

# ***Fantasy Football Analytics***

*Isaac T. Petersen*

To our daughter, Maisie.

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## *Table of contents*

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<b>Preface</b>	<b>ix</b>
How to Contribute . . . . .	ix
Open Access . . . . .	ix
License . . . . .	x
Citation . . . . .	x
About the Author . . . . .	xi
Accessibility . . . . .	xii
Acknowledgments . . . . .	xii
 <b>1 Introduction</b>	 <b>1</b>
1.1 About this Book . . . . .	1
1.2 What is Fantasy Football? . . . . .	1
1.3 Why Focus on Fantasy Football? . . . . .	2
1.4 Educational Value . . . . .	2
1.5 Learning Objectives . . . . .	3
1.6 Disclosures . . . . .	4
1.7 Disclaimer . . . . .	4
 <b>2 Intro to Football and Fantasy</b>	 <b>5</b>
2.1 Football . . . . .	5
2.1.1 The Objective . . . . .	5
2.1.2 The Roster . . . . .	5
2.1.3 The Field . . . . .	8
2.1.4 The Gameplay . . . . .	10
2.1.5 The Scoring . . . . .	11

2.1.6	Glossary of Terms . . . . .	11
2.2	Fantasy Football . . . . .	13
2.2.1	Overview of Fantasy Football . . . . .	13
2.2.2	The Fantasy League . . . . .	14
2.2.3	The Roster of a Fantasy Team . . . . .	14
2.2.4	Scoring . . . . .	15
<b>3</b>	<b>Getting Started with R for Data Analysis</b>	<b>19</b>
3.1	Initial Setup . . . . .	19
3.2	Installing Packages . . . . .	20
3.3	Load Packages . . . . .	20
3.4	Download Football Data . . . . .	20
3.4.1	Players . . . . .	20
3.4.2	Teams . . . . .	20
3.4.3	Player Info . . . . .	21
3.4.4	Rosters . . . . .	21
3.4.5	Game Schedules . . . . .	21
3.4.6	The Combine . . . . .	21
3.4.7	Draft Picks . . . . .	21
3.4.8	Depth Charts . . . . .	22
3.4.9	Play-By-Play Data . . . . .	22
3.4.10	4th Down Data . . . . .	22
3.4.11	Participation . . . . .	22
3.4.12	Historical Weekly Actual Player Statistics . . . . .	23
3.4.13	Injuries . . . . .	23
3.4.14	Snap Counts . . . . .	23
3.4.15	ESPN QBR . . . . .	24
3.4.16	NFL Next Gen Stats . . . . .	24
3.4.17	Advanced Stats from PFR . . . . .	25
3.4.18	Player Contracts . . . . .	26
3.4.19	FTN Charting Data . . . . .	26

3.4.20	Fantasy Player IDs . . . . .	27
3.4.21	FantasyPros Rankings . . . . .	27
3.4.22	Expected Fantasy Points . . . . .	27
3.5	Data Dictionary . . . . .	28
3.6	Create a Data Frame . . . . .	28
3.7	Variable Names . . . . .	29
3.8	Logical Operators . . . . .	30
3.8.1	Is Equal To: == . . . . .	30
3.8.2	Is Not Equal To: != . . . . .	30
3.8.3	Is Greater Than: > . . . . .	30
3.8.4	Is Less Than: < . . . . .	30
3.8.5	Is Greater Than or Equal To: >= . . . . .	31
3.8.6	Is Less Than or Equal To: <= . . . . .	31
3.8.7	Is In a Value of Another Vector: %in% . . . . .	31
3.8.8	Is Not In a Value of Another Vector: !(%in%) . . . . .	31
3.8.9	Is Missing: is.na() . . . . .	31
3.8.10	Is Not Missing: !is.na() . . . . .	32
3.8.11	And: & . . . . .	32
3.8.12	Or:   . . . . .	32
3.9	Subset . . . . .	32
3.9.1	One Variable . . . . .	33
3.9.2	Particular Rows of One Variable . . . . .	33
3.9.3	Particular Columns (Variables) . . . . .	33
3.9.4	Particular Rows . . . . .	38
3.9.5	Particular Rows and Columns . . . . .	40
3.10	View Data . . . . .	41
3.10.1	All Data . . . . .	41
3.10.2	First 6 Rows/Elements . . . . .	41
3.11	Data Characteristics . . . . .	42
3.11.1	Data Structure . . . . .	42
3.11.2	Data Dimensions . . . . .	43

3.11.3	Number of Elements . . . . .	43
3.11.4	Number of Missing Elements . . . . .	43
3.11.5	Number of Non-Missing Elements . . . . .	43
3.12	Create New Variables . . . . .	44
3.13	Recode Variables . . . . .	44
3.14	Rename Variables . . . . .	45
3.15	Convert the Types of Variables . . . . .	45
3.16	Merging/Joins . . . . .	48
3.16.1	Overview . . . . .	48
3.16.2	Data Before Merging . . . . .	49
3.16.3	Types of Joins . . . . .	50
3.17	Transform Data from Long to Wide . . . . .	58
3.18	Transform Data from Wide to Long . . . . .	65
3.19	Calculations . . . . .	66
3.19.1	Historical Actual Player Statistics . . . . .	66
3.19.2	Historical Actual Fantasy Points . . . . .	69
3.19.3	Player Age . . . . .	69
3.20	Plotting . . . . .	74
3.20.1	Rushing Yards per Carry By Player Age . . . . .	74
3.20.2	Defensive and Offensive EPA per Play . . . . .	77
<b>4</b>	<b>Player Evaluation</b>	<b>79</b>
4.1	Getting Started . . . . .	79
4.1.1	Load Packages . . . . .	79
4.2	Overview . . . . .	79
4.3	Athletic Profile . . . . .	80
4.4	Historical Performance . . . . .	81
4.4.1	Overview . . . . .	81
4.4.2	Efficiency . . . . .	82
4.4.3	Consistency . . . . .	82
4.5	Health . . . . .	84

<i>Contents</i>	vii
4.6 Age and Career Stage . . . . .	84
4.7 Situational Factors . . . . .	84
4.8 Matchups . . . . .	86
4.9 Cognitive and Motivational Factors . . . . .	86
4.10 Fantasy Value . . . . .	87
4.10.1 Sources From Which to Evaluate Fantasy Value . . . . .	87
4.10.2 Indices to Evaluate Fantasy Value . . . . .	88
4.11 Putting it Altogether . . . . .	92
<b>5 The Fantasy Draft</b>	<b>95</b>
5.1 Getting Started . . . . .	95
5.1.1 Load Packages . . . . .	95
5.2 Types of Fantasy Drafts . . . . .	95
5.2.1 Snake Draft . . . . .	95
5.2.2 Auction Draft . . . . .	95
5.2.3 Comparison . . . . .	96
5.3 Draft Strategy . . . . .	96
5.3.1 Overview . . . . .	96
5.3.2 Snake Draft . . . . .	98
5.3.3 Auction Draft . . . . .	98
<b>6 Research Methods</b>	<b>99</b>
6.1 Getting Started . . . . .	99
6.1.1 Load Packages . . . . .	99
6.2 Sample vs Population . . . . .	99
6.3 Research Designs . . . . .	100
6.3.1 Experiment . . . . .	100
6.3.2 Correlational/Observational Study . . . . .	100
6.3.3 Case Study . . . . .	101
6.3.4 Other Features of the Research Design . . . . .	101
6.4 Research Design Validity . . . . .	103

6.4.1	Internal Validity . . . . .	103
6.4.2	External Validity . . . . .	103
6.4.3	Conclusion Validity . . . . .	104
6.5	Levels of Measurement . . . . .	104
6.5.1	Nominal . . . . .	104
6.5.2	Ordinal . . . . .	105
6.5.3	Interval . . . . .	105
6.5.4	Ratio . . . . .	106
6.6	Measurement Validity . . . . .	106
6.6.1	Reliability . . . . .	106
6.6.2	Validity . . . . .	106
<b>7</b>	<b>Basic Statistics</b>	<b>107</b>
7.1	Getting Started . . . . .	107
7.1.1	Load Packages . . . . .	107
7.2	Descriptive Statistics . . . . .	107
7.3	Inferential Statistics . . . . .	107
7.4	Statistical Decision Tree . . . . .	107
	<b>References</b>	<b>109</b>



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## *Preface*

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This is a book in progress—it is incomplete. I will continue to add to and update it as I am able.

---

## How to Contribute

This is an open-access textbook. My goal is to share data analysis strategies for free! Anyone is welcome to contribute to the project. If you would like to contribute, please consider one of the following:

- open an issue<sup>1</sup> or create a pull request<sup>2</sup> on the book’s GitHub repository<sup>3</sup>.
- buy me a coffee<sup>4</sup>—Support me in developing this resource for fantasy football analytics... Even a cup of coffee (\$4.99) helps me stay awake!

The GitHub repository for the book is located here: <https://github.com/isaactpetersen/Fantasy-Football-Analytics-Textbook>. If you have data or analysis examples that are you willing to share and include in the book, feel free to contact me.

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## Open Access

This is an open-access book. This means that it is freely available for anyone to access.

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<sup>1</sup><https://github.com/isaactpetersen/Fantasy-Football-Analytics-Textbook/issues>

<sup>2</sup><https://github.com/isaactpetersen/Fantasy-Football-Analytics-Textbook/pulls>

<sup>3</sup><https://github.com/isaactpetersen/Fantasy-Football-Analytics-Textbook>

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.paypal.com/donate/?business=Q4FMMAMFYTX8&no\\_recurring=0&item\\_name=Support+me+in+developing+this+resource+for+fantasy+football+analytics...+Even+a+cup+of+coffee+%28%244.99%29+helps+me+stay+awake%21&currency\\_code=USD](https://www.paypal.com/donate/?business=Q4FMMAMFYTX8&no_recurring=0&item_name=Support+me+in+developing+this+resource+for+fantasy+football+analytics...+Even+a+cup+of+coffee+%28%244.99%29+helps+me+stay+awake%21&currency_code=USD)

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**Figure 1** Creative Commons License

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## Citation

The APA-style citation for the book is:

Petersen, I. T. (2024). *Fantasy football analytics*. Version 0.0.1. University of Iowa Libraries. <https://github.com/isaactpetersen/Fantasy-Football-Analytics-Textbook>. [INSERT DOI LINK]

