

How can I use `tight_layout()` in Matplotlib to improve the spacing and layout of my plot?

Authored by
stats writer

June 25, 2024

RECOMMENDED CITATION

stats writer (2024). *How can I use `tight_layout()` in Matplotlib to improve the spacing and layout of my plot?*. PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES. Retrieved from <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=151690>

`Tight_layout()` is a function in the Matplotlib library that can be used to improve the spacing and layout of a plot. It automatically adjusts the size and position of the axes, labels, and other elements in the plot to prevent them from overlapping and improve the overall appearance of the plot. This can be particularly useful when creating complex or multi-panel plots. By using `tight_layout()`, users can easily achieve a more polished and professional look for their plots.

Use `tight_layout()` in Matplotlib

You can use the `tight_layout()` function in Matplotlib to automatically adjust the padding between and around subplots.

The following example shows how to use this function in practice.

Example: How to Use `tight_layout()` in Matplotlib

Suppose we use Matplotlib to create four subplots in a 2×2 grid:

```
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
```

```
#define data
```

```
x =
```

```
y =
```

```
#define layout for subplots
```

```
fig, ax = plt.subplots(2, 2)
```

#define subplot titles

```
ax.plot(x, y, color='red')
```

```
ax.plot(x, y, color='blue')
```

```
ax.plot(x, y, color='green')
```

```
ax.plot(x, y, color='purple')
```

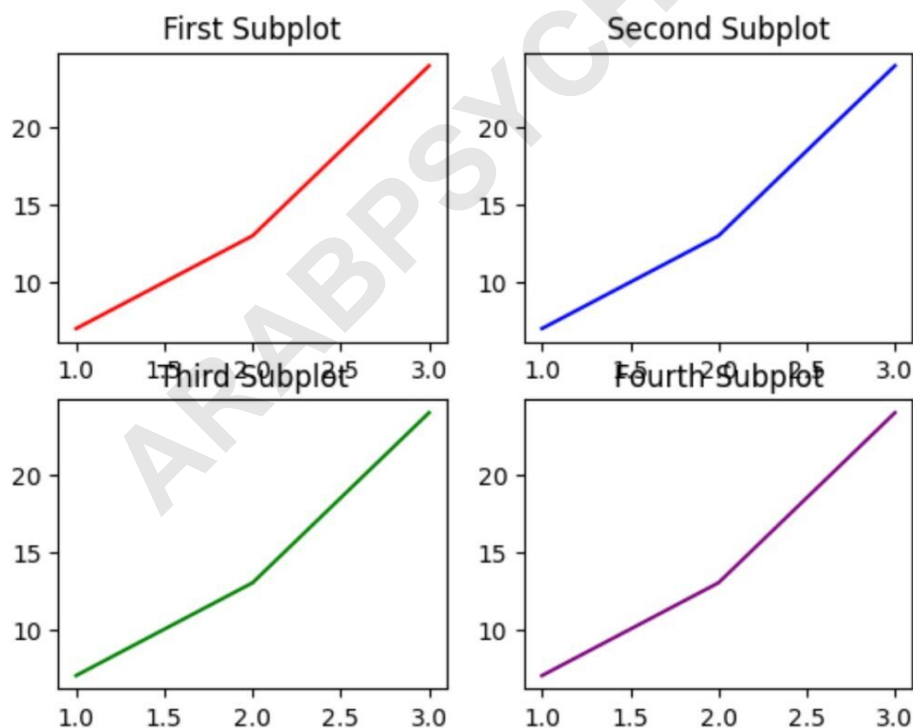
#add title to each subplot

```
ax.set_title('First Subplot')
```

```
ax.set_title('Second Subplot')
```

```
ax.set_title('Third Subplot')
```

```
ax.set_title('Fourth Subplot')
```



Notice that there is minimal padding between the

subplots, which causes the titles to overlap in some places.

By specifying `fig.tight_layout()` we can automatically adjust the padding between and around subplots:

```
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
```

```
#define data
```

```
x =
```

```
y =
```

```
#define layout for subplots
```

```
fig, ax = plt.subplots(2, 2)
```

```
#specify a tight layout
```

```
fig.tight_layout()
```

```
#define subplot titles
```

```
ax.plot(x, y, color='red')
```

```
ax.plot(x, y, color='blue')
```

```
ax.plot(x, y, color='green')
```

```
ax.plot(x, y, color='purple')
```

