

Data and Donuts: Data Visualization in R using ggplot2

Slide 1: Hi, and welcome to Data and Donuts. I'm Tobin Magle, the data management specialist at the Morgan Library at Colorado State University. Today we're going to be covering data visualization in R using ggplot2

Slide 2: To put this in the context of the research cycle, ggplot2 is useful for preliminary data analysis and producing publication quality graphs.

Slide 3: In brief, we'll

1. Go over the basic elements of ggplot graphs
2. Identify modifications you can apply to these graphs
3. Learn how to create and apply themes to your graphs
4. And export plots

Slide 4: for these exercises, we're assuming that you have a basic working knowledge of R and R studio. You'll need to

- Install both **R and R Studio**. See the setup instructions from Data Carpentry Linked on this slide if you need help.
- Download and unzip the quickstart files from the link on the slide. This file provides a premade working directory and file structure for this lesson.
- If you want to know how to set up a directory for yourself or are unfamiliar with R and R studio, see the Basic data analysis in R lesson linked on this slide.

Slide 5: The data set that we'll be working with contains data about various characteristics of small animals from an ecological study.

- Each row is data about an individual observed animal.
- Each column is one variable that describes each animal, like species, sex and weight.

Slide 6: These data will be loaded into a data frame using the **read.csv** function. If you're not familiar with read.csv, please go back and see the functions section of the R basics video for more information.

Demo 1: Setup

- Open R Studio project via rproj file:
 - Show data in the data folder
 - Show script
- Load ggplot2 package
- Load data using read.csv

Slide 7: Once the data are loaded, we'll be using the **ggplot2** package to plot these data. All ggplots contain 3 basic elements:

1. **Data** in the form of a data frame
2. **Aesthetics** that determine how the plot looks and

3. **Geoms**, which specify how the data should be plotted. For example, will the data be represented by points, lines, bars, etc.

Slide 8: The ggplot2 package contains a set of functions to implement these concepts:

1. The **ggplot()** function initializes the ggplot object.
2. The **aes()** function draws the axes and other visual features. It used as an argument to the ggplot function
3. The set of geom functions like **geom_points()** draws the data on the plot
4. Finally, the **+** operator allows you to add components to the plot in a modular fashion.

Slide 9: The simplest ggplot uses all of the described function to make a plot. The example code on this slide

1. Specifies that we're plotting data from the surveys_complete dataframe
2. Weight is plotted on the x axis, hindfoot length will be plotted on the y axis
3. The data will be represented by points.

Let's break down these pieces of code to see what they do.

Slide 10: First, let's look at the ggplot function. If data is the only specified argument, the function will still initialize the plot window, but it won't plot anything because you haven't specified what to plot.

Slide 11: If you add and the aesthetics argument which specifies what should go on the x and y axes, it draws the axes. In this case, we have weight on the x axis and hindfoot length on the y axis.

Slide 12: However, the data are not plotted on the graph until you specify the geom. Make sure to add the + operator at the end of the ggplot statement. In this case, we'll be plotting the data as points using geom_point()

Let's see how this works

Demo 2:

- Plot ggplot(data = surveys_complete) – gray plot area
- Plot data + aes – axes drawn
- Plot data + aes + geom – scatter plot of hindfoot length vs weight

Slide 13: Now that we've drawn basic scatterplot, let's customize it.

- One common customization is altering the **transparency** of the points
- This modification allows you to see where the points are the most dense
- We can do this by using the **alpha** argument in the geom_point function

Demo 3:

- Copy and paste Demo 1
- Add alpha = 0.1 as an argument to geom_point

Slide 14: Now let's add some color. We can turn the points blue by adding the `color = "blue"` argument to `geom_point`. For a full list of colors, see the color reference chart linked on this slide.

Demo 4:

- Copy and Paste Demo 2
- Add `color = blue` as an argument to `geom_point`

Slide 15: We can also use color to tell us something about the data. For example, we can colorize the points based on a factor variable, in this case `species_id`. To do this, we can alter the aesthetics within `geom_point` with the argument `color = species_id`.

Demo 5:

- Copy and Paste Demo 3
- Change `color = blue` to `aes(color = species_id)`
- Need to use `aes` because it's referencing the data frame instead of one color

Slide 16: At this point, you might be wondering why we are using the `aes` function in two different parts of the `ggplot` code.

- The `aes` statement in the `ggplot` function affects the aesthetics of the whole plot
- The `aes` statement in the `geom_point` function affects only the points.
- In this case, you could move `color = species_id` into the first `aes` statement and it wouldn't make a difference, but if you are layering multiple geoms on the plot, it becomes important.

Slide 17:

Exercise 1:

- Use the previous example as a starting point.
- Add color to the data points according to the plot from which the sample was taken (`plot_id`).

Hint: Check the class for `plot_id`. Consider changing the class of `plot_id` from integer to factor. Why does this change how R makes the graph?