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}
```

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## About the Author

I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences at the University of Iowa. I am a licensed psychologist with expertise in child clinical psychology. Why am I writing about fantasy football and data analysis? Because fantasy football involves the intersection of two things I love: sports and statistics.

Through my training, I have learned the value of statistics for answering important questions that I find interesting. In graduate training, I came to the realization that statistics are relevant not only for psychology and science, but also for domains that I enjoy as hobbies, including sports and fantasy sports. I have played in a longstanding fantasy football league for over 20 years (since my junior year of high school) with old friends from high school. I wanted to apply what I was learning about statistics to help others improve their performance in fantasy football and to help people—including those who might not otherwise be interested—to learn statistics. So I began blogging online about the value of applying statistics to improve decision making in fantasy football. Apparently, many people were interested in learning statistics when they could apply them to a domain that they find interesting like fantasy football. My blog eventually became FantasyFootballAnalytics.net<sup>6</sup>, a website that uses advanced statistics to help people win their fantasy football leagues.

In terms of my R and statistics background, I have published many peer-reviewed publications<sup>7</sup> that employ advanced statistical methods, have published a book on psychological assessment<sup>8</sup> that includes applied examples in R, and have published the `petersenlab` R package<sup>9</sup> on the Comprehensive R Archive Network (CRAN). I am also a co-author of the `ffanalytics` R package<sup>10</sup> that provides free utilities for downloading fantasy football projections and additional fantasy-relevant data, and for calculating projected points given your league settings.

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<sup>6</sup><http://fantasyfootballanalytics.net>

<sup>7</sup><https://developmental-psychopathology.lab.uiowa.edu/publications>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.routledge.com/9781032413068>

<sup>9</sup><https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/petersenlab/index.html>

<sup>10</sup><https://github.com/FantasyFootballAnalytics/ffanalytics>

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## Accessibility

I strive to follow principles of accessibility<sup>11</sup> (archived at <https://perma.cc/8XJ9-Q6QJ>) to make the book content accessible to people with visual impairments and physical disabilities. If there are additional ways I can make the content more accessible, please let me know.

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## Acknowledgments

I thank Dr. Benjamin Motz, who provided consultation and many helpful resources based on his fantasy football statistics class. I also thank key members of FantasyFootballAnalytics.net<sup>12</sup>, including Val Pinskiy, Andrew Tungate, Dennis Andersen, and Adam Peterson, who helped develop and provide fantasy football-related resources and who helped sharpen my thinking about the topic. I also thank Professor Patrick Carroll, who taught me the value of statistics for answering important questions.

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<sup>11</sup><https://bookdown.org/yihui/rmarkdown-cookbook/html-accessibility.html>

<sup>12</sup><http://fantasyfootballanalytics.net>

# 1

---

## *Introduction*

---

### 1.1 About this Book

How can we use information to make predictions about uncertain events? This book is about empiricism (basing theories on observed data) and judgment, prediction, and decision making in the context of uncertainty. The book provides an introduction to modern analytical techniques used to make informed predictions, test theories, and draw conclusions from a given dataset.

This book was originally written for a undergraduate-level course entitled, “Fantasy Football: Predictive Analytics and Empiricism”. The chapters provide an overview of topics that each could have its own class and textbook, such as causal inference<sup>1</sup>, factor analysis<sup>2</sup>, cluster analysis<sup>3</sup>, principal component analysis<sup>4</sup>, machine learning<sup>5</sup>, cognitive biases<sup>6</sup>, modern portfolio theory<sup>7</sup>, data visualization<sup>8</sup>, simulation<sup>9</sup>, etc. The book gives readers an overview of the breadth of the approaches to prediction and empiricism. As a consequence, the book does not cover any one technique or approach in great depth.

### 1.2 What is Fantasy Football?

Fantasy football is an online game where participants assemble (i.e., “draft”) imaginary teams composed of real-life National Football League (NFL) players. In this game, participants compete against their opponents (e.g.,

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<sup>1</sup>[causal-inference.qmd](#)

<sup>2</sup>[factor-analysis.qmd](#)

<sup>3</sup>[cluster-analysis.qmd](#)

<sup>4</sup>[pca.qmd](#)

<sup>5</sup>[machine-learning.qmd](#)

<sup>6</sup>[cognitive-bias.qmd](#)

<sup>7</sup>[modern-portfolio-theory.qmd](#)

<sup>8</sup>[data-visualization.qmd](#)

<sup>9</sup>[simulation.qmd](#)

friends/coworkers/classmates), accumulating points based on players' actual statistical performances in games. The goal is to outscore one's opponent each week to win matches and ultimately claim victory in the league.

---

### 1.3 Why Focus on Fantasy Football?

I was fortunate to have an excellent instructor who taught me the value of learning statistics to answer interesting and important questions. That is, I do not find statistics intrinsically interesting; rather, I find them interesting because of what they allow me to do. Many students find statistics intimidating in part because of how it is typically taught—with examples like dice rolls and coin flips that are (seemingly irrelevant and) boring to students. My contention is that applied examples are a more effective lens to teach many concepts in psychology and data analysis. It can be more engaging and relatable to learn statistics in the applied context of sports, a domain that is more intuitive to many. Many people play fantasy sports. This book involves applying statistics to a particular domain (football). People actually want to learn statistical principles and methods when they can apply them to interesting questions (e.g., sports). In my opinion [and supported by evidence; Motz (2013)], this is a much more effective way of engaging people and teaching statistics than in the context of abstract coin flips and dice rolls. Fantasy football relies heavily on prediction—trying to predict which players will perform best and selecting them accordingly. In this way, fantasy football provides a plethora of decision making opportunities in the face of uncertainty, and a wealth of data for analyzing these decisions. However, unlike many other applied domains in psychology, fantasy football (1) allows a person to see the accuracy of their predictions on a timely basis and (2) provides a safe environment for friendly competition. Thus, it provides a unique domain to evaluate—and improve—the accuracy of various prediction models.

---

### 1.4 Educational Value

Skills in statistics, statistical programming, and data analysis are highly valuable. This book includes practical and conceptual tools that build a foundation for critical thinking. The book aims to help readers evaluate theory in the light of evidence (and vice versa) and to refine decision making in the context of uncertainty. Readers will learn about the ways that psychological science (and

related disciplines) poses questions, formulates hypotheses, designs studies to test those questions, and interprets the findings, collectively with the aim to answer questions, improve decision making, and solve problems.

Of course, this is not a traditional psychology textbook. However, the book incorporates important psychological concepts, such as cognitive biases in judgment and prediction, etc. In the modern world of big data, research and society need people who know how to make sense of the information around us. Psychology is in a prime position to teach applied statistics to a wide variety of students, most of whom will not have careers as psychologists. Psychology can teach the importance of statistics given humans' cognitive biases. It can also teach about how these biases can influence how people interpret statistics. This book will teach readers the applications of statistics (prediction) and research methods (empiricism) to answer questions they find interesting, while applying scientific and psychological rigor.

---

## 1.5 Learning Objectives

This book aims to help readers accomplish the following learning objectives:

- Apply empirical inference and appreciate the value it provides over speculative supposition.
- Ask educated questions when confronted with decisions in the face of uncertainty.
- Understand human decision making, including common heuristics and cognitive biases and how to mitigate them analytically.
- Engage in critical thinking about causality, including devising plausible alternative explanations for observed effects.
- Understand causal inference including confounding, causal pathways, and counterfactuals.
- Think empirically about human behavior and performance.
- Describe the strengths and weaknesses of humans versus computers in prediction scenarios.
- Apply basic skills in statistical programming using R to manipulate and summarize datasets and to conduct data analysis.
- Critically evaluate the strengths and limitations of different statistical models and methodologies used in predicting uncertain events, enhancing their understanding of statistical inference and model selection.
- Use various analytical techniques for predicting the outcome of uncertain events, and for uncovering latent causes of patterns in observed data.
- Interpret findings from various statistical approaches and evaluate the accuracy of predictions.

- Engage in iterative problem-solving processes, refining analytical approaches based on feedback and outcomes, and adapting strategies accordingly.
- Communicate statistical findings and analyses in both written and oral formats, demonstrating proficiency in presenting complex information to diverse audiences.
- Make sense of big data.
- Use practical analytical skills that can be applied in future research and job settings.

---

## 1.6 Disclosures

I am the Owner of Fantasy Football Analytics, LLC, which operates <https://fantasyfootballanalytics.net>.

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## 1.7 Disclaimer

*“This material probably won’t win you fantasy football championships. You could take what we learn and apply it to fantasy football and you might become 5 percent more likely to win. Or... Consider the broader relevance of this. You could learn data analysis and figure out ways to apply it to other systems. And you could be making a six-figure salary within the next five years.”* – Benjamin Motz, Ph.D.



## 2

---

# *Intro to Football and Fantasy*

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This chapter provides a brief primer on (American) football and fantasy football. If you are already familiar with fantasy football, feel free to skip this chapter.

---

## 2.1 Football

Football is the most widely watched sport in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.1.1 The Objective

The goal in football is for a team to score more points than their opponent. A game lasts 60 minutes, and it is separated into four 15-minute quarters. The team with the most points when the time runs out wins.

### 2.1.2 The Roster

#### 2.1.2.1 Overview

Each team has 11 players on the field at a time. The particular players who are on the field will depend on the situation, but usually includes one of the three subsets of players:

1. Offense
2. Defense
3. Special Teams

---

<sup>1</sup><https://news.gallup.com/poll/610046/football-retains-dominant-position-favorite-sport.aspx> (archived at <https://perma.cc/X2UG-RAAK>); <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1430289/most-watched-sports-leagues-usa/> (archived at <https://perma.cc/JNU6-S96A>)

An example formation is depicted in Figure 2.1.



**Figure 2.1** An Example Football Formation for the Offense and Defense. The solid line indicates the line of scrimmage. The arrow indicates the direction the offense tries to advance the ball.

#### 2.1.2.2 Offense

The offense is on the field when the team has the ball.

Players on offense include:

- Quarterback (QB)
- Running Back (RB)
  - Halfback (HB) or Tailback (TB)
  - Fullback (FB)
- Wide Receiver (WR)
- Tight End (TE)
- Offensive Linemen (OL), part of the “Offensive Line”
  - Center (C)
  - Offensive Guard (OG)
  - Offensive Tackle (OT)

The quarterback is the most important player on the offense. They help lead the team down the field. The quarterback receives the ball from the Center at the beginning of the play, and they can either hand the ball off (typically to a Running Back or Fullback), pass the ball (typically to a Wide Receiver or

Tight End), or run the ball. Quarterbacks tend to have a strong arm for throwing the ball far and accurately. Some quarterbacks are fast and are considered “dual threats” to pass or run.

Running Backs take a hand-off from the Quarterback to execute a running play (i.e., a rush). They may also catch short passes from the Quarterback or help protect (i.e., block for) the Quarterback from the defensive players who are trying to tackle the Quarterback. Halfbacks and Tailbacks tend to be quick and agile. Fullbacks tend to be strong and powerful.

Wide Receivers catch passes from the Quarterback to execute a passing play. On running plays, they provide protection for the player running the ball (e.g., the Running Back) so the ball carrier can get as far as possible without being tackled. Wide receivers tend to be tall, fast, have good hands (can catch the ball well), and can jump high.

Tight Ends block for running and passing plays, and they catch passes from the Quarterback. Tight ends tend to be strong and have good hands.

Offensive Linemen block for running and passing plays. On passing plays, they provide protection for the Quarterback so the Quarterback has time to pass the ball without being tackled. On running plays, they provide protection for the player running the ball (e.g., the Running Back) so the ball carrier can get as far as possible without being tackled. Offensive Linemen tend to be large so they can provide adequate protection for the Quarterback and Running Back.

### 2.1.2.3 Defense

The defense is on the field when the team does not have the ball (i.e., when the opposing team has the ball).

Players on defense include:

- Defensive Linemen (DL), part of the “Defensive Line”
  - Defensive End (DE)
  - Defensive Tackle (DT)
- Linebacker (LB)
  - Middle (or Inside) Linebacker (MLB)
  - Outside Linebacker (OLB)
- Defensive Back (DB), part of the “Secondary”
  - Cornerback (CB)
  - Safety (S)
    - \* Free Safety (FS)
    - \* Strong Safety (SS)

The players on the defense attempt to tackle the offensive players for as short of gains as possible and attempt to prevent completed passes.

On passing plays, Defensive Linemen try to apply pressure to the Quarterback and try to tackle the Quarterback behind the line of scrimmage before the Quarterback can throw the ball (i.e., a sack). On rushing plays, Defensive Linemen try to tackle the ball carrier to prevent the ball carrier from advancing the ball (i.e., gaining yards). Defensive Linemen tend to be large yet quick so they can apply pressure to the Quarterback.

Linebackers are versatile in that, on a given play, they may attempt to a) “blitz” to sack the Quarterback, b) stop the Running Back, or c) prevent a completed pass. Linebackers tend to be strong yet agile.

Defensive Backs are specialist pass defenders. The main role of Cornerbacks is to cover the Wide Receivers. Safeties serve as the last line of defense for longer passes. Defensive Backs tend to be quick and agile.

#### **2.1.2.4 Special Teams**

The special teams involves specialist players who are on the field during all kicking plays including kickoffs, field goals, and punts.

Players on special teams include:

- Kicker (K)
- Punter (P)
- Holder
- Long Snapper
- Punt Returner
- Kick Returner
- and other players intended to block for or to tackle the ball carrier

On a field goal attempt, the Long Snapper snaps the ball to the Holder, who holds the ball for the Kicker. The Kicker attempts field goals and, during kick-offs, kicks the ball to the opposing team. During kickoffs, the Kick Returner catches the kicked ball and returns it for as many yards as possible. During a punt play, the Long Snapper snaps the ball to the Punter who kicks (i.e., punts) the ball to the opposing team. The Punt Returner catches the punted ball and returns it for as many yards as possible.

#### **2.1.3 The Field**

The football field is rectangular and is 120 yards long and  $53 \frac{1}{3}$  yards wide (109.73 m x 48.77 m).<sup>2</sup> At each end of the 120-yard field is a team’s end zone.

---

<sup>2</sup>One yard is equal to three feet. A yard is just smaller than a meter (0.9144 meters).

Each end zone is 10 yards long (9.14 m). Thus, the distance from one end zone to the other end zone is 100 yards (91.44 m). Behind each end zone is a field goal post. A diagram of a football field is depicted in Figure 2.2.



**Figure 2.2** A Diagram of a Football Field. The yard markers depict the distance from the nearest end zone. The orange shaded area is called the “red zone”, where chances of scoring points are highest. The original figure was modified to depict field goal posts. (Figure retrieved from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:American\\_football\\_field.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:American_football_field.svg))

### 2.1.4 The Gameplay

At the beginning of the game, there is a coin flip to determine which teams receives the ball first and which team takes which side of the field. During the kickoff, the kicking team kicks the ball to the receiving team, who has the option to return the kick. The offense starts their possession at the 25 yard line—if there is no return (i.e., a touchback)—or wherever the kick returner is tackled or goes out of bounds.

The team with the ball (i.e., the offense) has four opportunities (“downs”) to advance the ball (i.e., gain) 10 yards. A team can advance the ball either by running it or by throwing (i.e., passing) and catching it. At the end of a rushing play, the ball advances to wherever the ball carrier is tackled or goes out of bounds (i.e., wherever the player is “down”). At the end of a passing play, if the thrown ball is caught (i.e., a completed pass), the ball advances to wherever the ball carrier is tackled or goes out of bounds. If the thrown ball is not caught in bounds before the ball hits the ground (i.e., an incomplete pass), the ball does not advance. Wherever the ball is advanced to dictates where the next play begins. The yard position on the field where the next play takes place from is known as the “line of scrimmage”. Neither team can cross the line the line of scrimmage until the next play begins. To begin the play, the ball is placed on the line of scrimmage and the Center gives (or “snaps”) the ball to the Quarterback.

If the team advances the ball 10 or more yards within four downs, the team receives a “first down” and is awarded a new set of downs—four more downs to advance the ball 10 more yards. If the team advances the ball all the way to the other team’s end zone, they score a touchdown. If the team fails to advance the ball 10 or more yards within four downs, the team loses the ball, and the other team takes possession at that spot on the field. There are risks of giving the other team the ball with a short distance to score. Thus, on fourth down, instead of trying to advance the ball for a first down, a team may choose to kick a field goal—to get points—or to punt.

A field goal involves a kicker kicking the ball with an intent to kick the ball through the field goal posts (“uprights”). To score points by making a field goal, the kicked ball must go between the uprights (extended vertically) and over the cross bar.

Punting involves a punter kicking the ball to the other team with an intent to give their opponent worse field position, thus making it harder for the other team to score. The punting team tries to pin the opponent as close as possible to the opponent’s end zone (i.e., as far as possible from the own team’s end zone), so they have a longer distance to go to score a touchdown.

There are multiple ways that ball possession can switch from the offense to the other team. After scoring a touchdown, field goal, or safety, there is a kickoff, in which the scoring team kicks the ball to the opponent. Another

way that the ball switches possession to the other team is if the team commits a turnover. The defense can force a turnover by an interception, fumble recovery, or turnover on downs. A turnover due to an interception occurs when a defensive player catches the quarterback's pass. A turnover due to a fumble recovery occurs when an offensive player, who had possession of the ball, loses the ball before being down or scoring a touchdown and the ball is recovered by the opponent. A turnover on downs occurs when the team attempts on fourth down to achieve the remainder of the needed 10 yards to go but fails.

Other football-related situations include tackles for loss and sacks. A tackle for loss occurs when a ball carrier is tackled behind the line of scrimmage. A sack occurs when a Quarterback is tackled with the ball behind the line of scrimmage. A pass defended occurs when a defensive player knocks down the ball in the air so that the intended receiver cannot catch the ball.

### 2.1.5 The Scoring

The goal of the team with the ball (i.e., the offense) is to score points. It can do this by either advancing the ball into the other team's end zone (6 points) or by kicking a field goal (3 points). Advancing the ball in the other team's end zone is called a touchdown. After a touchdown, the offense chooses to attempt either a point-after-touchdown (PAT) or a two-point conversion. A PAT is a short kick attempt from the 15-yard line (i.e., 15 yards away from the end zone) that, if it goes through the goal posts ("uprights") and over the cross bar, is worth 1 point. A two-point conversion is a single-scoring opportunity from the 3-yard line (i.e., 3 yards away from the end zone). If the offense scores (i.e., advances the ball into the end zone) from the 3-yard line, the team is awarded 2 points.

A team can kick a field goal from any distance as long as the kick goes through the goal posts. The current record for the longest field goal is 66 yards (by Justin Tucker in 2021).

A safety occurs when the offense is tackled with the ball in their own end zone. When a safety occurs, the opposing team (i.e., defense) is awarded two points and the ball.

### 2.1.6 Glossary of Terms

- running play ("run") or rushing play (or "rush")—the attempt by an offensive player, typically the Running Back or Quarterback, to advance the ball "on the ground" by running it—not by passing it forward
- passing play (or "pass")—the attempt by an offensive player, typically the Quarterback, to advance the ball by throwing it forward to an offensive player

- passing attempt—the attempt to advance the ball by passing it (i.e., a thrown pass)
- rushing attempt—the attempt to advance the ball by running it
- passing completion—a thrown pass that is successfully caught by an offensive player
- passing incompleteness—a thrown pass that is not caught by an offensive player
- passing yards—the distance (in yards) the player advanced the ball by throwing it
- rushing yards—the distance (in yards) the player advanced the ball by running it
- receiving yards—the distance (in yards) the player advanced the ball by catching thrown passes and then running with it further upfield
- kick/punt return yards—the distance (in yards) the player advanced the ball by returning kicks or punts
- turnover return yards—the distance (in yards) the player advanced the ball by returning turnovers
- reception—a pass that is caught by the offensive player
- touchdown—advancing the ball into the opponent's end zone either by a) throwing a completed pass that ends up in the end zone, b) running it into the end zone, c) catching it in the end zone, or d) catching it and then running it into the end zone
- passing touchdown—advancing the ball into the opponent's end zone either by throwing a completed pass that ends up in the end zone
- rushing touchdown—advancing the ball into the opponent's end zone either by running it into the end zone
- receiving touchdown—advancing the ball into the opponent's end zone either by catching it in the end zone or by catching it and then running it into the end zone
- kick/punt return touchdown—advancing the ball into the opponent's end zone when returning a kick or punt
- turnover return touchdown—advancing the ball into the opponent's end zone when returning a turnover (i.e., interception or fumble)
- two-point conversion—a single-scoring opportunity from the 3-yard line (i.e., 3 yards away from the end zone) that is an option given to a team that scores a touchdown; if the offense scores (i.e., advances the ball into the end zone) from the 3-yard line, the team is awarded 2 points
- block—when the defense/special teams blocks a kick or field goal by hitting the ball just after it is kicked to prevent the ball from going far
- kickoff—the kicking team kicks the ball to the receiving team, who has the option to return the kick
- field goal—a kicker kicks the ball with an intent to kick the ball through the field goal posts (“uprights”). To score points by making a field goal, the kicked ball must go between the uprights (extended vertically) and over the cross bar. If the field goal attempt is successful, the team gains 3 points.



- point after touchdown (PAT)—a short kick attempt from the 15-yard line (i.e., 15 yards away from the end zone) that, if it goes through the goal posts (“uprights”) and over the cross bar, is worth 1 point
- extra point returned—if the defense/special teams returns the ball into the opponent’s end zone during a point after touchdown (PAT) attempt, it is worth 2 points
- punt—a punter kicks the ball to the other team with an intent to give their opponent worse field position, thus making it harder for the other team to score
- fumble lost—when an offensive player, who had possession of the ball, loses the ball before being down or scoring a touchdown and the ball is recovered by the opponent
- fumble forced—when a defensive player knocks the ball out of the hands of an offensive player, who had possession of the ball
- fumble recovery—when a defensive player recovers a fumble by the opponent
- interception—when a defensive player catches a pass from an offensive player
- tackle—when a player brings down the ball carrier
- tackle solo—when a player is the main tackler (i.e., the primary player to bring down the ball carrier)
- tackle assist—when a player is one of two or more players who, together, bring down the ball carrier
- tackle for loss—when an offensive player is tackled with the ball behind the line of scrimmage
- sack—when a Quarterback is tackled with the ball behind the line of scrimmage
- pass defended—when a defensive player knocks down the ball in the air so that the intended receiver cannot catch the ball
- safety—when the offense is tackled with the ball in their own end zone

---

## 2.2 Fantasy Football

### 2.2.1 Overview of Fantasy Football

Fantasy football is one of the most widely played games in the history of games. It is estimated that around 62 million people play fantasy sports<sup>3</sup>, of whom around 29 million play fantasy football.<sup>4</sup> As noted in the Introduction<sup>5</sup>,

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<sup>3</sup><https://thefsga.org/industry-demographics/> (archived at <https://perma.cc/9PB8-ZDJJ>)

<sup>4</sup><https://www.statista.com/topics/10895/fantasy-sports-in-the-us/> (archived at <https://perma.cc/8YSN-UUNT>)

<sup>5</sup>intro.qmd

fantasy football is an online game where participants assemble (i.e., “draft”) imaginary teams composed of real-life National Football League (NFL) players.<sup>6</sup> The participants are in charge of managing and making strategic decisions for their imaginary team to have the best possible team that will score the most points. Thus, the participants are called “managers”. Managers make decisions such as selecting which players to draft, selecting which players to play (i.e., “start”) on a weekly basis, identifying players to pick up from the remaining pool of available players (i.e., waiver wire), and making trades with other teams. Fantasy football relies heavily on prediction—trying to predict which players will perform best and selecting them accordingly.

2.2.2 The Fantasy League

A fantasy football “league” is composed of various imaginary (i.e., “fantasy”) teams—and their associated manager. In the fantasy league, the managers’ fantasy teams play against each other. A fantasy league is commonly composed of 8, 10, or 12 fantasy teams, but leagues can have more or fewer teams.

2.2.3 The Roster of a Fantasy Team

On a given roster, a manager has a “starting lineup” and a “bench”. Each week, the manager decides which players on their roster to put in the starting lineup, and which to keep on the bench. In many leagues, a starting lineup is composed of offensive players, a kicker, and defense/special teams:

Offensive players:

Table 2.1 Offensive Players in the Starting Lineup

Position	Typical Number of Players in Starting Lineup
Quarterback (QB)	1
Running Back (RB)	2
Wide Receiver (WR)	2
Tight End (TE)	1
Flex Position	1

A “flex position” is a flexible position that can involve a player from various positions: e.g., a Running Back, Wide Receiver, or Tight End.

Kickers:

<sup>6</sup>Fantasy leagues are also available for baseball<sup>7</sup>, basketball<sup>8</sup>, and many other sports.

- one Kicker (K)

Defense/Special Teams:

- one Team Defense (DST/D/DEF) or multiple Individual Defensive Players (IDP)

## 2.2.4 Scoring

### 2.2.4.1 Scoring Overview

In the game of fantasy football, managers accumulate points on a weekly basis based on players' actual statistical performances in NFL games. Managers receive points for only those players who are on their starting lineup (not players on their bench). A manager's goal is to outscore their opponent each week to win matches and ultimately claim victory in the league. Scoring settings can differ from league to league.

Below are common scoring settings for fantasy leagues.

### 2.2.4.2 Offensive Players

**Table 2.2** Common Scoring Settings for Offensive Players

Statistical category	Points
Rushing or receiving TD	6
Returning a kick or punt for a TD	6
Returning or recovering a fumble for a TD	6
Passing TD	4
Passing INT	−2
Fumble lost	−2
Rushing, passing, or receiving	2
2-point conversion	
Rushing or receiving yards	1 point per 10 yards
Passing yards	1 point per 25 yards

Note: “TD” = touchdown; “INT” = interception

Other common (but not necessarily standard) statistical categories include:

- receptions (called “point per reception” [PPR] leagues)

- return yards
- passing attempts
- rushing attempts

#### 2.2.4.3 Kickers

**Table 2.3** Common Scoring Settings for Kickers

Statistical category	Points
FG made: 50+ yards	5
FG made: 40–49 yards	4
FG made: 39 yards or less	3
Rushing, passing, or receiving	2
2-point conversion	
Point after touchdown attempt made	1
Point after touchdown attempt missed	−1
Missed FG: 0–39 yards	−2
Missed FG: 40–49 yards	−1

Note: “FG” = field goal

#### 2.2.4.4 Team Defense/Special Teams

**Table 2.4** Common Scoring Settings for Team Defense/Special Teams

Statistical category	Points
Defensive or special teams TD	3
Interception	2
Fumble recovery	2
Blocked punt, PAT, or FG	2
Safety	2
Sack	1

Note: “TD” = touchdown; “PAT” = point after touchdown; “FG” = field goal

#### 2.2.4.5 Individual Defensive Players

**Table 2.5** Common Scoring Settings for Individual Defensive Players

Statistical category	Points
Tackle solo	1
Tackle assist	0.5
Tackle for loss	1
Sack	2
Interception	4
Fumble forced	2
Fumble recovery	2
TD	6
Safety	2
Pass defended	1
Blocked kick	2
Extra point returned	2

Note: “TD” = touchdown

Other common (but not necessarily standard) statistical categories include:

- turnover return yards

#### 2.2.4.6 Common Scoring Abbreviations

- “TD” = touchdown
- “INT” = interception
- “yds” = yards
- “ATT” = attempts
- “2-pt conversion” = two-point conversion
- “FG” = field goal
- “PAT” = point after touchdown (i.e., extra point/point after attempt)



# 3

## *Getting Started with R for Data Analysis*

The book uses R for statistical analyses (<http://www.r-project.org>). R is a free software environment; you can download it at no charge here: <https://cran.r-project.org>.

### 3.1 Initial Setup

To get started, follow the following steps:

1. Install R: <https://cran.r-project.org>
2. Install RStudio Desktop: <https://posit.co/download/rstudio-desktop>
3. After installing RStudio, open RStudio and run the following code in the console to install several key R packages:

```
install.packages(  
  c("petersenlab", "ffanalytics", "nflreadr", "nflfastR", "nfl4th", "nflplotR",  
    "gsisdecoder", "progressr", "lubridate", "tidyverse", "psych"))
```

**i** Note 1: If you are in Dr. Petersen's class

If you are in Dr. Petersen's class, also perform the following steps:

1. Set up a free account on GitHub.com<sup>a</sup>.
2. Download GitHub Desktop: <https://desktop.github.com>

---

<sup>a</sup><https://github.com>

---

## 3.2 Installing Packages

You can install R packages using the following syntax:

```
install.packages("INSERT_PACKAGE_NAME_HERE")
```

For instance, you can use the following code to install the `nflreadr` package:

```
install.packages("nflreadr")
```

---

## 3.3 Load Packages

```
library("ffanalytics")  
library("nflreadr")  
library("nflfastR")  
library("nfl4th")  
library("nflplotR")  
library("progressr")  
library("lubridate")  
library("tidyverse")
```

---

## 3.4 Download Football Data

### 3.4.1 Players

```
nfl_players <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_players())
```

### 3.4.2 Teams



```
nfl_teams <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_teams(current = TRUE))
```

### 3.4.3 Player Info

### 3.4.4 Rosters

A Data Dictionary for rosters is located at the following link: [https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_rosters.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_rosters.html)

```
nfl_rosters <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_rosters(seasons = TRUE))  
  
nfl_rosters_weekly <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_rosters_weekly(seasons = TRUE))
```

### 3.4.5 Game Schedules

A Data Dictionary for game schedules data is located at the following link: [https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_schedules.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_schedules.html)

```
nfl_schedules <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_schedules(seasons = TRUE))
```

### 3.4.6 The Combine

A Data Dictionary for data from the combine is located at the following link: [https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_combine.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_combine.html)

```
nfl_combine <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_combine(seasons = TRUE))
```

### 3.4.7 Draft Picks

A Data Dictionary for draft picks data is located at the following link: [https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_draft\\_picks.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_draft_picks.html)

```
nfl_draftPicks <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_draft_picks(seasons = TRUE))
```

### 3.4.8 Depth Charts

A Data Dictionary for data from weekly depth charts is located at the following link: [https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_depth\\_charts.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_depth_charts.html)

```
nfl_depthCharts <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_depth_charts(seasons = TRUE))
```

### 3.4.9 Play-By-Play Data

To download play-by-play data from prior weeks and seasons, we can use the `load_pbp()` function of the `nflreadr` package. We add a progress bar using the `with_progress()` function from the `progressr` package because it takes a while to run. A Data Dictionary for the play-by-play data is located at the following link: [https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_pbp.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_pbp.html)

**i** Note 2: Downloading play-by-play data

Note: the following code takes a while to run.

```
nfl_pbp <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_pbp(seasons = TRUE))
```

### 3.4.10 4th Down Data

```
nfl_4thdown <- nfl4th::load_4th_pbp(seasons = 2014:2023)
```

### 3.4.11 Participation

A Data Dictionary for the participation data is located at the following link: [https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_participation.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_participation.html)

```
nfl_participation <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_participation(  
    seasons = TRUE,  
    include_pbp = TRUE))
```

### 3.4.12 Historical Weekly Actual Player Statistics

We can download historical week-by-week actual player statistics using the `load_player_stats()` function from the `nflreadr` package. A Data Dictionary for statistics for offensive players is located at the following link: [https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_player\\_stats.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_player_stats.html). A Data Dictionary for statistics for defensive players is located at the following link: [https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_player\\_stats\\_def.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_player_stats_def.html).

```
nfl_actualStats_offense_weekly <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_player_stats(  
    seasons = TRUE,  
    stat_type = "offense"))  
  
nfl_actualStats_defense_weekly <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_player_stats(  
    seasons = TRUE,  
    stat_type = "defense"))  
  
nfl_actualStats_kicking_weekly <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_player_stats(  
    seasons = TRUE,  
    stat_type = "kicking"))
```

### 3.4.13 Injuries

A Data Dictionary for injury data is located at the following link: [https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_injuries.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_injuries.html)

```
nfl_injuries <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_injuries(seasons = TRUE))
```

### 3.4.14 Snap Counts

A Data Dictionary for snap counts data is located at the following link: [https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_snap\\_counts.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_snap_counts.html)

```
nfl_snapCounts <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_snap_counts(seasons = TRUE))
```

### 3.4.15 ESPN QBR

A Data Dictionary for ESPN QBR data is located at the following link: [https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_espn\\_qbr.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_espn_qbr.html)

```
nfl_espnQBR_seasonal <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_espn_qbr(  
    seasons = TRUE,  
    summary_type = c("season")))  
  
nfl_espnQBR_weekly <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_espn_qbr(  
    seasons = TRUE,  
    summary_type = c("weekly")))  
  
nfl_espnQBR_weekly$game_week <- as.character(nfl_espnQBR_weekly$game_week)  
  
nfl_espnQBR <- bind_rows(  
  nfl_espnQBR_seasonal,  
  nfl_espnQBR_weekly  
)
```

### 3.4.16 NFL Next Gen Stats

A Data Dictionary for NFL Next Gen Stats data is located at the following link: [https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_nextgen\\_stats.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_nextgen_stats.html)

```
nfl_nextGenStats_pass_weekly <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_nextgen_stats(  
    seasons = TRUE,  
    stat_type = c("passing")))  
  
nfl_nextGenStats_rush_weekly <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_nextgen_stats(  
    seasons = TRUE,  
    stat_type = c("rushing")))  
  
nfl_nextGenStats_rec_weekly <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_nextgen_stats(  
    seasons = TRUE,  
    stat_type = c("receiving")))  
  
nfl_nextGenStats_weekly <- bind_rows(  
  nfl_nextGenStats_pass_weekly,
```

```
nfl_nextGenStats_rush_weekly,  
nfl_nextGenStats_rec_weekly  
)
```

### 3.4.17 Advanced Stats from PFR

A Data Dictionary for PFR passing data is located at the following link:  
[https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_pfr\\_passing.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_pfr_passing.html)

```
nfl_advancedStatsPFR_pass_seasonal <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_pfr_advstats(  
    seasons = TRUE,  
    stat_type = c("pass"),  
    summary_level = c("season"))  
)  
  
nfl_advancedStatsPFR_pass_weekly <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_pfr_advstats(  
    seasons = TRUE,  
    stat_type = c("pass"),  
    summary_level = c("week"))  
)  
  
nfl_advancedStatsPFR_rush_seasonal <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_pfr_advstats(  
    seasons = TRUE,  
    stat_type = c("rush"),  
    summary_level = c("season"))  
)  
  
nfl_advancedStatsPFR_rush_weekly <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_pfr_advstats(  
    seasons = TRUE,  
    stat_type = c("rush"),  
    summary_level = c("week"))  
)  
  
nfl_advancedStatsPFR_rec_seasonal <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_pfr_advstats(  
    seasons = TRUE,  
    stat_type = c("rec"),  
    summary_level = c("season"))  
)  
  
nfl_advancedStatsPFR_rec_weekly <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_pfr_advstats(  
    seasons = TRUE,  
    stat_type = c("rec"),
```

```

summary_level = c("week"))))

nfl_advancedStatsPFR_def_seasonal <- progressr::with_progress(
  nflreadr::load_pfr_advstats(
    seasons = TRUE,
    stat_type = c("def"),
    summary_level = c("season")))

nfl_advancedStatsPFR_def_weekly <- progressr::with_progress(
  nflreadr::load_pfr_advstats(
    seasons = TRUE,
    stat_type = c("def"),
    summary_level = c("week")))

nfl_advancedStatsPFR <- bind_rows(
  nfl_advancedStatsPFR_pass_seasonal,
  nfl_advancedStatsPFR_pass_weekly,
  nfl_advancedStatsPFR_rush_seasonal,
  nfl_advancedStatsPFR_rush_weekly,
  nfl_advancedStatsPFR_rec_seasonal,
  nfl_advancedStatsPFR_rec_weekly,
  nfl_advancedStatsPFR_def_seasonal,
  nfl_advancedStatsPFR_def_weekly,
)

```

### 3.4.18 Player Contracts

A Data Dictionary for player contracts data is located at the following link:  
[https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_contracts.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_contracts.html)

```

nfl_playerContracts <- progressr::with_progress(
  nflreadr::load_contracts())

```

### 3.4.19 FTN Charting Data

A Data Dictionary for FTN Charting data is located at the following link:  
[https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_ftn\\_charting.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_ftn_charting.html)

```

nfl_ftnCharting <- progressr::with_progress(
  nflreadr::load_ftn_charting(seasons = TRUE))

```

### 3.4.20 Fantasy Player IDs

A Data Dictionary for fantasy player ID data is located at the following link: [https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_ff\\_playerids.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_ff_playerids.html)

```
nfl_playerIDs <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_ff_playerids())
```

### 3.4.21 FantasyPros Rankings

A Data Dictionary for FantasyPros ranking data is located at the following link: [https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_ff\\_rankings.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_ff_rankings.html)

```
#nfl_rankings <- progressr::with_progress( # currently throws error  
#  nflreadr::load_ff_rankings(type = "all"))  
  
nfl_rankings_draft <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_ff_rankings(type = "draft"))  
  
nfl_rankings_weekly <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_ff_rankings(type = "week"))  
  
nfl_rankings <- bind_rows(  
  nfl_rankings_draft,  
  nfl_rankings_weekly  
)
```

### 3.4.22 Expected Fantasy Points

A Data Dictionary for expected fantasy points data is located at the following link: [https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary\\_ff\\_opportunity.html](https://nflreadr.nflverse.com/articles/dictionary_ff_opportunity.html)

```
nfl_expectedFantasyPoints_weekly <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_ff_opportunity(  
    seasons = TRUE,  
    stat_type = "weekly",  
    model_version = "latest"  
  ))  
  
nfl_expectedFantasyPoints_pass <- progressr::with_progress(  
  nflreadr::load_ff_opportunity(  
    seasons = TRUE,
```

### 3.5 Data Dictionary

### 3.6 Create a Data Frame

```
players <- data.frame(
  ID = 1:12,
  name = c(
    "Ken Cussion",
    "Ben Sacked",
    "Chuck Downfield",
    "Ron Ingbach",
    "Rhonda Ball",
    "Hugo Long",
```



```

    "Lionel Scrimmage",
    "Drew Blood",
    "Chase Emdown",
    "Justin Time",
    "Spike D'Ball",
    "Isac Ulooz"),
  position = c("QB","QB","QB","RB","RB","WR","WR","WR","WR","TE","TE","LB"),
  age = c(40, 30, 24, 20, 18, 23, 27, 32, 26, 23, NA, 37)
)

fantasyPoints <- data.frame(
  ID = c(2, 7, 13, 14),
  fantasyPoints = c(250, 170, 65, 15)
)

```

### 3.7 Variable Names

To see the names of variables in a data frame, use the following syntax:

```
names(nfl_players)
```

```

[1] "status"           "display_name"
[3] "first_name"       "last_name"
[5] "esb_id"           "gsis_id"
[7] "suffix"           "birth_date"
[9] "college_name"     "position_group"
[11] "position"         "jersey_number"
[13] "height"           "weight"
[15] "years_of_experience" "team_abbr"
[17] "team_seq"         "current_team_id"
[19] "football_name"    "entry_year"
[21] "rookie_year"      "draft_club"
[23] "college_conference" "status_description_abbr"
[25] "status_short_description" "gsis_it_id"
[27] "short_name"       "smart_id"
[29] "headshot"         "draft_number"
[31] "uniform_number"   "draft_round"
[33] "season"

```

```
names(players)
```

```
[1] "ID"      "name"    "position" "age"
```

```
names(fantasyPoints)
```

```
[1] "ID"      "fantasyPoints"
```

---

## 3.8 Logical Operators

### 3.8.1 Is Equal To: ==

```
players$position == "RB"
```

```
[1] FALSE FALSE FALSE TRUE TRUE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE
```

### 3.8.2 Is Not Equal To: !=

```
players$position != "RB"
```

```
[1] TRUE TRUE TRUE FALSE FALSE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE
```

### 3.8.3 Is Greater Than: >

```
players$age > 30
```

```
[1] TRUE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE TRUE FALSE FALSE NA TRUE
```

### 3.8.4 Is Less Than: <

```
players$age < 30
```

```
[1] FALSE FALSE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE FALSE TRUE TRUE NA FALSE
```

### 3.8.5 Is Greater Than or Equal To: >=

```
players$age >= 30
```

```
[1] TRUE TRUE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE TRUE FALSE FALSE NA TRUE
```

### 3.8.6 Is Less Than or Equal To: <=

```
players$age <= 30
```

```
[1] FALSE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE FALSE TRUE TRUE NA FALSE
```

### 3.8.7 Is In a Value of Another Vector: %in%

```
players$position %in% c("RB","WR")
```

```
[1] FALSE FALSE FALSE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE FALSE FALSE FALSE
```

### 3.8.8 Is Not In a Value of Another Vector: !(%in%)

```
!(players$position %in% c("RB","WR"))
```

```
[1] TRUE TRUE TRUE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE TRUE TRUE TRUE
```

### 3.8.9 Is Missing: is.na()

```
is.na(players$age)
```

```
[1] FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE TRUE FALSE
```

### 3.8.10 Is Not Missing: `!is.na()`

```
!is.na(players$age)
```

```
[1] TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE FALSE TRUE
```

### 3.8.11 And: `&`

```
players$position == "WR" & players$age > 26
```

```
[1] FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE TRUE TRUE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE
```

### 3.8.12 Or: `|`

```
players$position == "WR" | players$age > 23
```

```
[1] TRUE TRUE TRUE FALSE FALSE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE FALSE NA TRUE
```

---

## 3.9 Subset

To subset a data frame, use brackets to specify the subset of rows and columns to keep, where the value/vector before the comma specifies the rows to keep, and the value/vector after the comma specifies the columns to keep:

```
dataframe[rowsToKeep, columnsToKeep]
```

You can subset by using any of the following:

- numeric indices of the rows/columns to keep (or drop)
- names of the rows/columns to keep (or drop)
- values of TRUE and FALSE corresponding to which rows/columns to keep

### 3.9.1 One Variable

To subset one variable, use the following syntax:

```
players$name
```

```
[1] "Ken Cussion"      "Ben Sacked"      "Chuck Downfield" "Ron Ingback"
[5] "Rhonda Ball"     "Hugo Long"       "Lionel Scrimmage" "Drew Blood"
[9] "Chase Emdown"    "Justin Time"     "Spike D'Ball"    "Isac Ulooz"
```

or:

```
players[, "name"]
```

```
[1] "Ken Cussion"      "Ben Sacked"      "Chuck Downfield" "Ron Ingback"
[5] "Rhonda Ball"     "Hugo Long"       "Lionel Scrimmage" "Drew Blood"
[9] "Chase Emdown"    "Justin Time"     "Spike D'Ball"    "Isac Ulooz"
```

### 3.9.2 Particular Rows of One Variable

To subset one variable, use the following syntax:

```
players$name[which(players$position == "RB")]
```

```
[1] "Ron Ingback" "Rhonda Ball"
```

or:

```
players[which(players$position == "RB"), "name"]
```

```
[1] "Ron Ingback" "Rhonda Ball"
```

### 3.9.3 Particular Columns (Variables)

To subset particular columns/variables, use the following syntax:

#### 3.9.3.1 Base R

```
subsetVars <- c("name","age")  
  
players[,c(2,4)]
```

	name	age
1	Ken Cussion	40
2	Ben Sacked	30
3	Chuck Downfield	24
4	Ron Ingback	20
5	Rhonda Ball	18
6	Hugo Long	23
7	Lionel Scrimmage	27
8	Drew Blood	32
9	Chase Emdown	26
10	Justin Time	23
11	Spike D'Ball	NA
12	Isac Ulooz	37

```
players[,c("name","age")]
```

	name	age
1	Ken Cussion	40
2	Ben Sacked	30
3	Chuck Downfield	24
4	Ron Ingback	20
5	Rhonda Ball	18
6	Hugo Long	23
7	Lionel Scrimmage	27
8	Drew Blood	32
9	Chase Emdown	26
10	Justin Time	23
11	Spike D'Ball	NA
12	Isac Ulooz	37

```
players[,subsetVars]
```

	name	age
1	Ken Cussion	40
2	Ben Sacked	30
3	Chuck Downfield	24
4	Ron Ingback	20
5	Rhonda Ball	18

6	Hugo Long	23
7	Lionel Scrimmage	27
8	Drew Blood	32
9	Chase Emdown	26
10	Justin Time	23
11	Spike D'Ball	NA
12	Isac Ulooz	37

Or, to drop columns:

```
dropVars <- c("name", "age")  
  
players[, -c(2, 4)]
```

	ID	position
1	1	QB
2	2	QB
3	3	QB
4	4	RB
5	5	RB
6	6	WR
7	7	WR
8	8	WR
9	9	WR
10	10	TE
11	11	TE
12	12	LB

```
players[, !(names(players) %in% c("name", "age"))]
```

	ID	position
1	1	QB
2	2	QB
3	3	QB
4	4	RB
5	5	RB
6	6	WR
7	7	WR
8	8	WR
9	9	WR
10	10	TE
11	11	TE
12	12	LB

```
players[,!(names(players) %in% dropVars)]
```

	ID	position
1	1	QB
2	2	QB
3	3	QB
4	4	RB
5	5	RB
6	6	WR
7	7	WR
8	8	WR
9	9	WR
10	10	TE
11	11	TE
12	12	LB

### 3.9.3.2 Tidyverse

```
players %>%
  select(name, age)
```

	name	age
1	Ken Cussion	40
2	Ben Sacked	30
3	Chuck Downfield	24
4	Ron Ingback	20
5	Rhonda Ball	18
6	Hugo Long	23
7	Lionel Scrimmage	27
8	Drew Blood	32
9	Chase Emdown	26
10	Justin Time	23
11	Spike D'Ball	NA
12	Isac Ulooz	37

```
players %>%
  select(name:age)
```

	name	position	age
1	Ken Cussion	QB	40
2	Ben Sacked	QB	30
3	Chuck Downfield	QB	24



### *Subset*

37

4	Ron Ingback	RB	20
5	Rhonda Ball	RB	18
6	Hugo Long	WR	23
7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27
8	Drew Blood	WR	32
9	Chase Emdown	WR	26
10	Justin Time	TE	23
11	Spike D'Ball	TE	NA
12	Isac Ulooz	LB	37