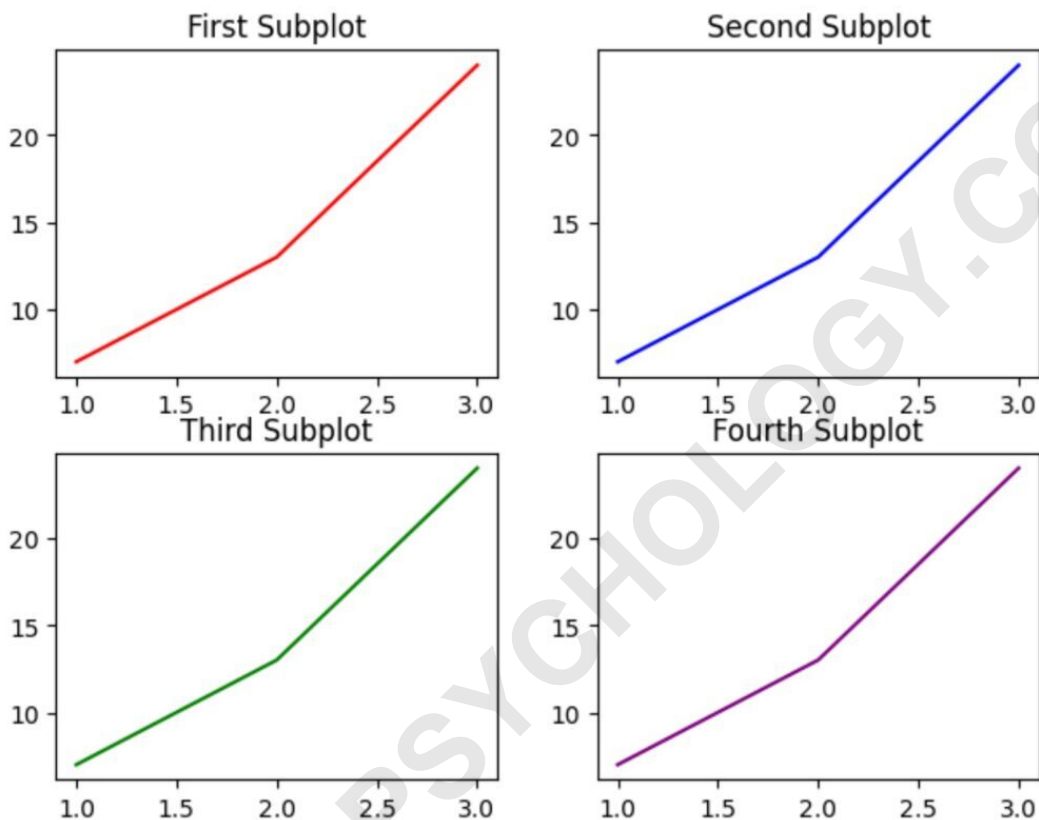
```
#add title to each subplot
```

```
ax.set_title('First Subplot')
```

```
ax.set_title('Second Subplot')
```

```
ax.set_title('Third Subplot')
```

```
ax.set_title('Fourth Subplot')
```



Notice that the padding between and around the subplots has been adjusted so that the plots no longer overlap in any area.

Note that the `tight_layout()` function takes a `pad` argument to specify the padding between the figure edge and the edges of subplots, as a fraction of the font

size.

The default value for `pad` is 1.08. However, we can increase this value to increase the padding around the plots:

```
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
```

```
#define data
```

```
x =
```

```
y =
```

```
#define layout for subplots
```

```
fig, ax = plt.subplots(2, 2)
```

```
#specify a tight layout with increased padding
```

```
fig.tight_layout(pad=5)
```

```
#define subplot titles
```

```
ax.plot(x, y, color='red')
```

```
ax.plot(x, y, color='blue')
```

```
ax.plot(x, y, color='green')
```

```
ax.plot(x, y, color='purple')
```

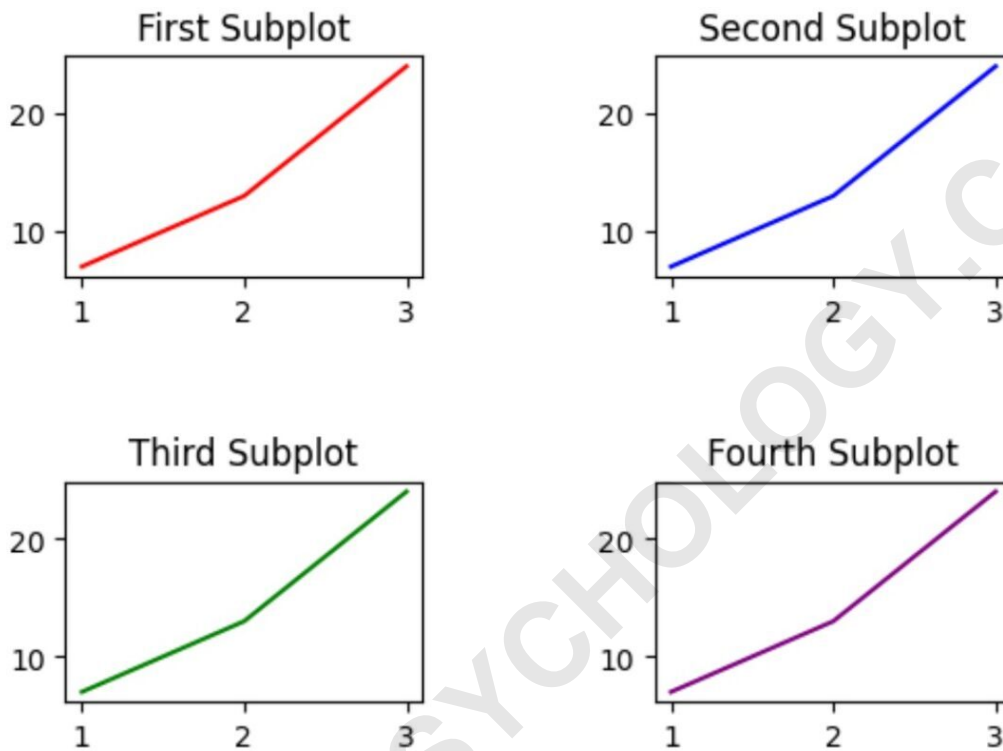
```
#add title to each subplot
```

```
ax.set_title('First Subplot')
```

```
ax.set_title('Second Subplot')
```

```
ax.set_title('Third Subplot')
```

```
ax.set_title('Fourth Subplot')
```



Notice that the padding around the plots has increased noticeably.

Feel free to adjust the value for the `pad` argument to increase the padding around the plots as much as you'd like.

The following tutorials explain how to perform other

common tasks in Matplotlib:

ARABPSYCHOLOGY.COM