Lesson notes | Advanced pivoting

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Intro
Learning Objectives
Packages
Datasets
Wide to long
Understanding names sep and ".value"
Value type before the separator
A non-time-series example
Escaping the dot separator
What to do when you don't have a neat separator?
Long to wide
Wrap Up!

Intro

You know basic pivoting operations from long format datasets to wide format datasets and vice versa. However, as is often the case, basic manipulations are sometimes not enough for the wrangling you need to do. Let's now see the next level. Let's go!

Learning Objectives

- 1. Master complex pivoting from wide to long and long to wide
- 2. Know how to use separators as a pivoting tool

Packages

```
# Load packages
if(!require(pacman)) install.packages("pacman")
pacman::p_load(tidyverse, outbreaks, janitor, rio, here, knitr)
```

Datasets

We will introduce these datasets as we go along but here is an overview:

 Survey data from India on how much money patients spent on tuberculosis treatment

- Biomarker data from an enteropathogen study in Zambia
- A diet survey from Vietnam

Wide to long

Sometimes you have multiple kinds of wide data in the same table. Consider this artificial example of heights and weights for children over two years:

```
child_stats <-
  tibble::tribble(
    ~child, ~year1_height, ~year2_height, ~year1_weight, ~year2_weight,
    "A", "80cm", "85cm", "5kg", "10kg",
    "B", "85cm", "90cm", "7kg", "12kg",
    "C", "90cm", "100cm", "6kg", "14kg"

child_stats</pre>
```

```
## # A tibble: 3 × 5
## child year1_height year2_height year1_weight year2_weight
## <chr> <chr> <chr> ## 1 A 80cm 85cm 5kg 10kg
## 2 B 85cm 90cm 7kg 12kg
## 3 C 90cm 100cm 6kg 14kg
```

If you pivot all the measurement columns, you'll get overly long data:

```
child_stats %>%
  pivot_longer(2:5)
```

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 3
## child name value
## < chr> <chr> <chr> ## 1 A year1_height 80cm
## 2 A year2_height 85cm
## 3 A year1_weight 5kg
## 4 A year2_weight 10kg
## 5 B year1_height 85cm
```

This is not what you (usually) want, because now you have two different kinds of data in the same column—weight and height.

To get the right shape, you'll need to use the names_sep argument and the ".value" identifier:

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 4
## child period height weight
## <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr> ## 1 A year1 80cm 5kg
## 2 A year2 85cm 10kg
## 3 B year1 85cm 7kg
## 4 B year2 90cm 12kg
## 5 C year1 90cm 6kg
```

Now we have one row for each child-period, an appropriately long format!

What the code above is doing may not be clear, but you should already be able to answer the practice question below by pattern matching with our example. After the practice question, we will explain the <code>names_sep</code> argument and the ".value" identifier in more depth.

Consider this other artificial data set:



```
## # A tibble: 3 × 5
## adult year1_BMI year2_BMI year1_HIV year2_HIV
## <chr> <dbl> <dbl> <chr> <chr> ## 1 A 25 30 Positive Positive
## 2 B 34 28 Negative Positive
## 3 C 19 17 Negative Negative
```

Pivot the data into a long format to get the following structure:

adult year BMI HIV



```
# Q_adult_long <-
# adult_stats %>%
# pivot_longer(______)
```

The child stats example above has numbers stored as characters [...]

As you saw in the previous lesson, you can easily extract the numbers from the output long data frame in our example using the parse number() function from readr:



```
## # A tibble: 5 × 4
  child period height weight
    <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr>
##
         year1 80cm
                     5kg
## 1 A
         year2 85cm
## 2 A
                      10kg
## 3 B
                85cm
         year1
                     7kg
## 4 B
         year2 90cm 12kg
## 5 C
         year1 90cm 6kg
```

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 4
    child period height weight
    <chr> <chr>
                 <dbl>
## 1 A
                     80
          year1
## 2 A
          year2
                     85
                            10
                     85
## 3 B
          year1
                     90
                            12
## 4 B
          year2
## 5 C
                     90
          vear1
```

Understanding names sep and ".value"

Now let's break down the pivot longer () call we saw above a bit more:

```
child_stats
```

Notice that the column names in the original child_stats data frame (year1_height, year2 height and so on) are made of three parts:

- the period being referenced: e.g. "year1"
- an underscore separator, "_";
- and the type of value recorded "height" or "weight"

We can make a table with these parts:

column_name	period	separator	".value"
year1_height	year1	_	height
year2_height	year2	_	height
year1_weight	year1	_	weight
year2_weight	year2	_	weight

Based on that table, it should now be easier to understand the $names_sep$ and $names_to$ arguments that we supplied to $pivot_longer()$:

```
names_sep = "_":
```

This is the separator between the period indicator (year) and the values (year and weight) recorded.

If we have a different separator, this argument would change. For example, if the separator were an empty space, " ", you would have <code>names_sep = " "</code>, as seen in the example below:

A tibble: 5 × 4

Next, the names_to argument indicates how the data should be reshaped. We passed a vector of two character strings, "period" and the ".value" to this argument. Let's consider each in turn:

The "period" string indicated that we want to move the data from each year (or period) into a separate row Note that there is nothing special about the word "period" used here; we could change this to any other string. So instead of "period", you could have written "time" or "year_of_measurement" or anything else:

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 4
## child year_of_measurement height weight
## <chr> <chr> <chr> ## 1 A year1 80cm 5kg
## 2 A year2 85cm 10kg
## 3 B year1 85cm 7kg
## 4 B year2 90cm 12kg
## 5 C year1 90cm 6kg
```

Now, **the ".value" placeholder** is a special indicator, that tells pivot_longer() to make a separate column for every distinct value that appears after the separator. In our example, these distinct values are "height" and "weight".

The ".value" string cannot be arbitrarily replaced. For example, this won't work:

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 4
## child period values value
## cchr> <chr> <chr> <chr> ## 1 A year1 height 80cm
## 2 A year2 height 85cm
## 3 A year1 weight 5kg
## 4 A year2 weight 10kg
## 5 B year1 height 85cm
```

To restate the point, the ".value" placeholder is tells pivot_longer() that we want to separate out the "height" and "weight" values into separate columns, because there are the two value types that occur after the "_" separator in the column names.

This means that if you had a wide dataset with three types of values, you would get separated-out columns, one for each value type. For example, consider the mock dataset below which shows children's records, at two time points, for the following variables:

- age in months,
- body fat %
- bmi

```
## # A tibble: 2 × 7
## child t1_age t2_age t1_fat t2_fat t1_bmi t2_bmi
## <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr> 13% 15% 14 15
## 2 b 7mths 9mths 15% 17% 16 18
```

Here, in the column names there are three value types occurring after the "_" separator: age, fat and bmi; the ".value" string tells pivot_longer() to make a new column for each value type:

```
## # A tibble: 4 × 5
## child time age fat bmi
## <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr> 13% 14
## 2 a t1 5mths 13% 14
## 2 a t2 8mths 15% 15
## 3 b t1 7mths 15% 16
## 4 b t2 9mths 17% 18
```

A pediatrician records the following information for a set of children over two years:



- head circumference:
- · neck circumference; and
- hip circumference

all in centimeters.

The output table resembles the below:

```
growth stats <-
 tibble::tribble(
  ~child,~yr1 head,~yr2 head,~yr1 neck,~yr2 neck,~yr1 hip,~yr2
           45, 48,
                            23, 24,
     52,
     "b",
            48, 50,
                            24, 26,
                                           52.
     52,
     "C",
             50,
                   52,
                            24,
                                    27,
                                           53,
     54
growth stats
```