```
players %>%  
  select(all_of(subsetVars))
```

	name	age
1	Ken Cussion	40
2	Ben Sacked	30
3	Chuck Downfield	24
4	Ron Ingback	20
5	Rhonda Ball	18
6	Hugo Long	23
7	Lionel Scrimmage	27
8	Drew Blood	32
9	Chase Emdown	26
10	Justin Time	23
11	Spike D'Ball	NA
12	Isac Ulooz	37

Or, to drop columns:

```
players %>%  
  select(-name, -age)
```

	ID	position
1	1	QB
2	2	QB
3	3	QB
4	4	RB
5	5	RB
6	6	WR
7	7	WR
8	8	WR
9	9	WR
10	10	TE
11	11	TE
12	12	LB

```
players %>%
  select(-c(name:age))
```

	ID
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9	9
10	10
11	11
12	12

```
players %>%
  select(-all_of(dropVars))
```

	ID	position
1	1	QB
2	2	QB
3	3	QB
4	4	RB
5	5	RB
6	6	WR
7	7	WR
8	8	WR
9	9	WR
10	10	TE
11	11	TE
12	12	LB

### 3.9.4 Particular Rows

To subset particular rows, use the following syntax:

#### 3.9.4.1 Base R

```
subsetRows <- c(4,5)

players[c(4,5),]
```

	ID	name	position	age
4	4	Ron Ingback	RB	20
5	5	Rhonda Ball	RB	18

```
players[subsetRows,]
```

	ID	name	position	age
4	4	Ron Ingback	RB	20
5	5	Rhonda Ball	RB	18

```
players[which(players$position == "RB"),]
```

	ID	name	position	age
4	4	Ron Ingback	RB	20
5	5	Rhonda Ball	RB	18

### 3.9.4.2 Tidyverse

```
players %>%
  filter(position == "WR")
```

	ID	name	position	age
1	6	Hugo Long	WR	23
2	7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27
3	8	Drew Blood	WR	32
4	9	Chase Emdown	WR	26

```
players %>%
  filter(position == "WR", age <= 26)
```

	ID	name	position	age
1	6	Hugo Long	WR	23
2	9	Chase Emdown	WR	26

```
players %>%
  filter(position == "WR" | age >= 26)
```

	ID	name	position	age
1	1	Ken Cussion	QB	40
2	2	Ben Sacked	QB	30
3	6	Hugo Long	WR	23
4	7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27
5	8	Drew Blood	WR	32
6	9	Chase Emdown	WR	26
7	12	Isac Ulooz	LB	37

### 3.9.5 Particular Rows and Columns

To subset particular rows and columns, use the following syntax:

#### 3.9.5.1 Base R

```
players[c(4,5), c(2,4)]
```

	name	age
4	Ron Ingback	20
5	Rhonda Ball	18

```
players[subsetRows, subsetVars]
```

	name	age
4	Ron Ingback	20
5	Rhonda Ball	18

```
players[which(players$position == "RB"), subsetVars]
```

	name	age
4	Ron Ingback	20
5	Rhonda Ball	18

#### 3.9.5.2 Tidyverse

```
players %>%
  filter(position == "RB") %>%
  select(all_of(subsetVars))
```

```
      name age
1 Ron Ingback 20
2 Rhonda Ball 18
```

## 3.10 View Data

### 3.10.1 All Data

To view data, use the following syntax:

```
View(players)
```

### 3.10.2 First 6 Rows/Elements

To view only the first six rows (if a data frame) or elements (if a vector), use the following syntax:

```
head(nfl_players)
```

```
# A tibble: 6 x 33
  status display_name first_name last_name esb_id gsis_id suffix birth_date
  <chr>   <chr>         <chr>    <chr>    <chr>   <chr>   <chr>   <chr>
1 RET    'Omar Ellison    'Omar      Ellison  ELL711~ 00-000~ <NA>   <NA>
2 ACT    A'Shawn Robinson A'Shawn    Robinson ROB367~ 00-003~ <NA>   1995-03-21
3 ACT    A.J. Arcuri      A.J.      Arcuri   ARC716~ 00-003~ <NA>   <NA>
4 RES    A.J. Bouye      Arlandus   Bouye    BOU651~ 00-003~ <NA>   1991-08-16
5 ACT    A.J. Brown      Arthur     Brown    BRO413~ 00-003~ <NA>   1997-06-30
6 ACT    A.J. Cann       Aaron      Cann     CAN364~ 00-003~ <NA>   1991-10-03
# i 25 more variables: college_name <chr>, position_group <chr>,
#   position <chr>, jersey_number <int>, height <dbl>, weight <int>,
#   years_of_experience <chr>, team_abbr <chr>, team_seq <int>,
#   current_team_id <chr>, football_name <chr>, entry_year <int>,
#   rookie_year <int>, draft_club <chr>, college_conference <chr>,
#   status_description_abbr <chr>, status_short_description <chr>,
#   gsis_it_id <int>, short_name <chr>, smart_id <chr>, headshot <chr>, ...
```

```
head(nfl_players$display_name)
```

```
[1] "'Omar Ellison"    "A'Shawn Robinson" "A.J. Arcuri"      "A.J. Bouye"
[5] "A.J. Brown"      "A.J. Cann"
```

## 3.11 Data Characteristics

### 3.11.1 Data Structure

```
str(nfl_players)
```

```
nflvrs_d [20,039 x 33] (S3: nflverse_data/tbl_df/tbl/data.table/data.frame)
 $ status          : chr [1:20039] "RET" "ACT" "ACT" "RES" ...
 $ display_name    : chr [1:20039] "'Omar Ellison" "A'Shawn Robinson" "A.J. Arcuri" "A.J. Bouye" ...
 $ first_name      : chr [1:20039] "'Omar" "A'Shawn" "A.J." "Arlandus" ...
 $ last_name       : chr [1:20039] "Ellison" "Robinson" "Arcuri" "Bouye" ...
 $ esb_id          : chr [1:20039] "ELL711319" "ROB367960" "ARC716900" "BOU651714" ...
 $ gsis_id         : chr [1:20039] "00-0004866" "00-0032889" "00-0037845" "00-0030228" ...
 $ suffix          : chr [1:20039] NA NA NA NA ...
 $ birth_date      : chr [1:20039] NA "1995-03-21" NA "1991-08-16" ...
 $ college_name    : chr [1:20039] NA "Alabama" "Michigan State" "Central Florida" ...
 $ position_group  : chr [1:20039] "WR" "DL" "OL" "DB" ...
 $ position        : chr [1:20039] "WR" "DT" "T" "CB" ...
 $ jersey_number   : int [1:20039] 84 91 61 24 11 60 6 81 63 20 ...
 $ height          : num [1:20039] 73 76 79 72 72 75 76 69 76 72 ...
 $ weight          : int [1:20039] 200 330 320 191 226 325 220 190 280 183 ...
 $ years_of_experience : chr [1:20039] "2" "8" "2" "8" ...
 $ team_abbr       : chr [1:20039] "LAC" "NYG" "LA" "CAR" ...
 $ team_seq        : int [1:20039] NA 1 NA 1 1 1 1 NA NA NA ...
 $ current_team_id : chr [1:20039] "4400" "3410" "2510" "0750" ...
 $ football_name    : chr [1:20039] NA "A'Shawn" "A.J." "A.J." ...
 $ entry_year      : int [1:20039] NA 2016 2022 2013 2019 2015 2019 NA NA NA ...
 $ rookie_year     : int [1:20039] NA 2016 2022 2013 2019 2015 2019 NA NA NA ...
 $ draft_club      : chr [1:20039] NA "DET" "LA" NA ...
 $ college_conference : chr [1:20039] NA "Southeastern Conference" "Big Ten Conference" "American A
 $ status_description_abbr : chr [1:20039] NA "A01" "A01" "R01" ...
 $ status_short_description: chr [1:20039] NA "Active" "Active" "R/Injured" ...
 $ gsis_it_id      : int [1:20039] NA 43335 54726 40688 47834 42410 48335 NA NA NA ...
 $ short_name       : chr [1:20039] NA "A.Robinson" "A.Arcuri" "A.Bouye" ...
```

```
$ smart_id          : chr [1:20039] "3200454c-4c71-1319-728e-d49d3d236f8f" "3200524f-4236-7960-bf20
$ headshot          : chr [1:20039] NA "https://static.www.nfl.com/image/private/f_auto,q_auto/leag
$ draft_number      : int [1:20039] NA 46 261 NA 51 67 NA NA NA NA ...
$ uniform_number    : chr [1:20039] NA "91" "61" "24" ...
$ draft_round       : chr [1:20039] NA NA NA NA ...
$ season            : int [1:20039] NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA ...
- attr(*, "nflverse_type")= chr "players"
- attr(*, "nflverse_timestamp")= POSIXct[1:1], format: "2024-03-01 01:18:40"
```

### 3.11.2 Data Dimensions

Number of rows and columns:

```
dim(nfl_players)
```

```
[1] 20039    33
```

### 3.11.3 Number of Elements

```
length(nfl_players$display_name)
```

```
[1] 20039
```

### 3.11.4 Number of Missing Elements

```
length(nfl_players$college_name[which(is.na(nfl_players$college_name))])
```

```
[1] 12127
```

### 3.11.5 Number of Non-Missing Elements

```
length(nfl_players$college_name[which(!is.na(nfl_players$college_name))])
```

```
[1] 7912
```

```
length(na.omit(nfl_players$college_name))
```

```
[1] 7912
```

---

### 3.12 Create New Variables

To create a new variable, use the following syntax:

```
players$newVar <- NA
```

Here is an example of creating a new variable:

```
players$newVar <- 1:nrow(players)
```

---

### 3.13 Recode Variables

Here is an example of recoding a variable:

```
players$oldVar1 <- NA
players$oldVar1[which(players$position == "QB")] <- "quarterback"
players$oldVar1[which(players$position == "RB")] <- "running back"
players$oldVar1[which(players$position == "WR")] <- "wide receiver"
players$oldVar1[which(players$position == "TE")] <- "tight end"

players$oldVar2 <- NA
players$oldVar2[which(players$age < 30)] <- "young"
players$oldVar2[which(players$age >= 30)] <- "old"
```

Recode multiple variables:

```
players %>%
  mutate(across(c(
    oldVar1:oldVar2),
    ~ case_match(
      .,
      c("quarterback", "old", "running back") ~ 0,
      c("wide receiver", "tight end", "young") ~ 1)))
```



	ID	name	position	age	oldVar1	oldVar2
1	1	Ken Cussion	QB	40	0	0
2	2	Ben Sacked	QB	30	0	0
3	3	Chuck Downfield	QB	24	0	1
4	4	Ron Ingback	RB	20	0	1
5	5	Rhonda Ball	RB	18	0	1
6	6	Hugo Long	WR	23	1	1
7	7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27	1	1
8	8	Drew Blood	WR	32	1	0
9	9	Chase Emdown	WR	26	1	1
10	10	Justin Time	TE	23	1	1
11	11	Spike D'Ball	TE	NA	1	NA
12	12	Isac Ulooz	LB	37	NA	0

---

### 3.14 Rename Variables

```
players <- players %>%  
  rename(  
    newVar1 = oldVar1,  
    newVar2 = oldVar2)
```

Using a vector of variable names:

```
varNamesFrom <- c("oldVar1", "oldVar2")  
varNamesTo <- c("newVar1", "newVar2")  
  
players <- players %>%  
  rename_with(~ varNamesTo, all_of(varNamesFrom))
```

---

### 3.15 Convert the Types of Variables

One variable:

```
players$factorVar <- factor(players$ID)  
players$numericVar <- as.numeric(players$age)
```

```
players$integerVar <- as.integer(players$newVar1)
players$characterVar <- as.character(players$newVar2)
```

Multiple variables:

```
players %>%
  mutate(across(c(
    ID,
    age),
    as.numeric))
```

	ID	name	position	age	newVar1	newVar2	factorVar	numericVar
1	1	Ken Cussion	QB	40	quarterback	old	1	40
2	2	Ben Sacked	QB	30	quarterback	old	2	30
3	3	Chuck Downfield	QB	24	quarterback	young	3	24
4	4	Ron Ingback	RB	20	running back	young	4	20
5	5	Rhonda Ball	RB	18	running back	young	5	18
6	6	Hugo Long	WR	23	wide receiver	young	6	23
7	7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27	wide receiver	young	7	27
8	8	Drew Blood	WR	32	wide receiver	old	8	32
9	9	Chase Emdown	WR	26	wide receiver	young	9	26
10	10	Justin Time	TE	23	tight end	young	10	23
11	11	Spike D'Ball	TE	NA	tight end	<NA>	11	NA
12	12	Isac Ulooz	LB	37	<NA>	old	12	37

	integerVar	characterVar
1	NA	old
2	NA	old
3	NA	young
4	NA	young
5	NA	young
6	NA	young
7	NA	young
8	NA	old
9	NA	young
10	NA	young
11	NA	<NA>
12	NA	old

```
players %>%
  mutate(across(
    age:newVar1,
    as.character))
```

ID	name	position	age	newVar1	newVar2	factorVar	numericVar
----	------	----------	-----	---------	---------	-----------	------------

## Convert the Types of Variables

47

1	1	Ken Cussion	QB	40	quarterback	old	1	40
2	2	Ben Sacked	QB	30	quarterback	old	2	30
3	3	Chuck Downfield	QB	24	quarterback	young	3	24
4	4	Ron Ingback	RB	20	running back	young	4	20
5	5	Rhonda Ball	RB	18	running back	young	5	18
6	6	Hugo Long	WR	23	wide receiver	young	6	23
7	7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27	wide receiver	young	7	27
8	8	Drew Blood	WR	32	wide receiver	old	8	32
9	9	Chase Emdown	WR	26	wide receiver	young	9	26
10	10	Justin Time	TE	23	tight end	young	10	23
11	11	Spike D'Ball	TE	<NA>	tight end	<NA>	11	NA
12	12	Isac Ulooz	LB	37	<NA>	old	12	37

integerVar			characterVar		
1	NA	old			
2	NA	old			
3	NA	young			
4	NA	young			
5	NA	young			
6	NA	young			
7	NA	young			
8	NA	old			
9	NA	young			
10	NA	young			
11	NA	<NA>			
12	NA	old			

```
players %>%
  mutate(across(where(is.factor), as.character))
```

ID		name	position	age	newVar1	newVar2	factorVar	numericVar
1	1	Ken Cussion	QB	40	quarterback	old	1	40
2	2	Ben Sacked	QB	30	quarterback	old	2	30
3	3	Chuck Downfield	QB	24	quarterback	young	3	24
4	4	Ron Ingback	RB	20	running back	young	4	20
5	5	Rhonda Ball	RB	18	running back	young	5	18
6	6	Hugo Long	WR	23	wide receiver	young	6	23
7	7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27	wide receiver	young	7	27
8	8	Drew Blood	WR	32	wide receiver	old	8	32
9	9	Chase Emdown	WR	26	wide receiver	young	9	26
10	10	Justin Time	TE	23	tight end	young	10	23
11	11	Spike D'Ball	TE	NA	tight end	<NA>	11	NA
12	12	Isac Ulooz	LB	37	<NA>	old	12	37

integerVar			characterVar		
1	NA	old			
2	NA	old			

3	NA	young
4	NA	young
5	NA	young
6	NA	young
7	NA	young
8	NA	old
9	NA	young
10	NA	young
11	NA	<NA>
12	NA	old

---

## 3.16 Merging/Joins

### 3.16.1 Overview

Merging (also called joining) merges two data objects using a shared set of variables called “keys.” The keys are the variable(s) that uniquely identify each row (i.e., they account for the levels of nesting). In some data objects, the key might be the player’s identification number (e.g., `player_id`). However, some data objects have multiple keys. For instance, in long form data objects, each participant may have multiple rows corresponding to multiple seasons. In this case, the keys may be `player_id` and `season`. If a participant has multiple rows corresponding to seasons and games/weeks, the keys are `player_id`, `season`, and `week`. In general, each row should have a value on each of the keys; there should be no missingness in the keys.

To merge two objects, the key(s) that will be used to match the records must be present in both objects. The keys are used to merge the variables in object 1 (*x*) with the variables in object 2 (*y*). Different merge types select different rows to merge.

Note: if the two objects include variables with the same name (apart from the keys), R will not know how you want each to appear in the merged object. So, it will add a suffix (e.g., `.x`, `.y`) to each common variable to indicate which object (i.e., object *x* or object *y*) the variable came from, where object *x* is the first object—i.e., the object to which object *y* (the second object) is merged. In general, apart from the keys, you should not include variables with the same name in two objects to be merged. To prevent this, either remove or rename the shared variable in one of the objects, or include the shared variable as a key. However, as described above, you should include it as a key *only* if it uniquely identifies each row in terms of levels of nesting.

### 3.16.2 Data Before Merging

Here are the data in the `players` object:

```
players
```

	ID	name	position	age	newVar1	newVar2	factorVar	numericVar
1	1	Ken Cussion	QB	40	quarterback	old	1	40
2	2	Ben Sacked	QB	30	quarterback	old	2	30
3	3	Chuck Downfield	QB	24	quarterback	young	3	24
4	4	Ron Ingback	RB	20	running back	young	4	20
5	5	Rhonda Ball	RB	18	running back	young	5	18
6	6	Hugo Long	WR	23	wide receiver	young	6	23
7	7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27	wide receiver	young	7	27
8	8	Drew Blood	WR	32	wide receiver	old	8	32
9	9	Chase Emdown	WR	26	wide receiver	young	9	26
10	10	Justin Time	TE	23	tight end	young	10	23
11	11	Spike D'Ball	TE	NA	tight end	<NA>	11	NA
12	12	Isac Ulooz	LB	37	<NA>	old	12	37

	integerVar	characterVar
1	NA	old
2	NA	old
3	NA	young
4	NA	young
5	NA	young
6	NA	young
7	NA	young
8	NA	old
9	NA	young
10	NA	young
11	NA	<NA>
12	NA	old

```
dim(players)
```

```
[1] 12 10
```

The data are structured in ID form. That is, every row in the dataset is uniquely identified by the variable, `ID`.

Here are the data in the `fantasyPoints` object:

```
fantasyPoints
```

```

      ID fantasyPoints
1     2             250
2     7             170
3    13              65
4    14              15

```

