

# Strings and regular expressions

## Week 5

AEM 2850 / 5850 : R for Business Analytics

Cornell Dyson

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Acknowledgements: R4DS (2e)

# Announcements

Welcome back -- I hope you had a nice February break!

Homework - Week 4 is due next Monday

Prelim 1 will be next Thursday, February 27 in class

- Will cover everything so far **including this week's material**
  - This includes the example from Tuesday, February 25
- We will provide more guidance via canvas
- Please contact me and SDS **as soon as possible** if you are eligible for testing accommodations and are not yet registered

Questions before we get started?

# Plan for today

Working with strings in R

Regular expressions

Working with regular expressions in R

# Working with strings in R

# Strings are nothing new

```
flights |>
  select(carrier, tailnum, origin, dest)
```

```
## # A tibble: 336,776 × 4
##   carrier tailnum origin dest
##   <chr>    <chr>    <chr> <chr>
## 1 UA      N14228   EWR   IAH
## 2 UA      N24211   LGA   IAH
## 3 AA      N619AA   JFK   MIA
## 4 B6      N804JB   JFK   BQN
## 5 DL      N668DN   LGA   ATL
## 6 UA      N39463   EWR   ORD
## 7 B6      N516JB   EWR   FLL
## 8 EV      N829AS   LGA   IAD
## 9 B6      N593JB   JFK   MCO
## 10 AA     N3ALAA   LGA   ORD
## # i 336,766 more rows
```

```
read_csv("homework-1-survey.csv") |>
  select(Concentration)
```

```
## # A tibble: 84 × 1
##   Concentration
##   <chr>
## 1 Economic Policy
## 2 Business analytics
## 3 Economic and Financial Policy
## 4 Public policy
## 5 Minor in Data Science
## 6 Finance
## 7 Finance
## 8 SBEE
## 9 Accounting
## 10 Business
## # i 74 more rows
```

# Strings in R

Strings are also referred to as "characters" (abbreviated `chr`)

Strings can be stored in many ways:

- Vectors
- **Data frame columns**
- Elements in a list

So far we have used them as we would any other data

**But now we'll learn to filter on, modify, or analyze "functions" of strings**

# The stringr package

`stringr` is loaded as part of the core tidyverse

All `stringr` functions have intuitive names that start with `str_`

We will cover a bunch of handy functions this week:

1. `str_length`
2. `str_to_upper` and `str_to_lower`
3. `str_c` and `str_glue`
4. `str_detect`
5. `str_count`
6. `str_replace`

See `vignette("stringr")` for more

# We'll use data from The Office

The **schrute** package contains transcripts of all episodes of **The Office** (US)

```
library(schrute)
theoffice # this data frame is an object from the schrute package
```

```
## # A tibble: 55,130 × 12
##   index season episode episode_name director      writer      character text
##   <int>  <int>   <int>   <chr>      <chr>      <chr>      <chr>   <chr>
## 1      1      1       1 Pilot      Ken Kwapis Ricky Gervais;S... Michael All ...
## 2      2      1       1 Pilot      Ken Kwapis Ricky Gervais;S... Jim      Oh, ...
## 3      3      1       1 Pilot      Ken Kwapis Ricky Gervais;S... Michael So y...
## 4      4      1       1 Pilot      Ken Kwapis Ricky Gervais;S... Jim      Actu...
## 5      5      1       1 Pilot      Ken Kwapis Ricky Gervais;S... Michael All ...
## 6      6      1       1 Pilot      Ken Kwapis Ricky Gervais;S... Michael Yes,...
## 7      7      1       1 Pilot      Ken Kwapis Ricky Gervais;S... Michael I've...
## 8      8      1       1 Pilot      Ken Kwapis Ricky Gervais;S... Pam      Well...
## 9      9      1       1 Pilot      Ken Kwapis Ricky Gervais;S... Michael If y...
## 10     10      1       1 Pilot      Ken Kwapis Ricky Gervais;S... Pam      What?
## # i 55,120 more rows
## # i 4 more variables: text_w_direction <chr>, imdb_rating <dbl>,
## #   total_votes <int>, air_date <chr>
```



