

Welcome to Writing Readable Code With Pipes.

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Pipes are fun! Just ask Mario. They're get you from point A to point B but — just like in the games — figuring out the best way to use the pipes will make you more productive and write better code.



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Who am I?

I'm Bob Rudis: Chief Data Scientist @ Rapid7 — a firm that focuses on making our world a safer & more secure place for everyone. I'm also the co-author of Data-Driven Security, a book full of outdated R code (not even R 3.0!) but very relevant concepts for getting started in a data mindset in cybersecurity.

If the shield doesn't give you social context about me, wait for the last slide or come find me over the next day to talk about the tidyverse, cybersecurity, cooking or Captain America.



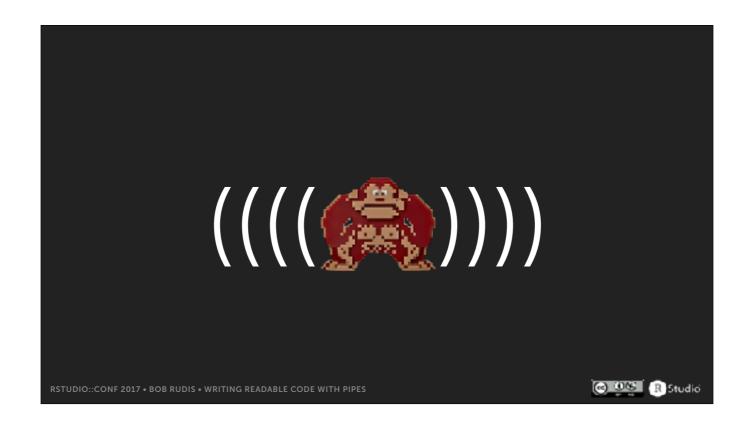
If you've been on the "right side" of the talk tracks today, you've already seen pipes. How many folks have seen / have used / know what pipes are? [REACT]

I'm here to give you some tips on how to improve your code, workflow and relationships with your co-workers and future self by making more write-able, read-able and use-able code with pipes.

In various slides you're going to see this guy [CLICK](without the noise). When you see him, that's a bad sign and usually an indicator of less-then-optimal practices (I can't say "bad" since code that works is ultimately good code — at least for one run).

You're also going to see this guy. [CLICK] True fact:, that is the only remaining picture of Hadley with just a mustache and in coveralls.

Seriously, though, when you see Mario that's an indication of super ++gd practice (he'll be giving a thumbs-up, too).



