

Manual for tsRFinder

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Abstract

The tsRFinder is a lightweight, fast and reliable tool for prediction and annotation of tRNA-derived small RNAs using next-generation sequencing data. It's a free open source software available at <https://github.com/wangqinhu/tsRFinder>.

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1 Introduction

Small RNAs, such as miRNA, siRNA, and piRNA, are key regulators of gene expression. The tRNA-derived small RNA (tsRNA) is a recently identified novel class of small RNA, no public tool has tailored for tsRNA analysis yet. We thus developed tsRFinder for tsRNA prediction and annotation with additional sequence and statistical analysis, using small RNA sequencing data and the reference genome sequences.

2 How to install

2.1 Dependency

The tsRFinder depends on a few free open source softwares, please check and install them at first:

- Perl, v5.10.1 or higher, required for tsRFinder.pl execution.
Always build-in in most of the UNIX-like OS.
- R, v2.15.2 or higher, required for small RNA data analysis and illustration.
<http://www.r-project.org>
- bowtie, v1.0.0 or higher, required for small RNA mapping.
<https://github.com/BenLangmead/bowtie>
- tRNAscan-SE, v1.3.1 or higher, required for tRNA prediction. It's optional if you prefer manual tRNA input.
<http://lowelab.ucsc.edu/tRNAscan-SE>

2.2 Installation

tsRFinder is maintained on GitHub and is ready-to-use, no compilation is required. However, if you take some time to improve the configuration, it may save you a lot of time for trouble shooting.

First, you may clone ¹ tsRFinder by typing:

¹If git is not installed, download it from <http://git-scm.com>

Clone tsRFinder

```
git clone https://github.com/wangqinhu/tsRFinder.git
```

in the terminal. Alternatively, you may download it from

Latest release of tsRFinder

```
https://github.com/wangqinhu/tsRFinder/releases/latest
```

and then decompress the zip file or the tarball.

Once tsRFinder is cloned or unpacked, move the entire directory to a proper place (or current working directory, such as home directory) and add the tsRFinder path to your environment settings. For example, if tsRFinder is placed in /the/path/of/tsRFinder, then type the following in the terminal if you are using bash.

Setup tsRFinder

```
echo export tsR_dir="/the/path/of/tsRFinder" >> $HOME/.bashrc  
source ~/.bashrc
```

tsRFinder is now ready for your dataset.

3 How to use

3.1 Preparing the dataset

Before running tsRFinder, you are asked to prepare/download the following two files: (1) the reference genome sequence, or the reference tRNA sequence and, (2) the small RNA reads.

You are strongly recommended to use the reference genome sequence and raw small RNA sequencing data since tsRFinder is capable of preparing the reference tRNA data and clean small RNA data automatically. In case you prefer to use manually prepared tRNA and small RNA files, you may run the demo data (enable debug mode in command line option: *-m debug*) and find out which exact format of tRNA reference and small RNA files is

acceptable instead. This is allowed but not encouraged. The user can also access the format description in the FAQ section.

3.2 Running the pipeline

tsRFinder has two ways for arguments input, either configuration file or command line option. We recommend you to use a command line option for debugging and building your configuration file. Once your inputs are determined, you can write it to a configuration file for analysis.

Once tsRFinder is properly installed, you can run tsRFinder from terminal directly, see the usage below.

Usage of tsRFinder: ./tsRFinder.pl -h

tsRFinder usage:

tsRFinder.pl <option>

-c Configuration file
-l Label
-g Reference genomic sequence file, conflict with -t
-t Reference tRNA sequence file, conflict with -g
-s Small RNA sequence file
-a Adaptor sequence
-n Min read length [default 18]
-x Max read length [default 45]
-e Min expression level [default 10]
-u Mature tsRNA level cut-off [default 10]
-f Small RNA family threshold [default 72]
-w tRNA with/without label [default no/yes]
-o Output compressed tarball [default no/yes]
-m Mode, run/debug [default run/debug]
-h Help
-v Version

Example:

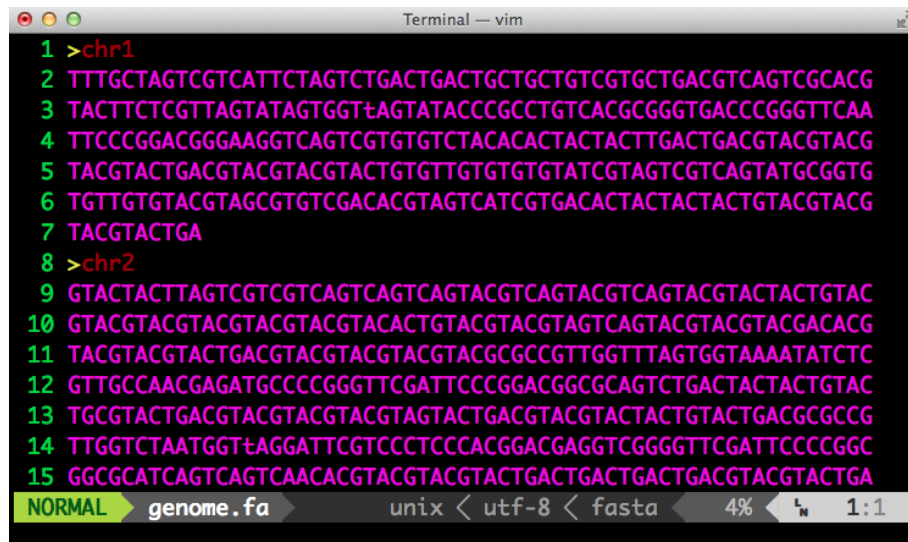
tsRFinder.pl -c demo/tsR.conf

4 Demo

To have a quick but rough overview that how tsRFinder looks like, see the animated gif demo in doc/demo.gif or online.

4.1 Demo data

Demo refseq: we used several random sequences embedded with some real tRNAs as pseudo reference sequences, in FASTA format and accessible from file "tsRFinder/demo/genome.fa". A reference genome sequence is also applicable. Figure 1 shows a refseq file in FASTA format.



The screenshot shows a terminal window titled "Terminal — vim" with a dark background. It displays a FASTA file named "genome.fa" in vim editor. The file contains two chromosome sequences, "chr1" and "chr2", each preceded by a line number and a ">" character. The sequences are composed of nucleotide bases (A, C, G, T) and are displayed in a light blue color. The status bar at the bottom of the vim window shows "NORMAL", "genome.fa", "unix", "utf-8", "fasta", "4%", and "1:1".

```
1 >chr1
2 TTTGCTAGTCGTCATTCTAGTCTGACTGACTGCTGCTGCTGCTGCTGACGTCAGTCGCACG
3 TACTTCTCGTTAGTATAGTGGTtAGTATACCCGCCCTGTCACGCGGGTGACCCGGGTTCAA
4 TTCCCGGACGGGAAGGTCAGTCGTGTGTCTACACACTACTACTTGACTGACGTACGTACG
5 TACGTA CTGACGTACGTACGTACTGTGTTGTGTGTATCGTAGTCGTCAGTATGCGGTG
6 TGTTGTGTACGTAGCGTGTGACACGTAGTCATCGTGACACTACTACTGTACGTACG
7 TACGTA CTGA
8 >chr2
9 GTACTACTTAGTCGTCGTCAGTCAGTCAGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACTACTGTAC
10 GTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGACACG
11 TACGTACGTACTGACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACTACTGTAC
12 GTTGCCAACGAGATGCCCCGGGTTGATTCCCGGACGGCGCAGTCTGACTACTACTGTAC
13 TCGTACTGACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACGTACTACTGTACTGACGCGCGG
14 TTGGTCTAATGGTtAGGATTCGTCCCTCCACGGACGAGGTCGGGGTTGATTCCCCGGC
15 GGCGCATCAGTCAGTCAACACGTACGTACGTACTGACTGACTGACTGACTGACGTACGTACTGA
```

Figure 1: Screenshot of the reference sequence in FASTA format

Demo sRNA: we extracted a bit of raw reads from some experimental data as a demo. Each read of the raw small RNA data have 4 lines. Beginning with "@" identifier line, followed by sequence line, "+" identifier optional line and quality score line, as shown in Figure 2.