# 1) str\_length()

`str_length` tells you the number of characters in a string

```
str_length("supercalifragilisticexpialidocious")
```

```
## [1] 34
```

```
theoffice |>  
  distinct(character) |>  
  slice_head(n = 5) |>  
  mutate(name_length = str_length(character))
```

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 2  
##   character name_length  
##   <chr>         <int>  
## 1 Michael           7  
## 2 Jim                3  
## 3 Pam                3  
## 4 Dwight            6  
## 5 Jan                3
```

## 2) `str_to_lower()` and `str_to_upper()`

`str_to_lower` converts to lower case

```
str_to_lower("I went to Cornell, you ever heard of it?")
```

```
## [1] "i went to cornell, you ever heard of it?"
```

`str_to_upper` converts to upper case

```
str_to_upper("I went to Cornell, you ever heard of it?")
```

```
## [1] "I WENT TO CORNELL, YOU EVER HEARD OF IT?"
```

Similar functionality for `str_to_title()` and `str_to_sentence()`

These functions are locale dependent (e.g., "en\_GB" vs "en\_US")

### 3) str\_c()

We have seen `c` combine arguments to make a **longer** vector or list:

```
abc <- c("a", "b", "c")  
c(abc, "s")
```

```
## [1] "a" "b" "c" "s"
```

```
c(abc, abc)
```

```
## [1] "a" "b" "c" "a" "b" "c"
```

By contrast, `str_c` combines arguments to make a **wider** character vector:

```
str_c(abc, "s")
```

```
## [1] "as" "bs" "cs"
```

```
str_c(abc, abc)
```

```
## [1] "aa" "bb" "cc"
```

We can use `str_c` within data frames to combine strings at scale

### 3) str\_c()

Here's an example of multiple columns in a data frame being combined into one:

```
theoffice |> slice_head(n = 1) |>  
  select(character, text)
```

```
## # A tibble: 1 × 2  
##   character text  
##   <chr>      <chr>  
## 1 Michael  All right Jim. Your quarterlies look very good. How are things at t...
```

```
theoffice |> slice_head(n = 1) |>  
  mutate(line = str_c(character, " said: ", text), .keep = "none") # mutate and keep only `line`
```

```
## # A tibble: 1 × 1  
##   line  
##   <chr>  
## 1 Michael said: All right Jim. Your quarterlies look very good. How are things ...
```

### 3) str\_c()

`str_c` will automatically recycle fixed arguments like " said: " that are shorter than `character` and `text`:

```
theoffice |> slice_head(n = 3) |>  
  mutate(line = str_c(character, " said: ", text), .keep = "none")
```

```
## # A tibble: 3 × 1  
##   line  
##   <chr>  
## 1 Michael said: All right Jim. Your quarterlies look very good. How are things ...  
## 2 Jim said: Oh, I told you. I couldn't close it. So...  
## 3 Michael said: So you've come to the master for guidance? Is this what you're ...
```

`str_c()` and `str_glue()` work well with `mutate()` because their output is the same length as their inputs

### 3) str\_glue()

`str_glue()` provides similar functionality, but different syntax:

```
theoffice |> slice_head(n = 3) |>  
  mutate(line = str_glue("{character} said: {text}"), .keep = "none") # note the different syntax
```

```
## # A tibble: 3 × 1  
##   line  
##   <glue>  
## 1 Michael said: All right Jim. Your quarterlies look very good. How are things ...  
## 2 Jim said: Oh, I told you. I couldn't close it. So...  
## 3 Michael said: So you've come to the master for guidance? Is this what you're ...
```

Items inside `{ }` are evaluated as if they are outside the quotes

This can be handy when combining many fixed and variable strings

# Regular expressions

# Regular expressions

What are regular expressions?

A concise, powerful way for describing patterns within strings

Regular expressions are a generic tool, not something specific to R

Let's use the names of some characters from The Office as examples:

```
names <- theoffice |> distinct(character) |> slice_head(n = 10) |> pull(character)
names
```

```
## [1] "Michael"      "Jim"           "Pam"           "Dwight"        "Jan"
## [6] "Michel"       "Todd Packer"  "Phyllis"       "Stanley"       "Oscar"
```



# Pattern basics

The simplest patterns consist of literal characters

```
names
```

```
## [1] "Michael"      "Jim"          "Pam"          "Dwight"       "Jan"
## [6] "Michel"       "Todd Packer"  "Phyllis"      "Stanley"      "Oscar"
```

`str_view` is a handy classroom utility for class to see how patterns match:

```
str_view(names, pattern = "J")
```

```
## [2] | <J>im
## [5] | <J>an
```

# Pattern basics

Literal pattern matches are case-sensitive by default

```
names
```

```
## [1] "Michael"      "Jim"          "Pam"          "Dwight"       "Jan"
## [6] "Michel"       "Todd Packer"  "Phyllis"      "Stanley"      "Oscar"
```

What do you think this will return?

```
str_view(names, pattern = "M")
```

```
## [1] | <M>ichael
## [6] | <M>ichel
```

What do you think this will return?

```
str_view(names, pattern = "m")
```

```
## [2] | Ji<m>
## [3] | Pa<m>
```

Note that these matches depend on **patterns**, not position

# Meta-characters

Punctuation characters like `.`, `+`, `*`, `[`, `]`, and `?` are **meta-characters** with special meanings

The most common one is `.`, which will match any character

What do you think these statements will return?

```
str_view(names, pattern = "J.m")
```

```
## [2] | <Jim>
```

```
str_view(names, pattern = "J.n")
```

```
## [5] | <Jan>
```

# Meta-characters

What do you think these statements will return?

```
str_view(names, pattern = "J..")
```

```
str_view(names, pattern = "J...")
```

```
## [2] | <Jim>  
## [5] | <Jan>
```

# Quantifiers

Quantifiers control how many times a pattern can match:

- **?** makes a pattern optional -- it matches 0 or 1 times
- **+** lets a pattern repeat -- it matches at least once
- **\*** lets a pattern be optional or repeat

What do you think this statement will return?

```
str_view(names, "M.*l") # match strings with M, then any number of any characters, then l
```

```
## [1] | <Michael>  
## [6] | <Michel>
```

# Character classes

`[]` lets you match a set of characters

```
str_view(names, "[aeiou]") # vowels
```

```
## [1] M<i>ch<a><e>l
## [2] J<i>m
## [3] P<a>m
## [4] Dw<i>ght
## [5] J<a>n
## [6] M<i>ch<e>l
## [7] T<o>dd P<a>ck<e>r
## [8] Phyll<i>s
## [9] St<a>nl<e>y
## [10] Osc<a>r
```

`^` inverts character class matches

```
str_view(names, "[^aeiou]") # NOT vowels
```

```
## [1] <M>i<c><h>ae<l>
## [2] <J>i<m>
## [3] <P>a<m>
## [4] <D><w>i<g><h><t>
## [5] <J>a<n>
## [6] <M>i<c><h>e<l>
## [7] <T>o<d><d>< ><P>a<c><k>e<r>
## [8] <P><h><y><l><l>i<s>
## [9] <S><t>a<n><l>e<y>
## [10] <O><s><c>a<r>
```

# Alternation

Last one! Hang in there!

Alternation, `|`, allows you to search for one or more alternative patterns

This should seem familiar...

What do you think these statements will return?

