Week 2 - Activities

Table of contents

## Programming Fundamentals in R (Part 1) Workshop

In this week workshop we are going to practice some basic programming concepts in R through several activities and exercises. These should build you confident and skills in navigating R and RStudio. There is a lot here, so do not worry if you don’t get everything done in the session, or if takes a while for certain concepts to click.

Each activity includes a summary of the key points to help you understand the concepts and techniques. If you get stuck on an exercise, take a moment to review the key points in the activity—it might give you the clarity you need to move forward.

Don’t hesitate to collaborate! Feel free to chat with your neighbours and help each other out. Myself, Ciara, and Aoife will also be around to provide support, so don’t hesitate to ask us for help.

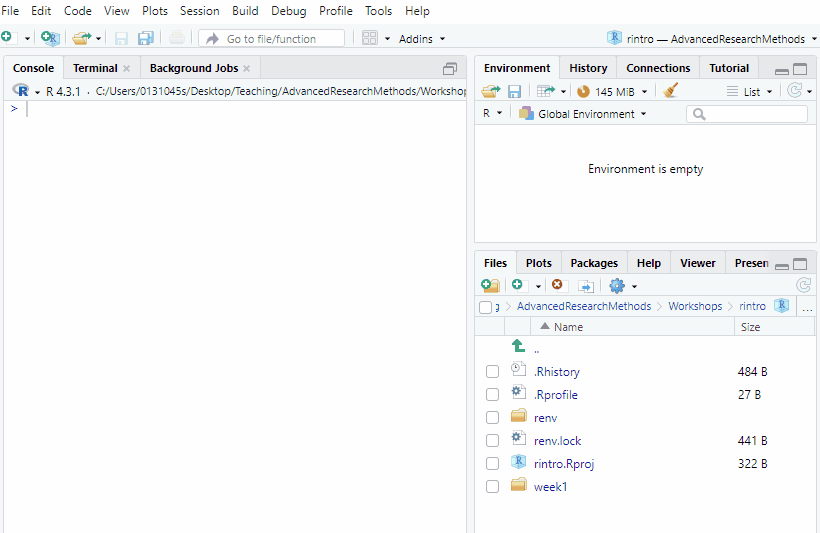
## Activity 1: Set up your Working Directory

One of the first steps in each of these workshops is setting up your **working directory**. If you remember from last week, a directory is simply another word for a folder. The working directory is the default folder where R will look to import files or save any files you export.

If you don’t set the working directory, R might not be able to locate the files you need (e.g., when importing a dataset) or you might not know where your exported files have been saved. Setting the working directory beforehand ensures that everything is in the right place and avoids these issues.

### Steps to Set Up Your Working Directory

1. Click:  
   **Session → Set Working Directory → Choose Directory**
2. Navigate to the folder you created for this course (this should be the same folder where you created week1).
3. Create a new folder called week2 inside this directory.
4. Select the week2 folder and click **Open**.



How to set your working directory

### Verify Your Working Directory

After setting the directory, check the output in the console to confirm that the file path inside the setwd() command is correct. It should look something like this:

> setwd("C:/Users/0131045s/Desktop/PS6183/rintro/week2")

You can always check your current working directory by typing in the following command in the console

> getwd()  
  
[1] "C:/Users/0131045s/Desktop/PS6183/rintro/week2"

## Activity 2: Console Commands

In R, we can write and execute code in two places: a **script** and **the console**. Both options enable you to run the same code with the same results, but there are important differences between the two:

* **Scripts** are ideal for saving, sharing, and reusing your code. You can think of them as your “notebook” for coding, where you can document and organise your work.
* **The console**, on the other hand, is more like a “scratchpad” for quick, one-off commands. Code entered in the console is not saved automatically and cannot be reused unless you copy and save it elsewhere.

For this reason, we’ll focus primarily on using **scripts** throughout this course. However, there are specific scenarios where using the console is more practical or efficient. When those situations arise, we’ll discuss why the console is the better choice.

For now, let’s take some time to practice using the console. This activity will help you feel comfortable working with it when needed.

For each of the following exercises, make sure to type out the following exercises in the console and press enter/return.