Solution:

- Copy and paste previous example
- Change `species_id` to `as.factor(plot_id)`

Slide 18: Now let's look at some other geoms we can use starting with box plots.

- Box plots work best with a factor variable on the x axis and a numeric variable on the y axis.
- The syntax for using a boxplot geom is `geom_boxplot()`
- Let's see how this works

Demo 6:

- `Ggplot = surveys complete`

- Aes = x = species id, y = hindfoot length
- Geom = geom_boxplot()
- Creates box plots with median, quartiles and outlier points

Slide 19: We said before that you can overlay multiple geoms on the same plot. Let's add some jittered points to the box plot we just made.

Demo 7:

- Copy/paste the previous box plot graph
- Add alpha = 0 as an argument of geom_boxplot so we can see the points
- Add geom_jitter with the arguments alpha = 0.3 and color = "tomato"
 - Jitter plots the points so that they are spread out horizontally on the x axis
- See that the points are densest in the box plots, as you'd expect.
- You can also get a sense of the number of observations for each species

Slide 20:

Exercise 2:

Plot the same data as in the previous example, but as a Violin plot

- Hint: see geom_violin().
- What information does this give you about the data that a box plot does

Solution:

- Copy and paste boxplot w/o the jitter geom
- Replace geom_boxplot with geom_violin
- Shows you how many observations are at each y value by the width of the violin

Slide 21: Now we're going to plot time series data using geom_line().

- But first, we need to reshape the surveys_complete data frame
- The code on this slide illustrates how to do this using the dplyr package. For more information, see the data and donuts session on data wrangling
- The output of this code generates a new data frame with year and species id as columns, plus a new column called n that represents the number of observations of a given species in a given year.

Slide 22: To plot these data as a line graph,

- We'll specify that data = yearly counts
- Specify we want year on the x axis and n on the y axis
- And that we should draw a line between the points

Demo 8:

```
ggplot(data = yearly_counts,
       aes(x = year,
          y = n)) +
geom_line()
```

doesn't tell you much, because it's not separated by species

Slide 23: To make a line for each species, we can add a new argument, `group`, to the `aes` function.

Demo 9:

- Copy/paste demo 6
- Add `group = species_id` to `aes`
- Now there's a line for each `species_id`
- But we can't tell which line represents which species

Slide 24: To fix this, we can color the lines based on `species_id`

Demo 10:

- Copy/paste demo 7
- Add `color = species_id`
- See there's a legend showing which line is what species

Slide 25:

Exercise 3:

- Use what you just learned to create a plot that depicts how the average weight of each species changes through the years.
- Hint: reshape the data using the following code

```
yearly_weight <- surveys_complete %>%  
  group_by(year, species_id) %>%  
  summarize(avg_weight = mean(weight))
```

Solution:

- Copy paste code for counts
- Replace `df` with `yearly_weight`
- Replace `y = n` with `y = avg_weight`

Slide 26: Now that we've got an informative graph of species observations over the years, let's get it publication ready.

- First, I'd remove the gray background and
- Make the axis labels more descriptive
- As well as increasing the font size
- We can do this using premade themes and the `theme` function

Slide 27: First, let's apply the premade black and white theme. If you want to see what other themes are available, see `?theme_bw`.

Demo 11:

- Copy paste the time series graph code
- Add `theme_bw()`
- `?theme_bw`

Slide 28: This theme is nicer, but we can tweak it to make it exactly what we want. For example, you might want to change the wording on the axis labels. You can do this using the `labs()` function.

Demo 12:

- Copy paste Demo 9
- Add `labs` function with `title`, `x` and `y` as arguments
 - Title is the plot title (Observed species in time)
 - X is x axis label (year of observation)
 - Y is y axis label (count)

Slide 29: The new labels are an improvement, but they are a little hard to read. We can change the font size and type with the `theme()` and `element_text()` functions

Demo 13:

- Copy paste demo 10
- Add theme
 - Text = element text (size = 16, family = Arial)

Slide 30: Once you get the graph the way you want it, you can save all the theme elements into a custom theme which is stored in a variable. In this case, we're starting with the black and white theme, but changing the font to 16 point Arial.

Slide 31: You can apply this theme to any plot of your choice. For example, a box plot

Demo 14:

- Copy and paste box plot example
- Add arial theme

Slide 32: Finally, you can export your plots to a file using the `ggsave` function.

- First, save the plot to a variable
- Then run the `ggsave` function
 - First argument is the name of the file
 - Second is the variable that holds the plot
 - Then the width and height in inches

Demo 15:

- Save the box plot to a variable
- `Ggsave("boxplot.png", box_plot, width = 15, height = 10)`
- Open new image file to see.

Slide 33: Thanks for listening. As always, if you have any questions about this material or any other data management topic, please don't hesitate to contact me at the email address on this slide. Other data management topics we cover can be found on our Data management services web site. If you would like to view the full material that this lesson was based on, see the data carpentry R ecology ggplot lesson. Finally, the ggplot2 cheat sheet is a great resource when you're coding on your own.