```
str_view(names, "J.m|P.m")
```

```
## [2] | <Jim>  
## [3] | <Pam>
```

```
str_view(names, "S.*|O.*")
```

```
## [9] | <Stanley>  
## [10] | <Oscar>
```

# More patterns

See [Chapter 15 of R4DS \(2e\)](#) for more on:

- **escaping**: matching meta-characters as if they were literal strings
- **anchors**: match the start or end of a string
- **character classes**: (continued)
- **quantifiers** (continued)
- **operator precedence**: parentheses, etc.
- **grouping**: back references, etc.



# Working with regular expressions in R

## 4) str\_detect()

`str_detect` can be used to match patterns and return a logical vector

```
first_4_characters
```

```
str_detect(first_4_characters, "Dwight")
```

```
## [1] "Michael" "Jim"      "Pam"      "Dwight"
```

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

What do you think these statements will return?

```
str_detect(first_4_characters, "a")
```

```
str_detect(first_4_characters, "[aeiou]")
```

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

```
## [1] TRUE TRUE TRUE TRUE
```

How could we fit this into our current workflow?

## 4) str\_detect()

`str_detect` is a powerful way to `filter` a data frame

```
theoffice |> select(season, episode, character, text) |>
  filter(str_detect(text,      # where to match a pattern
                  "sale")) # what pattern to match
```

```
## # A tibble: 370 × 4
##   season episode character text
##   <int>   <int>   <chr>   <chr>
## 1       1       2 Jim      This is my biggest sale of the year. They love me o...
## 2       1       2 Jim      Mr. Decker, we didn't lose your sale today, did we?...
## 3       1       3 Jim      That is a great offer. Thank you. I really think I ...
## 4       1       3 Jan      From sales?
## 5       1       4 Michael  Look, look, look. I talked to corporate, about prot...
## 6       1       5 Michael  All right, time, time out. Come on, sales, over her...
## 7       1       6 Jan      Alan and I have created an incentive program to inc...
## 8       1       6 Jan      We've created an incentive program to increase sale...
## 9       1       6 Jim      Plus you have so much more to talk to this girl abo...
## 10      1       6 Stanley  I thought that was the incentive prize for the top ...
## # i 360 more rows
```

## 4) str\_detect()

Literal pattern matches with `str_detect` are case-sensitive

```
theoffice |> select(season, episode, character, text) |>
  filter(str_detect(text,
    "Sale")) # sale and Sale produce different output
```

```
## # A tibble: 28 × 4
##   season episode character      text
##   <int>   <int> <chr>      <chr>
## 1       2     11 Michael    No, no. Salesmen and profit centers.
## 2       2     14 Michael    Old fashioned raid. Sales on Accounting. Y...
## 3       2     14 Michael and Dwight Ahhhh! Whoo hoo! Come on, come on, come on...
## 4       2     14 Michael    Oh, and I'm not? Why would you say that? B...
## 5       2     17 Jim        Dwight was the top salesman of the year at...
## 6       2     17 Michael    Speaker at the Sales Convention. Been ther...
## 7       2     17 Dwight    Saleswoman has a v*gln*.
## 8       2     17 Speaker    Next, I'd like to introduce the Dunder Mif...
## 9       2     17 Dwight    Salesman of Northeastern Pennsylvania, I a...
## 10      3      5 Angela    Sales take a long time.
## # i 18 more rows
```

## 4) str\_detect()

You could use multiple calls to `str_detect`, or use alternation:

```
theoffice |> select(season, episode, character, text) |>
  filter(str_detect(text,
    "sale|Sale")) # look for sale OR Sale
```