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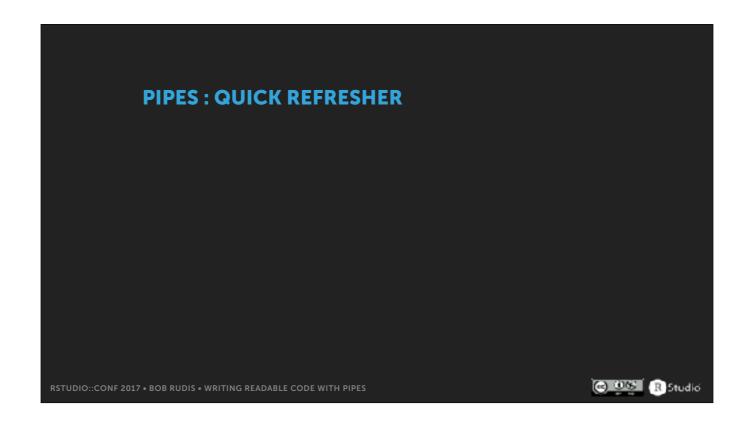
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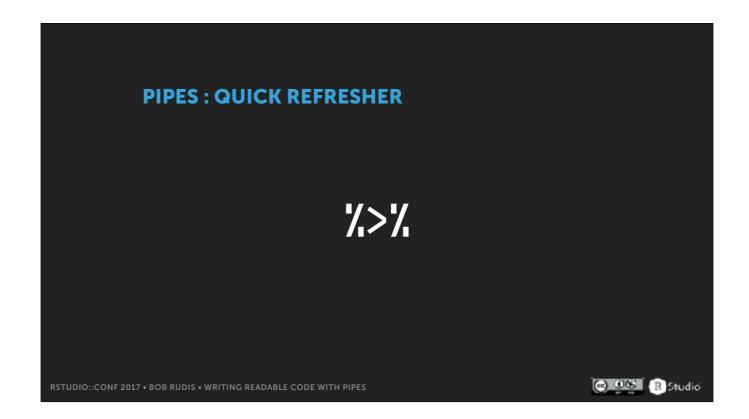
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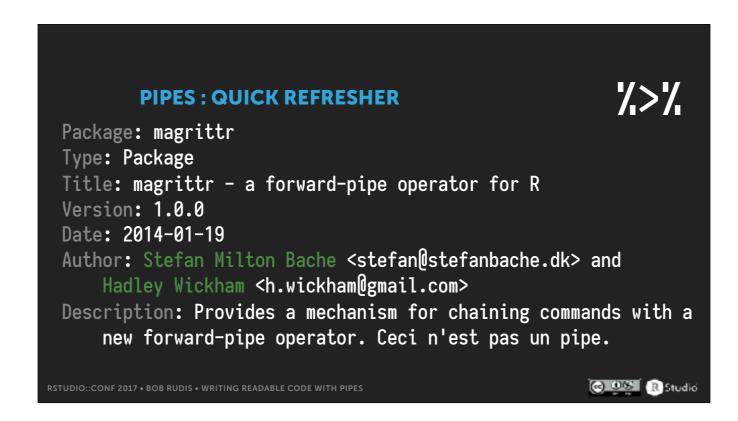
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What are these "pipes" again? [CLICK] Let's start with a refresher course in the revolution of 2014 [CLICK] (we're 6 days away from the anniversary!) when this new operator was introduced by Stefan in his magrittr package. We'll just be using the pipe symbol today and not delving into the dark art behind it. You should take a look at the pkg source on github to see all the work that goes on under the covers to enable the rich functionality in this new operator. The package name comes from a famous painting by René Magritte. More on that at the end of the talk.



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testthat gRbase pixiedust DiagrammeR text2vec geojson plotly GerminaR geojsonio poppr ptstem tigris HydeNet ggvis timevis Momocs gistr tmaptools SciencesPo gmailr qdap rbokeh vcfR analogsea gogamer googleAnalyticsR highcharter vegalite archivist rdrop2 vembedr binomen request visNetwork blscrapeR httping bpa igraph rgbif wellknown ckanr curlconverter leaflet dat rscorecard datadr leafletCN ddpcr lightsout rtext dendextend magrittr rvest diffrprojectswidget diffrprojects saeSim mason metricsgraphics simmer simulator dygraphs emil multipanelfigure sparklyr forcats nlstimedist stringr tableHTML fulltext operators gRain © 06 R Studio

Since the introduction of the magrittr pipe there are 81 packages that import/export the operator (I went through the NAMESPACE of every pkg on CRAN). As an aside, it seems I have a pkg in almost every column. Clearly I've been slacking off a bit.

In reality, [CLICK] 81 out of ~10K is a teensy tiny percentage of all the pkgs on CRAN; perhaps the equivalent, of one heart health for Mario. I'll prbly track this every couple of months this year, so watch the blog for details.



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What does "forward chaining" look like?

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object %% operation() \rightarrow result

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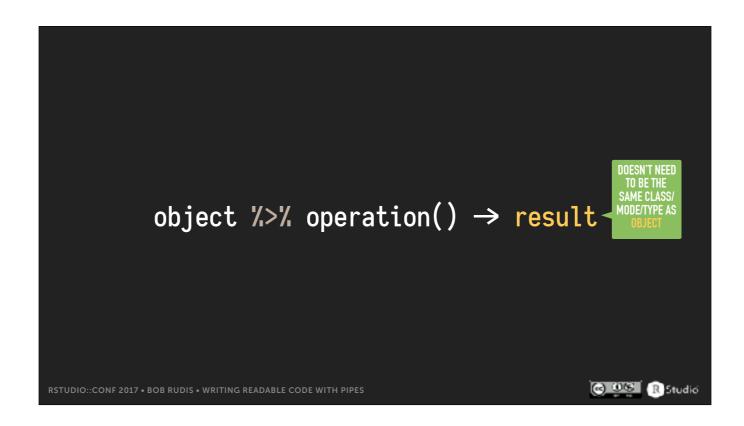
I like to think of it as taking data (an R object) and



