Workshop 2: Data Visualization with ggplot2 and plotnine

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28 May 2025

GitHub Page

These slides, source file, the code chunks, the workshop activities, and the data files can be found at github.com/rbrown53/RRDS25.

ggplot2 Introduction

While knowing how to plot using the base $\bf R$ packages is important, many $\bf R$ users are using the ggplot2 package (which is part of the tidyverse) more and more for making better-looking plots.

Advantages of ggplot2

- It's consistent! gg stands for "grammar of graphics"; easy base system for adding/removing plot elements, with room for being fancy too
- Very flexible
- Themes available to polish plot appearance
- Active maintenance/development
- Plots, or whole parts of plots, can be saved as objects
- Easy to add complexity or revert to earlier plot

ggplot2 Introduction

Disadvantages of ggplot2

- Sometimes more complicated than base R plotting
- Difficult to work with in iterated functions
- No 3-D graphics
- ggplot is often slower than base graphics
- The default colors can be difficult to change
- You might need to change the structure of your data frame to make certain plots (use tidyr::pivot_longer())

plotnine Introduction

The plotnine package in Python is "an implementation of a grammar of graphics in Python based on ggplot2." Installation instructions can be found at https://plotnine.org. A few notes about plotnine:

- It is developed by Hassan Kibirige and sponsored by Posit
- It is still in development (currently version 0.14.5)
- Nearly all functions from ggplot2 work exactly the same way, with only minor syntactic differences
 - Some more advanced functions to not work yet in plotnine

So, when learning ggplot2, you are also, in essence, learning plotnine.

plotnine Differences

The main differences between ggplot2 and plotnine are:

- Titles in plotnine are by default are centered instead of left-aligned
- We need to put quotes around variable names in plotnine.
- Any function argument that has a period (.) in ggplot2 has an underscore (_) in plotnine
 - Ex. theme(axis.title) in ggplot2 would be theme(axis_title) in plotnine.
- We put parentheses around all functions to build a plot in plotnine.
- We need to save the plot as an object in plotnine and show it with plot_name.show().

In these slides, we will focus on ggplot2, but I'll show some examples in plotnine as well.

ggplot Basics

There are three primary components to plotting with ggplot2:

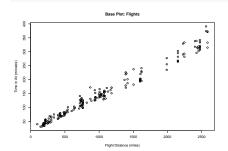
- The data component. This is what data set and variables we are actually plotting.
- The geometry component. This describes what it is we are plotting.
 Examples include barplots, scatter plots, histograms, smooth densities, qqplots, boxplots, etc.
- The aesthetic mapping or just the mapping. The two most important cues in this plot are the point positions on the x-axis and y-axis. Each point represents a different observation, and we map data about these observations to visual cues like x- and y-scale. Color is another visual cue that we map to region. How this is defined depends on what type of geometry we are using.

Example dataset: NYC Flights

```
install.packages("ggplot2")
install.packages("nycflights13")
library(ggplot2)
library(nycflights13)
head(flights, 3)
## # A tibble: 3 x 19
## year month day dep_time sched_dep_time dep_delay
## <int> <int> <int> <int>
                                          <dbl>
## 1 2013 1 1 517
                               515
## 2 2013 1 1 533
                                 529
## 3 2013 1 1
                                 540
                      542
## # i 13 more variables: arr_time <int>,
## #
     sched arr time <int>, arr delay <dbl>,
## # carrier <chr>, flight <int>, tailnum <chr>,
     origin <chr>, dest <chr>, air time <dbl>,
## #
     distance <dbl>, hour <dbl>, minute <dbl>,
## #
## # time hour <dttm>
```

Example in Base Plotting

There is essentially just one primary function to know: ggplot(). However, ggplot() needs lots of other support functions.