```
## # A tibble: 392 × 4
##   season episode character text
##   <int>   <int> <chr>    <chr>
## 1         1       2 Jim      This is my biggest sale of the year. They love me o...
## 2         1       2 Jim      Mr. Decker, we didn't lose your sale today, did we?...
## 3         1       3 Jim      That is a great offer. Thank you. I really think I ...
## 4         1       3 Jan      From sales?
## 5         1       4 Michael Look, look, look. I talked to corporate, about prot...
## 6         1       5 Michael All right, time, time out. Come on, sales, over her...
## 7         1       6 Jan      Alan and I have created an incentive program to inc...
## 8         1       6 Jan      We've created an incentive program to increase sale...
## 9         1       6 Jim      Plus you have so much more to talk to this girl abo...
## 10        1       6 Stanley I thought that was the incentive prize for the top ...
## # i 382 more rows
```

## 4) str\_detect()

You could consolidate this: regex parentheses are like in math

```
theoffice |> select(season, episode, character, text) |>
  filter(str_detect(text,
    "(s|S)ale")) # look for sale OR Sale
```

```
## # A tibble: 392 × 4
##   season episode character text
##   <int>   <int> <chr>    <chr>
## 1       1       2 Jim      This is my biggest sale of the year. They love me o...
## 2       1       2 Jim      Mr. Decker, we didn't lose your sale today, did we?...
## 3       1       3 Jim      That is a great offer. Thank you. I really think I ...
## 4       1       3 Jan      From sales?
## 5       1       4 Michael  Look, look, look. I talked to corporate, about prot...
## 6       1       5 Michael  All right, time, time out. Come on, sales, over her...
## 7       1       6 Jan      Alan and I have created an incentive program to inc...
## 8       1       6 Jan      We've created an incentive program to increase sale...
## 9       1       6 Jim      Plus you have so much more to talk to this girl abo...
## 10      1       6 Stanley  I thought that was the incentive prize for the top ...
## # i 382 more rows
```

## 4) str\_detect()

Or use `regex` to ignore all cases and control other pattern matching details

```
theoffice |> select(season, episode, character, text) |>
  filter(str_detect(text,
    regex("sale", ignore_case = TRUE))) # ignore all cases
```

```
## # A tibble: 393 × 4
##   season episode character text
##   <int>   <int> <chr>    <chr>
## 1       1       2 Jim      This is my biggest sale of the year. They love me o...
## 2       1       2 Jim      Mr. Decker, we didn't lose your sale today, did we?...
## 3       1       3 Jim      That is a great offer. Thank you. I really think I ...
## 4       1       3 Jan      From sales?
## 5       1       4 Michael  Look, look, look. I talked to corporate, about prot...
## 6       1       5 Michael  All right, time, time out. Come on, sales, over her...
## 7       1       6 Jan      Alan and I have created an incentive program to inc...
## 8       1       6 Jan      We've created an incentive program to increase sale...
## 9       1       6 Jim      Plus you have so much more to talk to this girl abo...
## 10      1       6 Stanley  I thought that was the incentive prize for the top ...
## # i 383 more rows
```

## 4) str\_detect()

When I say ignore all cases, I mean IGNORE ALL CASES!

```
theoffice |> select(season, episode, character, text) |>
  filter(str_detect(text,
                    regex("sale", ignore_case = TRUE))) |>
  filter(!str_detect(text, "(s|S)ale")) # find non-standard form(s)
```

```
## # A tibble: 1 × 4
##   season episode character text
##   <int>   <int> <chr>    <chr>
## 1       3       3 Dwight  I HAVE EXCELLENT SALES NUMBERS!
```



## 4) str\_detect()

`str_detect` can be combined with familiar functions to summarize data

```
theoffice |>
  filter(str_detect(text, regex("sale", ignore_case = TRUE))) |>
  count(character, sort = TRUE)
```

```
## # A tibble: 46 × 2
##   character      n
##   <chr>      <int>
## 1 Michael      91
## 2 Dwight       81
## 3 Jim          51
## 4 Andy         31
## 5 Pam          26
## 6 Ryan         10
## 7 Clark         8
## 8 Gabe          7
## 9 David         6
## 10 Angela        5
## # i 36 more rows
```

## 4) str\_detect()

`str_detect` can be combined with familiar functions to summarize data