```
dim(fantasyPoints)
```

```
[1] 4 2
```

### 3.16.3 Types of Joins

#### 3.16.3.1 Visual Overview of Join Types

Below is a visual that depicts various types of merges/joins. Object  $x$  is the circle labeled as  $x$ . Object  $y$  is the circle labeled as  $y$ . The area of overlap in the Venn diagram indicates the rows on the keys that are shared between the two objects (e.g., the same `player_id`, `season`, and `week`). The non-overlapping area indicates the rows on the keys that are unique to each object. The shaded blue area indicates which rows (on the keys) are kept in the merged object from each of the two objects, when using each of the merge types. For instance, a left outer join keeps the shared rows and the rows that are unique to object  $x$ , but it drops the rows that are unique to object  $y$ .

## Join Types



**Figure 3.1** Types of merges/joins

### 3.16.3.2 Full Outer Join

A full outer join includes all rows in *x* **or** *y*. It returns columns from *x* and *y*. Here is how to merge two data frames using a full outer join (i.e., “full join”):

```
fullJoinData <- full_join(
  players,
  fantasyPoints,
  by = "ID")

fullJoinData
```

	ID	name	position	age	newVar1	newVar2	factorVar	numericVar
1	1	Ken Cussion	QB	40	quarterback	old	1	40
2	2	Ben Sacked	QB	30	quarterback	old	2	30
3	3	Chuck Downfield	QB	24	quarterback	young	3	24
4	4	Ron Ingback	RB	20	running back	young	4	20
5	5	Rhonda Ball	RB	18	running back	young	5	18
6	6	Hugo Long	WR	23	wide receiver	young	6	23
7	7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27	wide receiver	young	7	27
8	8	Drew Blood	WR	32	wide receiver	old	8	32
9	9	Chase Emdown	WR	26	wide receiver	young	9	26
10	10	Justin Time	TE	23	tight end	young	10	23
11	11	Spike D'Ball	TE	NA	tight end	<NA>	11	NA
12	12	Isac Ulooz	LB	37	<NA>	old	12	37
13	13	<NA>	<NA>	NA	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	NA
14	14	<NA>	<NA>	NA	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	NA

	integerVar	characterVar	fantasyPoints
1	NA	old	NA
2	NA	old	250
3	NA	young	NA
4	NA	young	NA
5	NA	young	NA
6	NA	young	NA
7	NA	young	170
8	NA	old	NA
9	NA	young	NA
10	NA	young	NA
11	NA	<NA>	NA
12	NA	old	NA
13	NA	<NA>	65
14	NA	<NA>	15

```
dim(fullJoinData)
```

```
[1] 14 11
```

### 3.16.3.3 Left Outer Join

A left outer join includes all rows in  $x$ . It returns columns from  $x$  and  $y$ . Here is how to merge two data frames using a left outer join (“left join”):

```
leftJoinData <- left_join(
  players,
  fantasyPoints,
  by = "ID")
```

```
leftJoinData
```

	ID	name	position	age	newVar1	newVar2	factorVar	numericVar
1	1	Ken Cussion	QB	40	quarterback	old	1	40
2	2	Ben Sacked	QB	30	quarterback	old	2	30
3	3	Chuck Downfield	QB	24	quarterback	young	3	24
4	4	Ron Ingback	RB	20	running back	young	4	20
5	5	Rhonda Ball	RB	18	running back	young	5	18
6	6	Hugo Long	WR	23	wide receiver	young	6	23
7	7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27	wide receiver	young	7	27
8	8	Drew Blood	WR	32	wide receiver	old	8	32
9	9	Chase Emdown	WR	26	wide receiver	young	9	26
10	10	Justin Time	TE	23	tight end	young	10	23
11	11	Spike D'Ball	TE	NA	tight end	<NA>	11	NA
12	12	Isac Ulooz	LB	37	<NA>	old	12	37

	integerVar	characterVar	fantasyPoints
1	NA	old	NA
2	NA	old	250
3	NA	young	NA
4	NA	young	NA
5	NA	young	NA
6	NA	young	NA
7	NA	young	170
8	NA	old	NA
9	NA	young	NA
10	NA	young	NA
11	NA	<NA>	NA
12	NA	old	NA



```
dim(leftJoinData)
```

```
[1] 12 11
```

### 3.16.3.4 Right Outer Join

A right outer join includes all rows in  $y$ . It returns columns from  $x$  and  $y$ . Here is how to merge two data frames using a right outer join (“right join”):

```
rightJoinData <- right_join(
  players,
  fantasyPoints,
  by = "ID")
```

```
rightJoinData
```

	ID	name	position	age	newVar1	newVar2	factorVar	numericVar
1	2	Ben Sacked	QB	30	quarterback	old	2	30
2	7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27	wide receiver	young	7	27
3	13	<NA>	<NA>	NA	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	NA
4	14	<NA>	<NA>	NA	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	NA
	integerVar	characterVar	fantasyPoints					
1	NA	old	250					
2	NA	young	170					
3	NA	<NA>	65					
4	NA	<NA>	15					

```
dim(rightJoinData)
```

```
[1] 4 11
```

### 3.16.3.5 Inner Join

An inner join includes all rows that are in **both**  $x$  and  $y$ . An inner join will return one row of  $x$  for each matching row of  $y$ , and can duplicate values of records on either side (left or right) if  $x$  and  $y$  have more than one matching record. It returns columns from  $x$  and  $y$ . Here is how to merge two data frames using an inner join:

```
innerJoinData <- inner_join(
  players,
  fantasyPoints,
```

```
by = "ID")
```

```
innerJoinData
```

	ID	name	position	age	newVar1	newVar2	factorVar	numericVar
1	2	Ben Sacked	QB	30	quarterback	old	2	30
2	7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27	wide receiver	young	7	27
		integerVar	characterVar	fantasyPoints				
1		NA	old	250				
2		NA	young	170				

```
dim(innerJoinData)
```

```
[1] 2 11
```

### 3.16.3.6 Semi Join

A semi join is a filter. A left semi join returns all rows from  $x$  **with** a match in  $y$ . That is, it filters out records from  $x$  that are not in  $y$ . Unlike an inner join, a left semi join will never duplicate rows of  $x$ , and it includes columns from only  $x$  (not from  $y$ ). Here is how to merge two data frames using a left semi join:

```
semiJoinData <- semi_join(
  players,
  fantasyPoints,
  by = "ID")
```

```
semiJoinData
```

	ID	name	position	age	newVar1	newVar2	factorVar	numericVar
1	2	Ben Sacked	QB	30	quarterback	old	2	30
2	7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27	wide receiver	young	7	27
		integerVar	characterVar					
1		NA	old					
2		NA	young					

```
dim(semiJoinData)
```

```
[1] 2 10
```

### 3.16.3.7 Anti Join

An anti join is a filter. A left anti join returns all rows from  $x$  **without** a match in  $y$ . That is, it filters out records from  $x$  that are in  $y$ . It returns columns from only  $x$  (not from  $y$ ). Here is how to merge two data frames using a left anti join:

```
antiJoinData <- anti_join(
  players,
  fantasyPoints,
  by = "ID")

antiJoinData
```

	ID	name	position	age	newVar1	newVar2	factorVar	numericVar
1	1	Ken Cussion	QB	40	quarterback	old	1	40
2	3	Chuck Downfield	QB	24	quarterback	young	3	24
3	4	Ron Ingbach	RB	20	running back	young	4	20
4	5	Rhonda Ball	RB	18	running back	young	5	18
5	6	Hugo Long	WR	23	wide receiver	young	6	23
6	8	Drew Blood	WR	32	wide receiver	old	8	32
7	9	Chase Emdown	WR	26	wide receiver	young	9	26
8	10	Justin Time	TE	23	tight end	young	10	23
9	11	Spike D'Ball	TE	NA	tight end	<NA>	11	NA
10	12	Isac Ulooz	LB	37	<NA>	old	12	37

	integerVar	characterVar
1	NA	old
2	NA	young
3	NA	young
4	NA	young
5	NA	young
6	NA	old
7	NA	young
8	NA	young
9	NA	<NA>
10	NA	old

```
dim(antiJoinData)
```

```
[1] 10 10
```

### 3.16.3.8 Cross Join

A cross join combines each row in  $x$  with each row in  $y$ .

```
crossJoinData <- cross_join(
  players,
  fantasyPoints)
```

```
crossJoinData
```

	ID.x	name	position	age	newVar1	newVar2	factorVar
1	1	Ken Cussion	QB	40	quarterback	old	1
2	1	Ken Cussion	QB	40	quarterback	old	1
3	1	Ken Cussion	QB	40	quarterback	old	1
4	1	Ken Cussion	QB	40	quarterback	old	1
5	2	Ben Sacked	QB	30	quarterback	old	2
6	2	Ben Sacked	QB	30	quarterback	old	2
7	2	Ben Sacked	QB	30	quarterback	old	2
8	2	Ben Sacked	QB	30	quarterback	old	2
9	3	Chuck Downfield	QB	24	quarterback	young	3
10	3	Chuck Downfield	QB	24	quarterback	young	3
11	3	Chuck Downfield	QB	24	quarterback	young	3
12	3	Chuck Downfield	QB	24	quarterback	young	3
13	4	Ron Ingback	RB	20	running back	young	4
14	4	Ron Ingback	RB	20	running back	young	4
15	4	Ron Ingback	RB	20	running back	young	4
16	4	Ron Ingback	RB	20	running back	young	4
17	5	Rhonda Ball	RB	18	running back	young	5
18	5	Rhonda Ball	RB	18	running back	young	5
19	5	Rhonda Ball	RB	18	running back	young	5
20	5	Rhonda Ball	RB	18	running back	young	5
21	6	Hugo Long	WR	23	wide receiver	young	6
22	6	Hugo Long	WR	23	wide receiver	young	6
23	6	Hugo Long	WR	23	wide receiver	young	6
24	6	Hugo Long	WR	23	wide receiver	young	6
25	7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27	wide receiver	young	7
26	7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27	wide receiver	young	7
27	7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27	wide receiver	young	7
28	7	Lionel Scrimmage	WR	27	wide receiver	young	7
29	8	Drew Blood	WR	32	wide receiver	old	8
30	8	Drew Blood	WR	32	wide receiver	old	8
31	8	Drew Blood	WR	32	wide receiver	old	8
32	8	Drew Blood	WR	32	wide receiver	old	8
33	9	Chase Emdown	WR	26	wide receiver	young	9
34	9	Chase Emdown	WR	26	wide receiver	young	9
35	9	Chase Emdown	WR	26	wide receiver	young	9
36	9	Chase Emdown	WR	26	wide receiver	young	9
37	10	Justin Time	TE	23	tight end	young	10
38	10	Justin Time	TE	23	tight end	young	10

39	10	Justin Time	TE	23	tight end	young	10
40	10	Justin Time	TE	23	tight end	young	10
41	11	Spike D'Ball	TE	NA	tight end	<NA>	11
42	11	Spike D'Ball	TE	NA	tight end	<NA>	11
43	11	Spike D'Ball	TE	NA	tight end	<NA>	11
44	11	Spike D'Ball	TE	NA	tight end	<NA>	11
45	12	Isac Ulooz	LB	37	<NA>	old	12
46	12	Isac Ulooz	LB	37	<NA>	old	12
47	12	Isac Ulooz	LB	37	<NA>	old	12
48	12	Isac Ulooz	LB	37	<NA>	old	12
numericVar integerVar characterVar ID.y fantasyPoints							
1	40	NA	old	2		250	
2	40	NA	old	7		170	
3	40	NA	old	13		65	
4	40	NA	old	14		15	
5	30	NA	old	2		250	
6	30	NA	old	7		170	
7	30	NA	old	13		65	
8	30	NA	old	14		15	
9	24	NA	young	2		250	
10	24	NA	young	7		170	
11	24	NA	young	13		65	
12	24	NA	young	14		15	
13	20	NA	young	2		250	
14	20	NA	young	7		170	
15	20	NA	young	13		65	
16	20	NA	young	14		15	
17	18	NA	young	2		250	
18	18	NA	young	7		170	
19	18	NA	young	13		65	
20	18	NA	young	14		15	
21	23	NA	young	2		250	
22	23	NA	young	7		170	
23	23	NA	young	13		65	
24	23	NA	young	14		15	
25	27	NA	young	2		250	
26	27	NA	young	7		170	
27	27	NA	young	13		65	
28	27	NA	young	14		15	
29	32	NA	old	2		250	
30	32	NA	old	7		170	
31	32	NA	old	13		65	
32	32	NA	old	14		15	
33	26	NA	young	2		250	
34	26	NA	young	7		170	

35	26	NA	young	13	65
36	26	NA	young	14	15
37	23	NA	young	2	250
38	23	NA	young	7	170
39	23	NA	young	13	65
40	23	NA	young	14	15
41	NA	NA	<NA>	2	250
42	NA	NA	<NA>	7	170
43	NA	NA	<NA>	13	65
44	NA	NA	<NA>	14	15
45	37	NA	old	2	250
46	37	NA	old	7	170
47	37	NA	old	13	65
48	37	NA	old	14	15

```
dim(crossJoinData)
```

```
[1] 48 12
```

### 3.17 Transform Data from Long to Wide

Depending on the analysis, it may be important to restructure the data to be in long or wide form. When the data are in wide form, each player has only one row. When the data are in long form, each player has multiple rows—e.g., a row for each game. The data structure is called wide or long form because a dataset in wide form has more columns and fewer rows (i.e., it appears wider and shorter), whereas a dataset in long form has more rows and fewer columns (i.e., it appears narrower and taller).

Here are the data in the `nfl_actualStats_offense_weekly` object. The data are structured in “player-season-week form”. That is, every row in the dataset is uniquely identified by the variables, `player_id`, `season`, and `week`. This is an example of long form, because each player has multiple rows.

Original data:

```
dataLong <- nfl_actualStats_offense_weekly %>%
  select(player_id, player_display_name, season, week, fantasy_points)

dim(dataLong)
```

```
[1] 129739      5
```

```
names(dataLong)
```

```
[1] "player_id"          "player_display_name" "season"
[4] "week"               "fantasy_points"
```

Below, we widen the data by two variables (season and week), using `tidyverse`, so that the data are now in “player form” (where each row is uniquely identified by the `player_id` variable):

```
dataWide <- dataLong %>%
  pivot_wider(
    names_from = c(season, week),
    names_glue = "{.value}_{season}_week{week}",
    values_from = fantasy_points)

dim(dataWide)
```

```
[1] 4021 530
```

```
names(dataWide)
```

```
[1] "player_id"          "player_display_name"
[3] "fantasy_points_1999_week1" "fantasy_points_1999_week2"
[5] "fantasy_points_1999_week4" "fantasy_points_1999_week7"
[7] "fantasy_points_1999_week8" "fantasy_points_1999_week9"
[9] "fantasy_points_1999_week10" "fantasy_points_1999_week11"
[11] "fantasy_points_1999_week12" "fantasy_points_1999_week13"
[13] "fantasy_points_1999_week14" "fantasy_points_1999_week15"
[15] "fantasy_points_1999_week16" "fantasy_points_1999_week5"
[17] "fantasy_points_1999_week6" "fantasy_points_1999_week17"
[19] "fantasy_points_1999_week18" "fantasy_points_1999_week3"
[21] "fantasy_points_1999_week19" "fantasy_points_1999_week20"
[23] "fantasy_points_1999_week21" "fantasy_points_2000_week1"
[25] "fantasy_points_2000_week12" "fantasy_points_2000_week14"
[27] "fantasy_points_2000_week15" "fantasy_points_2000_week6"
[29] "fantasy_points_2000_week10" "fantasy_points_2000_week4"
[31] "fantasy_points_2000_week5" "fantasy_points_2000_week7"
[33] "fantasy_points_2000_week8" "fantasy_points_2000_week9"
[35] "fantasy_points_2000_week11" "fantasy_points_2000_week13"
[37] "fantasy_points_2000_week2" "fantasy_points_2000_week16"
[39] "fantasy_points_2000_week17" "fantasy_points_2000_week3"
[41] "fantasy_points_2000_week18" "fantasy_points_2000_week19"
[43] "fantasy_points_2000_week21" "fantasy_points_2000_week20"
```

```
[45] "fantasy_points_2001_week15" "fantasy_points_2001_week17"
[47] "fantasy_points_2001_week1"  "fantasy_points_2001_week3"
[49] "fantasy_points_2001_week4"  "fantasy_points_2001_week5"
[51] "fantasy_points_2001_week6"  "fantasy_points_2001_week9"
[53] "fantasy_points_2001_week11" "fantasy_points_2001_week12"
[55] "fantasy_points_2001_week13" "fantasy_points_2001_week14"
[57] "fantasy_points_2001_week16" "fantasy_points_2001_week2"
[59] "fantasy_points_2001_week7"  "fantasy_points_2001_week8"
[61] "fantasy_points_2001_week10" "fantasy_points_2001_week19"
[63] "fantasy_points_2001_week18" "fantasy_points_2001_week20"
[65] "fantasy_points_2001_week21" "fantasy_points_2002_week3"
[67] "fantasy_points_2002_week1"  "fantasy_points_2002_week2"
[69] "fantasy_points_2002_week4"  "fantasy_points_2002_week6"
[71] "fantasy_points_2002_week7"  "fantasy_points_2002_week8"
[73] "fantasy_points_2002_week9"  "fantasy_points_2002_week5"
[75] "fantasy_points_2002_week10" "fantasy_points_2002_week11"
[77] "fantasy_points_2002_week12" "fantasy_points_2002_week13"
[79] "fantasy_points_2002_week14" "fantasy_points_2002_week15"
[81] "fantasy_points_2002_week16" "fantasy_points_2002_week17"
[83] "fantasy_points_2002_week19" "fantasy_points_2002_week20"
[85] "fantasy_points_2002_week21" "fantasy_points_2002_week18"
[87] "fantasy_points_2003_week2"  "fantasy_points_2003_week4"
[89] "fantasy_points_2003_week5"  "fantasy_points_2003_week7"
[91] "fantasy_points_2003_week8"  "fantasy_points_2003_week9"
[93] "fantasy_points_2003_week10" "fantasy_points_2003_week11"
[95] "fantasy_points_2003_week13" "fantasy_points_2003_week14"
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```



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```

```
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[529] "fantasy_points_2023_week9" "fantasy_points_2023_week20"
```

### 3.18 Transform Data from Wide to Long

Conversely, we can also restructure data from wide to long.

Original data:

```
dataWide <- nfl_actualStats_offense_weekly %>%
  select(player_id, player_display_name, season, week, recent_team, opponent_team)

dim(dataWide)
```

```
[1] 129739      6
```

```
names(dataWide)
```

```
[1] "player_id"          "player_display_name" "season"
[4] "week"              "recent_team"        "opponent_team"
```

Data in long form, transformed from wide form using tidyverse:

```
dataLong <- dataWide %>%
  pivot_longer(
    cols = c(recent_team, opponent_team),
    names_to = "role",
    values_to = "team")

dim(dataLong)
```

```
[1] 259478      6
```

```
names(dataLong)
```

```
[1] "player_id"      "player_display_name" "season"
[4] "week"           "role"                "team"
```

---

## 3.19 Calculations

### 3.19.1 Historical Actual Player Statistics

In addition to week-by-week actual player statistics, we can also compute historical actual player statistics as a function of different timeframes, including season-by-season and career statistics.

