**INTRODUCTION TO FUNCTIONS**

**Introduction to Functions**

In programming, as we start to write bigger and more complex programs, one thing we will start to notice is we will often have to repeat the same set of steps in many different places in our program.

Let’s imagine we were building an application to help people plan trips! When using a trip planning application we can say a simple procedure could look like this:

1. Establish your origin and destination

2. Calculate the distance/route

3. Return the best route to the user

We will perform these three steps every time users have to travel between two points using our trip application. In our programs, we could rewrite the same procedures over and over (and over) for each time we want to travel, but there’s a better way! Python gives us a useful concept called [*functions*](https://www.codecademy.com/resources/docs/python/functions?page_ref=catalog).

Functions are a convenient way to group our code into reusable blocks. A function contains a sequence of steps that can be performed repeatedly throughout a program without having to repeat the process of writing the same code again.

In this lesson, we are going to explore the idea of a function by slowly building out a Python program for our trip planning steps!

At the end of this lesson, you’ll know how to:

* Write a function and return values from it.
* Allow functions to take custom input.
* Experiment with how functions access our other python code.

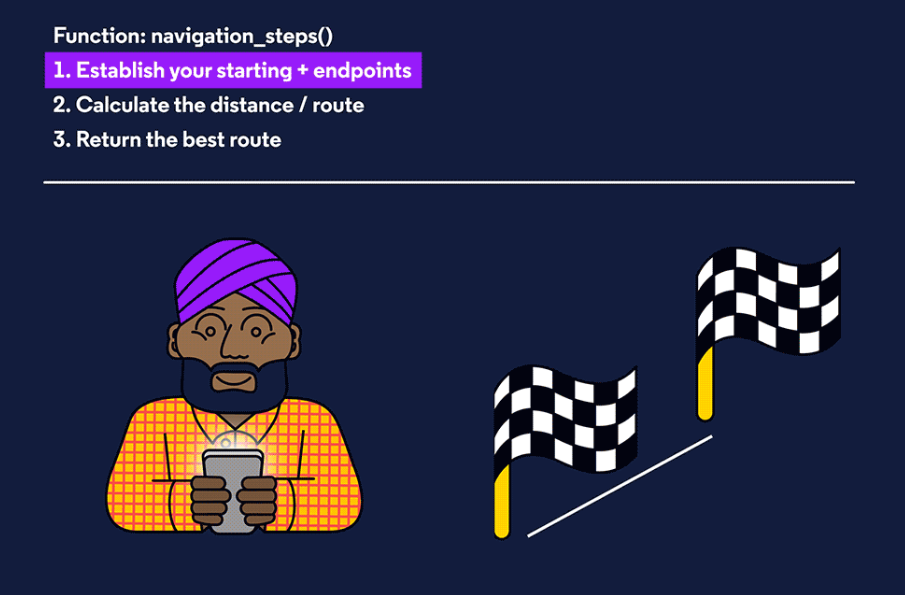
And much more!

**Instructions**

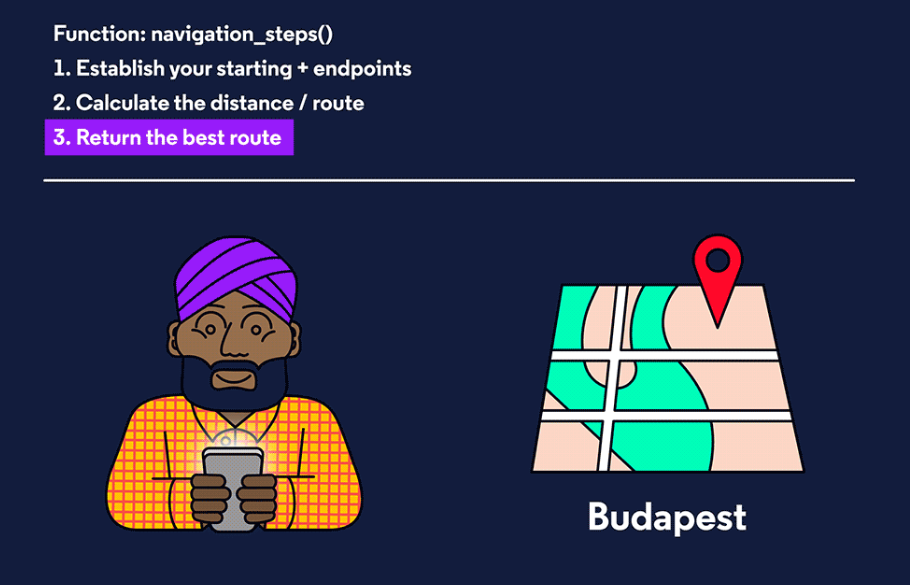
Review the visual for the function navigation\_steps().

