

AS124816-L

# Untangling Python: A Crash Course on Dynamo's Python Node

Gui Talarico - WeWork

## Learning Objectives

- Understand the difference between Python and IronPython
- Develop a basic understanding of how Python works within Dynamo
- Understand the default template and other boilerplate code commonly used
- Learn how to better understand and troubleshoot Dynamo Python code.

## Description

This class will walk through the basic concepts of using Python within the Dynamo Environment. We will cover basic Python concepts that are needed to write a few code samples, as well as explain in detail boilerplate and import codes that are used. The class will also touch on some aspects of the Revit API that are needed to perform basic operations such as the active document and transactions.

## Speaker

Gui Talarico is a Senior Building Information Specialist in the Product Development Group at WeWork. Prior to joining WeWork, he was a computational designer at SmithgroupJJR and an adjunct faculty at Virginia Tech, where he taught Computational Design. He has also taught Dynamo and Grasshopper Workshops, and Python courses for beginners. Gui has spoken at several industry events including DC Revit User Group, DC Dynamo, National Building Museum Keystone Society, and the WeWork Product Talk Series. Beyond his professional work, he is active in several online communities and Open Source projects. In 2016 he started Revit API Docs, a comprehensive and extensible online Documentation for the Revit API which has been widely recognized as a valuable resource to the Revit API Community.

## Relevant Project

- [revitapidocs.com](http://revitapidocs.com)
- [github.com/gtalarico/revitpythonwrapper](https://github.com/gtalarico/revitpythonwrapper)
- [github.com/gtalarico/ironpython-stubs](https://github.com/gtalarico/ironpython-stubs)

## Social Media

Twitter @gtalarico

Github @gtalarico

## A Few Words on Python

### What is Python?

Python is a high-level, general-purpose, open-source programming language. The language is widely used in a variety of fields, including mathematics, data-science, and web-development.

Python is also an interpreted language, meaning, its code is interpreted without requiring compilation. The program that interprets and executes the code is called an interpreter. Interpreters can be executed independently, or embedded within other applications.

The most common Python interpreter implementation is CPython, which is written in the language “C” and it’s considered to be the main-stream or reference Python implementation.

### What is IronPython?

IronPython is an implementation of Python created by Microsoft and it’s written in C#. The C# implementation allows the interpreted python code to interact directly with other applications that are part of the Microsoft .NET framework (C#, F#, VB, etc) through the Common Language Runtime (clr module).

This language interoperability has made IronPython a popular language for creating embedded scripting environments within Windows applications that use the .NET framework. Some applications that offer embedded python scripting environments are Rhino + Grasshopper, Autodesk Maya, and of course, Dynamo.

While Python code can be written to be compatible with both mainstream Python and IronPython, this is only true when the code doesn’t take advantage of implementation-specific features. For example, code that requires .NET interoperability requires the ironpython-exclusive clr module. Conversely, python code that depends on libraries that rely on native C code cannot run in IronPython (Numpy, Pandas, etc).

### Why Learn Python

Recognized as having a shallow learning curve, Python has become a popular choice for education environments and beginners. The syntax and language-constructs are simple and promote code-readability - when well written; its code is often considered easy to read even by non-programmers.

Python’s language design also makes it an excellent language to create short macro-like scripts and automation logic due to its conciseness and comprehensive standard library (modules that are built-in and shipped with the language).

Lastly, adding a language like Python to your toolset enables you to develop tools and workflows that are often faster than *pure* visual-programming, but also allow you to overcome limitations where the programs fall short.