```
## # A tibble: 3 × 7
## child yrl head yr2 head yrl neck yr2 neck yrl hip yr2 hip
## <chr> <dbl> <dbl> <dbl> <dbl> <dbl> <dbl>
               48 23
                           24 51
## 1 a
          45
                 50
## 2 b
           48
                       24
                              26
                                    52
                                         52
                 52
## 3 c
           50
                        24
                              27
                                   53
                                         54
```

Pivot the data into a long format to get the following structure:

child year head neck hip

Value type *before* the separator

In all the example we have used so far, the column names were constructed such that value type came after the separator (Recall our table:

column_name	period	separator	".value"
year1_height	year1	_	height
year2_height	year2	_	height
year1_weight	year1	_	weight
year2_weight	year2	_	weight

)

But of course, the column names could be constructed differently, with the value types coming before the separator, as in this example:

```
## # A tibble: 3 × 5
## child height year1 height year2 weight year1 weight year2
## <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr>
                                     10kg
## 1 A 80cm
                85cm
                           5kg
## 2 B
       85cm
                 90cm
                           7kg
                                     12kg
## 3 C
      90cm
                100cm
                           6kg
                                     14kg
```

Here, the value types (height and weight) come before the "_" separator.

How can our $pivot_longer()$ command accommodate this? Simple! Just swap the order of the vector given to the names to argument:

```
So instead of names_to = c("time", ".value"), you would have names_to = c(".value", "time"):
```

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 4
## child time height weight
## < <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr> <chr> ## 1 A year1 80cm 5kg
## 2 A year2 85cm 10kg
## 3 B year1 85cm 7kg
## 4 B year2 90cm 12kg
## 5 C year1 90cm 6kg
```

And that's it!



Consider the following data set from Zambia about enteropathogens and their biomarkers.

```
## Rows: 297 Columns: 7
## — Column specification

## Delimiter: ","
## dbl (7): ID, LPS_1, LPS_2, LBP_1, LBP_2, IFABP_1, IFABP_2
##
## i Use `spec()` to retrieve the full column specification
for this data.
## i Specify the column types or set `show_col_types = FALSE`
to quiet this message.
```

```
enteropathogens_zambia_wide
```

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 7

## ID LPS_1 LPS_2 LBP_1 LBP_2 IFABP_1 IFABP_2

## <a href="https://doi.org/db1">db1</a> <a href="https://db1">db1</a> <a href="https://db1">https://db1">db1</a> <a href="https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">https://db1">http
```



This data frame has the following columns:

- LPS_1 and LPS_2: lipopolysaccharide levels, measured by Pyrochrome LAL, in EU/mL
- LBP_1 and LBP_2: LPS binding protein levels, in pg/mL
- IFABP_1 and IFAPB_2: intestinal-type fatty acid binding protein levels, in pg/mL

Pivot the dataset so that it resembles the following structure

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 5

## ID sample_count LPS LBP IFABP

PRACTICE ## <dbl> <dbl> <dbl> <dbl> 
## 1 1002 1 222. 38414. 1294.

## 2 1002 2 390. 6840. 610.

## 3 1003 1 181. 26888. 22.5

## 4 1003 2 NA NA NA

## 5 1004 1 257. 49183. 0
```

A non-time-series example

So far we have been using person-period (time series) datasets to illustrate the idea of complex pivots with multiple value types.

But as we have mentioned, not all reshape-requiring datasets are time series data. Let's see a quick non-time-series example [...]

You might measure the height (cm) and weight (kg) of a series of parental couples in a table like this:

```
family stats <-</pre>
 tibble::tribble(
 ~couple, ~father height, ~father weight, ~mother height, ~mother weight,
          180, 80, 160,
     "a",
    "b",
                                            150,
                 185,
                               90,
                                                           76,
    "c",
                 182,
                               93,
                                            143,
                                                           78
 )
family stats
```

```
## # A tibble: 3 × 5
  couple father height father weight mother height
## <chr> <dbl> <dbl> <dbl>
## 1 a
                180
                            80
                                       160
                 185
                             90
## 2 b
                                       150
                 182
## 3 c
                                       143
                             93
## # ... with 1 more variable: mother weight <dbl>
```

Here we have two different types of values (weight and height) for each person in the couple.

To pivot this to one-row per person, we'll again need the names_sep and names_to arguments:

The separator is an underscore, "_", so we used names_sep = "_" and because the value types come after the separator, the ".value" identifier was placed second in the names_to argument.