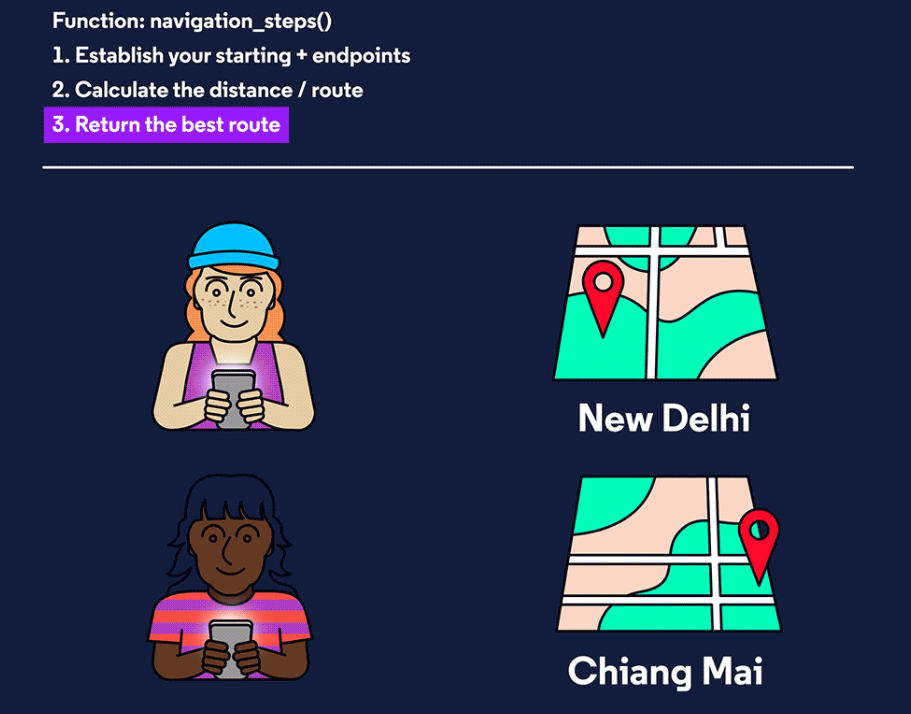
Notice how the function navigation\_steps() serves as a container for the three steps in the procedure and can be reused across multiple users as they plan their trips to different locations.

Click **Next** when you are ready to learn more about functions.









**Why Functions?**

Let’s come back to the trip planning application we just discussed in the previous exercise. The steps we talked about for our program were:

1. Establish an origin and destination

2. Calculate the distance/route

3. Return the best route

If we were to convert our steps into Python code, a very simple version that plans a trip between two popular New York tourist destinations might look like this:

print("Setting the Empire State Building as the starting point and Times Square as our destination.")  
   
print("Calculating the total distance between our points.")   
   
print("The best route is by train and will take approximately 10 minutes.")

Anytime we want to go between these two points we would need to run these three print statements (for now we can assume the best route and time will stay the same).

If our program now had 100 new people trying to find the best directions between the Empire State Building and Times Square, we would need to run each of our three print statements 100 times!

Now, if you’re thinking about using a loop here, your intuition would be totally right! Unfortunately, we won’t be always traveling between the same two locations which means a loop won’t be as effective when we want to customize a trip. We will address this in the upcoming sections!

For now, let’s gain an appreciation for functions.