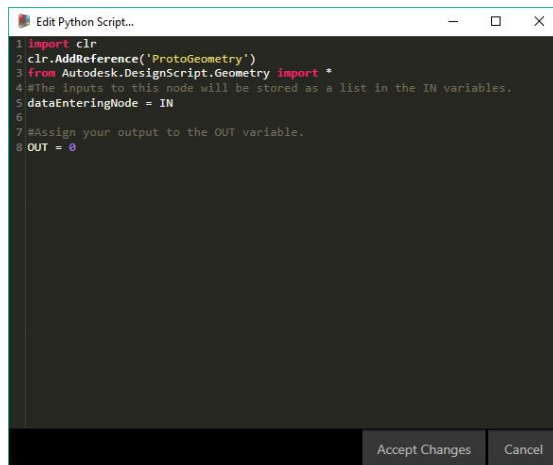
## Writing and Executing Python Code

### Development Environments

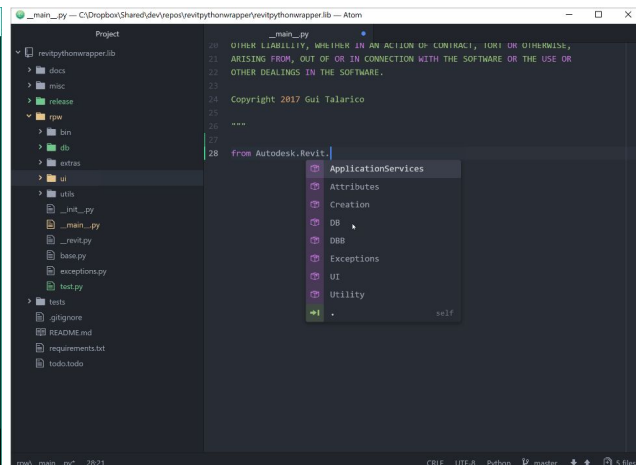
Python code can be written using any text, although most developers use robust text editors like Atom, Sublime, Visual Studio Code, or Notepad ++.

Integrated Development Environments like PyCharm or Visual Studio can also be used, however, I find they are often intimidating for beginners.

You can also write your code directly in embedded editors such as the one provided by Dynamo, although they usually lack many of the features provided by the alternatives above like code completion, code linting, and file management.



Dynamo Python Script Editor



Atom Editor

## Executing Python Code

### Within Dynamo

Dynamo provides a simple Script Editor with basic syntax-highlighting and limited autocompletion. This is enough for most simple scripts, however a developer may want to migrate to external editors as complexity increases. More details on how to use an external editor will be explained further down in the course.

### Using a Python Interpreter

While this class will focus primarily on the use of Python within Dynamo, the Python interpreter is an invaluable tool for testing code samples and exploring the language with interactive feedback. To launch an Ironpython interpreter, navigate to C:\Program Files (x86)\IronPython 2.7 and execute ipy.exe. You should see a prompt like this:

```
IronPython 2.7.3 (2.7.0.40) on .NET 4.0.30319.42000 (32-bit)
Type "help", "copyright", "credits" or "license" for more information.
>>>
```

## Introduction to Python

While a comprehensive language tutorial is not in the scope of this class, it will be helpful for those with no prior Python experience that we cover a few basic concepts and language features. You can try typing the commands below on an Ironpython Interpreter shown in the section above.

Note: the >>> caret indicates the code is being run from an interpreter in interactive mode. In some examples, blank lines might follow to indicate the output or result of the line executed.

## Printing and Commenting

### Printing

Python programs can output values using the function `print`. Unfortunately, this functionality is not accessible in Dynamo as Dynamo does not pipe the standard output (stdout) to its console.

```
>>> print('Hello World')
Hello World
>>> print(2+4)
6
```

### Commenting

A hash or pound character (#) can be used to tell the interpreter to ignore all subsequent characters in the same line. This is commonly used to add comments to yourself and others.

```
>>> # This line will not be executed
```

## Basic Data Types

### Integer

Positive or negative whole numbers with no decimal points.

```
>>> 5
>>> -10
>>> 3
```

### Float

Positive or negative Integer values, with decimals separated by a dot.

```
>>> 4.0
>>> 2.2
>>> -10.2
```

## String

Strings are used to represent text-like objects and must be enclosed by single or double quotes. Triple quoted strings (single or double) can be used to represent multiline text.

```
>>> '123 Street'
>>> "Another String"
>>> ''' Multiline strings are represented with
      triple quotes (single or double) '''
```

## Boolean

Valid boolean-type values are `True` and `False`. These types are case sensitive, so `True` is not the same as `true`.

```
>>> True
>>> False
```

## List

Array-like container object that can hold a collection of data-types including other lists (nested lists). Unlike other languages, Python lists can hold different data-types mixed together, although that's often not a good idea. Lists are represented with square brackets. When lists are created, they are often immediately assigned to a variable, as in the examples below.

```
>>> numbers = [1,2,3]
>>> points = [[0,0,0], [2,3,4], [5,5,5]]
>>> objects = ['Desk', 'Chair', 'Lamp']
```