4.2 Demo running

tsRFinder allows you specify inputs via a separate configuration file, as shown below for an example of the content of demo tsR.conf:

```

Terminal — vim
1 @HWI-ST1106:652:H0Y8BADXX:2:1101:2120:2141 1:N:0:ATGTCA
2 GAGGAGGATGACCTTGGGCTGAGAATGGAATTCTCGGGTGCCAAGGAACT
3 +
4 CCCCCFFHHHHHJJDDGGHIBGIJJICHIIJGHIIJGIJJIIJEGIIIG
5 @HWI-ST1106:652:H0Y8BADXX:2:1101:2016:2163 1:N:0:ATGTCA
6 TGAGCTACGTGGAAGACATCGTCAGGTGGAATTCTCGGGTGCCAAGGAACT
7 +
8 CCCDFADFHHHHHJGCEEHHE@GHIJ?FHIJJIIJJJJ2@AHIIGGIGB
9 @HWI-ST1106:652:H0Y8BADXX:2:1101:2346:2189 1:N:0:ATGTCA
10 TTAATATTCCTGAACCGAGACGTGGAATTCTCGGGTGCCAAGGAACTCCA
11 +
12 ???D;DD:D4D?DEIE1)3)@FFE@1@DACB9?;DDDD)?B#####
13 @HWI-ST1106:652:H0Y8BADXX:2:1101:2392:2203 1:N:0:ATGTCA
14 TGCGGCGATTACGCGCATTCGAGCCTGGAATTCTCGGGTGCCAAGGAACT
15 +
16 @@DDDDDD:??FHGGHIIIGDHEHEDD9(=CGGGGHIGG<EHHHBB@DCC
17 @HWI-ST1106:652:H0Y8BADXX:2:1101:2588:2161 1:N:0:ATGTCA
18 AACGAGATGCCCCGGGTTCGATTCCCGGACGGCGCACCATGGAATTCTCG
19 +
NORMAL sRNA.fq unix < utf-8 < fastq 0% 1:1

```

Figure 2: Screenshot of the small RNA sequence in FASTQ format

```

Demo configuration file for tsRfinder: demo/tsR.conf

mode           : run
label          : Abc
reference_genome : demo/genome.fa
reference_tRNA  :
sRNA           : demo/sRNA.fq.gz
adaptor        : TGGAATTCTCGGGTGCCAAGG
min_read_length : 18
max_read_length : 45
min_expression_level : 10
mature_cut_off  : 10
family_threshold : 72
tRNA_with_label : no
output_compressed : no

```

Currently we have 13 items (16 options in command line) for configuration file filling. The argument items and the inputs are separated by colon (":"). You are recommended to use the first three letters of the investigated organism as a label (e.g. *Ath* for *Arabidopsis thaliana*, *-l* in command line

option); the paths of reference genome (-g) and small RNA (-s) should be supplied at least (tsRFinder supports input in gzipped files for sRNA and reference genome, and plain ASCII text is also acceptable). If raw sequence data is used, the adaptor sequence (-a) is required. In case a reference tRNA (-t) is not used, leave the argument to EMPTY.

Once the configuration file is well prepared, typing the following in the terminal to run tsRFinder. In the demo, the configuration file (-c) is at demo/tsR.conf, as shown below:

Running tsRFinder demo

```
./tsRFinder.pl -c demo/tsR.conf
```

tsRFinder allows you specify the minimum (-n) and maximum (-x) length of sequence for processing, may specify the minimum expression level (-e) of the reads to increase reliability, as well as cut-off (-u) of the expression level of mature tsRNA. In case the family members are loose, the users may increase the tsRNA family threshold (-f) to tune it.

tsRFinder can work in run and debug modes (-m). In case of accessing some problems or some temporary files, you may enable the debug mode, otherwise use the run mode (default). To check the usage or version, you can use -h and -v option, respectively. To create a compressed tarball of the output file, use -o yes option please.

