto distribution with parameter a=2.

Solution.



Note

Theorem. Let F be the CDF of a continuous random variable X. Then $X = F^{-1}(U)$, where $U \sim \mathrm{U}(0,1)$.

The described method is called *inverse transform sampling*. It allows for generating random deviates from many distributions by using the U(0,1) random number generator.

Inverse transform sampling

The PDF of a random variable X from the Pareto distribution with shape parameter $a \ge 0$ is defined as

$$f(x) = \frac{a}{x^{a+1}},\tag{3.5}$$

for x > 1. The CDF is given by

$$F(x) = (1 - 1/x^{a}), (3.6)$$

and hence

$$F^{-1}(u) = (1-u)^{-1/a}. (3.7)$$

Therefore the random variable $F^{-1}(U) = (1 - U)^{-1/2}$, where $U \sim \mathrm{U}(0, 1)$, has the Pareto distribution with shape parameter a = 2.

The random sample may be generated as follows:

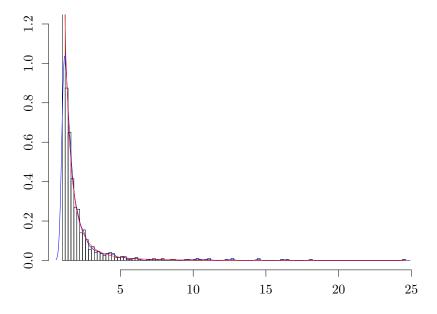
```
 \begin{array}{l} n <- \ 1000 \\ u <- \ runif(n) \\ x <- \ (1 - \ u)^(-0.5) \\ \# \ or: \ x <- \ u^(-0.5) \ \# \ note: \ 1-u \ and \ u \ has \ the \ same \ distributions \\ \end{array}
```

Let us draw a histogram, a kernel density estimator, and the theoretical PDF:

```
hist(x, prob = T, main = NA, ylim = c(0, 1.2), breaks = 100)

lines(density(x), col = "blue")

curve(2/x^3, add = T, col = "red", from = 1)
```



 $oldsymbol{\cdot}$

Ex. 3.6. Calculate the area of $A = \{(x, y) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : 0 < x < 1; 0 < y < x^2\}$ using the Monte Carlo Integration method.

Solution.



Note

Monte Carlo Integration. Let $X_1, Y_1, X_2, Y_2, ...$ be independent random variables with the uniform distribution U([0,1]). For a given continuous function $f:[0,1] \to [0,1]$ we define

$$Z_i = \mathbf{1} \left(Y_i \le f(X_i) \right), \tag{3.8}$$

where $\mathbf{1}(\cdot)$ is the indicator function. Then, from the strong law of large numbers, it almost surely holds

$$\lim_{n \to \infty} \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n} Z_i = \int_0^1 f(x) \, dx. \tag{3.9}$$

The method was proposed by a Polish mathematician Stanisław Ulam, who participated in the famous Manhattan Project.



Task

The generalization of this method for different (interval-based) domains and co-domains is left to the reader as an easy exercise.

The area of A is equal to

$$\int_A dx \, dy = \int_0^1 \left(\int_0^{x^2} dy \right) \, dx = \int_0^1 x^2 \, dx = \frac{1}{3}.$$

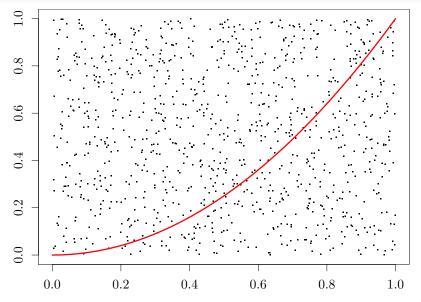
Let us calculate its approximate value by the Monte Carlo Integration method.