List items can be accessed using its index wrapped in square brackets. Indexes start at 0.

```
>>> objects[0] # Retrieves item of index 0 (first)
'Desk'
```

Nested lists can be accessed in the same way.

```
>>> points[1][0] # Item of index 1 (2nd), then first in nested list
2
```

## Dictionary

Container-like objects that holds data using key-value pairs. Strings are often used as keys, but they can be of other data-types - values can be anything. Dictionaries are represented using curly braces, with key-colon-value pairs, separated by commas.

```
>>> elevations= {'Level 1': 10.0, 'Level 2': 25.0}
>>> coordinates = {'absolute': [0,0,0], 'relative': [20,20,0]}
>>> person = {'Name': 'Mark', 'Age': 20, 'Address': '123 Street'}
```

## None

None is a unique object type that's used to represent an undefined value or the absence of a value. None is also case-sensitive.

```
>>> default_size = None
```

## **Expressions and Statements**

Expression are statements that make up the core syntactical structure of the language. You do not have to memorize these, but knowing them helps form a vocabulary that can be used to better understand and discuss a language.

### Expressions

An expression is a combination of values and operators that can be evaluated down to a single value or object. Some examples are:

```
>>> 2 * 2           # Evaluates to 4
>>> 'Hello ' + 'You' # Evaluates to 'Hello You'
>>> [1, 2, 3]       # Evaluates to [1, 2, 3]
>>> 4 > 2           # Evaluates to True
>>> 2 == 3          # Evaluates to False (== checks for equality)
```

### Statements

In contrast, statements are basically everything else, often associated with an action. Common statements are variable assignment ( `x = 2` ), and other flow-control features such as (if, else, for, etc).

```
>>> x = 3           # Assign the value 3 to the variable x
>>> if x == 3:      # Checks if the variable x is equal to the value 3
...     x = 5       # Assign the value 5 to the variable x
```

### Statement - Assignment

A single '=' symbol is used to assign a value to a variable name. This is different than two '==', which is a check for equality, as shown above.

```
>>> x = 1
>>> y = 3
>>> print(x+y)
4
```

### Statement - Conditional

If, else, and elif can be used to check for conditions, and control the flow of the program based on whether those conditions are met.

```
>>> x = 5
>>> if x > 3:
...     print('x is larger than 3')
... elif x == 3:
...     print('x is 3')
... else:
...     print('x is less than 3')
```

### Statement - For Loop

For Loops allow us to iterate over any *iterable elements*. Some of the most common iterables elements are Lists, Dictionaries, Strings:

```
>>> for letter in 'Hello':
...     print(letter)
'H'
'e'
'l'
'l'
'o'

>>> for number in [1,2,3]:
...     print(number)
1
2
3
```

## White Space

One of the most controversial and loved features of Python is the obligatory use of white space. Unlike other languages which use brackets to group blocks of code, Python uses spaced indentation. Using the same example from above, note how indentation is used to control execution flow:

```
>>> x = 3
>>> if x == 3:
...     # Only do this if x is equal to 3
... else:
...     # Do this if x is NOT EQUAL 3
>>> # Do something at the end, Regardless of the value of x
```

## Functions and Methods

### Functions

A function is a named block of code that performs an action. Functions can be defined using the keyword `def` followed by the function name and arguments. Functions are called by adding parentheses `()` after their name. Arguments are the values passed to a function (`x` and `y` in the example below). Functions can use the keyword `return` to return a value, although that is not a requirement.

```
>>> def print_text():      # Function Takes no arguments
...     print('My Text')  # Performs a function, but doesn't return any value
>>> print_text()
'My Text'
>>> def add_numbers(x, y): # Function receives 2 argument
...     return x + y      # Returns the sum of the 2 arguments received
>>> total = add_numbers(2, 5) # total variable will hold the value 7 returned
>>> print(total)
7
```

### Methods

Methods are functions defined and stored within objects. Many built-in data-types come with pre-defined *methods* built-in. That enables us to *call* or *apply* a function directly to an object.

```
>>> numbers = [1, 2, 3]
>>> numbers.append(4)  # appends an item to a list
[1, 2, 3, 4]
>>> 'LEVEL 01'.lower() # converts a string to lower-case
'level 01'
```



## Classes

Classes are *recipes* for custom data-types. For instance, one could create a class called Door. An instance of this class might have a property `door.is_open` that returns True or False, a property `door.width` that returns its width, and a method `door.open()` which will open it. Creation or further details on classes are beyond the scope of this course, but we will use a few custom classes defined by the Revit API in later examples.

