Getting started with a Python Code Editor

Code editors are fantastic resources that make it easy to write and edit code on your laptop. As part of this class, we will be using the VS Code editor to write and edit our Python programs.

Downloading and installing the VS Code editor

Visual Studio Code is a lightweight but powerful source code editor which runs on your desktop and is available for Windows, macOS and Linux. We will write and edit python code using the Visual Studio code editor. Follow the directions on the VS Code website to install the version of VS Code that is appropriate for your laptop.

Installing the Python extensions for VS Code

Once VS Code is installed you will also need to install an extension for Python. VS Code can be used for programming in many different programming languages, so we will need to tell VSCode that we want to use Python. You can learn more about extensions here. Go the the VS Code menu, Select View -> Extensions, to pull up the "Extensions Market Place" on the left-hand panel. Search for and install "Python" by IntelliSense. This extension works alongside Python in Visual Studio Code to provide performant language support, linters, and debuggers for Python. You will learn about each of these in the days to come. They will be useful in formatting your code to make it beautiful, while also checking for mistakes and errors.

Specifying the version of Python to use

As we discussed in setup2_python, there are many versions of python. For this class, we are going to use the same version of python to make troubleshooting easy, and ensure that you can easily use all of the Python modules that we will use in this class. Python modules are bits of code, written by other programmers, that we can use in our own programs (more on that to come!). We will use some of these modules to make sure our code is correctly formatted, and also for debugging. But, before we can use these modules, we need to tell VScode which version of Python to use. To do this, you can go to View -> Command Palette. Then in the search box type "Python: Select Interpreter". Choose the most recent version of python that you just installed 3.11.1

Now you are all set to start writing Python code in VS Code!

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