Firstly, we generate a random sample $(U_1, V_1, \dots, U_n, V_n)$ from the uniform distribution:

```
n <-\ 1000 # the larger the number, the better the approximation u <-\ runif(n) v <-\ runif(n)
```

Let us plot the points $(U_1, V_1), \ldots, (U_n, V_n)$ and the function $y = x^2, x \in [0, 1]$.

```
plot(u, v, xlim = c(0, 1), ylim = c(0, 1), pch = ".")
curve(x * x, col = "red", type = "l", lwd = 3, add = T)
```



Then we count the number of points which fall below the graph of $y = x^2$:

```
z \leftarrow (v \leftarrow u * u) # a logical vector sum(z) # recall that TRUE=1 and FALSE=0 ## [1] 329
```

Therefore the area is approximately equal to:

```
mean(z)
## [1] 0.329
```

•

3.3. Conditional statements

Conditional statements allow us to branch an algorithm's control flow. They work in much the same way as their C/C++ versions.

3.3.1. if..else

The syntax of the if..else statement is:

```
if (Condition)
{
     ... statements ...
}
```

```
or:
if (Condition)
{
    ... statements ...
} else {
    ... statements ...
}
```

<u>N</u>

Note

Note that the else keyword must be put in the same line as the if-block's closing brace — otherwise R's parser will not interpret it correctly.

```
a <- runif(1)
if (a < 0.5) print("less")
else print("more") # ERROR: unexpected 'else'</pre>
```

```
a <- runif(1)
if (a < 0.5) print("less") else print("more")
## [1] "less"</pre>
```

3.3.2. ifelse() function

ifelse returns a vector of values chosen among two possibilities according to a given conditioning vector.

Consider the following example.

```
test <- (1:10)%%2 == TRUE
yes <- rep("yes", 10)
no <- rep("no", 10)
ret <- ifelse(test, yes, no)
ret
## [1] "yes" "no" "yes" "no" "yes" "no" "yes" "no"</pre>
```

Therefore, if else statement may be considered as a "vectorized" case of if..else. It is similar to the C's ?: operator.

Here is an interesting illustration from the R manual:

```
x < -c(6:-4)
sqrt(x) # gives warning
## Warning: NaNs produced
## [1] 2.449 2.236 2.000 1.732 1.414 1.000 0.000
                                                                NaN
                                                                      NaN
                                                    NaN
                                                          NaN
sqrt(ifelse(x >= 0, x, NA)) # no warning
## [1] 2.449 2.236 2.000 1.732 1.414 1.000 0.000
                                                     NA
                                                           NA
                                                                 NA
                                                                       ΝA
ifelse(x >= 0, sqrt(x), NA) # warning - why?
## Warning: NaNs produced
## [1] 2.449 2.236 2.000 1.732 1.414 1.000 0.000
```

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3.4. Loops

3.4.1. for **loop**

The for loop iterates through all elements of a vector. A loop variable is used to control the execution of a given code block.

The syntax is:

```
for (Variable in Vector)
{
    ... statements ...
}
```

statements are performed length(Vector) times. In each iteration of the loop, Variable is being assigned one of the consecutive values from Vector, that is: Vector[1], Vector[2],...This is similar to the foreach loop in C#.

Example:

The brackets $\{\cdot\}$ may of course be omitted in case of only one statement to be iterated.

```
for (i in 1:5) print(2^i)
## [1] 2
## [1] 4
## [1] 8
## [1] 16
## [1] 32
```

3.4.2. while loop

Here is the syntax of the while loop:

```
while (Condition)
{
    ... statements ...
}
```

commands are executed until the Condition is false (while Condition is true). Let us find the greatest power of 2 smaller than 100.

```
i <- 0
while (2^i < 100) {
    i <- i + 1
}
print(c(i, 2^i)) # Move back one step (why?)
## [1] 7 128
print(c(i - 1, 2^(i - 1)))
## [1] 6 64</pre>
```

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Details

break breaks out of a loop of any type. The control is transferred to the first statement outside the currently executed loop.

next halts the processing of the current iteration and advances to the next.

