A Gentle Introduction to R

Jonathan Whiteley

2023-08-06

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 called '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 R interface
- Enter commands
 - ▶ input & output: using R interactively
 - use some common functions
- Understand Errors & Warnings
- Use technical terms for R concepts
- How to get Help

Why is it named \mathbb{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 Ross Ihaka and Robert Gentleman at the University of Aukland in the early 1990s.



- R has a slightly different interface for each Operating System (OS)
 - ► GUI = **G**raphical **U**ser **I**nterface
- In every case, you interact with R primarily using a command line
 - 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.

The R command-line

The command prompt normally looks like this:

>

- ▶ 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 execute the current command
- 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 by pressing escape (esc)



In this presentation,

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

Input (commands)

Expected output (results) look like this:

Output (results)



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)

ullet a demonstration of linear modelling & GLMs

demo()

a list of available demos

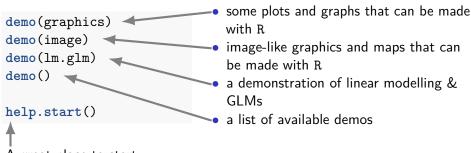
help.start()

← 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.





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

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



- 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
```

 Names should begin with a letter

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.
- R Manuals (https://cran.r-project.org/manuals.html)
- R Contributed Documentation
 - e.g., http://cran.r-project.org/doc/contrib/usingR.pdf
- Internet search
 - Stack Overflow (stackoverflow.com)