**Instructions**

**1.**

***Run*** the pre-written print() statements to see what they output.

Checkpoint 2 Passed

**2.**

Write the same set of print statements three more times. Run the code again and see the output.

Checkpoint 3 Passed

Hint

Make sure that the three print statements are all duplicated three more times.

**3.**

Hopefully now you have some perspective about your life without functions!

In the next section, we will learn how we can [refactor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_refactoring) our code to utilize functions to reuse code.

Click ***Run*** your code again and then click ***Next*** to continue.

**travel.py**

# First user wants to travel between these two points!

print("Setting the Empire State Building as the starting point and Times Square as our destination.")

print("Calculating the total distance between our points.")

print("The best route is by train and will take approximately 10 minutes.")

# Second user wants to travel between these two points!

print("Setting the Empire State Building as the starting point and Times Square as our destination.")

print("Calculating the total distance between our points.")

print("The best route is by train and will take approximately 10 minutes.")

# Third user wants to travel between these two points!

print("Setting the Empire State Building as the starting point and Times Square as our destination.")

print("Calculating the total distance between our points.")

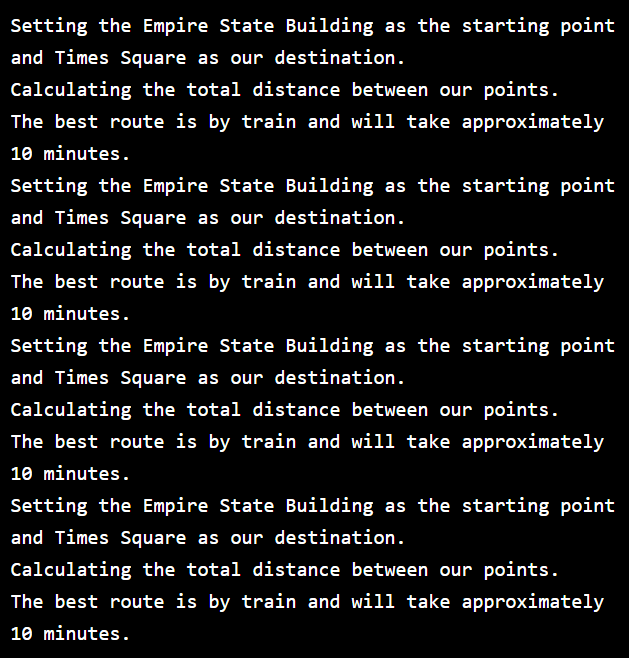
print("The best route is by train and will take approximately 10 minutes.")

# Fourth user wants to travel between these two points!

print("Setting the Empire State Building as the starting point and Times Square as our destination.")

print("Calculating the total distance between our points.")

print("The best route is by train and will take approximately 10 minutes.")



**Defining a Function**

A *function* consists of many parts, so let’s first get familiar with its core - a function definition.

Here’s an example of a function definition:

def function\_name():  
  # functions tasks go here

There are some key components we want to note here:

* The def keyword indicates the beginning of a function (also known as a function header). The function header is followed by a name in snake\_case format that describes the task the function performs. It’s best practice to give your functions a descriptive yet concise name.
* Following the function name is a pair of parenthesis ( ) that can hold input values known as parameters (more on parameters later in the lesson!). In this example function, we have no parameters.
* A colon : to mark the end of the function header.
* Lastly, we have one or more valid python statements that make up the function body (where we have our python comment).

Notice we’ve indented our # function tasks go here comment. Like loops and conditionals, code inside a function must be indented to show that they are part of the function.

Here is an example of a function that greets a user for our trip planning application:

def trip\_welcome():  
  print("Welcome to Tripcademy!")   
  print("Let's get you to your destination.")

***Note:*** Pasting this code into the editor and clicking ***Run*** will result in an empty output terminal. The print() statements within the function will not execute since our function hasn’t been used. We will explore this further in the next exercise; for now, let’s practice defining a function.

**Instructions**

**1.**

Two of the most common NYC attractions include the Empire State Building and Times Square.

In *travel.py*, we’ll write a function that prints the directions via subway from the Empire State Building to Times Square.