Both next and break apply only to the inner-most loop in case of nested loops.

```
i <- 0
sumEven <- 0
while (i < 10) {
    i < -i + 1
    if (i\%2 == 1)
        next
    print(i)
    sumEven <- sumEven + i</pre>
}
## [1] 2
## [1] 4
## [1] 6
## [1] 8
## [1] 10
print(sumEven)
## [1] 30
```

3.4.3. repeat loop

The syntax for the repeat loop is as follows.

```
repeat
{
    ... statements ...
}
```

statements are executed until we break out of the loop implicitly (with the break statement).

```
i <- 0
repeat {
    if (2^(i + 1) >= 100)
        break
    i <- i + 1
}
print(c(i, 2^i))
## [1] 6 64</pre>
```

3.4.4. A note on efficiency

In many applications, the use of loops in R is highly inefficient. We should use other solutions where possible.

Consider the following example:

```
v <- numeric(10)
for (i in 1:10) v[i] <- 2^i
v</pre>
```

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```
## [1] 2 4 8 16 32 64 128 256 512 1024
```

We apply a vector (*sic!*) operator ^ 10 times — for each element of v. That is OK in imperative languages like C++. In R (a higher-level language), it would be better to express the above example using only *one* (optimized for speed) call to ^:

```
v <- 2^(1:10)
print(v) # operations on vectors only
## [1] 2 4 8 16 32 64 128 256 512 1024</pre>
```

Does it really matter? One more example: we want to calculate a vector of numbers a_1, \ldots, a_n where $a_i = \left(1 + \frac{1}{i}\right)^i$ (consecutive approximations to the number e).

Compare the run times (returned by system.time()) of the following expressions.

```
> n <- 1000000
> a1 <- numeric(n) # empty vector of size n
> system.time( { for (i in 1:n) a1[i] <- (1+1/i)^i } ) # using for loop
> system.time( { a2 <- (1+1/(1:n))^(1:n) } ) # operations on vectors</pre>
```

The results were as follows (see the user column, which gives the real processing time in seconds²):

```
# using the for loop:
    user system elapsed
4.320    0.041    4.423
# operations on vectors:
    user system elapsed
0.172    0.006    0.180
```

However, some tasks, due their *iterative* nature, cannot be performed without explicit usage of looping statements.

3.4.5. replicate() function

The replicate() function is designed to perform e.g. some random experiment several times. It returns all results as a vector or a matrix.

It is very convenient and will be often used throughout our course.

Here is its syntax:

```
replicate(HowManyTimes,
{
    ... different tasks, e.g. sampling, arithmetic operations etc. ...
    return the result as a vector (also: a "single" number)
})
```

For example:

```
results <- replicate(50, {
    sample <- rnorm(10) # a random sample from N(0,1) of size 10
    sd(sample) # the result of the experiment
})
results</pre>
```

 $^{^2{\}rm The}$ results were obtained on GNU/Linux 2.6.40.6-0.fc15.x86_64 SMP, model name : Intel(R) Core(TM) i5 CPU M 430 2.27GHz, cache size : 3072 KB, MemTotal: 4 GB.

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```
## [1] 0.8347 1.2021 0.7779 1.3208 1.0446 0.9824 0.9982 1.1797 1.2201 1.0453 ## [11] 0.9548 0.4724 0.7428 0.5856 1.3047 1.0624 0.9653 1.2153 1.0636 0.9744 ## [21] 0.8121 0.7267 1.1399 0.9268 0.9934 1.2465 1.0432 1.6088 1.0500 0.9551 ## [31] 1.3184 0.6913 0.7772 0.9299 0.9923 1.2695 0.7269 0.8675 1.0583 1.3358 ## [41] 1.3599 0.9471 0.9415 0.9958 0.8521 0.9697 0.5135 1.0761 0.7168 1.1381 mean(results) ## [1] 0.9985
```

Bibliography

- [1] D.E. Knuth. Sztuka programowania. Tom II. Algorytmy seminumeryczne. WNT, 2002.
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