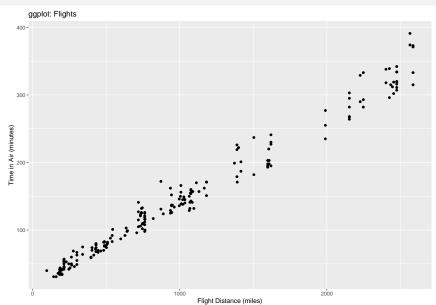


Example in ggplot2

In a ggplot, we need to begin with the ggplot() function and then add on (literally with a + sign) to that plot using other commands. In this case, I put geom_point() to add those solid dots.

```
ggplot(data = flights) +
  geom_point(aes(x = distance, y = air_time)) +
  labs(x = "Flight Distance (miles)",
        y = "Time in Air (minutes)",
        title = "ggplot: Flights")
```

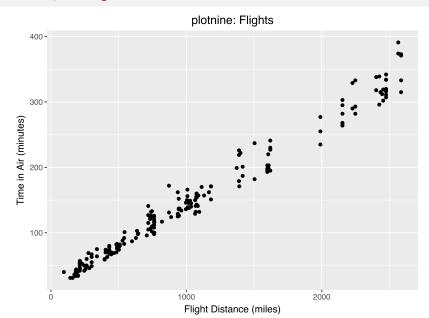
Example in ggplot2



Example in plotnine

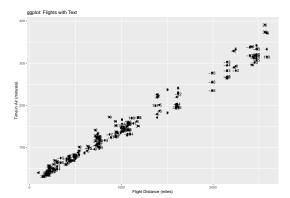
```
import pandas as pd # Needed to read in data file
from plotnine import * # Import all functions from plotnine
flights = pd.read csv('flights.csv') # Read in data file
p = (
  ggplot(flights)
  + geom_point(aes(x = "distance", y = "air_time"))
  + labs(x = "Flight Distance (miles)",
         y = "Time in Air (minutes)",
         title = "plotnine: Flights")
p.show()
```

Example in plotnine



Example in ggplot2 with Labels

Here is an example adding text to the plot.



Global vs Local Aesthetic Mapping

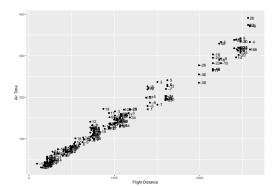
Instead of putting the aes() function in the geom_*() function, we can put it in the ggplot() and it will apply everywhere.

Anything put into the ggplot() function will apply globally to the entire plot (unless it is overwritten) whereas anything put into the geometry will only apply to that geometry. Some options, like size, can only be put into the geometry.

Example in ggplot2 with Gobal aes()

Now the x and y aesthetics are only given once. The nudge_x option will move the text to the right 45 units.

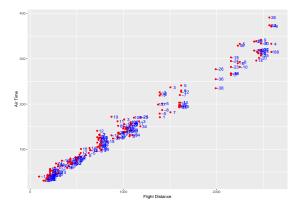
```
ggplot(data = flights, aes(x = distance, y = air_time)) +
  geom_point() +
  geom_text(aes(label = arr_delay), nudge_x = 45) +
  labs(x = "Flight Distance", y = "Air Time")
```



Example in ggplot2 with Color

This will make the points red, but the text blue.

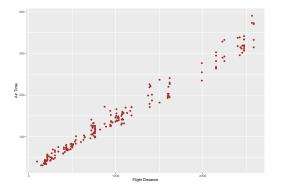
```
ggplot(data = flights, aes(x = distance, y = air_time)) +
  geom_point(color = "red") +
  geom_text(aes(label=arr_delay), nudge_x=45, color="blue") +
  labs(x = "Flight Distance", y = "Air Time")
```



Piping in ggplot2

Pipes work very well with ggplot also. Remember that pipes (I> or %>%) by default put objects being piped into the first argument of the function.

```
flights |>
  ggplot(aes(distance, air_time)) +
  geom_point(col = "brown") +
  labs(x = "Flight Distance", y = "Air Time")
```



Adding Loess Curve

Adding geom_smooth() will, by default, add a loess curve to the data and put confidence interval bands on the curve.

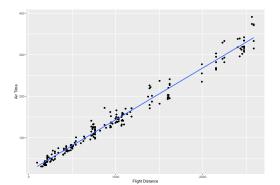
```
ggplot(flights, aes(distance, air time)) +
                   geom point() +
                   geom_smooth(color = "red", linetype = "dashed") +
                   labs(x = "Flight Distance", y = "Air Time")
## 'geom smooth()' using method = 'loess' and formula =
## 'v ~ x'
           indiciolation of the state of t
```

Flight Distance

Adding Least Squares Line

Putting method = "lm" in the geom_smooth() function will add the line of best fit.

