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2017-08-02

Is R right for you? If yes…

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Pei-Pei Lei on Is R right for you? If yes…

Greetings AEA community, I'm Pei-Pei Lei, a biostatistician in the Office of Survey Research at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Have you been looking to expand your skill set in statistical programming? Have you wondered if R is the appropriate statistical software package for your needs? The purpose of this post is to help you decide whether R is right for you and, if so, how you can get started using it.

R may be the right tool if you:

- Need to manage and/or analyze quantitative data
- Are looking for a free alternative to commercial software packages, such as SAS, SPSS, and STATA
- Don't mind writing computer code – does *print ("Hello, world!")* look easy enough to you?
- Want to create nice-looking and informative figures and graphics (see this website for example)

If you're not sure, here are some places for you to get a feel for R language:

> TryR: *This website provides online interactive step-by-step practice on the webpage*

> DataCamp: *This website provides online interactive step-by-step practice (more material than TryR)*

Hot tips:
The following is a list of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) that can help you learn R for free (or pay a fee for a verified certificate):

> R programming on Coursera: *It's a 4-week course to go through basic R programming knowledge. It provides a weekly quiz and a final project for you to test your skills. Good for beginning to intermediate users.*

> Introduction to R for Data Science on edX: *It's a self-paced 4-week course to go through basic R programming knowledge. This course is using DataCamp for class materials and exercises. Good for beginners.*

> R Basics – R Programming Language Introduction on Udemy: *This is a self-paced course that goes through basic set up such as downloading the software and coding. Good for beginners.*

> Data Analysis with R on Udacity: *This course takes about 2 months to finish (it's also part of the Data Analyst nanodegree program). Its tutorial videos show coding processes in RStudio. Good for beginning to intermediate users.*

You can also install the Swirl R package to learn R in R. It gives you interactive instructions for different topics. This is good for intermediate users.

Rad resources:
R-bloggers: *This is a repository of R-related articles, including tutorials. You can subscribe to the mailing list to receive the latest articles.*

[Stack overflow](): *This is a forum where you can post your question and get answers, or even better, provide answer to others' questions!*

Lessons Learned:

Don't be intimidated by the many choices you have in learning R. They are the means to reach your goal. So pick one that you like and get started!