First, define a function, directions\_to\_timesSq(). Leave the body of the function empty for now.

***Note:*** When we run the code, we will see an error: SyntaxError: unexpected EOF while parsing. This will occur when we don’t populate a function with any statements. We will populate it with code in the next step.

EOF stands for “End of File” — Python is telling you that it was expecting some code in the body of the function, but it hit the end of the file first.

Checkpoint 2 Passed

Hint

Remember the core of a function - a definition. Check to make sure you have all the components for a function definition.

def my\_function\_name():

**2.**

Within the body of the function, use three print() statements to output the following directions:

Walk 4 mins to 34th St Herald Square train station  
Take the Northbound N, Q, R, or W train 1 stop  
Get off the Times Square 42nd Street stop

Remember, if you run your code, you shouldn’t see any output in the terminal at this point. Check out the hint if you want to see how to see the output (we will be doing it in the next section as well!)

Checkpoint 3 Passed

Hint

Check your statements for spaces, capitalization, and spelling. If you are still having problems getting the checkpoint to pass, try and copy and paste the text directly from the narrative into your print statement.

If you are interested in seeing the output, call your function like this:

directions\_to\_timesSq()

**travel.py**

# Your code below:

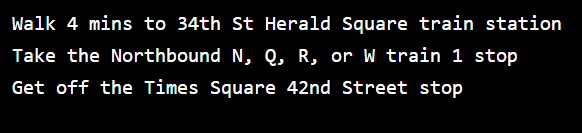
def directions\_to\_timesSq():

  print("Walk 4 mins to 34th St Herald Square train station")

  print("Take the Northbound N, Q, R, or W train 1 stop")

  print("Get off the Times Square 42nd Street stop")

directions\_to\_timesSq()

****

**Calling a Function**

Now that we’ve practiced defining a function, let’s learn about calling a function to execute the code within its body.

The process of executing the code inside the body of a function is known as calling it (This is also known as “executing a function”). To call a function in Python, type out its name followed by parentheses ( ).

Let’s revisit our directions\_to\_timesSq() function :

def directions\_to\_timesSq():  
  print("Walk 4 mins to 34th St Herald Square train station.")  
  print("Take the Northbound N, Q, R, or W train 1 stop.")  
  print("Get off the Times Square 42nd Street stop.")

To call our function, we must type out the function’s name followed by a pair of parentheses and no indentation:

directions\_to\_timesSq()

Calling the function will execute the print statements within the body (from the top statement to the bottom statement) and result in the following output:

Walk 4 mins to 34th St Herald Square train station.  
Take the Northbound N, Q, R, or W train 1 stop.  
Get off the Times Square 42nd Street stop.

Note that you can only call a function *after* it has been defined in your code.

Now it’s your turn to call a function!

**Instructions**

**1.**

Call the directions\_to\_timesSq() function.

Click ***Run*** to see it execute and print out.

Checkpoint 2 Passed

Hint

Make sure you call the function directions\_to\_timesSq() outside of the function definition. It should not be indented at all.

**2.**

Add an additional print statement to our directions\_to\_timesSq() function.

Have the statement print "Take lots of pictures!"

**Run** your code again and see how your output changes.

Checkpoint 3 Passed

Hint

Remember to add the print statement inside of the function definition for directions\_to\_timesSq(). It should be indented and contain the text "Take lots of pictures!". Make sure to place it after the other print statements in the function.

**travel.py**

def directions\_to\_timesSq():

  print("Walk 4 mins to 34th St Herald Square train station.")

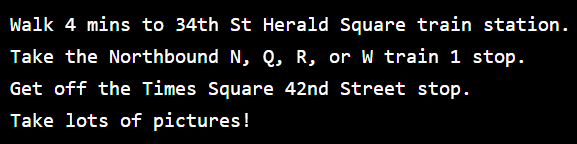
  print("Take the Northbound N, Q, R, or W train 1 stop.")

  print("Get off the Times Square 42nd Street stop.")

  print("Take lots of pictures!")