### Exercises

1. **Basic Calculations**  
   Perform the following calculations in the console:
   * Add 45 and 32.
   * Divide 120 by 8 (use **/** key to divide).
   * Multiply 7 by 15 (use **\*** to multiple).
   * Multiply 21 by 4, and then divide by 2.
2. **Calculate the Mean**  
   Imagine you want to calculate the average (mean) of these five numbers: 15, 22, 18, 30, and 3. Use the R console to find the correct result.

|  |
| --- |
| Tip |
| If your answer seems unusually high, remember that R follows the **BEDMAS** (Brackets, Exponents, Division/Multiplication, Addition/Subtraction) order of operations. |

1. **Fixing the + Operator Error**  
   Run the first line of code in the console. When you encounter the + operator, how can you fix it? Test your answer in the console.

(60 / 100  
   
+

|  |
| --- |
| Tip |
| The + operator in R indicates that the command is incomplete. Finish the command and press Enter again |

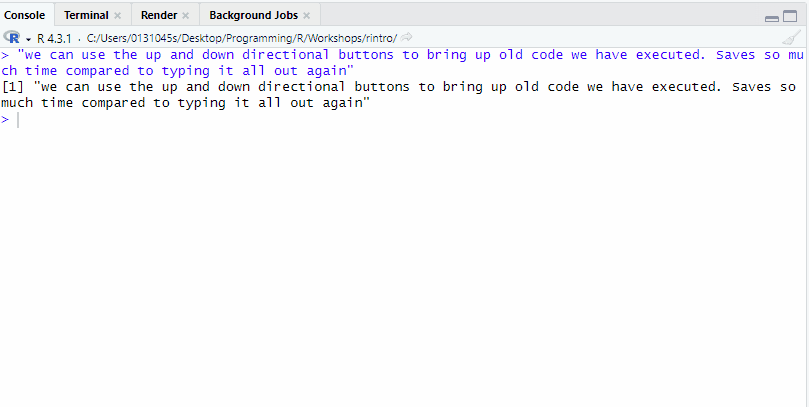
1. **Identifying and Fixing Errors**  
   Run the following code exactly as it appears. Take note of the error message. What went wrong? What do you think the correct code should be?

(20 = 30) / 34 - 21

Error in 20 = 30: invalid (do\_set) left-hand side to assignment

|  |
| --- |
| Tip |
| Look at the 20 = 30, and remember that R takes what we say literally. What would be wrong with this statement if we meant it literally? |

1. **Using the Up Arrow to Edit Code**  
   After running the code in **Exercise 4**, click anywhere in the console and press the **Up** arrow key on your keyboard to retrieve the last command. Fix the error in the code and run it again.
2. **Exploring Console Navigation**  
   Press the **Up** arrow key a few times in the console. What happens? Now press the **Down** arrow key. How does it behave? Try experimenting with this feature.



Use the up and down directional keys to bring up previous code in the console

## Activity 3: Set up your R Script

We’ve done enough work in the console for now! Let’s switch gears and create an R script that we’ll use for the rest of today’s activities.

### Creating an R Script in RStudio

Follow these steps to create a new R script:

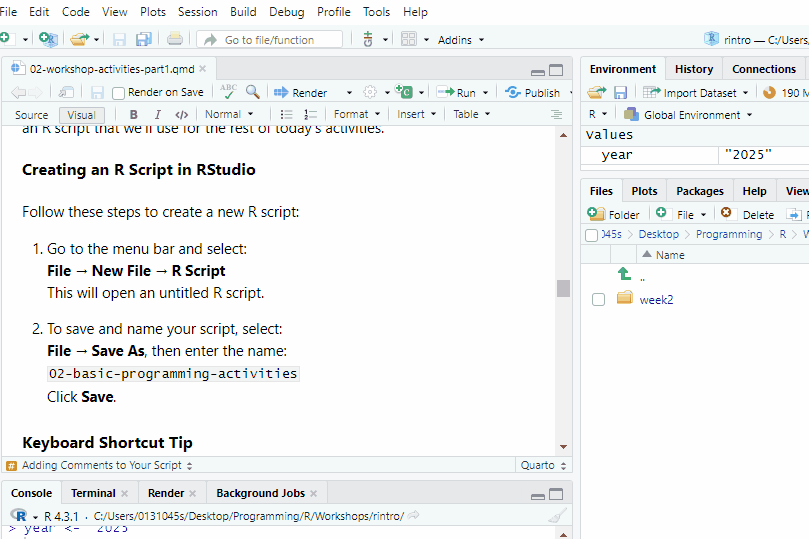
1. Go to the menu bar and select:  
   **File → New File → R Script**  
   This will open an untitled R script.
2. To save and name your script, select:  
   **File → Save As**, then enter the name:  
   02-basic-programming-activities  
   Click **Save**.