#### 3.19.1.1 Career Statistics

First, we can compute the players' career statistics using the `calculate_player_stats()`, `calculate_player_stats_def()`, and `calculate_player_stats_kicking()` functions from the `nflfastR` package for offensive players, defensive players, and kickers, respectively.

**i** Note 3: Calculating players' career statistics

Note: the following code takes a while to run.

```
nfl_actualStats_offense_career <- nflfastR::calculate_player_stats(
  nfl_pbp,
  weekly = FALSE)
```

```
nfl_actualStats_defense_career <- nflfastR::calculate_player_stats_def(
  nfl_pbp,
  weekly = FALSE)

nfl_actualStats_kicking_career <- nflfastR::calculate_player_stats_kicking(
  nfl_pbp,
  weekly = FALSE)
```

### 3.19.1.2 Season-by-Season Statistics

Second, we can compute the players' season-by-season statistics.

```
seasons <- unique(nfl_pbp$season)

nfl_pbp_seasonalList <- list()
nfl_actualStats_offense_seasonalList <- list()
nfl_actualStats_defense_seasonalList <- list()
nfl_actualStats_kicking_seasonalList <- list()
```

#### **i** Note 4: Calculating players' season-by-season statistics

Note: the following code takes a while to run.

```
pb <- txtProgressBar(
  min = 0,
  max = length(seasons),
  style = 3)

for(i in 1:length(seasons)){
  # Subset play-by-play data by season
  nfl_pbp_seasonalList[[i]] <- nfl_pbp %>%
    filter(season == seasons[i])

  # Compute actual statistics by season
  nfl_actualStats_offense_seasonalList[[i]] <-
    nflfastR::calculate_player_stats(
      nfl_pbp_seasonalList[[i]],
      weekly = FALSE)

  nfl_actualStats_defense_seasonalList[[i]] <-
    nflfastR::calculate_player_stats_def(
      nfl_pbp_seasonalList[[i]],
      weekly = FALSE)
```

```

nfl_actualStats_kicking_seasonalList[[i]] <-
  nflfastR::calculate_player_stats_kicking(
    nfl_pbp_seasonalList[[i]],
    weekly = FALSE)

nfl_actualStats_offense_seasonalList[[i]]$season <- seasons[i]
nfl_actualStats_defense_seasonalList[[i]]$season <- seasons[i]
nfl_actualStats_kicking_seasonalList[[i]]$season <- seasons[i]

print(
  paste("Completed computing projections for season: ", seasons[i], sep = ""))

# Update the progress bar
setTxtProgressBar(pb, i)
}

# Close the progress bar
close(pb)

nfl_actualStats_offense_seasonal <- nfl_actualStats_offense_seasonalList %>%
  bind_rows()
nfl_actualStats_defense_seasonal <- nfl_actualStats_defense_seasonalList %>%
  bind_rows()
nfl_actualStats_kicking_seasonal <- nfl_actualStats_kicking_seasonalList %>%
  bind_rows()

```

### 3.19.1.3 Week-by-Week Statistics

We already load players' week-by-week statistics [above](#). Nevertheless, we could compute players' weekly statistics from the play-by-play data using the following syntax:

```

nfl_actualStats_offense_weekly <- nflfastR::calculate_player_stats(
  nfl_pbp,
  weekly = TRUE)

nfl_actualStats_defense_weekly <- nflfastR::calculate_player_stats_def(
  nfl_pbp,
  weekly = TRUE)

nfl_actualStats_kicking_weekly <- nflfastR::calculate_player_stats_kicking(
  nfl_pbp,
  weekly = TRUE)

```



### 3.19.2 Historical Actual Fantasy Points

Specify scoring settings:

#### 3.19.2.1 Weekly

#### 3.19.2.2 Seasonal

#### 3.19.2.3 Career

### 3.19.3 Player Age

```
# Reshape from wide to long format
nfl_actualStats_offense_weekly_long <- nfl_actualStats_offense_weekly %>%
  pivot_longer(
    cols = c(recent_team, opponent_team),
    names_to = "role",
    values_to = "team")

# Perform separate inner join operations for the home_team and away_team
nfl_actualStats_offense_weekly_home <- inner_join(
  nfl_actualStats_offense_weekly_long,
  nfl_schedules,
  by = c("season", "week", "team" = "home_team")) %>%
  mutate(home_away = "home_team")

nfl_actualStats_offense_weekly_away <- inner_join(
  nfl_actualStats_offense_weekly_long,
  nfl_schedules,
  by = c("season", "week", "team" = "away_team")) %>%
  mutate(home_away = "away_team")

nfl_actualStats_defense_weekly_home <- inner_join(
  nfl_actualStats_defense_weekly,
  nfl_schedules,
  by = c("season", "week", "team" = "home_team")) %>%
  mutate(home_away = "home_team")

nfl_actualStats_defense_weekly_away <- inner_join(
  nfl_actualStats_defense_weekly,
  nfl_schedules,
  by = c("season", "week", "team" = "away_team")) %>%
  mutate(home_away = "away_team")
```

```

nfl_actualStats_kicking_weekly_home <- inner_join(
  nfl_actualStats_kicking_weekly,
  nfl_schedules,
  by = c("season", "week", "team" = "home_team")) %>%
  mutate(home_away = "home_team")

nfl_actualStats_kicking_weekly_away <- inner_join(
  nfl_actualStats_kicking_weekly,
  nfl_schedules,
  by = c("season", "week", "team" = "away_team")) %>%
  mutate(home_away = "away_team")

# Combine the results of the join operations
nfl_actualStats_offense_weekly_schedules_long <- bind_rows(
  nfl_actualStats_offense_weekly_home,
  nfl_actualStats_offense_weekly_away)

nfl_actualStats_defense_weekly_schedules_long <- bind_rows(
  nfl_actualStats_defense_weekly_home,
  nfl_actualStats_defense_weekly_away)

nfl_actualStats_kicking_weekly_schedules_long <- bind_rows(
  nfl_actualStats_kicking_weekly_home,
  nfl_actualStats_kicking_weekly_away)

# Reshape from long to wide
player_game_gameday_offense <- nfl_actualStats_offense_weekly_schedules_long %>%
  distinct(player_id, season, week, game_id, home_away, team, gameday) %>% #, .keep_all = TRUE
  pivot_wider(
    names_from = home_away,
    values_from = team)

player_game_gameday_defense <- nfl_actualStats_defense_weekly_schedules_long %>%
  distinct(player_id, season, week, game_id, home_away, team, gameday) %>% #, .keep_all = TRUE
  pivot_wider(
    names_from = home_away,
    values_from = team)

player_game_gameday_kicking <- nfl_actualStats_kicking_weekly_schedules_long %>%
  distinct(player_id, season, week, game_id, home_away, team, gameday) %>% #, .keep_all = TRUE
  pivot_wider(
    names_from = home_away,
    values_from = team)

```

```

# Merge player birthdate and the game date
player_game_birthdate_gameday_offense <- left_join(
  player_game_gameday_offense,
  unique(nfl_players[,c("gsis_id", "birth_date")]),
  by = c("player_id" = "gsis_id")
)

player_game_birthdate_gameday_defense <- left_join(
  player_game_gameday_defense,
  unique(nfl_players[,c("gsis_id", "birth_date")]),
  by = c("player_id" = "gsis_id")
)

player_game_birthdate_gameday_kicking <- left_join(
  player_game_gameday_kicking,
  unique(nfl_players[,c("gsis_id", "birth_date")]),
  by = c("player_id" = "gsis_id")
)

player_game_birthdate_gameday_offense$birth_date <- ymd(player_game_birthdate_gameday_offense$birth_date)
player_game_birthdate_gameday_offense$gameday <- ymd(player_game_birthdate_gameday_offense$gameday)

player_game_birthdate_gameday_defense$birth_date <- ymd(player_game_birthdate_gameday_defense$birth_date)
player_game_birthdate_gameday_defense$gameday <- ymd(player_game_birthdate_gameday_defense$gameday)

player_game_birthdate_gameday_kicking$birth_date <- ymd(player_game_birthdate_gameday_kicking$birth_date)
player_game_birthdate_gameday_kicking$gameday <- ymd(player_game_birthdate_gameday_kicking$gameday)

# Calculate player's age for a given week as the difference between their birthdate and the game date
player_game_birthdate_gameday_offense$age <- interval(
  start = player_game_birthdate_gameday_offense$birth_date,
  end = player_game_birthdate_gameday_offense$gameday
) %>%
  time_length(unit = "years")

player_game_birthdate_gameday_defense$age <- interval(
  start = player_game_birthdate_gameday_defense$birth_date,
  end = player_game_birthdate_gameday_defense$gameday
) %>%
  time_length(unit = "years")

player_game_birthdate_gameday_kicking$age <- interval(
  start = player_game_birthdate_gameday_kicking$birth_date,
  end = player_game_birthdate_gameday_kicking$gameday
) %>%
  time_length(unit = "years")

```

```

) %>%
  time_length(unit = "years")

# Merge with player info
player_age_offense <- left_join(
  player_game_birthdate_gameday_offense,
  nfl_players %>% select(-birth_date, -season),
  by = c("player_id" = "gsis_id"))

player_age_defense <- left_join(
  player_game_birthdate_gameday_defense,
  nfl_players %>% select(-birth_date, -season),
  by = c("player_id" = "gsis_id"))

player_age_kicking <- left_join(
  player_game_birthdate_gameday_kicking,
  nfl_players %>% select(-birth_date, -season),
  by = c("player_id" = "gsis_id"))

# Add game_id to weekly stats to facilitate merging
nfl_actualStats_game_offense_weekly <- nfl_actualStats_offense_weekly %>%
  left_join(
    player_age_offense[,c("season", "week", "player_id", "game_id")],
    by = c("season", "week", "player_id"))

nfl_actualStats_game_defense_weekly <- nfl_actualStats_defense_weekly %>%
  left_join(
    player_age_defense[,c("season", "week", "player_id", "game_id")],
    by = c("season", "week", "player_id"))

nfl_actualStats_game_kicking_weekly <- nfl_actualStats_kicking_weekly %>%
  left_join(
    player_age_kicking[,c("season", "week", "player_id", "game_id")],
    by = c("season", "week", "player_id"))

# Merge with player weekly stats
player_age_stats_offense <- left_join(
  player_age_offense %>% select(-position, -position_group),
  nfl_actualStats_game_offense_weekly,
  by = c(c("season", "week", "player_id", "game_id")))

player_age_stats_defense <- left_join(
  player_age_defense %>% select(-position, -position_group),
  nfl_actualStats_game_defense_weekly,

```

```

    by = c(c("season", "week", "player_id", "game_id")))

player_age_stats_kicking <- left_join(
  player_age_kicking %>% select(-position, -position_group),
  nfl_actualStats_game_kicking_weekly,
  by = c(c("season", "week", "player_id", "game_id")))

player_age_stats_offense$years_of_experience <- as.integer(player_age_stats_offense$years_of_experience)
player_age_stats_defense$years_of_experience <- as.integer(player_age_stats_defense$years_of_experience)
player_age_stats_kicking$years_of_experience <- as.integer(player_age_stats_kicking$years_of_experience)

# Merge player info with seasonal stats
player_seasonal_offense <- left_join(
  nfl_actualStats_offense_seasonal,
  nfl_players %>% select(-position, -position_group, -season),
  by = c("player_id" = "gsis_id")
)

player_seasonal_defense <- left_join(
  nfl_actualStats_defense_seasonal,
  nfl_players %>% select(-position, -position_group, -season),
  by = c("player_id" = "gsis_id")
)

player_seasonal_kicking <- left_join(
  nfl_actualStats_kicking_seasonal,
  nfl_players %>% select(-position, -position_group, -season),
  by = c("player_id" = "gsis_id")
)

# Calculate age
season_startdate <- nfl_schedules %>%
  group_by(season) %>%
  summarise(startdate = min(gameday, na.rm = TRUE))

player_seasonal_offense <- player_seasonal_offense %>%
  left_join(
    season_startdate,
    by = "season"
  )

player_seasonal_defense <- player_seasonal_defense %>%
  left_join(
    season_startdate,

```

```

    by = "season"
  )

player_seasonal_kicking <- player_seasonal_kicking %>%
  left_join(
    season_startdate,
    by = "season"
  )

player_seasonal_offense$age <- interval(
  start = player_seasonal_offense$birth_date,
  end = player_seasonal_offense$startdate
) %>%
  time_length(unit = "years")

player_seasonal_defense$age <- interval(
  start = player_seasonal_defense$birth_date,
  end = player_seasonal_defense$startdate
) %>%
  time_length(unit = "years")

player_seasonal_kicking$age <- interval(
  start = player_seasonal_kicking$birth_date,
  end = player_seasonal_kicking$startdate
) %>%
  time_length(unit = "years")

```

---

## 3.20 Plotting

### 3.20.1 Rushing Yards per Carry By Player Age

```

# Prepare Data
rushing_attempts <- nfl_pbp %>%
  dplyr::filter(
    season_type == "REG") %>%
  filter(
    rush == 1,
    rush_attempt == 1,
    qb_scramble == 0,
    qb_dropback == 0,

```

```

    !is.na(rushing_yards))

rb_yardsPerCarry <- rushing_attempts %>%
  group_by(rusher_id, season) %>%
  summarise(
    ypc = mean(rushing_yards, na.rm = TRUE),
    rush_attempts = n(),
    .groups = "drop") %>%
  ungroup() %>%
  left_join(
    nfl_players %>% select(-season),
    by = c("rusher_id" = "gsis_id")
  ) %>%
  filter(
    position_group == "RB",
    rush_attempts >= 50) %>%
  left_join(
    season_startdate,
    by = "season"
  )

rb_yardsPerCarry$age <- interval(
  start = rb_yardsPerCarry$birth_date,
  end = rb_yardsPerCarry$startdate
) %>%
  time_length(unit = "years")

# Create Plot
ggplot2::ggplot(
  data = rb_yardsPerCarry,
  ggplot2::aes(
    x = age,
    y = ypc) +
  ggplot2::geom_point() +
  ggplot2::geom_smooth() +
  ggplot2::labs(
    x = "Rushing Back Age (years)",
    y = "Rushing Yards per Carry/season",
    title = "2023 NFL Rushing Yards Per Carry per Season by Player Age",
    subtitle = "(minimum 50 rushing attempts)"
  ) +
  ggplot2::theme_classic()

```



**Figure 3.2** 2023 NFL Rushing Yards Per Carry per Season by Player Age

```
# Subset Data
rb_seasonal <- player_seasonal_offense %>%
  filter(position_group == "RB")

# Create Plot
ggplot2::ggplot(
  data = rb_seasonal,
  ggplot2::aes(
    x = age,
    y = rushing_epa)) +
  ggplot2::geom_point() +
  ggplot2::geom_smooth() +
  ggplot2::labs(
    x = "Rushing Back Age (years)",
    y = "Rushing EPA/season",
    title = "2023 NFL Rushing Expected Points Added (EPA) per Season by Player Age"
  ) +
  ggplot2::theme_classic()
```





**Figure 3.3** 2023 NFL Rushing Expected Points Added (EPA) per Season by Player Age

### 3.20.2 Defensive and Offensive EPA per Play

Expected points added (EPA) per play by the team with possession.

```
pbp_regularSeason <- nfl_pbp %>%
  dplyr::filter(
    season == 2023,
    season_type == "REG") %>%
  dplyr::filter(!is.na(posteam) & (rush == 1 | pass == 1))

epa_offense <- pbp_regularSeason %>%
  dplyr::group_by(team = posteam) %>%
  dplyr::summarise(off_epa = mean(epa, na.rm = TRUE))

epa_defense <- pbp_regularSeason %>%
  dplyr::group_by(team = defteam) %>%
  dplyr::summarise(def_epa = mean(epa, na.rm = TRUE))

epa_combined <- epa_offense %>%
  dplyr::inner_join(epa_defense, by = "team")

ggplot2::ggplot(
```

```

data = epa_combined,
ggplot2::aes(
  x = off_epa,
  y = def_epa)) +
nflplotR::geom_mean_lines(
  ggplot2::aes(
    x0 = off_epa ,
    y0 = def_epa)) +
nflplotR::geom_nfl_logos(
  ggplot2::aes(
    team_abbr = team),
  width = 0.065,
  alpha = 0.7) +
ggplot2::labs(
  x = "Offense EPA/play",
  y = "Defense EPA/play",
  title = "2023 NFL Offensive and Defensive EPA per Play"
) +
ggplot2::theme_classic() +
ggplot2::scale_y_reverse()

```



**Figure 3.4** 2023 NFL Offensive and Defensive EPA per Play

# 4

---

## *Player Evaluation*

---

### 4.1 Getting Started

#### 4.1.1 Load Packages

```
library("tidyverse")
```

### 4.2 Overview

Evaluating players for fantasy football could be thought of as similar to the process of evaluating companies when picking stocks to buy. You want to evaluate and compare various assets so that you get the assets with the best value.

There are various domains of criteria we can consider when evaluating a football player's fantasy prospects. Potential domains to consider include:

- athletic profile
- historical performance
- health
- age and career stage
- situational factors
- matchups
- cognitive and motivational factors
- fantasy value

The discussion that follows is based on my and others' *impressions* of some of the characteristics that may be valuable to consider when evaluating players. However, the extent to which any factor is actually relevant for predicting

future performance is an empirical question and should be evaluated empirically.

---

### 4.3 Athletic Profile

Factors related to a player's athletic profile include factors such as:

- body shape
  - height
  - weight
  - hand size
  - wing span (arm length)
- body function
  - agility
  - strength
  - speed
  - acceleration/explosiveness
  - jumping ability

In terms of body shape, we might consider a player's height, weight, hand size, and wing span (arm length). Height allows players to see over opponents and to reach balls higher in the air. Thus, greater height is particularly valuable for Quarterbacks and Wide Receivers. Heavier players are tougher to budge and to tackle. Greater weight is particularly valuable for Linemen, Fullbacks, and Tight Ends, but it can also be valuable—to a degree—for Quarterbacks, Running Backs, and Wide Receivers. Hand size and wing span is particularly valuable for people catching the ball; thus, a larger hand size and longer wing span are particularly valuable for Wide Receivers and Tight Ends.

In terms of body function, we can consider a player's agility, strength, speed, acceleration/explosiveness, and jumping ability. For Wide Receivers, speed, explosiveness, and jumping ability are particularly valuable. For Running Backs, agility, strength, speed, and explosiveness are particularly valuable.

Many aspects of a player's athletic profile are available from the National Football League (NFL) Combine, which is especially relevant for evaluating rookies. We demonstrate how to import data from the NFL Combine in Section 3.4.6. There are also calculators that integrate information about body shape and information from the NFL Combine to determine a player's relative athletic score (RAS) for their position: <https://ras.football/ras-calculator/>

---

## 4.4 Historical Performance

### 4.4.1 Overview

---

“The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior.” – Unknown

---

---

“Past performance does not guarantee future results.” – A common disclaimer about investments.

