R: How to Convert Character to Date Using Lubridate

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Ribridate is a package in R that allows you to convert character data to date formats such as month-day-year, day-month-year and year-month-day. This can be useful for data analysis, as it allows for easier manipulation of dates and times. The lubridate package provides a range of functions to make it easy to convert characters to dates, as well as other tasks such as finding the difference between two dates or adding and subtracting time intervals.

You can use various functions from the **lubridate** package in R to convert a character column to a date format.

Two of the most common functions include:

ymd() - Convert character in year-month-date format to date
mdy() - Convert character in month-day-year format to date

The following examples show how to use the **ymd()** and **mdy()** functions in practice.

Note: Refer to the for a complete list of functions you can use to convert characters to dates depending on the format your dates are in.

Example 1: Convert Character to Date Using ymd()

Suppose we have the following data frame in R:

```
#create data frame
df <- data.frame(date=c('2022-01-05', '2022-02-18', '2022-03-21',
'2022-09-15', '2022-10-30', '2022-12-25'),
sales=c(14, 29, 25, 23, 39, 46))
```

```
#view data frame
df
```

```
date sales
1 2022-01-05 14
2 2022-02-18 29
3 2022-03-21 25
4 2022-09-15 23
5 2022-10-30 39
6 2022-12-25 46
```

```
#view class of date column
class(df$date)
```

"character"

Currently the values in the **date** column are characters, but we can use the **ymd()** function from the lubridate package to convert them to dates:

library(lubridate)

#convert character to date format
df$date <- ymd(df$date)

#view updated data frame
df

date sales
1 2022-01-05 14
2 2022-02-18 29
3 2022-03-21 25
4 2022-09-15 23
5 2022-10-30 39
6 2022-12-25 46

#view updated class of date column
class(df$date)

"Date"

We can see that the **date** column now has a class of Date instead of character.

Example 2: Convert Character to Date Using mdy()

Suppose we have the following data frame in R:

#create data frame
df <- data.frame(date=c('March 4, 2022', 'April 9, 2022', 'May 6, 2022',
'May 29, 2022', 'June 1, 2022', 'July 2, 2022'),
sales=c(14, 29, 25, 23, 39, 46))

#view data frame
df

date sales

1 March 4, 2022 14
2 April 9, 2022 29
3 May 6, 2022 25
4 May 29, 2022 23
5 June 1, 2022 39
6 July 2, 2022 46

#view class of date column
class(df$date)

"character"

Currently the values in the **date** column are characters, but we can use the **mdy()** function from the lubridate package to convert them to dates:

library(lubridate)

#convert character to date format
df$date <- mdy(df$date)

#view updated data frame
df

date sales
1 2022-03-04 14
2 2022-04-09 29
3 2022-05-06 25
4 2022-05-29 23
5 2022-06-01 39
6 2022-07-02 46

#view updated class of date column
class(df$date)

"Date"

We can see that the **date** column now has a class of Date instead of character.