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to end up with a result (which doesn't have to look like the original data object at all)



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just like this

```
operation ← function(data, param1, ...) {
   data ← do_stuff_with(data)
   data ← do_even_morestuff_with(data)
   data
}
```

"operation" is just an R function like you've written before. It takes in data and parameters, does stuff with it and spits out the new object.

```
operation ← function(data, param1, ...) {
   data ← do_stuff_with(data)
   data ← do_even_morestuff_with(data)
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}
```

the super important thing to remember is "data first". Your functions must/should be written with that in mind.

```
"DATA FIRST"

operation ← function(data, param1, ...) {
   data ← do_stuff_with(data)
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You may say "duh", but there are some seminal examples of this not being the case in R... And, there's our friend letting us know we shouldn't do this.

```
"DATA NOT FIRST"

Im(formula, data, subset, weights, na.action, method = "qr", model = TRUE, x = FALSE, y = FALSE, qr = TRUE, singular.ok = TRUE, contrasts = NULL, offset, ...)

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```

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A real life example of a real pipe would be to take this

```
mtcars %>% str()

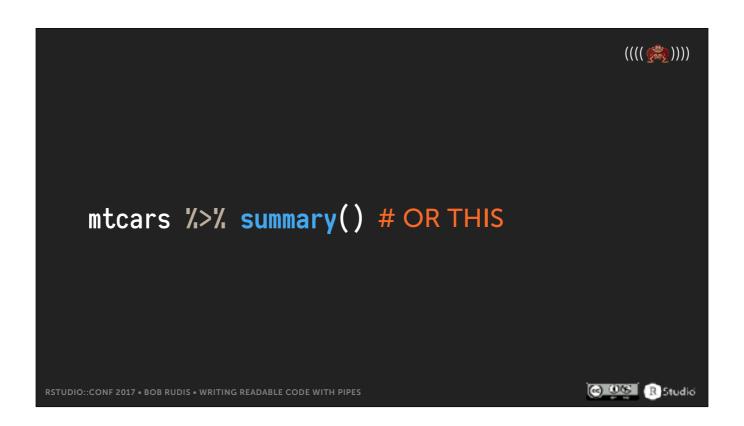
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```

and turn it into this

```
mtcars %>% str() # DON'T DO THIS

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```

except that you really shouldn't



really, srsly don't do this



Why? It violates rule #1.

These are some of my personal piping rules/guidelines. There aren't many. I think they make sense. You need to do what works well for you.

For single operation pipes, I believe there's an expectation that a single function call that's not part of a chain (we'll see a full chain in second) has a contract to have it be called normally. This is just my own rule, so feel totally free to disagree. Whatever gets your work done and works well with your team is paramount. Let's move on to a larger example.

Raise your hand if you've seen code like this.

Now, raise your hand if you've _written_ code like this.

This type of snippet is one reason our 8-bit nemesis is in parentheses. I imagine him rolling down barrels with each open parenthesis.

when you wrote this code you totally knew what it was going to do.

Now, you prbly have no idea and your future self is all hating on your former self.

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We take the data and then push it through a group of what I'll call atomic operations to achieve an end result.