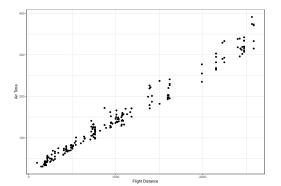
```
ggplot(flights, aes(distance, air_time)) +
  geom_point() +
  geom_smooth(method = "lm", se = F, formula = "y ~ x") +
  labs(x = "Flight Distance", y = "Air Time")
```



Example in ggplot2 with Theme

We can change the background using theme_*(). There are theme_bw(), theme_dark(), theme_classic(), theme_minimal() and more.

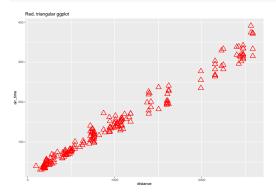
```
ggplot(data = flights, aes(x = distance, y = air_time)) +
  geom_point() +
  labs(x = "Flight Distance", y = "Air Time") +
  theme_bw()
```



Changing the Graph Options in ggplot2

We can change the type of points added in the geom_point() function.

```
ggplot(data = flights, aes(x = distance, y = air_time)) +
  geom_point(size = 5, color = "red", shape = 2) +
  labs(title = "Red, triangular ggplot")
```



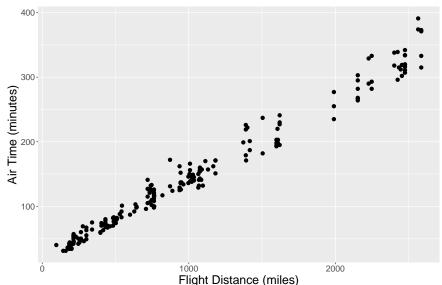
The shape argument works just like pch in base plotting.

Changing Font Size and Type

We can change font size and type in the theme() function. Note that if both theme() and a function like theme_bw() are used, the theme_bw() function must be put first or else it will overwrite the theme() function.

Changing Font Size and Type

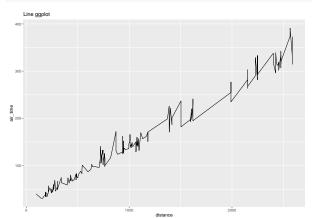
Check out this Font!



ggplot2 Line Graph

Instead of adding geom_point(), we can add something else, like
geom_line()

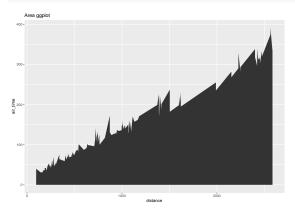
```
ggplot(data = flights, aes(x = distance, y = air_time)) +
  geom_line() + labs(title = "Line ggplot")
```



ggplot2 Area Graph

Or even something like shading the area under the points.

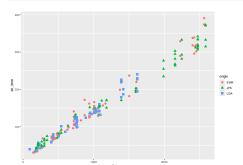
```
ggplot(data = flights, aes(x = distance, y = air_time)) +
  geom_area() + labs(title = "Area ggplot")
```



Not sure this is a good idea for this plot.

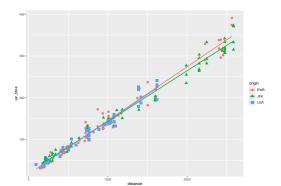
Grouping by Another Variable

ggplot makes it easy to split the data using another variable. Simply put the color argument in the aes() function in ggplot. This will automatically add a legend. We can change other aspects of the plot, like the shape, based on another variable too.



Grouping by Another Variable - Adding Lines

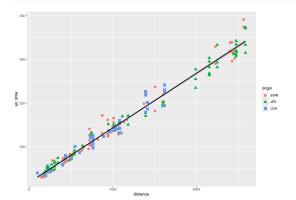
Adding geom_smooth() when the graph is grouped by another variable will add a line for each group.



Grouping by Another Variable - One Line

If we wanted only one line of best fit while still changing the color and/or shape by origin, then we would have to be careful about where we add those aesthetics.