|  |
| --- |
| Faster Way to Create an R Script |
| Keyboard Shortcut Tip There’s a faster way to do this in RStudio on your laptop using your keyboard.   * **Create a new script (local version of RStudio)**:   + Windows: Press Control + Shift + N   + Mac: Press Command + Shift + N   If you are using PositCloud, then the keyboard commands to create a new script are slightly different   * **Create a new script (Posit Cloud)**:   + Windows: Press Control + Alt + Shift + N   + Mac: Press ⌘ + Shift + Option + N * **Save your script (works on both local version or Posit Cloud)**:   + Windows: Press Control + S   + Mac: Press Command + S |

### Add Comments to Your Script

To make your script organised and easy to understand, use comments (#) to include a title and author information at the top of your file.

# Title: Basic Programming Activities  
# Author: [Your Name]  
# Date: [Today's Date]



How to create an R script, save it, and add appropriate starting comments to it.

For the rest of the activities, make sure to write your code in the R script. Keep your code neat by using spacing between lines of code and commenting. I recommend to make a comment to highlight each new activity.

## Activity 4: Data Types

### Information on Data Types

|  |
| --- |
| What are the different data types? |
| R categorises information into **data types**. There are four main data types you’ll encounter:   1. **Character** (often called a “string”): Any text enclosed in quotation marks (either double or single). **Examples:** "ryan", "PS6183", 'introduction to R' 2. **Numeric** (or Double): Any real number, with or without decimal places. **Examples:** 22, 34.43, 54.00 3. **Integer**: Whole numbers without decimal places. To specify a number as an integer, add a capital L at the end. **Examples:** 78L, 55L, 21L 4. **Logical**: A value that is either TRUE or FALSE. This is **case-sensitive**, so only the following examples will work: TRUE, FALSE, T, F.   It’s essential to understand data types because certain operations are valid only for specific data types. For instance, mathematical operations can only be performed on **Numeric** or **Integer** data types. |

|  |
| --- |
| How can we check and transform data types? |
| We can check the data type of a piece of information by using the class function  class(78L)  [1] "integer"  Sometimes, we may need to convert one data type to another. R provides several functions to help with this:  as.numeric() #Converts to numeric as.character() # Converts to character as.integer() # Converts to integer as.logical() # Converts to logical |

### Exercises

In the R script you created, complete the following exercises.

|  |
| --- |
| Running code from an R Script |
| To run a piece of code from your script, you can:   1. **Using the Run Button** Highlight the code you want to run and click the **Run** button in the top-right corner of the script editor. 2. **Using Keyboard Shortcuts** Place your cursor on the line of code you want to run (or highlight multiple lines), then press the following keys simultaneously:    * **Windows**: Ctrl Enter    * **Mac**: Command Enter   Feel free to use whichever method is most comfortable for you!  Make sure to highlight the code before clicking Run  Make sure to highlight the code before clicking Run |

**Data Type Exercises**

1. **Guess the Data Type**  
   Look at each of the following pieces of code. Before running them, try to guess their data type. Then, use the class() function in R to check your answer.
   * "Hello World!"
   * 43
   * "42.34"
   * FALSE
   * 44.4
   * 72L
2. **Fix the Data Type Errors**  
   The following data types have been incorrectly entered into R. Use the appropriate conversion functions to correct them:
   * Convert "42.34" from **character** to **numeric**.
   * Convert "FALSE" from **character** to **logical**.
   * Convert 2024 from **numeric** to **character**.
   * Convert 1 from **integer** to **logical** (observe the result!).  
     **Bonus:** Convert 0 from **numeric** to **logical** and note what happens.