[CLICK]

Even if you're not 100% sure what those purrr functions do, you can prbly get a better idea - and more quickly - that this code prints out from a character vector in red.

```
c("dGhpcyBhdWRpZW5jZQ==", "bXkgZmFtaWx5", "Ug==") %>%

map(openssl::base64_decode) %>%

map_chr(rawToChar) %>%

sprintf(fmt = "I <3 %s") %>%

paste0(collapse = "\n") %>%

crayon::red() %>%

cat()

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@ Studio
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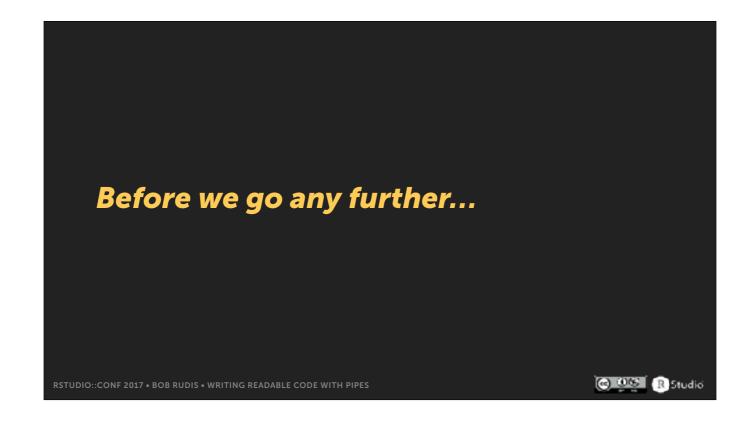
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Even if you're not 100% sure what those purrr functions do, you can prbly get a better idea - and more quickly - that this code prints out from a character vector in red.



I <3 this audience
I <3 my family
I <3 R</pre>





So, you've got a taste of how piping can make your code more readable but we need to talk about the elephant in the talk track



the tidyverse.

```
library(tidyverse)

ggplot2 (data vis)
dplyr (data manip)
tidyr (data tidying)
readr (data import)
purrr (functional prog)
tibble (data.frame++)
```

It's a wrapper package that loads the pkgs that make up the core of the tidyverse. These all subscribe to the "data first" mentality, are "verb" driven (naming a function with a verb so it's clear it's performing an operation). you can totally use piping w/o the tidyverse but it's much better to be in the tidyverse than without.



Drop a note on the github repo from this talk (link at the end) if you want more examples in different contexts. We don't have much time, so we'll just go through a few.

This is one we all likely have/had/seen.

```
cowrie_2017-01-03T004539.json.gz
cowrie_2017-01-03T044239.json.gz
cowrie_2017-01-03T065255.json.gz
cowrie_2017-01-03T010619.json.gz
cowrie_2017-01-03T044746.json.gz
cowrie_2017-01-03T073818.json.gz
cowrie_2017-01-03T014616.json.gz
cowrie_2017-01-03T0145817.json.gz
```

We're going to use _my_ data, too. To hades with your gene strings, literature extracts, stock quotes, and animal tracking data! This is honeypot data (logs from traps we set out for attackers)

I'm also giving some of this data away in the gh repo so you can get a chance to play with real live cybersecurity honeypot data.

```
library(ndjson)
library(anytime)

do.call(rbind, lapply(list.files("data/honeypot",
    pattern="cowrie.*json.gz", full.names=TRUE), function(x) {
        df ← as.data.frame(stream_in(x))
        df ← df[,c("timestamp", "src_ip", "src_port", "sensor",
        "session", "dst_port", "eventid", "username", "password")]
        df$timestamp ← anytime(df$timestamp)
        df
})) → cowrie_df

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```

Apart from using two fairly new pkgs, this sld be familiar code to most folks.

get a list of files, turn each one into a data frame. possibly clean up said data frame and bind all the rows together.

it's also an ugly mess, even in an RStudio editor window.

this is slightly better. we're not in the piping tidyverse yet but at least your future self or your co-workers won't hate you as much.

We've separated out functionality and made the code a bit more modular and easier to read. but only a bit.