You can read more about Python Classes on the official docs at [docs.python.org/3/tutorial/classes.html](https://docs.python.org/3/tutorial/classes.html)

## Imports

Imports can be used to load additional modules, classes, or functions into your script. These can come from another script you have written, or from the Python Standard Library. The standard library is a large collection of packages that is shipped with Python to extend functionality. For instance, the `math` module contains additional math-related tools; the `time` module gives you tools for working with time. You can read more about all the modules available in the Standard library on <https://docs.python.org>

Below are two simple examples that use the `os` and `sys` module to access functionality related to the operating system and the interpreter:

```
>>> import os # imports the os module
>>> os.listdir('C:/') # call listdir method to get files in directory
['Program Files', 'ProgramData', 'Users', 'Windows', 'Logs']
```

```
>>> import sys # imports the sys module
>>> sys.version
'2.7.3 (IronPython 2.7.3 (2.7.0.40) on .NET 4.0.30319.42000 (32-bit))'
>>> sys.exit() # Execution of program is terminated
```

## Finding Imported Modules

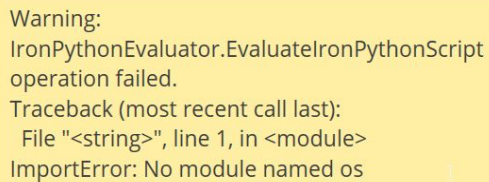
Python does a few tricks behind the scenes to locate packages and modules during import time. The locations that will be searched are stored as a list in the `path` property of the `sys` module. The list can be accessed using `sys.path`. The default IronPython `sys.path` is shown below. `'.'` means “look in the current directory”, and the other 3 locations are folders within the IronPython Installation directory.

```
>>> import sys
>>> sys.path
['.', 'C:\\Program Files (x86)\\IronPython 2.7\\Lib', 'C:\\Program Files (x86)\\IronPython 2.7\\DLLs', 'C:\\Program Files (x86)\\IronPython 2.7', 'C:\\Program Files (x86)\\IronPython 2.7\\lib\\site-packages']
```

## Importing Modules in Dynamo

Although we have not started using the Dynamo Python node, it is important to cover an important issue related to imports in Dynamo. If you try importing any of the packages mentioned above (with the exception of `sys`), you will get an `ImportError` exception

```
import os
```



Warning:  
IronPythonEvaluator.EvaluateIronPythonScript  
operation failed.  
Traceback (most recent call last):  
File "<string>", line 1, in <module>  
ImportError: No module named os

“ImportError: No module named os”

For reasons unknown to me, Dynamo defaults to an empty `sys.path`. That means the interpreter is not able to natively import modules from the Standard Library. Luckily, this is an easy problem to solve. All you have to do is *append* that location to the `sys.path` *list* and you will be able to import standard modules.

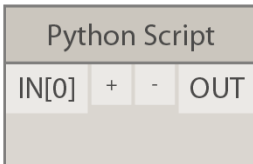
```
import sys
sys.path.append(r'C:\Program Files (x86)\IronPython 2.7\Lib')
import os
```

In the example above, the letter `r` is added to indicate the path is a “raw” string. This has to be done because Python backslashes have a special meaning (escape character). The `r` tells python to interpret the string as is, and ignore the special meaning of the backslash. Another alternative which is commonly used is to escape the backslash with another backslash:

```
sys.path.append('C:\\Program Files (x86)\\IronPython 2.7\\Lib')
```