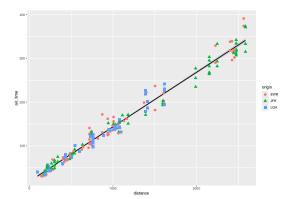
```
ggplot(data = flights, aes(x = distance, y = air_time)) +
  geom_point(aes(color = origin, shape = origin), size = 3) +
  geom_smooth(method = "lm", formula = "y ~ x", color = "black")
```



Grouping by Another Variable - Front/Back

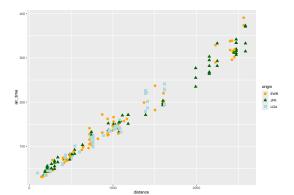
In that last plot, the line was in front of the points. We can put it behind the points by putting the <code>geom_smooth()</code> function first. The order of the geometries matters.

```
ggplot(data = flights, aes(x = distance, y = air_time)) +
  geom_smooth(method = "lm", formula = "y ~ x", color = "black") +
  geom_point(aes(color = origin, shape = origin), size = 3)
```



Change Colors Manually

We can manually change the colors using the values option in the scale_color_manual() add on function.

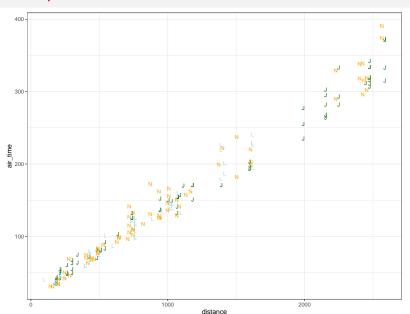


Change Order of Grouped Variable Categories

We can manually change the order of the categories in the legend using the breaks option in the scale_color_manual() add on function. It is similar for the shape with scale_shape_manual().

```
ggplot(data = flights, aes(x = distance, y = air time,
                           color=origin, shape=origin)) +
  geom point(size = 3) +
  scale color manual(
    breaks = c("JFK", "LGA", "EWR"),
    values = c("darkgreen", "lightblue", "orange")
    ) +
  scale_shape_manual(
    breaks = c("JFK", "LGA", "EWR"),
    values = c("J", "L", "N")
    ) +
  theme bw()
```

Example



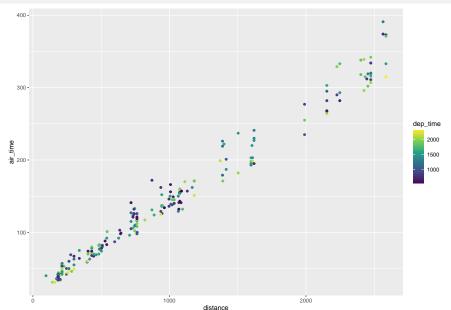
origin

L LGA N EWR

Grouping by a Continuous Variable

We can also group by a continuous variable. In this case, we can change the color based on the departure time variable.

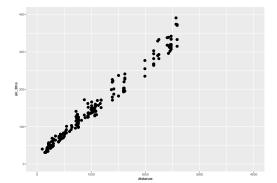
Grouping by a Continuous Variable Example



Changing Axis Limits

We can change the limits of the x and y axes if we don't adjust the axis ticks using the lims() function.

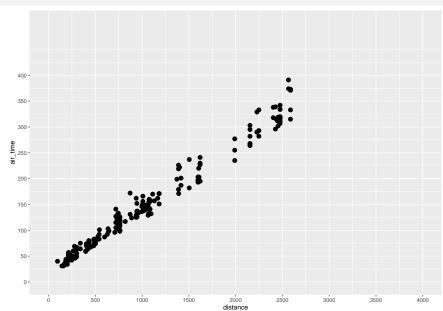
```
# color by a continuous variable
ggplot(data = flights, aes(x = distance, y = air_time)) +
  geom_point(size = 3) +
  lims(x = c(0, 4000), y = c(0, 400))
```



Changing Axis Ticks

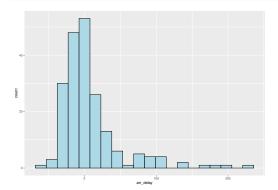
If we want to change the axis ticks, we can use the scale_x_continous() and scale_y_continuous() functions. If these functions are used, then the x and y limits can only be changed in those functions, not in lims(). If both a scale_*() function and the lims() function are used, then one will override the other.

Changing Axis Ticks

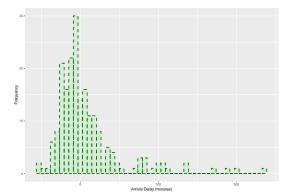


ggplot2 for a Single Quantitative Variable: Histogram

Of course, we can also use ggplot() for plotting a single variable. We can make histograms, boxplots, barplots, etc.