Let's improve on it in the tidyverse

that's the same code in the piping tidyverse [CLICK] and is a good example of rule #2

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LES RÈGLES DE LA TUYAUTERIE DE hrbrmstr (hrbrmstr's Rules of Piping)

- ▶ A pipe group should be designed to accomplish a unified task



Which is

the unified task here is to make a data frame from a list of files

(oh yeah, Hadley hates list.files() so don't tell him I used it but dir() reminds me of DOS and also makes me think I'm asking for directions).



```
filter(mtcars, cyl==6) %>%
  count(gear) %>%
  ggplot(aes(gear, n)) + geom_col()
```





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  count(gear) %>%
  ggplot(aes(gear, n)) + geom_col()
```

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```
count(iris, Species, sort=TRUE) %>%
  mutate(Species=factor(Species, levels=Species)) %>%
  ggplot(aes(Species, n)) + geom_col()
```

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```
count(iris, Species, sort=TRUE) %>%
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```

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```
get_flu_data("national", years=2010:2016) %>%
  mutate(week=from_yr_wk(YEAR, WEEK)) %>%
  gather(age_group, count, starts_with("AGE")) %>%
  ggplot(aes(week, count, group = age_group)) +
  geom_line(aes(color = age_group)) +
  scale_y_continuous(label=scales::comma, limits=c(0,20000)) +
  facet_wrap(~age_group, scales="free") +

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```



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get_flu_data("national", years=2010:2016) %>%
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```

```
GET("https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/search.csv",
    query=list(
       conditions[agency_ids][]`=254,
conditions[publication_date][gte]`="01/01/2006",
       conditions[publication_date][lte] ="1/13/2017",
       conditions[term] = "60396",
       conditions[type][]\="NOTICE")) %>%
  stop_for_status() %>%
  content(as="parsed") %>%
  filter(grepl("^Quarterly", title)) → reg_df
                                                        © OS R Studio
```



```
GET("nttps://www.federalregister.gov/articles/search.csv",
    query=list(
        `conditions[agency_ids][]`=254,
        `conditions[publication_date][gte]`="01/01/2006",
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        `conditions[term]`="60396",
        `conditions[type][]`="NOTICE")) %>%

Stop_for_status() %>%
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    filter(grepl("^Quarterly", title)) ⇒ reg_df
```



```
read_fwf(satellites, na=c("N/A"), col_types=satcat_cols,
        fwf_positions(satcat_cols_start,
                 satcat_cols_end, satcat_col_names)) %>%
 mutate(multiple=(multiple=="M"),
        payload=(payload=="*")) %>%
  left_join(satcat_launch_sources, by="source") %>%
  left_join(satcat_launch_sites, by="launch_site") %>%
  left_join(satcat_op_status, by="op_status_code") %>%
 mutate(is_active=(op_status_code %in%
                  c("+", "P", "B", "S", "X"))) → satcat
                                                   © OS R Studio
```

LES RÈGLES DE LA TUYAUTERIE DE hrbrmstr

(hrbrmstr's Rules of Piping)

- ▶ The chain should be > 1
- ▶ A pipe group should be designed to accomplish a unified task
- ▶ It's OK to change object class/type/mode



we started off with a character vector and ended up with a data frame. this pipe chain only had two object type changes. I'll freely admit that this tripped me up when the pipe iterator first came out. a very common munging pipe chain is to have ugly character vectors being turned into lists which get turned into data frames. Thanks to the broom package (a pocket universe attached to the tidyverse), you can even take numeric vectors and turn them into lists of fitted models and turn them into data frames via piping.

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LES RÈGLES DE LA TUYAUTERIE DE hrbrmstr

(hrbrmstr's Rules of Piping)

- ▶ The chain should be > 1
- ▶ A pipe group should be designed to accomplish a unified task
- It's OK to change object class/type/mode
- ▶ Be data-source aware
- ▶ Pipe operations should be "atomic"

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But, before you go all crazy with piping there are two more rules to consider.

in reality, this is an expensive operation for me since I (well the awesome Rapid7 Labs engineering team does) generate over 20,000 of these JSON files a day.

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that means if I have a pipe chain like this where I read them all in, so some more stuff to the resultant YUGE data frame and ultimately plot top credential use frequencies i've got two problem pitfalls I should have avoided.

first is "what if something goes wrong in the post-data-frame creation function? this is often a general criticism of piping, especially within pkg source code. Here, though, it's a real concern since if it breaks, I've lost quite a bit of time. It may seem like another "duh", but I'm going to bet you'll remember this slide when you do it yourself in the future. the other gotcha is getting a nice plot but losing the data behind it. pretty much the same problem, but it's an easy trap to fall into.