## Activity 5: Variables

### Information on Variables

|  |
| --- |
| What are variables? |
| Variables are labels for pieces of information we want to save and use later. To create a variable, we first specify the variable’s name, use the assignment operator (<-), specify the information that will be stored in that variable, and then run that line of code.  year <- "2024"  Once we have created a variable, we can type of that variable instead of its information.  print(year)  [1] "2024"  We can change (reassign) the piece of information that is stored to a variable.  year <- "2025"   print(year)  [1] "2025"  If we look in the environment pane and tab, we can see R storing and updated the information as we run our code.  Look at what happens in the environment pane (top right hand) corner when we assign and reassign our variable  Look at what happens in the environment pane (top right hand) corner when we assign and reassign our variable |

|  |
| --- |
| Why are variables useful? |
| Variables are really useful when we want perform operations across multiple pieces of information. For example, like calculating the total and mean of someones scores on Extraversion.  extra1 <- 1 #a participants score on our first extraversion item extra2 <- 2 extra3 <- 4 extra4 <- 2 extra5 <- 3 #a participants score on our fifth extraversion item  total\_extra <- extra1 + extra2 + extra3 + extra4 + extra5  mean\_extra <- total\_extra/5  print(total\_extra)  [1] 12  print(mean\_extra)  [1] 2.4 |

|  |
| --- |
| Rules for Naming Variables |
| Rules for Naming Variables There are strict and recommended rules for naming variables. Here is a summary of the strict ones (you will run into an error if you break any of these). For more details, see the textbook: [Conventions for Naming Variables](https://ryandonovan93.github.io/rintro/programming1.html#whats-in-a-name-conventions-for-naming-variables). **Strict Rules**  1. Variable names can include letters (A-Z, a-z), numbers (0-9), periods (.), and underscores (\_), but must **start with a letter or a period** (e.g., first\_name is valid; 1st\_name is not). 2. No spaces in variable names. Use underscores or periods instead (e.g., my\_name, my.name). 3. Variable names are **case-sensitive** (e.g., my\_name ≠ My\_name). 4. Avoid using **reserved words** in R, such as if, else, TRUE, or FALSE. |

### Exercises

|  |
| --- |
| **Keyboard Shortcut for the Assignment Operator <-** |
| There is a keyboard shortcut for writing the assignment operator (<-).  On **Windows**, press these two keys at the same time: Alt -  On **Mac**, press the following two keys at the same time: Option - |

1. **Create a Character Variable**
   * Create a variable named favourite\_colour and assign it your favourite colour.
   * What data type is this variable? Use class() to check.
2. **Create Numeric Variables**
   * Create two variables called num1 and num2. Assign them any two numbers.
   * Add num1 and num2 together and save the result in a new variable called sum\_result.

|  |
| --- |
| Error: object num1/num2 not found |
| If you are receiving this error, it is because you have not run the code that defines the variable. Make sure to highlight that code and press run, before adding num1 and num2 together. |

- Use `print()` to show the value of `sum\_result`.

1. **Convert Height**
   * Make a variable called height\_cm and set it to your height in centimetres (e.g., 175).
   * Create a second variable called height\_m and set it to your height in metres. To do this, divide height\_cm by 100.
   * Use print() to display the values of height\_cm and height\_m.

## Activity 6: Vectors

### Information on Vectors

|  |
| --- |
| What are vectors? How do we create a vector? |
| In data analysis, we rarely work with individual variables or data types. Instead, we usually work with collections of data organised in data structures.  The most basic and important data structure in R is the **vector**. Vectors are like a column or row of data. Creating a Vector To create a vector, assign it a variable name, use the assignment operator (<-), and combine multiple items using the c() function (short for “combine”):  rintro\_instructors <- c("Ryan", "Ciara", "Aoife") |