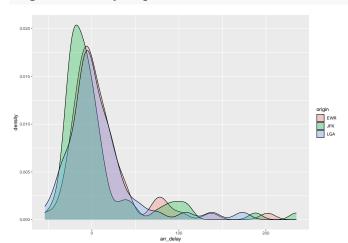
ggplot2 for a Single Quantitative Variable: Histogram



ggplot2 for a Single Quant. Variable: Density Plot

geom_density can be used to compare density plots for several groups.

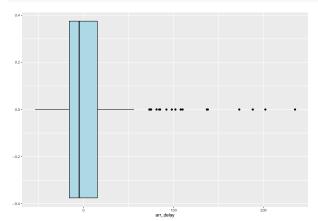
```
ggplot(data = flights, aes(x = arr_delay, fill = origin)) +
  geom_density(alpha = 0.3)
```



ggplot2 for a Single Quantitative Variable: Boxplot

Creating a basic boxplot. We can also make it vertical by putting $y = arr_delay$ in the aes() function instead of $x = arr_delay$.

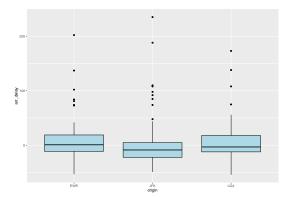
```
ggplot(data = flights, aes(x = arr_delay)) +
  geom_boxplot(color = "black", fill = "lightblue")
```



ggplot2 for a Single Quant. Variable: Side-by-Side Boxplots

We can make side-by-side boxplots grouped by a categorical variable as x (or as y if you want side-by-side horizontal boxplots).

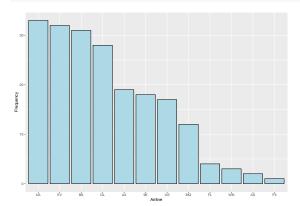
```
ggplot(data = flights, aes(x = origin, y = arr_delay)) +
  geom_boxplot(color = "black", fill = "lightblue")
```



ggplot2 for a Single Categorical Variable: Barplot

We can make plots for categorical variables as well. The fct_infreq() function arranges the bars from highest to lowest.

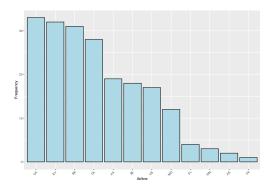
```
ggplot(data = flights, aes(x = fct_infreq(carrier))) +
  geom_bar(color = "black", fill = "lightblue") +
  labs(x = "Airline", y = "Frequency")
```



ggplot2 for a Single Categorical Variable: Barplot

These labels are short, but if they were longer, it would be nice to angle them. You can do that in the theme() function.

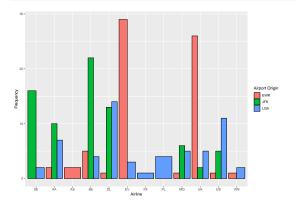
```
ggplot(data = flights, aes(x = fct_infreq(carrier))) +
  geom_bar(color = "black", fill = "lightblue") +
  labs(x = "Airline", y = "Frequency") +
  theme(axis.text.x = element_text(angle = 45, hjust = 1))
```



ggplot2 for a Single Categ. Variable: Side-by-Side Barplots

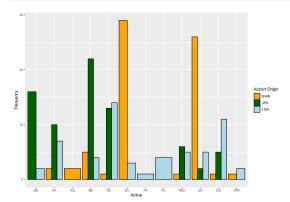
We can split the bars by another variable. In this case, we will make a plot of the airline carrier and break it up by flight origin airport and put the bars side by side.

```
ggplot(data = flights, aes(x = carrier, fill = origin)) +
  geom_bar(color = "black", position = "dodge") +
  labs(x = "Airline", y = "Frequency", fill = "Airport Origin")
```



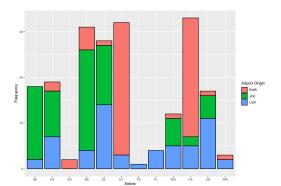
ggplot2 for Two Categ. Variables: Side-by-Side Barplots

We can change the fill colors using scale_fill_manual().