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this is what Id' consider the atomic group sequence.

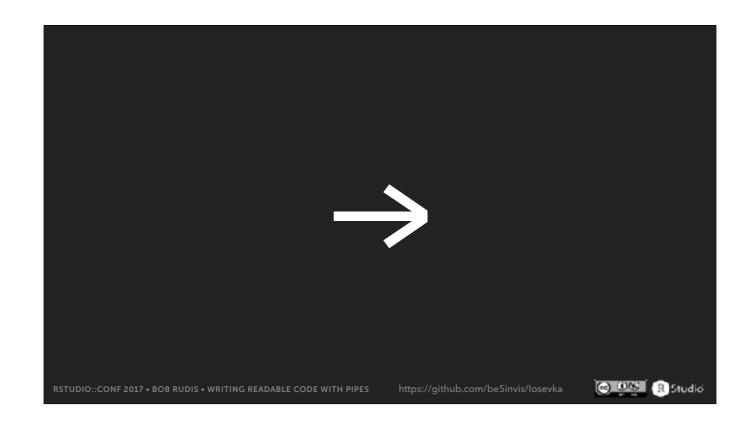
Make a data frame. [CLICK]

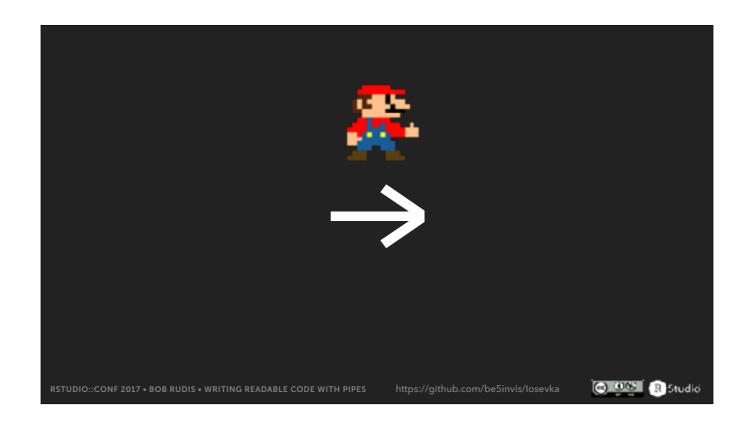
do other stuff with the data frame after it's safely in the R environment. It's just being aware of your data source.

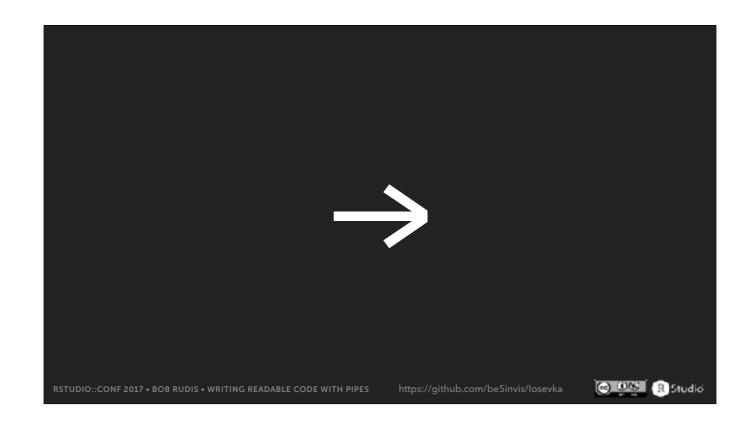
Make a data frame. [CLICK]

do other stuff with the data frame after it's safely in the R environment. It's just being aware of your data source.











these are two other examples of not being data source aware. Bandwidth isn't free (Rapid7's S3 bill is living proof). [CLICK]

Write code around those readers to check to see if you really do need to load it anew or if you can use a local cache.