# Call your function here:

directions\_to\_timesSq()

****

**Whitespace & Execution Flow**

Consider our welcome function for our trip planning application:

def trip\_welcome():  
  print("Welcome to Tripcademy!")   
  print("Let's get you to your destination.")

The print statements all run together when trip\_welcome() is called. This is because they have the same base level of indentation (2 spaces).

In Python, the amount of [whitespace](https://www.codecademy.com/resources/docs/general/whitespace?page_ref=catalog) tells the computer what is part of a function and what is not part of that function.

If we wanted to write another statement outside of trip\_welcome(), we would have to unindent the new line:

def trip\_welcome():  
  # Indented code is part of the function body  
  print("Welcome to Tripcademy!")   
  print("Let's get you to your destination.")  
   
# Unindented code below is not part of the function body  
print("Woah, look at the weather outside! Don't walk, take the train!")  
   
trip\_welcome()

Our trip\_welcome() function steps will not print Woah, look at the weather outside! Don't walk, take the train! on our function call. The print() statement was unindented to show it was not a part of the function body but rather a separate statement.

We would see the following output from this program:

Woah, look at the weather outside! Don't walk, take the train!  
Welcome to Tripcademy!  
Let's get you to your destination.

Lastly, note that the execution of a program always begins on the first line. The code is then executed one line at a time from top to bottom. This is known as execution flow and is the order a program in python executes code.

Woah, look at the weather outside! Don't walk, take the train! was printed before the print() statements from the function trip\_welcome().

Even though our function was defined before our lone print() statement, we didn’t call our function until after.

Let’s play around with indentation and the flow of execution!

### Instructions

**1.**

We are going to help our trip planner users figure out if they should travel today based on the weather. Let’s let our users know we can check the weather for them.

Write a print() statement that will output Checking the weather for you!.

Checkpoint 2 Passed

Hint

To print() a string use the following syntax and replace <Your string in here> with the string you want to output:

print("<Your string in here>")

You can copy and paste the string from the checkpoint instructions to make sure there are no typos.

**2.**

We took a look outside and see a bright sunny day. Write a function called weather\_check() that will print a message to our users that it’s a great day to travel! The function should output:

Looks great outside! Enjoy your trip.

**Note:** Don’t call your function just yet! We will do that in the next step.

Checkpoint 3 Passed

Hint

Remember to use def before weather\_check(): to define the function and to indent the print statement to show that it is part of the function.

**3.**

Oh no! It looks like some clouds came in and it started raining. Our users shouldn’t go on a trip in the rain. In our weather\_check() function add a second print() statement under the first one which prints a warning message for our travelers! It should print:

False Alarm, the weather changed! There is a thunderstorm approaching. Cancel your plans and stay inside.

Checkpoint 4 Passed

Hint

Make sure to add another print() statement inside of your function under the first print() statement at the same level of indentation.

**4.**

Call the function weather\_check().

Checkpoint 5 Passed

Hint

Be sure to add weather\_check() at the bottom of your code without any indentation.

**5.**

Unindent your final print statement in your weather\_check() function. Run the program again.

What is different?

Checkpoint 6 Passed

Hint

Remember to unindent the front of the second print statement in your weather\_check() function. You should notice a different order in your output terminal due to the change in the indentation.

**travel.py**

# Your code below:

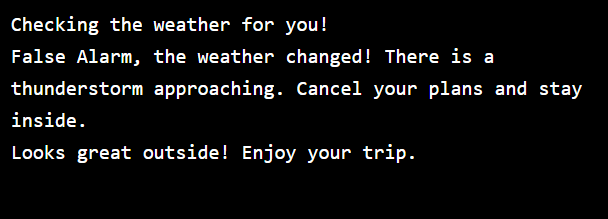
print("Checking the weather for you!")

def weather\_check():

  print("Looks great outside! Enjoy your trip.")

print("False Alarm, the weather changed! There is a thunderstorm approaching. Cancel your plans and stay inside.")

weather\_check()



**Parameters & Arguments**

Let’s return to our trip\_welcome() function one more time! Let’s modify our function to give a welcome that is a bit more detailed.

def trip\_welcome():  
  print("Welcome to Tripcademy!")   
  print("Looks like you're going to Times Square today.")  
   
trip\_welcome()

This will output:

Welcome to Tripcademy!  
Looks like you're going to Times Square today.