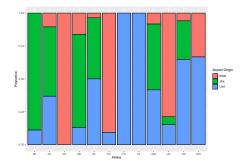
ggplot2 for Two Categorical Variables: Stacked Barplot

We can split the bars by another variable. In this case, we will make a plot of carrier, break it up by origin, and stack the bars.



ggplot2 for Two Categorical Variables: Stacked Barplot

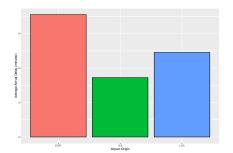
We can split the bars by another variable. In this case, we will make a plot of carrier, break it up by origin, stack the bars, and adjust them so each bar totals 100%.



ggplot2 Barplot Identity

We often want to use a column of a data frame or tibble as the heights of our bar plot instead of having ggplot tabulate them for us. For this, we need to put stat = "identity" in the geom_bar() function.

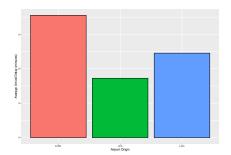
```
flights |> group_by(origin) |>
  summarize(avg_delay = mean(arr_delay)) |>
  ggplot(aes(x = origin, y = avg_delay, fill = origin)) +
  geom_bar(color = "black", stat = "identity") +
  labs(x = "Airport Origin", y = "Average Arrival Delay (minutes)") +
  theme(legend.position = "none")
```



ggplot2 geom_col()

The exact same thing can be accomplished using geom_col().
geom_col() is equivalent to geom_bar(stat = "identity"). t used functions to add

```
flights |> group_by(origin) |>
  summarize(avg_delay = mean(arr_delay)) |>
  ggplot(aes(x = origin, y = avg_delay, fill = origin)) +
  geom_col(color = "black") +
  labs(x = "Airport Origin", y = "Average Arrival Delay (minutes)") +
  theme(legend.position = "none")
```

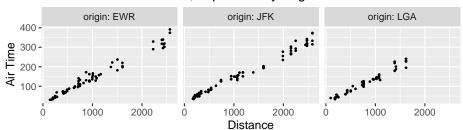


Use facet_grid() or facet_wrap() to create a separate plot for each value of a factor variable. We don't have to change any of the original plotting code, just add the facet command to it. Faceting can also be done on more than one categorical variable to create a grid of plots.

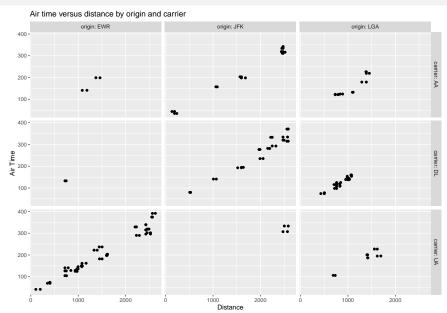
Additionally, it is sometimes helpful to save a simpler version of a plot, and then add onto it later with additional layers (for example, an if/else statement that plots different layers dependent on if a criterion is met or not).

We might want to summarize the data in the previous plot with a smoother on top of the points. With ggplot, we can simply add the geom_smooth() command. Each geom_*() just adds another layer to the plot.

Air time versus distance, separated by origin



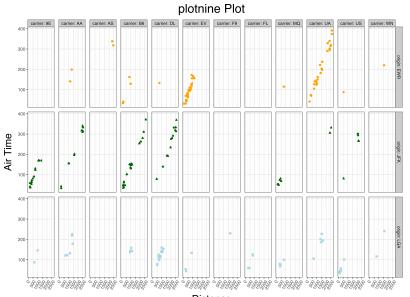
```
# make the basis for a plot using applot save it as p
p <- flights |>
  filter(carrier %in% c("UA", "DL", "AA")) |>
  ggplot(aes(x = distance, y = air_time))
# add a geom (points) and display the plot
p + geom_point() + geom_jitter(width = 100) +
  facet_grid(cols = vars(origin), rows = vars(carrier),
    labeller = label both) +
  labs(x = "Distance", y = "Air Time",
       title = paste("Air time versus",
                     "distance by origin and carrier"))
```



Example in plotnine

```
import pandas as pd # Needed to read in data file
import plotnine as p9
from plotnine import * # Import all functions from plotnine
p9.options.figure_size = (12, 7)
flights = pd.read csv('flights.csv')
p = 0
  ggplot(flights, aes(x = "distance", y = "air_time",
                      color = "origin", shape = "origin"))
  + geom point(size = 0.5)
  + geom_jitter(width = 100)
  + theme bw()
  + labs(x="Distance", y = "Air Time", title = "ggplot",
         color = "Origin Airport", shape = "Origin Airport")
  + scale x continuous(breaks = list(range(0, 3000, 500)))
  + scale color manual(values = ["orange", "darkgreen", "lightblue"])
  + theme(axis_title = element_text(size = 20), # note instead of .
          plot title = element text(size = 24),
          axis_text_x = element_text(angle = 60, vjust = 1))
  + facet_grid(rows = "origin", cols = "carrier", labeller = "label_both")
p.show()
```

Example in plotnine



Origin Airport

LGA

Summary

The syntax of a ggplot is ggplot(data, aes(x, y)) and you add on to the plot with + at the end of each line.