We fall into this trap since it's hard to make quick blog posts or book chapters with full production caching code, but only use "live" remote data in a pipe if you absolutely need to (there are use-cases but I'd wager most folks here prbly don't have one).

```
read_html("https://example.com/page.html") %>%
html_nodes("p") %>%
html_text() → some_text

read_csv("https://example.com/data.csv") %>%
mutate(...) %>%
count(...) → df
```

these are two other examples of not being data source aware. Bandwidth isn't free (Rapid7's S3 bill is living proof). [CLICK]

Write code around those readers to check to see if you really do need to load it anew or if you can use a local cache.

We fall into this trap since it's hard to make quick blog posts or book chapters with full production caching code, but only use "live" remote data in a pipe if you absolutely need to (there are use-cases but I'd wager most folks here prbly don't have one).

```
# read_html("https://example.com/page.html") %>%
html_nodes("p") %>%
html_text() \Rightarrow some_text

# read_csv("https://example.com/data.csv") %>%
mutate(...) %>%
count(...) \Rightarrow df

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```

these are two other examples of not being data source aware. Bandwidth isn't free (Rapid7's S3 bill is living proof). [CLICK]

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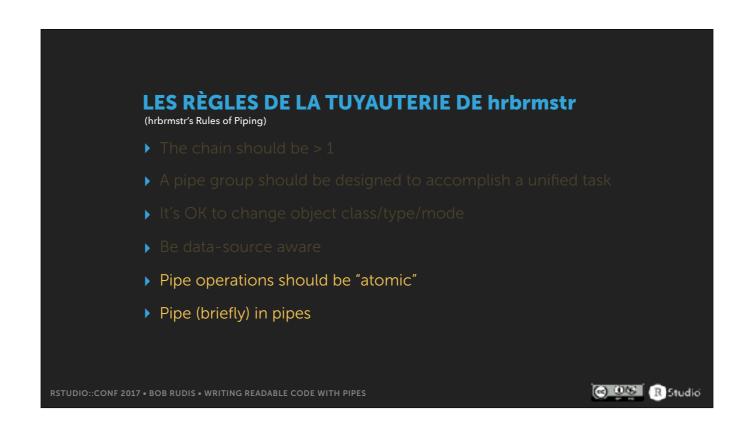
LES RÈGLES DE LA TUYAUTERIE DE hrbrmstr

(hrbrmstr's Rules of Piping)

- ▶ The chain should be > 1
- ▶ A pipe group should be designed to accomplish a unified task
- It's OK to change object class/type/mode
- ▶ Be data-source aware
- Pipe operations should be "atomic"
- ▶ Pipe (briefly) in pipes

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this is really a correlation to the previous ones, but you should consider using pipes within pipes vs make extra long anonymous functions.

this takes survey data results of answers to salary ranges and ultimately finds the mean for the range. there are similar string manipulation tasks like this in many workflows.

```
income %>%
    strsplit(" - ") %>%
    map(gsub, pattern="[,\\$]", replacement="") %>%
    map(as.numeric) %>%
    map_dbl(mean)

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```

that's much more readable here

and much better than this mess in named base operations

```
strsplit(income, " - ") %>%
map_dbl(~gsub("[,\\$]", "", .) %>%
as.numeric() %>%
mean())
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```

i think this representation is much more compact but still readable (provided you grok the tilde syntax of purrr).

the tilde creates an implicit anonymous function.

this can be more performant than looping for each operation. if you have more than a million rows i'd consider doing this for short operations

LES RÈGLES DE LA TUYAUTERIE DE hrbrmstr

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- ▶ The chain should be > 1
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- Pipe operations should be "atomic"
- Be data-source aware
- Pipe (briefly) in pipes
- ▶ Don't be reticent to create new verbs

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speaking of which

```
dollar_to_numeric ← function(x) {
    map(x, ~as.numeric(gsub("[,\\$]", "", .)))
}