|  |
| --- |
| Key points about vectors |
| Key Points about Vectors The textbook provides more details on vectors, but for today’s session, here are the key points to remember:  **All Elements in a Vector Must Be the Same Data Type**  rintro\_names <- c("Gerry", "Aoife", "Liam", "Eva", "Helena", "Ciara", "Niamh", "Owen") #character vector   rintro\_marks <- c(69, 65, 80, 77, 86, 88, 92, 71) #numeric vector   rintro\_satisfied <- c(TRUE, TRUE, TRUE, FALSE, FALSE, TRUE, TRUE, FALSE) #true or false vector  If we include multiple data types, R will either throw an error or convert everything to a single data type.  rintro\_grades <- c(69, 65, 80, 77, 86, 88, "A1", 71)   print(rintro\_grades)  [1] "69" "65" "80" "77" "86" "88" "A1" "71"  In this example, all numbers are converted to characters because “A1” is a character.  **Vectors Can Contain a Single Element**  rintro\_week <- 2L  We can check the type of vector with the class() function  class(rintro\_week)  [1] "integer"  **Functions with Vectors**  You can use functions to calculate useful information about vectors:  mean(rintro\_marks) # Calculate the mean  [1] 78.5  sort(rintro\_marks) # Sort from lowest to highest  [1] 65 69 71 77 80 86 88 92  sort(rintro\_marks, decreasing = TRUE) # Sort from highest to lowest  [1] 92 88 86 80 77 71 69 65  summary(rintro\_satisfied) # Summarise logical values  Mode FALSE TRUE  logical 3 5 |

|  |
| --- |
| How do we index a vector? |
| **Vector Indexing**  Vectors use an **index** to keep track of the position of each element. The index is determined by the order in which the data was entered.    Use square brackets [] to extract specific elements:  rintro\_satisfied[1] # Extract the first element  [1] TRUE  rintro\_satisfied[3] # Extract the third element  [1] TRUE  rintro\_satisfied[8] # Extract the eighth element  [1] FALSE  rintro\_names[c(2, 4, 8)] # Extract the 2nd, 4th, and 8th elements  [1] "Aoife" "Eva" "Owen"  rintro\_names[c(1:4)] # Extract elements 1 through 4  [1] "Gerry" "Aoife" "Liam" "Eva" |

### Exercises

1. **Create Vectors of Different Data Types**
   * Create a **character vector** called friends with the names of 3 of your friends.
   * Create an **integer vector** called years with the number of years you’ve been friends (use 1 for friendships less than a year).
   * Create a **numeric vector** called extra with their extraversion scores (out of 5).
   * Create a **logical vector** called galway to indicate whether each friend lives in Galway (TRUE) or not (FALSE).
   * Use the class() function to check the data type of each vector.
2. **Index Specific Elements**  
   Extract the 2nd, 4th, and 6th elements from each of the following vectors. Copy, paste, and run the code before attempting this.

vect1 <- c("No, not this element", "Yes, this element", "No, not this element", "Yes, this element", "No, not this element", "Yes, this element")  
  
vect2 <- c(0, 1, 0, 1, 0, 1)  
  
vect3 <- c("FALSE", "TRUE", "FALSE", "TRUE", "FALSE", "TRUE")

1. **Extract and Save the Bottom 3 Marks**
   * How would you extract and save the **lowest 3 marks** from the rintro\_marks vector? Try it. Make sure to create the variable in your script first.
   * rintro\_marks <- c(69, 65, 80, 77, 86, 88, 92, 71)
   * **Hint**: Use the sort() function as shown in the examples.
   * **Bonus**: Calculate the mean of the bottom 3 marks (use mean() function).

## Activity 7: Dataframes

### Information on DataFrames

|  |
| --- |
| What are data frames? How do we create a data frame? |
| A **data frame** is a rectangular data structure made up of rows and columns, similar to a spreadsheet in Excel or a table in a Word document. In R, each column of a data frame is a vector, and all vectors must have the same length.  To create a data frame, we use the data.frame() function:  my\_df <- data.frame(  name = c("Alice", "Bob", "Charlie"), #a character vector  age = c(25L, 30L, 22L), #an integer vector  score = c(95.65, 88.12, 75.33) #a numeric vector )  my\_df  name age score 1 Alice 25 95.65 2 Bob 30 88.12 3 Charlie 22 75.33 |

|  |
| --- |
| Hold up. Why do use = instead of <- to create our column vectors? |
| The main reason is that we are creating these vectors inside of a function. Inside functions like data.frame, we need to use the = operator to create vectors instead of <-.  It’s hard to drill too deeply into this when we have not even covered functions yet. But just put it down to as a weird quirk of the R language! |