---

Factors relating to historical performance to consider could include:

- performance in college
  - draft position
- performance in the NFL
- efficiency
- consistency

It is important to consider a player’s past performance. However, the extent to which historical performance may predict future performance may depend on many factors such as (a) the similarity of the prior situation to the current situation, (b) how long ago the prior situation was, and (c) the extent to which the player (or situation) has changed in the interim. For rookies, the player does not have prior seasons of performance in the NFL to draw upon. Thus, when evaluating rookies, it can be helpful to consider their performance in college or in their prior leagues. However, there are large differences between the situation in college and the situation in the NFL, so prior success in college may not portend future success in the NFL. An indicator that intends to be prognostic of future performance, and that accounts for past performance, is a player’s draft position—that is, how early (or late) was a player selected in

the NFL Draft. The earlier a player was selected in the NFL Draft, the greater likelihood that the player will perform well.

For players who have played in the NFL, past performance becomes more relevant because, presumably, the prior situation is more similar (than was their situation in college) to their current situation. Nevertheless, lots of things change from game to game and season to season: injuries, coaches, coaching strategies, teammates, etc. So just because a player performed well or poorly in a given game or season does not necessarily mean that they will perform similarly in subsequent games/seasons. Nevertheless, historical performance is one of the best indicators we have.

We demonstrate how to import historical player statistics in Section 3.4.12. We demonstrate how to calculate historical player statistics in Section 3.19.1. We demonstrate how to calculate historical fantasy points in Section 3.19.2.

#### 4.4.2 Efficiency

In addition to how many fantasy points a player scores in terms of historical performance, we also care about efficiency and [consistency](#). How efficient were they given the number of opportunities they had? If they were relatively more efficient, they will likely score more points than many of their peers when given more opportunities. If they were relatively inefficient, their capacity to score fantasy points may be more dependent on touches/opportunities. Efficiency might be operationalized by indicators such as yards per passing attempt, yards per rushing attempt, yards per target, yards per reception, etc.

#### 4.4.3 Consistency

In terms of consistency, how consistent was the player they from game to game and from season to season? For instance, we could examine the standard deviations of players' fantasy points across games in a given season. However, the standard deviation tends to be upwardly biased as the mean increases. So, we can account for the player's mean fantasy points per game by dividing their game-to-game standard deviation of fantasy points ( $\sigma$ ) by their mean fantasy points across games ( $\mu$ ). This is known as the coefficient of variation (CV):

$$CV = \frac{\sigma}{\mu}$$

Players with a lower standard deviation and a lower coefficient of variation (of fantasy points across games) are more consistent. In the example below, Player 2 might be preferable to Player 1 because Player 2 is more consistent; Player 1 is more “boom-or-bust.” Despite showing a similar mean of fantasy

points across weeks, Player 2 shows a smaller week-to-week standard deviation and coefficient of variation.

```
set.seed(1)

playerScoresByWeek <- data.frame(
  player1_scores = rnorm(17, mean = 20, sd = 7),
  player2_scores = rnorm(17, mean = 20, sd = 4),
  player3_scores = rnorm(17, mean = 10, sd = 4),
  player4_scores = rnorm(17, mean = 10, sd = 1)
)

consistencyData <- data.frame(t(playerScoresByWeek))

weekNames <- paste("week", 1:17, sep = "")

names(consistencyData) <- weekNames
row.names(consistencyData) <- NULL

consistencyData$mean <- rowMeans(consistencyData[,weekNames])
consistencyData$sd <- apply(consistencyData, 1, sd)
consistencyData$cv <- consistencyData$sd / consistencyData$mean

consistencyData$player <- c(1, 2, 3, 4)

consistencyData <- consistencyData %>%
  select(player, mean, sd, cv, week1:week17)

round(consistencyData, 2)
```

	player	mean	sd	cv	week1	week2	week3	week4	week5	week6	week7	week8	week9
1	1	20.60	6.47	0.31	15.61	21.29	14.15	31.17	22.31	14.26	23.41	25.17	24.03
2	2	20.61	3.35	0.16	23.78	23.28	22.38	23.68	23.13	20.30	12.04	22.48	19.78
3	3	10.32	2.65	0.26	4.49	8.34	8.42	9.76	14.40	13.05	9.34	8.99	12.79
4	4	10.19	1.11	0.11	9.39	10.34	8.87	11.43	11.98	9.63	8.96	10.57	9.86
		week10	week11	week12	week13	week14	week15	week16	week17				
1		17.86	30.58	22.73	15.65	4.50	27.87	19.69	19.89				
2		19.38	14.12	18.09	21.67	25.43	19.59	21.55	19.78				
3		12.23	7.24	7.17	11.46	13.07	9.55	13.52	11.59				
4		12.40	9.96	10.69	10.03	9.26	10.19	8.20	11.47				

---

## 4.5 Health

Health-related factors to consider include:

- current injury status
- injury history

It is also important to consider a player's past and current health status. In terms of a player's current health status, it is important to consider whether they are injured or are playing at less than 100% of their typical health. In terms of a player's prior health status, one can consider their injury history, including the frequency and severity of injuries and their prognosis.

We demonstrate how to import injury reports in Section [3.4.13](#).

---

## 4.6 Age and Career Stage

Age and career stage-related factors include:

- age
- experience
- touches

A player's age is relevant because of important age-related changes in a player's speed, ability to recover from injury, etc. A player's experience is relevant because players develop knowledge and skills with greater experience. A player's prior touches/usage is also relevant, because it speaks to how many hits a player may have taken. For players who take more hits, it may be more likely that their bodies "break down" sooner.

---

## 4.7 Situational Factors

Situational factors one could consider include:

- team quality



- role on team
- teammates
- opportunity and usage
  - snap count
  - touches/targets
  - red zone usage

Football is a team sport. A player is embedded within a broader team context; it is important to consider the strength of their team context insofar as it may support— or detract from—a player’s performance. For instance, for a Quarterback, it is important to consider how strong the pass blocking is from the Offensive Line. Will they have enough time to throw the ball, or will they be constantly under pressure to be sacked? It is also important to consider the strength of the pass catchers—the Wide Receivers and Tight Ends. For a Running Back, it is important to consider how strong the run blocking is from the Offensive Line. For a Wide Receiver, it is important to consider how strong the pass blocking is, and how strong the Quarterback is.

It is also important to consider a player’s role on the team. Is the player a starter or a backup? Related to this, it is important to consider the strength of one’s teammates. For a given Running Back, if a teammate is better at running the ball, this may take away from how much the player sees the field. For a given Wide Receiver, if a teammate is better at catching the ball, this may take some targets away from the player. However, the team’s top defensive back is often matched up against the team’s top Wide Receiver. So, if the team’s top Wide Receiver is matched up against a particularly strong Defensive Back, the second- and third-best Wide Receivers may more targets than usual.

It is also important to consider a player’s opportunity and usage, which are influenced by many factors, including the skill of the player, the skill of their teammates, the role of the player on the team, the coaching style, the strategy of the opposing team, game scripts, etc. In terms of the player’s opportunity and usage, how many snaps do they get? How many touches and/or targets do they receive? Being on the field for more snaps and receiving more touches and/or targets means that the player has more opportunities to score fantasy points. Are they targeted in the red zone? Red zone targets are more likely to lead to touchdown scoring opportunities, which are particularly valuable in fantasy football.

---

## 4.8 Matchups

Matchup-related factors to consider include:

- strength of schedule
- weekly matchup

Another aspect to consider is how challenging their matchup(s) and strength of schedule is. For a Quarterback, it is valuable to consider how strong the opponent's passing defense is. For a Running Back, how strong is the running defense? For a Wide Receiver, how strong is the passing defense and the Defensive Back that is likely to be assigned to guard them?

---

## 4.9 Cognitive and Motivational Factors

Other factors to consider include cognitive and motivational factors. Some coaches refer to these as the “X Factor” or “the intangibles.” However, just as any other construct in psychology, we can devise ways to operationalize them. Insofar as they are observable, they are measurable.

Cognitive and motivational factors one could consider include:

- reaction time
- knowledge and intelligence
- work ethic and mental toughness
- incentives
  - contract performance incentives
  - whether they are in a contract year

A player's knowledge, intelligence, and reaction time can help them gain an upper-hand even when they may not be the fastest or strongest. A player's work ethic and mental toughness may help them be resilient and persevere in the face of challenges. Contract-related incentives may lead a player to put forth greater effort. For instance, a contract may have a performance incentive that provides a player greater compensation if they achieve a particular performance milestone (e.g., receiving yards). Another potential incentive is if a player is in what is called their “contract year” (i.e., the last year of their current contract). If a player is in the last year of their current contract, they have an incentive to perform well so they can get re-signed to a new contract.

---

## 4.10 Fantasy Value

### 4.10.1 Sources From Which to Evaluate Fantasy Value

There are several sources that one can draw upon to evaluate a player's fantasy value:

- expert or aggregated rankings
- layperson rankings
  - players' Average Draft Position (ADP) in other league [snake drafts](#)
  - players' Average Auction Value (AAV) in other league [auction drafts](#)
- expert or aggregated projections

#### 4.10.1.1 Expert Fantasy Rankings

Fantasy rankings (by so-called “experts”) are provided by many sources. To reduce some of the bias due to a given source, some services aggregate projections across sources, consistent with a “wisdom of the crowd” approach. FantasyPros<sup>1</sup> aggregates fantasy rankings across sources. Fantasy Football Analytics<sup>2</sup> creates fantasy rankings from projections that are aggregated across sources (see the webapp here: <https://apps.fantasyfootballanalytics.net>).

#### 4.10.1.2 Layperson Fantasy Rankings: ADP and AAV

Average Draft Position (ADP) and Average Auction Value (AAV), are based on league drafts, mostly composed of everyday people. ADP is based on [snake drafts](#), whereas AAV is based on [auction drafts](#). Thus, ADP and AAV are consistent with a “wisdom of the crowd” approach, and I refer to them as forms of rankings by laypeople. ADP data are provided by FantasyPros<sup>3</sup>. AAV data are also provided by FantasyPros<sup>4</sup>.

#### 4.10.1.3 Projections

Projections are provided by various sources. Projections (and rankings, for that matter) are a bit of a black box. It is often unclear how they were derived

---

<sup>1</sup><https://www.fantasypros.com/nfl/rankings/consensus-cheatsheets.php>

<sup>2</sup><https://fantasyfootballanalytics.net>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.fantasypros.com/nfl/adp/overall.php>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.fantasypros.com/nfl/auction-values/calculator.php>

by a particular source. That is, it is unclear how much of the projection was based on statistical analysis versus conjecture.

To reduce some of the bias due to a given source, some services aggregate projections across sources, consistent with a “wisdom of the crowd” approach. Projections that are aggregated across sources are provided by Fantasy Football Analytics<sup>5</sup> (see the webapp here: <https://apps.fantasyfootballanalytics.net>) and by FantasyPros<sup>6</sup>.

#### 4.10.1.4 Benefits of Using Projections Rather than Rankings

It is important to keep in mind that rankings, ADP, and AAV are specific to roster and scoring settings of a particular league. For instance, in point-per-reception (PPR) leagues, players who catch lots of passes (Wide Receivers, Tight Ends, and some Running Backs) are valued more highly. As another example, Quarterbacks are valued more highly in 2-Quarterback leagues. Thus, if using rankings, ADP, or AAV, it is important to find ones from leagues that mirror—as closely as possible—your league settings.

Projected statistics (e.g., projected passing touchdowns) are agnostic to league settings and can thus be used to generate league-specific fantasy projections and rankings. Thus, projected statistics may be more useful than rankings because they can be used to generate rankings for your particular league settings. For instance, if you know how many touchdowns, yards, and interceptions a Quarterback is projected to throw (in addition to any other relevant categories for the player, e.g., rushing yards and touchdowns), you can calculate how many fantasy points the Quarterback is expected to gain in your league (or in any league). Thus, you can calculate ranking from projections, but you cannot reverse engineer projections from rankings.

#### 4.10.2 Indices to Evaluate Fantasy Value

Based on the sources above (rankings, ADP, AAV, and projections), we can derive multiple indices to evaluate fantasy value. There are many potential indices that can be worthwhile to consider, including a player’s:

- dropoff
- value over replacement player (VORP)
- uncertainty

---

<sup>5</sup><https://fantasyfootballanalytics.net>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.fantasypros.com/nfl/auction-values/calculator.php>

#### 4.10.2.1 Dropoff

A player's *dropoff* is the difference between (a) the player's projected points and (b) the projected points of the next-best player at that position.

#### 4.10.2.2 Value Over Replacement Player

Because players from some positions (e.g., Quarterbacks) tend to score more points than players from other positions (e.g., Wide Receivers), it would be inadvisable to compare players across different positions based on projected points. In order to more fairly compare players across positions, we can consider a player's value over a typical replacement player at that position (shortened to "value over replacement player"). A player's *value over a replacement player* (VORP) is the difference between (a) a player's projected fantasy points and (b) the fantasy points that you would be expected to get from a typical bench player at that position. Thus, VORP provides an index of how much added value a player provides.

#### 4.10.2.3 Uncertainty

A player's *uncertainty* is how much variability there is in projections or rankings for a given player across sources. For instance, consider a scenario where three experts provide ratings about two players, Player A and Player B. Player A is projected to score 300, 310, and 290 points by experts 1, 2, and 3, respectively. Player B is projected to score 400, 300, and 200 points by experts 1, 2, and 3, respectively. In this case, both players are (on average) projected to score the same number of points (300).

```
exampleData <- data.frame(  
  player = c(rep("A", 3), rep("B", 3)),  
  expert = c(1:3, 1:3),  
  projectedPoints = c(300, 310, 290, 400, 300, 200)  
)  
  
playerA_mean <- mean(exampleData$projectedPoints[which(exampleData$player == "A")])  
playerB_mean <- mean(exampleData$projectedPoints[which(exampleData$player == "B")])  
  
playerA_sd <- sd(exampleData$projectedPoints[which(exampleData$player == "A")])  
playerB_sd <- sd(exampleData$projectedPoints[which(exampleData$player == "B")])  
  
playerA_cv <- playerA_mean / playerA_sd  
playerB_cv <- playerB_mean / playerB_sd
```

```
playerA_mean
```

```
[1] 300
```

```
playerB_mean
```

```
[1] 300
```

However, the players differ considerably in their uncertainty (i.e., the source-to-source variability in their projections), as operationalized with the standard deviation and coefficient variation of projected points across sources for a given player.

```
playerA_sd
```

```
[1] 10
```

```
playerB_sd
```

```
[1] 100
```

```
playerA_cv
```

```
[1] 30
```

```
playerB_cv
```

```
[1] 3
```

Here is a depiction of a density plot of projected points for a player with a low, medium, and high uncertainty:

```
playerA <- rnorm(1000000, mean = 150, sd = 5)
playerB <- rnorm(1000000, mean = 150, sd = 15)
playerC <- rnorm(1000000, mean = 150, sd = 30)

mydata <- data.frame(playerA, playerB, playerC)

mydata_long <- mydata %>%
  pivot_longer(
```

```
    cols = everything(),
    names_to = "player",
    values_to = "points"
  ) %>%
  mutate(
    name = case_match(
      player,
      "playerA" ~ "Player A",
      "playerB" ~ "Player B",
      "playerC" ~ "Player C",
    )
  )

ggplot2::ggplot(
  data = mydata_long,
  ggplot2::aes(
    x = points,
    fill = name
  )
) +
  ggplot2::geom_density(alpha = .3) +
  ggplot2::labs(
    x = "Players' Projected Points",
    title = "Density Plot of Projected Points for Three Players"
  ) +
  ggplot2::theme_classic() +
  ggplot2::theme(legend.title = element_blank())
```



**Figure 4.1** Density Plot of Projected Points for Three Players

Uncertainty is not necessarily a bad characteristic of a player's projected points. It just means we have less confidence about how the player may be expected to perform. Thus, players with greater uncertainty are risky and tend to have a higher upside (or ceiling) and a lower downside (or floor).

---

### 4.11 Putting it Altogether

After performing an evaluation of the relevant domain(s) for a given player, then one must integrate the evaluation information across domains to make a judgment about a player's overall value. When thinking about a player's value, it can be worth thinking of a player's upside and a player's downside. Player that are more consistent may show higher downside but a lower upside. Younger, less experienced players may show a higher upside but a lower downside.

The extent to which you prioritize a higher upside versus a higher downside may depend on many factors. For instance, when drafting players, you may prioritize drafting players with the highest downside (i.e., the safest players), whereas you may draft sleepers (i.e., players with higher upside) for your bench. When choosing which players to start in a given week, if you are predicted to beat a team handily, it may make sense to start the players with



the highest downside. By contrast, if you are predicted to lose to a team by a good margin, it may make sense to start the players with the highest upside.



# 5

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## *The Fantasy Draft*

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### 5.1 Getting Started

#### 5.1.1 Load Packages

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### 5.2 Types of Fantasy Drafts

There are several types of drafts in fantasy football. The most common types of drafts are snake drafts and auction drafts.

#### 5.2.1 Snake Draft

In a snake draft, the participants (i.e., managers) are assigned a draft order. In the first round, the managers draft in that order. In the second round, the managers draft in reverse order. It continues to “snake” in this way, round after round, so that the person who has the first pick in a given round has the last pick in the next round, and whoever has the last pick in a given round has the first pick in the next round.

#### 5.2.2 Auction Draft

In an auction draft, the managers are assigned a nomination order and there is a salary cap (e.g., \$200). The first manager chooses which player to nominate. Then, the managers bid on that player like in an auction. In order to bid, the manager must raise the price by at least \$1. If two managers want to obtain the same player, they may continue to raise the amount until one manager backs out and is no longer to bid by raising the price. The highest bidder wins (i.e., drafts) that player. Then, the second manager nominates a player, and the managers bid on that player. This process repeats until all teams have drafted their allotment of players.

### 5.2.3 Comparison

Snake drafts are more common than auction drafts. Snake drafts tend to be quicker than auction drafts. However, auction drafts are more fair than snake drafts. In an auction draft, unlike a snake draft, all players are available to all teams. For instance, in a snake draft, the first 9 players drafted are unavailable to the 10th pick of the first round. So, if you have the 10th pick and want the top-ranked player, this player would not be available to you in the snake draft. However, in the auction draft, every player is available to every manager, so long as the manager is able and willing to bid enough.

---

## 5.3 Draft Strategy

### 5.3.1 Overview

There is no one “right” draft strategy. Sometimes it works best to “zig” when everyone else is “zagging”. For instance, if you notice that everyone else is drafting Wide Receivers, this may mean that other managers are over-valuing Wide Receivers, and this could be a nice opportunity to draft a Running Back for good value.

