COMP110: Principles of Computing

# 3: Flowcharts and pseudocode

# Learning outcomes

- ▸ Produce and explain basic flowcharts
- ▸ Produce and explain basic pseudocode

# Worksheet B

- Flowcharts and pseudocode
- Due in class on **Monday 10th October** (next week)

# Reading

B. Shneiderman, R. Mayer, D. McKay, and P. Heller, 1977. Experimental Investigations of the Utility of Detailed Flowcharts in Programming. *Communications of the ACM*, 20(6):373–381.

# Loops (from last time)

# For loops and ranges

```
for i in xrange(5):
    print i
```

- ► `xrange(n)` is the **sequence** $0, 1, 2, \ldots, n-1$
- ► So `xrange(5)` is the **sequence** $0, 1, 2, 3, 4$
- ► Note: `xrange(n)` **does not include** $n$
- ► The `for` loop iterates through the items in a sequence **in order**
- ► Can also use `range` instead of `xrange`, but `range` is less efficient
  - ► Homework (advanced): what is the difference between `range` and `xrange`?

# For loops (1)

Socrative room code: FALCOMPED

```
a = 0
b = 0

for i in xrange(5):
    a = i
    b = b + i

print a
print b
```

| Variable | Value |
|----------|-------|
| a        |       |
| b        |       |
| i        |       |

# For loops (2)

Socrative room code: FALCOMPED

```
a = 0
b = 0

for i in xrange(10):
    if i < 3 or i > 7:
        a += i
    else:
        b += i

print a
print b
```

| Variable | Value |
|----------|-------|
| a        |       |
| b        |       |
| i        |       |

# More ranges

- Can optionally specify **start point**
- `xrange(3, 10)` $\rightarrow [3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9]$
- If start point is specified, can optionally specify **step**
- `xrange(0, 20, 2)` $\rightarrow [0, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18]$
- Step can be negative:
- `xrange(10, 0, -1)` $\rightarrow [10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1]$

# While loops

Socrative room code: FALCOMPED

The **while** loop keeps executing while the condition is **true**

```
a = 1

while a < 100:
    a = a * 2

print a
```

| Variable | Value |
|----------|-------|
| a        |       |

# Looping forever

```
a = 1

while True:
    a = a * 2
    print a
```

# Algorithms

# What is an algorithm?

A **sequence of instructions** which can be followed **step by step** to perform a **computational task**.

# Programs vs algorithms

- A program is **specific** to a particular programming language and/or machine
- An algorithm is **general**
- An algorithm must be **implemented** as a program before a computer can run it
- An algorithm generally performs **one task**, whereas a program may perform **many**
  - E.g. Microsoft Word is not an algorithm, but it implements many algorithms
  - E.g. it implements an algorithm for determining where to break a line of text, how much space to add to centre a line, etc.
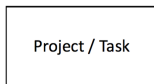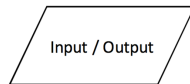
# Flowcharts

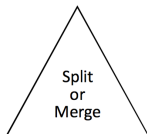HOW TO WRITE GOOD CODE:
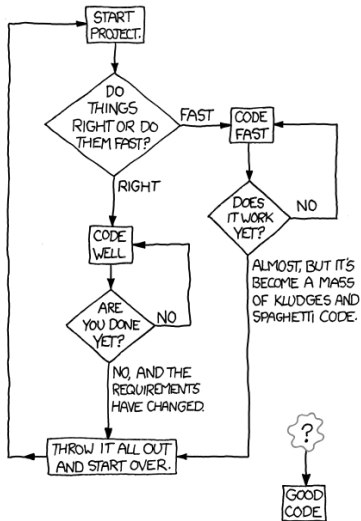
# Flowchart symbols

**Start / End**
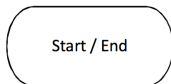
The start or end of a workflow.

**Project / Task**
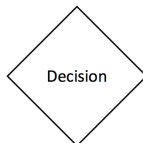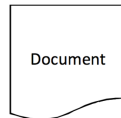
Process or action.

**Input / Output**

Data: Inputs to, and outputs from, a process.

**Split or Merge**
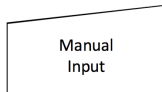
Upright indicates a process split, inverted indicates a merge of processes.

**Decision**

Decision point in a process or workflow.

**Document**

Document or report.

**Manual Input**

Prompt for information, manually entered into a system.
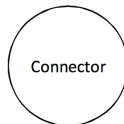
**Connector**

Used to connect one part of a flowchart to another.