|  |
| --- |
| How do we extract/index information from Data Frames? |
| Extracting Information from Data Frames You can extract or subset data from a data frame in several ways: Selecting Columns  1. **Using $ notation** to extract a single column:   my\_df$name  [1] "Alice" "Bob" "Charlie"  **Using [] notation** to extract one or more columns, the syntax being **the dataframe[the rows we want, the columns we want]**.  my\_df[, "age"] #This selects all the rows for the age column  [1] 25 30 22  To extract multiple columns, use the c() function:  my\_df[, c("age", "score")]  age score 1 25 95.65 2 30 88.12 3 22 75.33 Selecting Rows You can access rows using indexing, specifying the row number you want to retrieve, following the syntax: **the dataframe[the rows we want, the columns we want]**.  To get the first row:  my\_df[1, ] #extracts the first row and the last column  name age score 1 Alice 25 95.65  To get specific rows, use the c() function:  my\_df[c(1, 3), ]  name age score 1 Alice 25 95.65 3 Charlie 22 75.33  To select a range of rows, use the : operator:  my\_df[2:4, ]  name age score 2 Bob 30 88.12 3 Charlie 22 75.33 NA <NA> NA NA Selecting Rows and Columns Together You can select specific rows and columns simultaneously using the syntax: **the dataframe[the rows we want, the columns we want]**.  my\_df[c(1,3), c("age", "score")]  age score 1 25 95.65 3 22 75.33 |

|  |
| --- |
| How do we add columns or rows to a data frame |
| Adding Columns to a Data Frame You can add a new column to an existing data frame by assigning values to it:  #existing\_df$NewColumn <- c(Value1, Value2, Value3) #syntax  my\_df$gender <- c("Female", "Non-binary", "Male")  print(my\_df)  name age score gender 1 Alice 25 95.65 Female 2 Bob 30 88.12 Non-binary 3 Charlie 22 75.33 Male Adding Rows to a Data Frame To add a new row, you first need to create a new data frame with the same columns as the original:  new\_row <- data.frame(name = "John", age = 30, score = 77.34, gender = "Male")  Then, use the rbind() function to combine the two data frames:  my\_df <- rbind(my\_df, new\_row)  my\_df  name age score gender 1 Alice 25 95.65 Female 2 Bob 30 88.12 Non-binary 3 Charlie 22 75.33 Male 4 John 30 77.34 Male |

|  |
| --- |
| Indexing does not change a data frame without variable assignment |
| Important Note Indexing does **not** modify the original data frame.  my\_df[c(1,3), c("age", "score")]  age score 1 25 95.65 3 22 75.33  print(my\_df)  name age score gender 1 Alice 25 95.65 Female 2 Bob 30 88.12 Non-binary 3 Charlie 22 75.33 Male 4 John 30 77.34 Male  To save changes, assign the result to a new variable:  my\_df2 <- my\_df[c(1,3), c("age", "score")]   print(my\_df2)  age score 1 25 95.65 3 22 75.33 |

### Exercises

1. **Creating a Data Frame**
   * Create a data frame called student\_data with the following columns:
     + name: Names of 3 students (as a character vector).
     + age: Ages of the students (as integers).
     + mark: Their grades (as numeric values).
   * Print the student\_data data frame.
2. **Extracting Data**
   * Using the student\_data data frame, complete the following tasks:
     + Extract the name column using $ notation.
     + Extract the mark column using [] notation.
     + Extract the names and marks of the first two students using [] notation and save this data frame as partial\_student\_data.
     + Extract the first row of the partial\_student\_data data frame.
3. **Adding a Column**
   * Add a new column called attendance to student\_data, with the values TRUE, FALSE, and TRUE to indicate whether each student attended the most recent class.
   * Print the updated student\_data data frame.
4. **Adding a Row**
   * Create a new row (call it new\_student) with the following details:
     + name: “Judith”
     + age: 31L
     + mark: 89.5
     + attendance: FALSE
   * Add this row to the student\_data data frame using rbind().
   * Display the updated data frame.

## Keyboard Shortcuts in RStudio

Here are some useful keyboard shortcuts in RStudio.

| **Action** | **Windows** | **Mac** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Create a new script | Ctrl + Shift + N | Cmd + Shift + N |
| Save the current script | Ctrl + S | Cmd + S |
| Run the current line or code | Ctrl + Enter | Cmd + Enter |
| Insert assignment operator <- | Alt + - | Option + - |
| Comment/Uncomment lines | Ctrl + Shift + C | Cmd + Shift + C |