The most used functions to add onto a ggplot are:

- geom_point(), geom_line(), geom_histogram(), geom_boxplot(), geom_text(), geom_bar(), etc.
- labs() for labels including a plot title.
- lims() for axis limits.
- theme() for text size and visually changing other things.
- scale_color_manual() or scale_fill_manual() for changing the color or fill of the plot manually.
- scale_x_continuous() or scale_y_continuous() for changing the axis ticks and limits.

Further Resources & Assistance

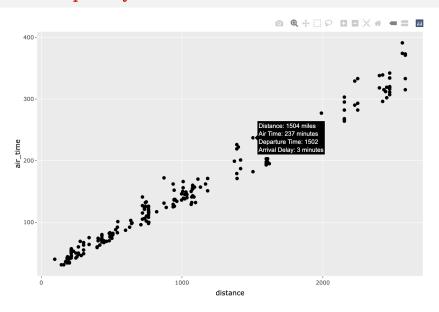
- Cheat sheet for data visualization with ggplot2 (accessible in Rstudio by going to Help -> Cheat Sheets -> Data visualization with ggplot2)
- ggplot2 documentation
- Google
- Stack overflow
- Hadley Wickham's book: https://ggplot2-book.org/
- Rafael Irizarry's book: http://rafalab.dfci.harvard.edu/dsbook-part-1/dataviz/ggplot2.html.
- Al tools like ChatGPT

Bonus: plotly

The plotly \mathbf{R} package plays very nicely with ggplot objects. You can use the ggplotly() function on a ggplot to make it interactive.

```
library(plotly)
p <- flights |>
  mutate(hover label = paste(
    "Distance: ", distance, "miles",
    "\nAir Time:", air time, "minutes",
    "\nDeparture Time:", dep time,
    "\nArrival Delay:", arr delay, "minutes"
  ) |>
  ggplot(aes(x = distance, y = air_time, text = hover_label)) +
  geom_point()
ggplotly(p, tooltip = "text") # Makes only text shown in hover,
                              # not x or y
```

Bonus: plotly



Session info

sessionInfo()

```
## R version 4.5.0 (2025-04-11)
## Platform: aarch64-apple-darwin20
## Running under: macOS Sequoia 15.4.1
##
## Matrix products: default
## BLAS: /Library/Frameworks/R.framework/Versions/4.5-arm64/Resources/lib/libRblas.0.dylib
## LAPACK: /Library/Frameworks/R.framework/Versions/4.5-arm64/Resources/lib/libRlapack.dylib; LAPACK version 3
##
## locale:
## [1] en US.UTF-8/en US.UTF-8/en US.UTF-8/C/en US.UTF-8/en US.UTF-8
##
## time zone: America/Denver
## tzcode source: internal
##
## attached base packages:
## [1] stats
                graphics grDevices utils
                                              datasets
## [6] methods
                base
##
## other attached packages:
## [1] reticulate_1.42.0 lubridate_1.9.4
## [3] forcats 1.0.0
                         stringr 1.5.1
## [5] dplyr_1.1.4 purrr_1.0.4
                    tidyr_1.3.1
## [7] readr_2.1.5
   [9] tibble 3.2.1
                     ggplot2_3.5.2
## [11] tidvverse 2.0.0
                         dslabs 0.8.0
##
## loaded via a namespace (and not attached):
  [1] Matrix 1.7-3
                          isonlite 2.0.0
  [3] gtable_0.3.6
                          compiler_4.5.0
   [5] Rcpp_1.0.14
                          tidyselect_1.2.1
   [7] png 0.1-8
                          scales 1.4.0
    [9] yaml_2.3.10
                          fastmap_1.2.0
                                                                                                          62
```