**Off Page Connector**
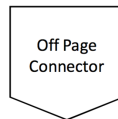
Connector used to connect one page of a flowchart to another.

# Swimlanes
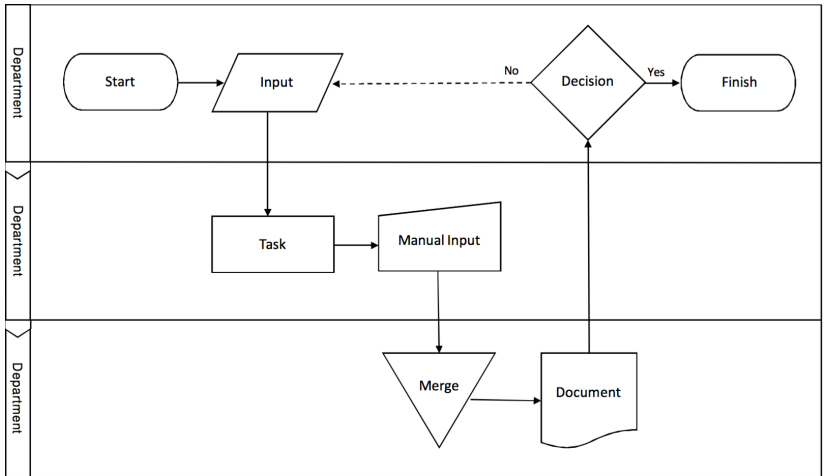
# Activity

- In **groups of 2-3**
- **Draw** a flowchart for **logging into Facebook**
- Draw your flowchart using **pen and paper**
- Include at least two swimlanes: **the user's browser/device** and **the Facebook server**

# Software for drawing flowcharts

Intended for drawing flowcharts:

- Gliffy `https://www.gliffy.com`
- Microsoft Visio

Can draw flowcharts:

- Microsoft PowerPoint
- Google Docs

If you're desperate:

- Any drawing package (Inkscape, Adobe Illustrator, Apple Keynote, ...)
- MS Paint

# Pseudocode

# Pseudocode

Flowcharts are useful, but...

- ► Can be time-consuming to draw
- ► Do not reflect structured programming concepts well

**Pseudocode** expresses an algorithm in a way that looks more like a structured program

# Pseudocode example

**print** "How old are you?"
**read** *age*
**if** *age* < 13 **then**
    **print** "You are a child"
**else if** *age* < 18 **then**
    **print** "You are a teenager"
**else**
    **print** "You are an adult"
**end if**

# Pseudocode example

$$sum \leftarrow 0 \qquad \triangleright \text{ initialisation}$$
$$\textbf{for } i \text{ in } 1, \ldots, 9 \textbf{ do}$$
$$\quad sum \leftarrow sum + i$$
$$\textbf{end for}$$
$$\textbf{print } sum \qquad \triangleright \text{ print the result}$$

# Formatting pseudocode

- Pseudocode is a **communication tool**, not a **programming language**
- Important: **clear**, **concise**, **unambiguous**, **consistent**
- **Not** important: adhering to a strict set of style guidelines, ensuring direct translatability to your chosen programming language

# Level of abstraction

Whether working with flowcharts or pseudocode, choose your **level of abstraction** carefully

# Level of abstraction: Good

Fill kettle
Turn kettle on
Put instant coffee in mug
**if** sugar wanted **then**
    Add sugar
**end if**
Wait for kettle to boil
**if** milk wanted **then**
    Pour water to $\frac{4}{5}$ full
    Add milk
**else**
    Fill mug with water
**end if**
Stir

# Level of abstraction: Not so good

Position kettle beneath tap
Turn tap on
**while** water is below halfway point **do**
    Wait
**end while**
Turn tap off
Place kettle on base
Press power button
...

# Level of abstraction: Silly

Place right palm on kettle handle
Bend fingers on right hand
Lift arm upwards
**while** tap spout is not directly above kettle **do**
    Move arm to the right
**end while**
Place left palm on tap handle
Bend fingers on left hand
Rotate left hand
...

# Activity

A number guessing game: The computer chooses a number between 1 and 20 at random. The player guesses a number. The computer says whether the guessed number is "too high", "too low" or "correct". The game ends when the correct number is guessed, or after 5 incorrect guesses.

- ► In **groups of 2-3**
- ► **Write** pseudocode for the number guessing game
- ► Write your pseudocode with **pen and paper** or using your favourite **text editor or word processor**