Our function does a really good job of welcoming anyone who is traveling to Times Square but a really poor job if they are going anywhere else. In order for us to make our function a bit more dynamic, we are going to use the concept of function [*parameters*](https://www.codecademy.com/resources/docs/python/functions/parameters-arguments?page_ref=catalog).

Function parameters allow our function to accept data as an input value. We list the parameters a function takes as input between the parentheses of a function ( ).

Here is a function that defines a single parameter:

def my\_function(single\_parameter)  
  # some code

In the context of our trip\_welcome() function, it would look like this:

def trip\_welcome(destination):  
  print("Welcome to Tripcademy!")   
  print("Looks like you're going to " + destination + " today.")

In the above example, we define a single parameter called destination and apply it in our function body in the second print statement. We are telling our function it should expect some data passed in for destination that it can apply to any statements in the function body.

But how do we actually use this parameter? Our parameter of destination is used by passing in an *argument* to the function when we call it.

trip\_welcome("Times Square")

This would output:

Welcome to Tripcademy!  
Looks like you're going to Times Square today.

To summarize, here is a quick breakdown of the distinction between a parameter and an argument:

* The parameter is the name defined in the parenthesis of the function and can be used in the function body.
* The argument is the data that is passed in when we call the function and assigned to the parameter name.

Let’s write a function with parameters and call the function with an argument to see it all in action!

**Instructions**

**1.**

We want to create a program that allows our users to generate the directions for their upcoming trip!

Create a function called generate\_trip\_instructions() that defines one parameter called location.

***Note***: Since we did not define any code in our function yet, we will receive an error in our output terminal. Don’t worry, we will be filling in the code in the next step.

Checkpoint 2 Passed

Hint

Function parameters must be defined in the parenthesis of our function definition:

def some\_function(single\_parameter):   
  #some code

**2.**

generate\_trip\_instructions() should print out the following:

Looks like you are planning a trip to visit <location>

Where <location> will represent the location parameter.

Checkpoint 3 Passed

Hint

Remember to concatenate the location to the end of the string in the print statement by using the + operator.

**3.**

generate\_trip\_instructions() should also let our users know they can reach their location using public transit.

Let’s have generate\_trip\_instructions()also print out the following on a new line:

You can use the public subway system to get to <location>

Where <location> will represent the location parameter.

Checkpoint 4 Passed

Hint

Remember to concatenate the location to the end of the string in the print statement by using the + operator.

**4.**

Time for some greenery! Let’s see what happens when we call the function and input the argument "Central Park", a backyard wonder in the heart of New York City.

Checkpoint 5 Passed

Hint

Make sure that you call generate\_trip\_instructions outside of the function definition and that you pass "Central Park" as the argument to the function.

**5.**

The day trip is over and we need to get back to the train station to head home. Change the argument to "Grand Central Station" and call the function again.

What changed in the output?

Checkpoint 6 Passed

Hint

Make sure that you call generate\_trip\_instructions outside of the function definition and that you pass "Grand Central Station" as the argument to the function.

**travel.py**

# Your code below:

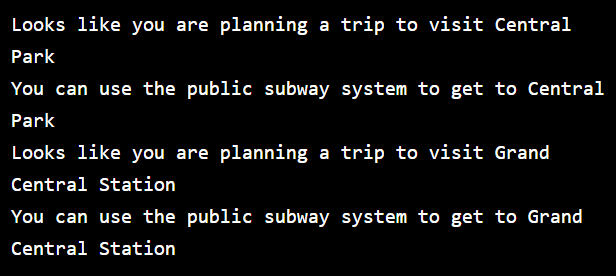
def generate\_trip\_instructions(location):

  print("Looks like you are planning a trip to visit " + location)

  print("You can use the public subway system to get to " + location)

generate\_trip\_instructions("Central Park")

generate\_trip\_instructions("Grand Central Station")

****