

# Writing good code

A short primer

Luce Skrabanek

4 February 2020

# Consistency is key

Many style guides that will help guide you:

- Google Style Guide – <https://google.github.io/styleguide/Rguide.html>
- Rstudio / Hadley Wickham – <http://adv-r.had.co.nz/Style.html>

# Naming things

- Good names are the first step to good code.
  - ▶ snake\_case
  - ▶ lowerCamelCase
  - ▶ UpperCamelCase
  - ▶ leopard.case
- Be consistent with the use of plurals
- Aim to be concise, but meaningful
- Use nouns to name variables
- Use verbs to name functions
- Avoid using names of existing functions or objects

# Good indentation

- Essential for readable code
- RStudio will do it for you!
- Be consistent
- Code within curly braces `{}` should always be indented (and opening curly braces should not be on a line on their own)
- Split up very long lines onto multiple lines

# Whitespace is your friend

- Place spaces around all infix operators (`=`, `+`, `-`, `<-`, etc)
- Put spaces after commas; don't put spaces before commas, except when selecting whole columns: `data.frame[ , column2]`
- Use empty lines to separate chunks of code that are logically related

# Comments

- At a minimum, there should be an explanatory comment before each function; detail the expected inputs and outputs, especially if your argument names are not obvious
- Anything unclear should also get a clarifying comment
- Cleverer / more concise code often requires better comments

# Functions and breaking code up

- Good code is broken up into functions
- Each function should do one well-defined thing
- Names of functions should tell you what they do (but use comments anyway)
- *Don't copy code* (DRY: Don't repeat yourself)

# Performance

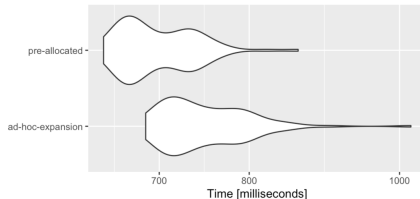
- Especially at first, worry about your code being clear and working first
- For loops aren't the fastest, but are easy to read and understand as you are learning
  - ▶ Explicitly set the size of the final vector



# Performance: for-loop example

```
runSimulation <- function(num_itations = 100) {  
  d <- data.frame(lower = numeric(num_itations),  
                  mean = numeric(num_itations),  
                  upper = numeric(num_itations))  
  for (i in 1:num_itations) {  
    x <- rnorm(10000)  
    d[i, ] <- mean(x) + c(-1.96, 0, +1.96) * sd(x) / sqrt(length(x))  
  }  
  length(which(d$lower > 0 | d$upper < 0))  
}  
  
runSimulation0 <- function(num_itations = 100) {  
  d <- data.frame(lower = numeric(0),  
                  mean = numeric(0),  
                  upper = numeric(0))  
  for (i in 1:num_itations) {  
    x <- rnorm(10000)  
    d[i, ] = mean(x) + c(-1.96, 0, +1.96) * sd(x) / sqrt(length(x))  
  }  
  length(which(d$lower > 0 | d$upper < 0))  
}
```

1000 iterations



10000 iterations