Escaping the dot separator

A special example may crop up when you try to pivot a dataset where the separator is a period.

There we used the string "\." to indicate a dot "." because the "." is a special character in R, and sometimes needs to be escaped



Consider again the adult_stats data you saw above. Now the column names have been changed slightly.

```
adult stats dot sep <-
 tibble::tribble(
   ~adult, ~`BMI.year1`, ~`BMI.year2`, ~`HIV.year1`,
       ~`HIV.year2`,
      "A",
                      25,
                                    30, "Positive",
       "Positive",
      "B",
                     34,
                                    28, "Negative",
       "Positive",
      "C",
                     19,
                                   17,
                                         "Negative",
       "Negative"
adult stats dot sep
```



```
## # A tibble: 3 × 5
## adult BMI.year1 BMI.year2 HIV.year1 HIV.year2
## <chr> <dbl> <dbl> <chr> <chr> ## 1 A 25 30 Positive Positive
## 2 B 34 28 Negative Positive
## 3 C 19 17 Negative Negative
```

Again, pivot the data into a long format to get the following structure:

adult year BMI HIV

What to do when you don't have a neat separator?

Sometimes you do not have a neat separator.

Consider this survey data from India that looked at how much money patients spent on tuberculosis treatment:

```
## Rows: 880 Columns: 22
## — Column specification

## Delimiter: ","

## chr (10): Sex, Education, Employment, Alcohol, Smoking, Form of TB, Chext
Xray, firs...

## dbl (12): id, Age, WtinKgs, HtinCms, bmi, Diabetes, first visit cost,
second visit c...

##

## i Use `spec()` to retrieve the full column specification for this data.

## i Specify the column types or set `show_col_types = FALSE` to quiet this
message.
```

tb_visits

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 7
     id first visit location first visit cost
##
    <dbl> <chr>
                                            <dbl>
## 1 100202 GH
## 2 100396 Pvt. docto
                                             1500
## 3 100590 Pvt. docto
                                             2000
## 4 100687 Pvt. hospi
                                            20000
## 5 100784 Pvt. docto
                                             1000
## # ... with 4 more variables: second visit location <chr>,
## # second visit cost <dbl>, third visit location <chr>, ...
```

It does not have a neat separator between the time indicators (first, second, third) and the value type (cost, location). That is, rather than something like "firstvisit_location", we have instead "first_visit_location", so the underscore is used for two purposes. For this reason, if you try our usual pivot strategy, you will get an error:

The most direct way to reshape this dataset successfully would be to use special "regex" (string manipulation), but you likely have not learned this yet!

Run `rlang::last_error()` to see where the error occurred.

So for now, the solution we recommend is to manually rename your columns to insert a clear separator, "__":

```
tb_visits_renamed <-
   tb_visits %>%
   rename(first__visit_location = first_visit_location,
        first__visit_cost = first_visit_cost,
        second__visit_location = second_visit_location,
        second__visit_cost = second_visit_cost,
        third__visit_location = third_visit_location,
        third__visit_cost = third_visit_cost)

tb_visits_renamed
```

Now we can try the pivot:

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 4
    id visit_count visit_location visit_cost
    <dbl> <chr>
##
                 <chr>
                                         <dbl>
                      GH
## 1 100202 first
## 2 100202 second
                     <NA>
                                              0
                     <NA>
                                              0
## 3 100202 third
## 4 100396 first Pvt. docto
## 5 100396 second Pvt. clini
                                          1500
                                           1000
```

Now let's polish the data frame:

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 4
## id visit count visit location visit cost
## <dbl> <dbl> <chr>
                                     <dh1>
## 1 100202
                1 GH
## 2 100396
                  1 Pvt. docto
                                      1500
## 3 100396
                 2 Pvt. clini
                                      1000
## 4 100396
                  3 Pvt. hospi
                                      2500
## 5 100590
                 1 Pvt. docto
                                      2000
```

Above, we first remove the entries where we do not have the visit location information (i.e. we filter out the rows where the visit location variable is set to ""). We then convert to numeric values the visit count variable, where the strings "first" to "third" are converted to numerical entries 1 to 3. Finally, we ensure the variable of visit cost is numeric using mutate() and the helper function as numeric().

We will use a survey data about diet from Vietnam. Women in Hanoi were interviewed about their food shopping, and this was used to create nutrition profiles for each women. Here we will use a subset of this data for 61 households who came for 2 visits, recording:



- enerc_kcal_w_1: the consumed energy from ingredient/food (Kcal) during the first visit (with 2 for the second visit)
- dry_w_1: the consumed dry from ingredient/food (g) during the first visit (with _2 for the second visit)
- water_w_1: the consumed water from ingredient/food (g) during the first visit (with 2 for the second visit)
- fat_w_1: the consumed Lipid from ingredient/food (g) during the first visit (with 2 for the second visit)

```
## Rows: 61 Columns: 9
## — Column specification

## Delimiter: ","
## dbl (9): household_id, enerc_kcal_w_1, enerc_kcal_w_2,
dry_w_1, dry_w_2, water_w_1, ...
##
## i Use `spec()` to retrieve the full column specification
for this data.
## i Specify the column types or set `show_col_types = FALSE`
to quiet this message.
```

diet diversity vietnam wide



```
## # A tibble: 5 × 9
## household id enerc kcal w 1 enerc kcal w 2 dry w 1
dry w 2
##
            <dbl>
                           <dbl>
                                           <dbl>
<dbl>
                                          1386.
## 1
              348
                           2268.
                                                    548.
281.
                                          1240.
## 2
              354
                           2775.
                                                    600.
284.
## 3
               53
                           3104.
                                          2075.
                                                    646.
451.
               18
                           2802.
                                          2146.
                                                    620.
807.
## 5
              211
                           1298.
                                          1191.
                                                    269.
288.
## # ... with 4 more variables: water w 1 <dbl>,
## # water w 2 <dbl>, fat w 1 <dbl>, fat w 2 <dbl>
```

You should first distinguish if we have a neat operator or not. Based on this, rename your columns if necessary. Then bring the different visit records (1 and 2) into a sole column for energy, fat weight, water weight and dry weight. In other words, pivot the dataset into long format.

```
# Q_diet_diversity_vietnam_long <-
# diet_diversity_vietnam_wide %>%
# pivot_long(_____)
```

Long to wide

We just saw how to do some complex operations wide to long, which we saw in the previous lesson is essential for plotting and wrangling. Let's see the opposite transformation.

It could be useful to put long to wide to do different transformations, filters, and processing NAs. In this format, your measurements / collected data become the columns of the data set.

Let's take the Zambia enteropathogen data, and this time, let's take the original! Indeed, what you were handling before was a dataset **prepared for you**, in a wide format. **The original dataset is long** and we will now see the data preparation I did beforehand, behind the scenes. You're almost becoming the teacher of this lesson;)

```
enteropathogens_zambia_long <-
     read_csv(here("data/enteropathogens_zambia_long.csv"))</pre>
```

```
## Rows: 417 Columns: 5
## — Column specification

## Delimiter: ","
## dbl (5): ID, group, LPS, LBP, IFABP
##
## i Use `spec()` to retrieve the full column specification for this data.
## i Specify the column types or set `show_col_types = FALSE` to quiet this message.
```

```
enteropathogens_zambia_long
```

This is how we convert it from long to wide:

```
enteropathogens_zambia_wide <-
  enteropathogens_zambia_long %>%
  pivot_wider(
   names_from = group,
   values_from = c(LPS, LBP, IFABP)
)
enteropathogens_zambia_wide
```

You can see that the values of the variable group (1 or 2) are added to the values' names (LPS, LBP, IFABP) to create the new columns representing different group data: for example, LPS 1 and LPS 2.

We are considering this "advanced" pivoting because we are pivoting wider several variables at the same time, but as you can see, the syntax is quite simple—the same arguments are used as we did with the simpler pivots in the previous lesson—names_from and values from.

Let's see another example, using the diet survey data from Vietnam that you manipulated previously:

```
## Rows: 122 Columns: 6
## — Column specification

## Delimiter: ","
## dbl (6): visit_number, household_id, enerc_kcal_w, dry_w, water_w, fat_w
##
## i Use `spec()` to retrieve the full column specification for this data.
## i Specify the column types or set `show_col_types = FALSE` to quiet this message.
```

```
diet_diversity_vietnam_long
```

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 6
## visit_number household_id enerc_kcal_w dry_w water_w fat_w
```

```
<dbl>
##
        <dbl>
                             <dbl> <dbl> <dbl> <dbl> <
## 1
                    348
                             2268. 548. 4219. 78.4
          1
## 2
                             2775. 600. 2376. 115.
           1
                    354
                             3104. 646. 2808. 127.
## 3
           1
                     53
## 4
           1
                     18
                             2802. 620. 3457. 87.4
## 5
           1
                     211
                             1298. 269. 2584. 47.8
```

Here we will use the $visit_number$ variable to create new variable for energy, water, fat and dry content of foods recorded at different visits:

```
diet_diversity_vietnam_wide <-
   diet_diversity_vietnam_long %>%
   pivot_wider(
    names_from = visit_number,
    values_from = c(enerc_kcal_w, dry_w, water_w, fat_w)
)

diet_diversity_vietnam_wide
```

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 9
## household id enerc kcal w 1 enerc kcal w 2 dry w 1 dry w 2
   ##
## 1
         348
                   2268.
                              1386.
                                     548.
                                           281.
                               1240. 600.
## 2
                   2775.
         354
                                           284.
                                           451.
## 3
          53
                   3104.
                               2075. 646.
          18
## 4
                   2802.
                               2146. 620. 807.
## 5
         211
                   1298.
                              1191.
                                     269.
                                           288.
## # ... with 4 more variables: water_w_1 <dbl>,
## # water w 2 <dbl>, fat w 1 <dbl>, fat w 2 <dbl>
```

You can see that the values of the variable <code>visit_number</code> (1 or 2) are added to the values' names (<code>energy_kcal_w</code>, <code>dry_w</code>, <code>fat_w</code>, <code>water_w</code>) to create the new columns representing different group data: for example, <code>water_w_1</code> and <code>water_w_2</code>. We have pivoted to wide format all of these variables at the same time. Now each weight measure per visit is represented as a single variable (i.e. column) in the dataset.

With this format, it is easy to sum together the energy intake per household for example:

```
diet_diversity_vietnam_wide %>%
  select(household_id, enerc_kcal_w_1, enerc_kcal_w_2) %>%
  mutate(total_energy_kcal = enerc_kcal_w_1 + enerc_kcal_w_2) %>%
  arrange(household_id)
```

```
## # A tibble: 5 \times 4
##
  household_id enerc_kcal_w_1 enerc_kcal_w_2
       ##
## 1
          14
                   1040.
## 2
          17
                   2100.
                              1286.
                   2802.
## 3
          18
                               2146.
## 4
           22
                   3187.
                               1582.
```

However, you could get something similar in the long format:

```
diet_diversity_vietnam_long %>%
  group_by(household_id) %>%
  summarize(total_energy = sum(enerc_kcal_w))
```

```
## # A tibble: 5 × 2
## household id total energy
          <dbl>
##
                       <dbl>
## 1
             14
                        2704.
## 2
             17
                       3386.
## 3
             18
                       4948.
## 4
              22
                        4769.
## 5
              24
                        4385.
```



Take tb_visits_renamed dataset that we manipulated above and pivot it back to its wide format.

```
# Q_tb_visit_wide <-
# tb_visits_renamed %>%
# pivot_wider(_____)
```

Wrap Up!

You data wrangling skills have just been enhanced with advanced pivoting. This skill will often prove essential when handling real world data. I have no doubt you will soon put it into practice. It is also essential, as we have seen, for plotting. So I hope pivoting will be of use not only for your wrangling, but also for your plotting tasks.

Contributors

The following team members contributed to this lesson:



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References