```
theoffice |>
  filter(str_detect(text,
    regex("that's what she said", ignore_case = TRUE))) |>
  count(character, sort = TRUE)
```

```
## # A tibble: 8 × 2
##   character      n
##   <chr>      <int>
## 1 Michael      23
## 2 Dwight        3
## 3 Jim           2
## 4 Creed         1
## 5 David         1
## 6 Holly         1
## 7 Jan           1
## 8 Pam           1
```

## 4) str\_detect()

`str_detect` with regular expressions can be very powerful

```
theoffice |> select(character, text) |>  
  filter(str_detect(text, "assistant.*manager")) |>  
  slice_head(n = 10)
```

```
## # A tibble: 10 × 2  
##   character text  
##   <chr>      <chr>  
## 1 Dwight    I, but if there were, I'd be protected as assistant regional manag...  
## 2 Dwight    And that's why you have an assistant regional manager.  
## 3 Michael   No, I am the team manager. You can be assistant to the team manage...  
## 4 Dwight    Hey, Pam, I'm assistant regional manager, and I can take care of h...  
## 5 Michael   All right. Well then, you are now acting manager of Dunder Mifflin...  
## 6 Dwight    Uh,... my first sale, my promotion to assistant regional manager, ...  
## 7 Jim       Oh, that's because at first it was a made up position for Dwight, ...  
## 8 Charles   So you're the assistant to the regional manager?  
## 9 Darryl    Since Andy promoted me to assistant regional manager, I've been tr...  
## 10 Andy     You now, Darryl, this is textbook assistant regional manager stuff...
```

## 5) str\_count()

`str_count` can be used to count the number of matches in a string

```
theoffice |>
  distinct(character) |>
  slice_head(n = 5) |>
  mutate(
    name = str_to_lower(character), # another way to avoid case sensitivity
    m_s = str_count(name, "m"),
    i_s = str_count(name, "i")
  )
```

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 4
##   character name      m_s   i_s
##   <chr>      <chr>   <int> <int>
## 1 Michael  michael     1     1
## 2 Jim      jim        1     1
## 3 Pam      pam        1     0
## 4 Dwight   dwight     0     1
## 5 Jan      jan        0     0
```

## 5) str\_count() with regex

```
theoffice |>
  distinct(character) |>
  slice_head(n = 5) |>
  mutate(
    name = str_to_lower(character),
    vowels = str_count(name, "[aeiou]"), # count matches of ANY of these characters
    consonants = str_count(name, "[^aeiou]") # count matches of everything EXCEPT these characters
  )
```

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 4
##   character name      vowels consonants
##   <chr>      <chr>    <int>      <int>
## 1 Michael  michael      3          4
## 2 Jim      jim         1          2
## 3 Pam      pam         1          2
## 4 Dwight   dwight      1          5
## 5 Jan      jan         1          2
```

Reminder: `[]` lets you match a set of characters; `^` inverts character class matches

## 6) str\_replace()

As the name suggests, `str_replace` can be used to modify patterns in strings

```
names
```

```
## [1] "Michael" "Jim" "Pam" "Dwight" "Jan"
## [6] "Michel" "Todd Packer" "Phyllis" "Stanley" "Oscar"
```

```
str_replace(names, "Dw", "Duhw") # jim's office pronunciation guide
```

```
## [1] "Michael" "Jim" "Pam" "Duhwright" "Jan"
## [6] "Michel" "Todd Packer" "Phyllis" "Stanley" "Oscar"
```

## 6) str\_replace()

`str_replace` replaces the first match of a pattern

```
str_replace("Phyllis", "l", "!")
```

```
## [1] "Phy!lis"
```

`str_replace_all` replaces all matches of a pattern

```
str_replace_all("Phyllis", "l", "!")
```

```
## [1] "Phy!!is"
```

These pair naturally with `mutate` just like `str_c`, `str_glue`, and `str_count`