

Rather than having all of its functionality built into its core, Python was designed to be highly extensible. This compact modularity has made it particularly popular as a means of adding programmable interfaces to existing applications. Van Rossum's vision of a small core language with a large standard library and easily extensible interpreter stemmed from his frustrations with ABC, which espoused the opposite approach.

Python strives for a simpler, less-cluttered syntax and grammar while giving developers a choice in their coding methodology. In contrast to Perl's "there is more than one way to do it" motto, Python embraces a "there should be one—and preferably only one—obvious way to do it" design philosophy. Alex Martelli, a Fellow at the Python Software Foundation and Python book author, writes that "To describe something as 'clever' is not considered a compliment in the Python culture."

Python's developers strive to avoid premature optimization, and reject patches to non-critical parts of the CPython reference implementation that would offer marginal increases in speed at the cost of clarity. When speed is important, a Python programmer can move time-critical functions to extension modules written in languages such as C, or use PyPy, a just-in-time compiler. Cython is also available, which translates a Python script into C and makes direct C-level API calls into the Python interpreter.

An important goal of Python's developers is keeping it fun to use. This is reflected in the language's name—a tribute to the British comedy group Monty Python—and in occasionally playful approaches to tutorials and reference materials, such as examples that refer to spam and eggs (from a famous Monty Python sketch) instead of the standard foo and bar.

A common neologism in the Python community is *pythonic*, which can have a wide range of meanings related to program style. To say that code is *pythonic* is to say that it uses Python idioms well, that it is natural or shows fluency in the language, that it conforms with Python's minimalist philosophy and emphasis on readability. In contrast, code that is difficult to understand or reads like a rough transcription from another programming language is called *unpythonic*.

Users and admirers of Python, especially those considered knowledgeable or experienced, are often referred to as *Pythonistas*.