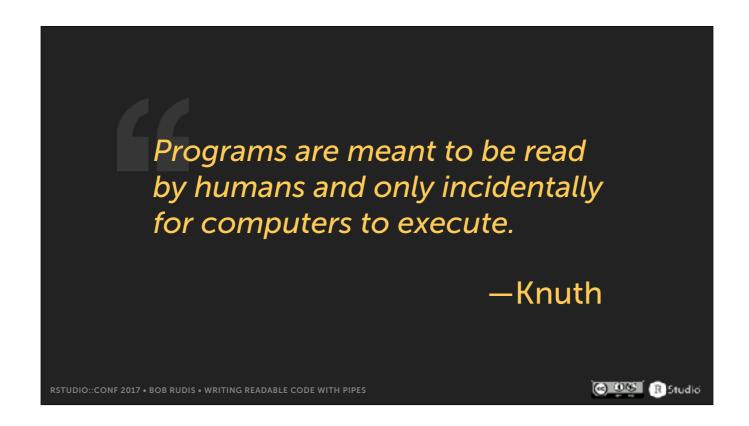
compute_means ← function(x) { map_dbl(x, mean) }

strsplit(income, " - ") %>%
    dollar_to_numeric() %>%
    compute_means()

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```

ultimately, you're communicating with at least your future self if not co-workers if not the internet. You absolutely know what that pipe chain does (i cld/shld have wrapped the string spitting, too). it's self-documenting and each component is also easy to unit test (you do test your code, right?). it also lends itself to making support pkgs for your analyses or developing your own personal r pkg.

there are times you may need to combine things into larger functions (i.e. if you have to iterate over a million+ rows) vs make each iterative transformation distinctly.

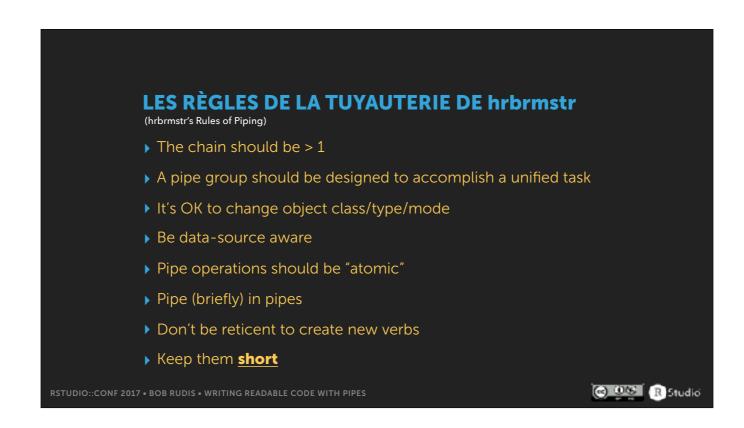




remember, you're coding for this happy guy, not some 8-bit gorilla.



remember, you're coding for this happy guy, not some 8-bit gorilla.



As Columbo would say, there's just one more thing.

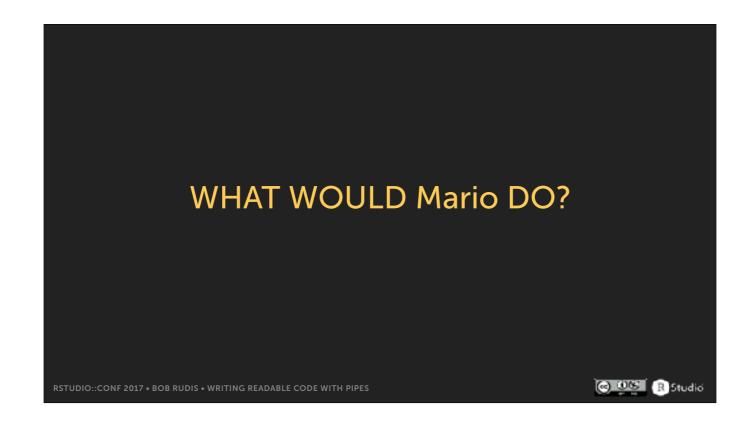
This last one shid go without saying but I'll say it anyway without examples. It's in line with other bullets but long pipelines are a recipe for disaster. it prbly means you haven't bucketed your operations well.

Think of pipes in the same way as a data viz. The code bits around a given line provide context.

long pipes are hard to test and actually hard to read for the same reasons many visualizations are (needing to rely on memory or having to reference critical information far away from where your eyes are now).













google the phrase to give this context;)

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TALK OVER

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thank you!

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thank you!