4.3 Demo output

By default, tsRFinder delivers a summary files with some basic statistics. The predicted or user applied tRNA sequence, the small RNA clean data, the tRNA reads, and the predicted tsRNA sequences are listed. A figure showing the length distributions of small RNA and tRNA reads (Figure 3) are included. Meanwhile, tsRFinder gives additional summary on tsRNA family, and tRNA/tsRNA expression levels (including 5' tsRNA, 3' tsRNA and their abundance), text map (tmap) showing mapping of small RNA to tRNA, graphics showing the expression level based on small RNA data, the cleavage sites, and the cleavage profile (Figure 4). Shown below is a demo:

tsRFinder demo output list

```
-----  
SUMMARY  
-----  
  
*      tRNA seq : Abc/tRNA.fa  
      Total : 5  
*      sRNA reads : Abc/sRNA.fa  
      Total : 10005215  
      Unique : 7227  
*      tRNA reads : Abc/tRNA.read.fa  
      Total : 236122  
      Unique : 50  
*      tsRNA seq : Abc/tsRNA.seq  
      Total : 7  
      Unique : 6  
* tsRNA report : Abc/tsRNA.report.xls  
  tsR-5p total : 5  
  tsR-3p total : 2  
  tsR-5p unique : 4  
  tsR-5p unique : 2  
*      Text map : Abc/tsRNA.tmap  
*      Visual map : Abc/images  
* Distribution : Abc/distribution.pdf  
*      Cleavage :  
      Detail : Abc/cleavage.txt  
      Profile : Abc/cleavage_profile.pdf  
* tsRNA family : Abc/tsRNA.fam  
* Stat. by BDI :  
  Sensitivity : 0.9593  
  Specificity : 0.7825  
  Accuracy : 0.8819
```

4.4 Visualization of tmap data

To examine the map of tsRNA, a vim syntax plugin was developed for visualization. You may enable color text map by copying lib/tmap.vim into the vim syntax folder, and put the following line into your .vimrc file:

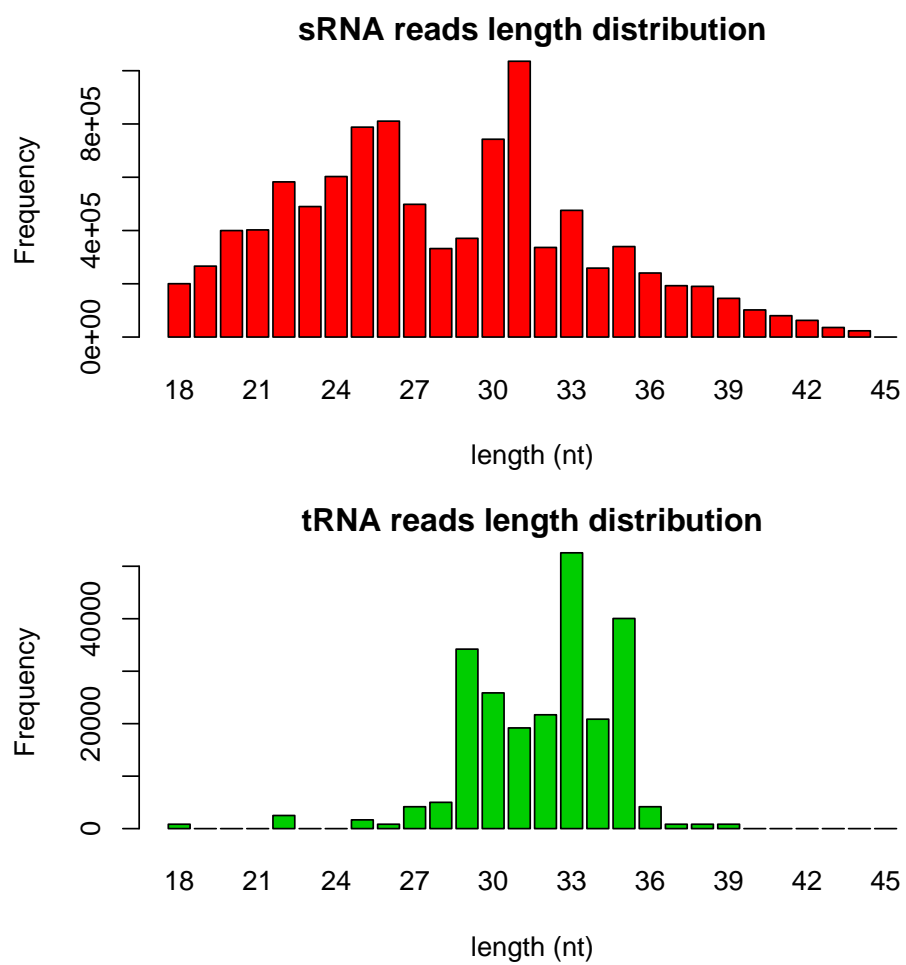


Figure 3: Length distribution of small RNA and tRNA reads

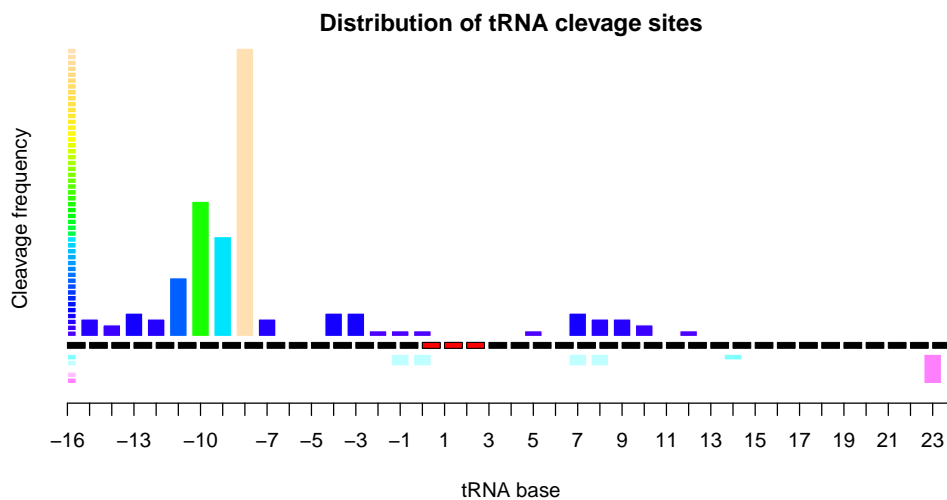


Figure 4: tRNA cleavage profile²

Set filetype tmap in vim

```
au BufNewFile,BufRead *.tmap setf tmap
```

Once tmap vim is installed, open the tsRNA.tmap file with vim to generate a color text map, as shown in Figure 5.

Visualization tsRNA.tmap

```
vim tsRNA.tmap
```

If you prefer plain text view without highlighting, open tsRNA.tmap with any text editors you have.

5 FAQ

1. Can tsRFinder run on Windows?

No. tsRFinder depends on tRNAscan-SE (UNIX source code) and uses the advantages of some build-in program of UNIX-like systems, for example, awk, grep and head. Running on Windows may lead unexpected errors. Linux or OS X is strongly recommended.

2. What's the length required for small RNA reads?

You are recommended to use raw data. In case a manually prepared sRNA file is used for input, proceed following this format: first line, begin with ">", and the label "Abc", then the 7bit index, followed by "-" (or "|", "- " and blank space) and the read number; second line, the sequence of the read. One more thing, the format of sRNA data in tsRFinder is compatible with the FASTX_TOOL kit³, allowing you to use fastx tools.

Shown below is an example.

sRNA example

```
>Abc0000001_772
CAGGTGGTCAGGTAGAGAATACCAAGGCGCT
>Abc0000002_475
AGGTGGTCAGGTAGAGAATACCAAGGCGCT
```

5. I have problems in installing tsRFinder and/or the dependencies, where can I get more help?

You can access the official support website for trouble-shooting, or open new issue for tsRFinder repository on GitHub. The URL is <https://github.com/wangqinhu/tsRFinder/issues/new>

6. Where to report bugs?

Goto <https://github.com/wangqinhu/tsRFinder/issues/new>

7. Can we use tsRFinder for commercial purpose?

Yes. tsRFinder is free, open source software, see the MIT license.

8. The 'nwalgn' not compatible to my operating system, what can I do?

tsRFinder uses Needleman-Wunsch algorithm nwalgn for small RNA alignment, with pre-building of the binaries for some of the recent OS X / Linux. If you find it not suitable for your system or want to compile it by yourself, goto lib/src directory and type 'make' to build⁴ it manually.

³http://hannonlab.cshl.edu/fastx_toolkit/

⁴The gcc compiler is required. For OS X, you can install Xcode (ship with gcc)