In general, you will first want to generate the rankings you will use to select which players to prioritize. You may generate your rankings based one or more of the following:

- your evaluation of players<sup>1</sup>
- [expert or aggregated rankings](#)
- [layperson rankings](#)
  - players’ [Average Draft Position](#) (ADP) in other league drafts (for [snake drafts](#))
  - players’ [Average Auction Value](#) (AAV) in other league drafts (for auction drafts<sup>2</sup>)
- [expert or aggregated projections](#)
- [indices derived from rankings and projections](#)

Section [4.10.1](#) describes where to obtain [aggregated rankings](#), [aggregated projections](#), [ADP](#), and [AAV](#) data.

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<sup>1</sup>[player-evaluation.qmd](#)

<sup>2</sup>[sec-draftStrategyAuction](#)

An important concept in the draft is “**dropoff**”, which is described in Section 4.10.2.1. **Dropoff** at a given position, is the difference—in terms of projected fantasy points—between (a) the best available player remaining at that position and (b) the second-best available player remaining at that position. If there is a bigger **dropoff** at a given position, there may be greater value in drafting the top player from that position. For instance, consider the following scenario: “Quarterback A” is projected to score 325 points, and “Quarterback B” is projected to score 320 points. “Tight End A” is projected to score 230 points, and “Tight End B” is projected to score 150 points. In this example, there is a much greater **dropoff** for Tight Ends than there is for Quarterbacks. Thus, even though “Quarterback A” is projected to score more points than “Tight End A”, “Tight End A” may be more valuable because there is still a good Quarterback available if someone else drafts “Quarterback A”.

Another important concept is a player’s **value over a typical replacement player** at that position (shortened to “value over replacement player”; VORP), which is described in Section 4.10.2.2.

Another important concept is a player’s **uncertainty**, which is described in Section 4.10.2.3.

In both **snake** and **auction** draft formats, your goal is to draft the team whose weekly starting lineup scores the most points and thus the collection of players with the greatest **VORP**. For your starting lineup, it may make sense—especially with your earliest selections—when comparing two players with equivalent **VORP**, to prioritize players with higher **consistency** and lower **uncertainty**, because they may be considered “safer” with a higher floor. However, when drafting players for your bench, it make make more sense to prioritize high-risk, high reward players with greater **uncertainty**, because they may have a higher ceiling. Players with a higher ceiling have a potential to be “sleepers”—players who are valued low (i.e., with a high **ADP** or low **AAV**) and who outperform their valuation. Note that, although players with greater **uncertainty** are high-risk, high-reward players, selecting this kind of a player for your bench (i.e., in a late round or for a small cost) is a *lower* risk selection, because you have less to lose with later/lower-cost picks. That is, even though the *player* is higher risk, selecting a higher risk player for your bench is a lower risk *decision*.

The Spurs in the National Basketball Association (NBA) were well-reputed for excelling in this draft strategy<sup>3</sup> (archived at <https://perma.cc/X7NW-WZC6>). They frequently used their second-round picks to draft high-risk, high-reward players. Sometimes, the second round pick was a bust, but they have little to lose with a failed second round pick. Other times, their second round picks—including Willie Anderson, DeJuan Blair, Goran Dragic, Luis Scola, and Manu Ginóbili—greatly outperformed expectations. Thanks, in

<sup>3</sup><https://harvardsportsanalysis.org/2013/11/beating-the-nba-draft-does-any-team-outperform-expectations/>

part, to this draft strategy, the team showed strong extended success for nearly three decades from 1989 through the late-2010s.

However, the draft strategies to achieve the “optimal lineup” differ between [snake](#) versus [auction](#) drafts.

### 5.3.2 Snake Draft

In general, your goal is to draft the team whose weekly starting lineup has the greatest [VORP](#). Consequently, you are often looking to pick the player with the highest [VORP](#) at a given selection, while keeping in mind (a) the [dropoff](#) of players at other positions and (b) which players may be available at subsequent picks so that you do not sacrifice too much later value with a given selection. For instance, if a particular Quarterback has a slightly higher [VORP](#) than a particular Running Back, but the Quarterback is likely to be available at the manager’s next pick but the Running Back is likely to be unavailable at their next pick, it might make more sense to draft the Running Back.

### 5.3.3 Auction Draft

According to an analysis<sup>4</sup> by the Harvard Sports Analysis Collective (archived at <https://perma.cc/P7RX-92UU>), the majority of the manager’s salary cap should be spent on the starting lineup, and you should spend less on bench players. This is known as the “stars and scrubs” draft strategy. Based on the analysis, the author recommended applying a 10% premium to the top players and a 10% discount to the lower-tiered players. The idea behind the approach is that a player on your bench does not contribute to the team’s points and, thus, most players drafted to your bench do not contribute much to the team’s points throughout the season. That said, bench players can be important in the case of a starter’s injury or under-performance. So, it is recommended to draft starters with lower [uncertainty](#) who are safer. In contrast to your starting lineup, you may look to draft players on your bench who have greater [uncertainty](#) for their high reward potential in a low-risk selection given the lower price.

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<sup>4</sup><https://harvardsportsanalysis.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/fantasyfootballdraftanalysis1.pdf>

# 6

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## *Research Methods*

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### 6.1 Getting Started

#### 6.1.1 Load Packages

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### 6.2 Sample vs Population

In research, it is important to distinguish between the sample and the target population. The target *population* is who you want your study's findings to generalize to. For instance, if we want our findings to lead to inferences we can draw regarding all current NFL players, then NFL players are our target population. However, despite our best efforts to recruit all NFL players into our study, we may not succeed in doing that. The participants (i.e., people or players) who we successfully recruit to be in our study represent our *sample*.

It is rare for the sample to include all people who are in the target population. It can be costly to recruit large samples, and many potential participants may decline to participate for a variety of reasons (insufficient time, lack of interest in the study, distrust of scientists, etc.). Thus, our goals are (a) to recruit as many people from the population as possible and (b) for the sample to be as *representative* of the population as possible.

For increasing the representativeness of the sample (with respect to the population), we might conduct a *random sample*, in which each person in the population (i.e., each NFL player) has equal likelihood of being selected. For instance, we might randomly select 250 players to recruit to the study. True random samples, though strong in aspiration, are difficult and costly to achieve. In reality, many researchers conduct convenience sampling. A convenience sample is recruited because it is convenient (i.e., less costly and time-consuming).

For instance, many studies examine college students—in part, because they are easy to recruit. If our target population is NFL players but we are unable to recruit NFL players into our study, we could easily recruit a large sample

of college students. Although the convenience sample may afford a very large sample, the college student sample may not be representative of the target population (NFL players). Thus, the findings in our study may not *generalize* to NFL players—that is, what we learn in college students may not apply in the same way among NFL players. For instance, if we learn that consumption of sports drinks (compared to drinking only water) improves running speed among college students, that may not be the case among NFL players.

---

## 6.3 Research Designs

There are three broad types of research designs:

- experiment
- correlational/observational study
- case study

### 6.3.1 Experiment

In an *experiment*, there are one or more things that we manipulate to see how the manipulation influences the process of interest. The variable that we manipulate is the *independent variable*. By contrast, the *dependent variable* is the variable that we evaluate to determine whether it was influenced by the manipulation (i.e., by the independent variable).

For instance, we may be interested to evaluate whether players perform better (e.g., run faster) if they drink a sports drink compared when they drink only water. Our hypothesis might be that players will be expected to perform better when they drink a sports drink (compared to when they drink only water). To this this research question and hypothesis, we might conduct an experiment by randomly assigning some players during practice to receive a sports drink and some players to receive only water. In this case, our independent variable is whether the player receives a sports drink. Our dependent variable might be their 40-yard dash time during practice.

### 6.3.2 Correlational/Observational Study

In a correlational (aka observational) study, we do not manipulate a variable to see how the manipulation influences another variable. Instead, we examine how two variables, a predictor and an outcome variable, are associated. The



hypothesized cause is called the predictor variable. The hypothesized effect is called the outcome variable. In this way, the predictor variable is similar to the independent variable, and the outcome variable is similar to the dependent variable. However, unlike the independent and dependent variables in an experiment, the predictor and outcome variables in a correlational study are not manipulated.

For instance, to use a correlational study to test the possibility that players who drink sports drinks perform better than players who drink only water, we could examine whether the players who drink sports drinks during a game score more fantasy points than players who drink only water during the game. In this case, our predictor variable is whether the players drink sports drinks during a game. Our outcome variable is the number of fantasy points the player scored.

### 6.3.3 Case Study

In a case study, we assess a small sample of individuals (commonly only one person or a few people), often with rich qualitative information. Themes may be coded from the qualitative information, which may help inform inferences about whether some process may have played a role in influencing the outcome of interest.

For instance, to use a case study to evaluate the possibility that players who drink sports drinks perform better than players who drink only water, we could conduct an in-depth interview with a player. In the interview, we might ask the player how they performed in games with versus without a sports drink and have them discuss whether they believe the sports drink improved their performance (and if so, how). Then, based on the player's responses, we might code the responses to extract themes and to make a qualitative judgement of whether or not the player likely performed better during games in which they had a sports drink.

### 6.3.4 Other Features of the Research Design

#### 6.3.4.1 Number of Timepoints

In addition to whether the research design is an [experiment](#), [correlational/observational study](#), or a [case study](#), a research design can also have one or multiple timepoints. The differing number of timepoints allow studies to be characterized as one of the following:

- cross-sectional
- longitudinal

#### 6.3.4.1.1 Cross-Sectional

A *cross-sectional study* is a study with one timepoint.

For instance, in a cross-sectional study evaluating whether having a sports drink improves player performance, we might assess players' drinking behavior and performance during only game 1.

#### 6.3.4.1.2 Longitudinal Design

A *longitudinal study* is a study with more than one timepoint. When the same measures are assessed at each of multiple timepoints, we refer to this as a "repeated measures" design.

In a longitudinal study evaluating whether having a sports drink improves player performance, we might assess players' drinking behavior and performance during each game of the season, and possibly across multiple seasons.

#### 6.3.4.2 Within- or Between-Subject

A research design can also be within-subject, between-subject, or both.

##### 6.3.4.2.1 Within-Subject Design

A *within-subject design* is one in which each participant (i.e., person or player) receives multiple levels of the independent variable (or predictor).

For instance, in an experiment evaluating whether having a sports drink improves player performance, we might assign players to drink the sports drink in the first half of the game and to drink only water in the second half of the game. Or we could assign some of the players to drink sports drink in the first half and water in the second half, and assign the other players to drink water in the first half and sports drink in the second half.

In a correlational study evaluating whether having a sports drink improves player performance, we might evaluate how within-person changes in sports drink consumption are associated with within-person changes in performance. That is, we could evaluate, when a given player has a sports drink (or more sports drinks), do they perform better than when the same individual has only water (or fewer sports drinks)?

#### 6.3.4.2.2 Between-Subject Design

A *between-subject design* is one in which each participant (i.e., person or player) receives only one level of the independent variable.

For instance, in an experiment evaluating whether having a sports drink improves player performance, we might assign some players to drink the sports drink but the other players to drink only water.

In a correlational study evaluating whether having a sports drink improves player performance, we might evaluate whether people who drink sports drinks tend to perform better than players who drink only water. Or, we could evaluate whether players who drink more sports drinks perform better than players who drink fewer sports drinks (i.e., whether the number of sports drinks consumed during a game is correlated with player performance).

---

## 6.4 Research Design Validity

Research design validity involves the accuracy of inferences from a study. There are three types of research design validity:

- internal validity
- external validity
- conclusion validity

### 6.4.1 Internal Validity

Internal validity is the extent to which we can be confident that the associations identified in the study are causal.

### 6.4.2 External Validity

External validity is the extent to which we can be confident that findings from the study play out similarly in the real world—that is, the findings generalize to the target population.

### 6.4.3 Conclusion Validity

Conclusion validity is the extent to which a study's conclusions are reasonable about the association among variables based on the data. That is, were the correct statistical analyses performed, and are the interpretations of the findings from those analyses correct?

---

## 6.5 Levels of Measurement

It is important to know the levels of measurement of your data, because the level(s) of measurement of your data constrain the types of comparisons and analyses that you can meaningfully perform. There are four levels of measurement that any variable can have:

- nominal
- ordinal
- interval
- ratio

Each is described below:

### 6.5.1 Nominal

A variable is considered nominal if it is composed of qualitative classifications. You cannot meaningfully evaluate whether one number in the variable is larger than another number in the variable because higher numbers do not reflect higher levels of the concept. Examples of nominal variables include:

- sex (e.g., 1 = male; 2 = female)
- race (e.g., 1 = American Indian; 2 = Asian; 3 = Black; 4 = Pacific Islander; 5 = White)
- ethnicity (e.g., 0 = Non-Hispanic/Latino; 1 = Hispanic/Latino)
- zip code
- jersey number

A football player's jersey number is an example of a nominal variable. A jersey number of 7 is not higher on whatever concept of interest compared to a jersey number of 6.

To examine the central tendency of a nominal variable, you can determine the mode, but you cannot calculate a mean or median.

### 6.5.2 Ordinal

A variable is considered ordinal if the classifications are ordered. However, ordinal variables do not have equally spaced intervals. Examples of ordinal intervals include:

- likert response scales (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree)
- educational attainment (e.g., 1 = no formal education; 2 = elementary school; 3 = middle school; 4 = high school; 5 = college; 6 = graduate degree)
- academic grades on A–F scale (e.g., 1 = A; 2 = B; 3 = C; 4 = D; 5 = F)
- player rank (1 = 1st; 2 = 2nd; 3 = 3rd, etc.)

A football player's fantasy rank is an example of an ordinal variable. A player with a fantasy rank of 1 has a higher rank than a player with a rank of 2, but it is not known how far apart each player is—i.e., the intervals do not all reflect the same distance. For instance, the distance between the top-ranked player and the 2nd-best player might be 30 points, whereas the distance between the 2nd-best player and the 3rd-best player might be 2 points.

To examine the central tendency of ordinal data, the median and mode are most appropriate; however, the mean may be used (unlike for nominal data).

### 6.5.3 Interval

A variable is considered interval if the classifications are ordered (similar to ordinal data) and have equally spaced intervals (unlike ordinal data). However, interval variables do not have a meaningful zero that reflects absence. Examples of interval data include:

- temperature on the Fahrenheit or Celsius scale
- time of day

For instance, the temperature difference between 80 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit is the same as the temperature difference between 90 and 100 degrees Fahrenheit. However, 0 degrees Fahrenheit does not reflect absence of temperature/heat.

Interval data can be meaningfully added or subtracted. For instance, if a game starts at 4 pm and ends at 7 pm, you know the game lasted 3 hours ( $7 - 4 = 3$ ). However, interval data cannot be meaningfully multiplied or divided. For instance, 100 degrees Fahrenheit is not twice as hot as 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

To examine the central tendency of interval data, you can compute the mean, median, or mode.

#### 6.5.4 Ratio

A variable is considered ratio if the classifications are ordered (similar to ordinal data), have equally spaced intervals (like interval data), and have an absolute zero point that reflects absence of the concept. Examples of ratio data include:

- height
- weight
- age
- distance
- speed
- volume
- time elapsed
- income
- years of formal education
- points in football

For instance, points in football has order, equally spaced intervals, and an absolute zero—a team cannot score less than zero points, and zero points reflects absence of points (though it could be argued to be interval data because zero points does not reflect absence of skill.)

Ratio data can be meaningfully added, subtracted, multiplied, or divided. A player who weighs 350 pounds weighs twice as much as someone who weighs 175 pounds.

To examine the central tendency of ratio data, you can compute the mean, median, or mode.

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### 6.6 Measurement Validity

#### 6.6.1 Reliability

#### 6.6.2 Validity

# 7

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## *Basic Statistics*

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### 7.1 Getting Started

#### 7.1.1 Load Packages

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### 7.2 Descriptive Statistics

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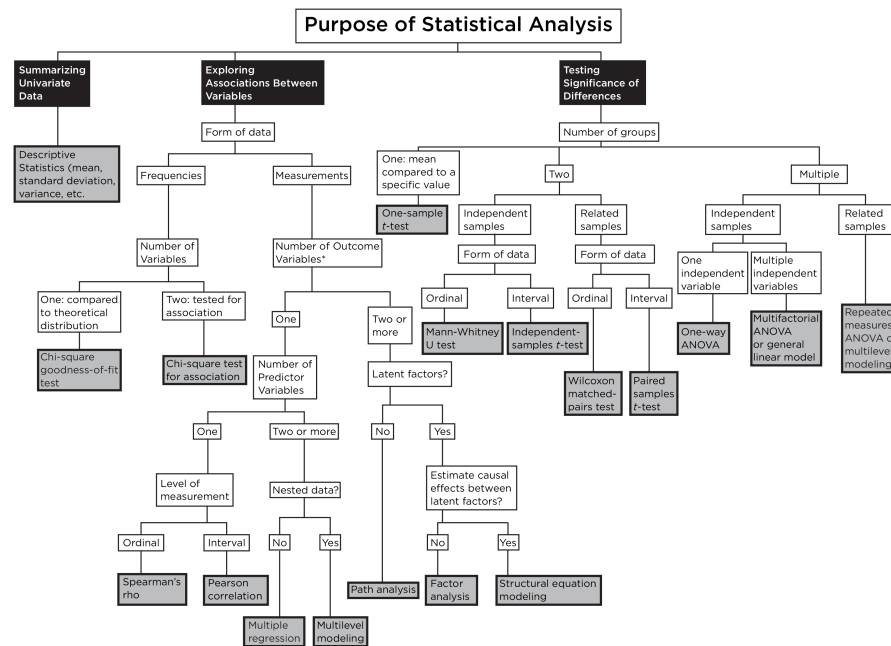
### 7.3 Inferential Statistics

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### 7.4 Statistical Decision Tree

An example statistical decision tree is depicted in Figure 7.1.

For an online, interactive statistical decision tree to help you decide which statistical analysis to use, see here: <https://www.statsflowchart.co.uk>



\* Also includes manifest indicators that are used to identify latent factors.

Note: "Predictor" and "independent variable" are used interchangeably, as are "outcome" and "dependent variable", according to differing conventions of respective disciplines. Multilevel modeling goes by many terms, including mixed modeling, mixed-effects modeling, and hierarchical linear modeling.

**Figure 7.1** A Statistical Decision Tree For Choosing an Appropriate Statistical Procedure. Adapted from: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:InferentialStatisticalDecisionMakingTrees.pdf>. The original source is: Corston, R., & Colman, A. M. (2000). *A crash course in SPSS for Windows*. Wiley-Blackwell. Changes were made to the original, including the addition of several statistical tests.



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## *References*

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- Corston, R., & Colman, A. M. (2000). *A crash course in SPSS for windows*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Motz, B. (2013). Fantasy football: A touchdown for undergraduate statistics education. *Proceedings of the Games, Learning, and Society Conference, 9.0*, 222–228. <https://doi.org/10.1184/R1/6686804.v1>



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# ***Index***

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GitHub, [ix](#)