A Gentle Introduction to R

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Pop Quiz

We will review these *at the end*, so you can see how much you have learned.

- What does 'CRAN' stand for?
- Why is it named '`R`'?
- How can you use `R` *interactively*?
- How do you find out what a function does & how to use it?
- How do you store values to re-use later?
- True or False: Warnings can be ignored, but an Error means I made a mistake.
- True or False: Error messages will tell me how to fix the problem.

Learning Objectives

- Get familiar with the  *interface*
- Use technical *terms* for R concepts
- Enter *commands*
  - input & output: using R interactively
  - use some common *functions*
- Understand *Errors* & *Warnings*
- How to get Help

Why is it named R?

- R started as an *open-source* implementation of the S statistical computing language (S-PLUS)
  - S was created at Bell Laboratories in 1976
  - R was based on the S syntax (mostly v3), but works very differently "under the hood".
- R was created by **R**oss Ihaka and **R**obert Gentleman at the University of Aukland in the early 1990s.

The R Interface

- 'base R' has a slightly different interface for each **O**perating **S**ystem (OS)
  - GUI = **G**raphical **U**ser **I**nterface
- R can also run inside of a terminal (no GUI) or other software (different GUI).

Integrated Development Environment (IDE)

- An IDE is like an extra interface layer on top of 'base R'
- IDEs often add convenient tools to make writing code easier (e.g., syntax highlighting), and for developing larger projects with multiple files.
- **RStudio** is one of the most popular cross-platform IDEs for R.
  - RStudio is available in open source (free/libre) and commercial[a] editions.

[a] for organizations not able to use software licensed with AGPL

A quick tour of 'base R'

A quick tour of RStudio

Interacting with R

- Regardless of the interface, you interact with R primarily using a *command line*
  - aka, a **c**ommand **l**ine **i**nterface (cli)
- aka "Question-and-Answer Model"
  - You ask R to do something (a *command*),
    and R tells you the answer (*result*).
- Instructions are given to R using the *R language*.

R is designed so that users can start by using it *interactively* (what we will do today), and then gradually use it for more programming as their needs and skills grow.

The R command-line

- The command *prompt* normally looks like this:

```
>
```

(the colour varies depending on the interface)

  - This is R's way of saying "I am ready to accept new commands".
  - Type a new command on the line after this prompt (i.e., *input*).

- **Press `return`/`enter` to *run* the current *command***
- If you can still edit the command next to the prompt, then it has not been submitted to R to execute (it is still waiting for input).
- If the last prompt is not empty (i.e., there is text beside it) *and* you cannot edit what is beside the prompt, it means R is still running the last command and is not ready to accept a new command yet.
  - Wait for a new empty prompt to appear before entering the next command.

The R command-line (cont'd)

- If the prompt looks like this:

```
+
```

  it means the last command was *incomplete* and R is waiting for more input.
  R will not do anything until the command is completed or cancelled.

  - This usually means you forgot a closing
    quote ", *parenthesis* (, *bracket* [, or *brace* {

- You can *cancel* the current command at any time by pressing escape (esc)

The R console

In this presentation,

- *commands* that can be entered in the *command-line* look like this:

```
Input (commands)
```

  - You can try these yourself!

- Expected output (results) look like this:

```
## Output (results)
```

R is a show-off

```
demo(graphics)
```

- some plots and graphs that can be made with R

```
demo(image)
```

- image-like graphics and maps that can be produced with R

```
demo(lm.glm)
```

- a demonstration of linear modelling & GLMs

```
demo()
```

- a list of available demos

```
help.start()
```

← A great place to start,
especially if you are comfortable reading documentation for a programming language.
More on this later.

Note

R will not only show the output, but also *the code used to produce it*.

R is a show-off (alt)

```
demo(graphics)
demo(image)
demo(lm.glm)
demo()

help.start()
```

- some plots and graphs that can be made with R
- image-like graphics and maps that can be made with R
- a demonstration of linear modelling & GLMs
- a list of available demos

A great place to start, especially if you are comfortable reading documentation for a programming language. More on this later.

Note

R will not only show the output, but also *the code used to produce it*.

R is a calculator

```
1 + 1
```

```
## [1] 2
```

```
2 * 2
```

```
## [1] 4
```

```
2 ^ 3
```

```
## [1] 8
```

```
10 - 1
```

```
## [1] 9
```

```
8 / 2
```

```
## [1] 4
```

```
sqrt(9)
```

```
## [1] 3
```

- These are *expressions*
- *Expressions* are *evaluated*, and the *value* (result) is *returned* (sometimes *invisibly*)

command-line tips

- With the cursor next to the empty prompt (>),
  use the up & down arrow keys (↑↓) to re-produce previous commands
- This lets you "scroll through your *command history*"
- Press up (↑) once, and you get the last command you entered without having to copy & paste

Symbolic *variables*

- You can store values (*objects*) in symbolic variables (*names*) using an *assignment operator*

`<-`	assign the *value* on the **right** to the *name* on the **left**

- Names can include:

letters	`a-z A-Z`
numbers	`0-9`
periods	`.`
underscores	`_`

```
A <- 10
B <- 10 * 10
A_log <- log(A)
B.seq <- 1:B

assign('x', 3)
```

- Names *should begin with a* ***letter***

Retrieve values

When a variable *name* is evaluated, it returns the stored *value*.

```
A
```

```
## [1] 10
```

```
B
```

```
## [1] 100
```

```
A_log
```

```
## [1] 2.303
```

```
x
```

```
## [1] 3
```

```
B.seq
```

```
##   [1]   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10  11  12  13
##  [19]  19  20  21  22  23  24  25  26  27  28  29  30  31
##  [37]  37  38  39  40  41  42  43  44  45  46  47  48  49
##  [55]  55  56  57  58  59  60  61  62  63  64  65  66  67
##  [73]  73  74  75  76  77  78  79  80  81  82  83  84  85
##  [91]  91  92  93  94  95  96  97  98  99 100
```

Built-in variables

Some words and letters already have values in R and should **never be used as variable names**.

```
pi
```

```
## [1] 3.142
```

```
version
```

```
## ... information about the
##  current version of R ...
```

```
letters
```

```
##  [1] "a" "b" "c" "d" "e" "f" "g" "h" "i" "j" "k" "l" "m" "r
## [20] "t" "u" "v" "w" "x" "y" "z"
```

```
LETTERS
```

```
##  [1] "A" "B" "C" "D" "E" "F" "G" "H" "I" "J" "K" "L" "M" "N
## [20] "T" "U" "V" "W" "X" "Y" "Z"
```

Reserved words

Some words and letters already have special meaning in the R language (*keywords*) and should **never be used as variable names**.

References & More Information

```
help.start()
```

Available from the above screen:

- An Introduction to R
- The R Language Definition

Online:

- RStudio Education (education.rstudio.com)
  - tutorials, workshop materials, and other resources.
-  Manuals (https://cran.r-project.org/manuals.html)
-  Contributed Documentation
  - e.g., http://cran.r-project.org/doc/contrib/usingR.pdf
- Internet search
  - Stack Overflow (stackoverflow.com)