## Dynamo Python Nodes

### Python Script Node

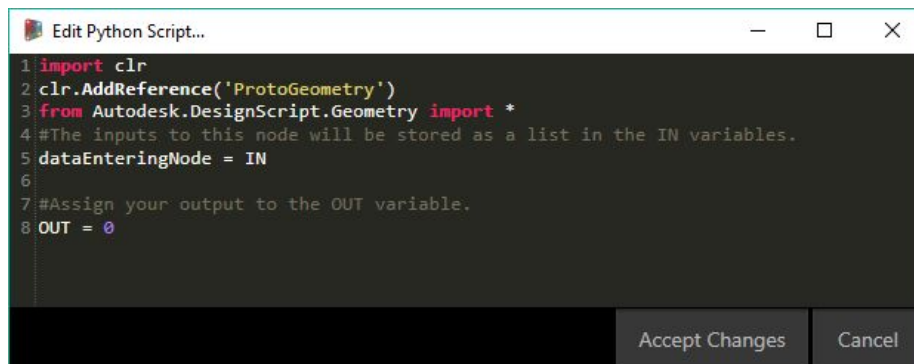


#### Inputs and Outputs

As with other Nodes, Inputs and Outputs are located on the left and right sides, respectively. Additional inputs can be added by using the + button. Each input value is *injected* into the scripts' context and will be available as variable `IN[0]`, `IN[1]`, etc.

#### Script Body

To edit the script, double click the empty area below the inputs/outputs and a simple embedded editor will launch. The editor will have a starter script template which will be covered in more detail later.



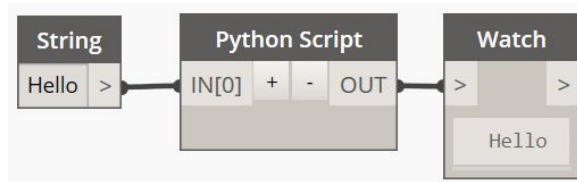
#### Input / Output Example

Launch the Script Editor, remove the template script, and include only the following code:

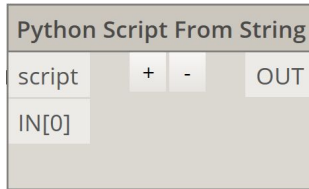
```
OUT = IN[0]
```

Connect a string "Hello" to the input `IN[0]`, and the output should be "Hello".

This simple example shows how data can pass straight through the Node by setting its output equal to its input.



## Python Script From String Node

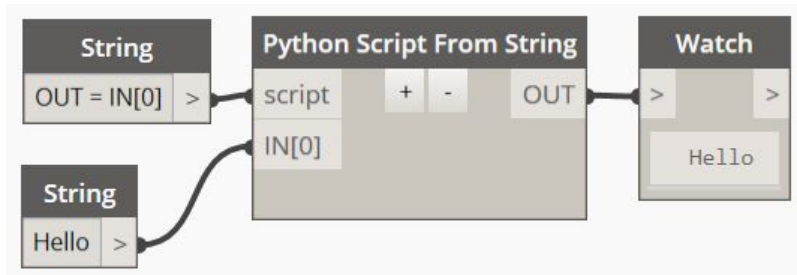


The *Python Script From String* Node behaves similarly to the *Python Script* Node, except instead of using the builtin editor, the is passed to it as a text string.

To demonstrate how a script body is passed as an input to the Python Node, we will use the same one line script used above to set the OUT variable to be equal to its input IN[0].

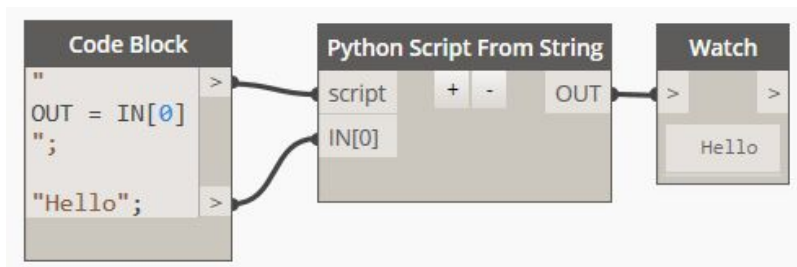
The output of the node will should be the string "Hello"

### Script from String Node



### Script from String Node - Code Blocks

You can also use a Code Block to create your script string. To use a Code Block, your script body needs to be enclosed in double quotes.



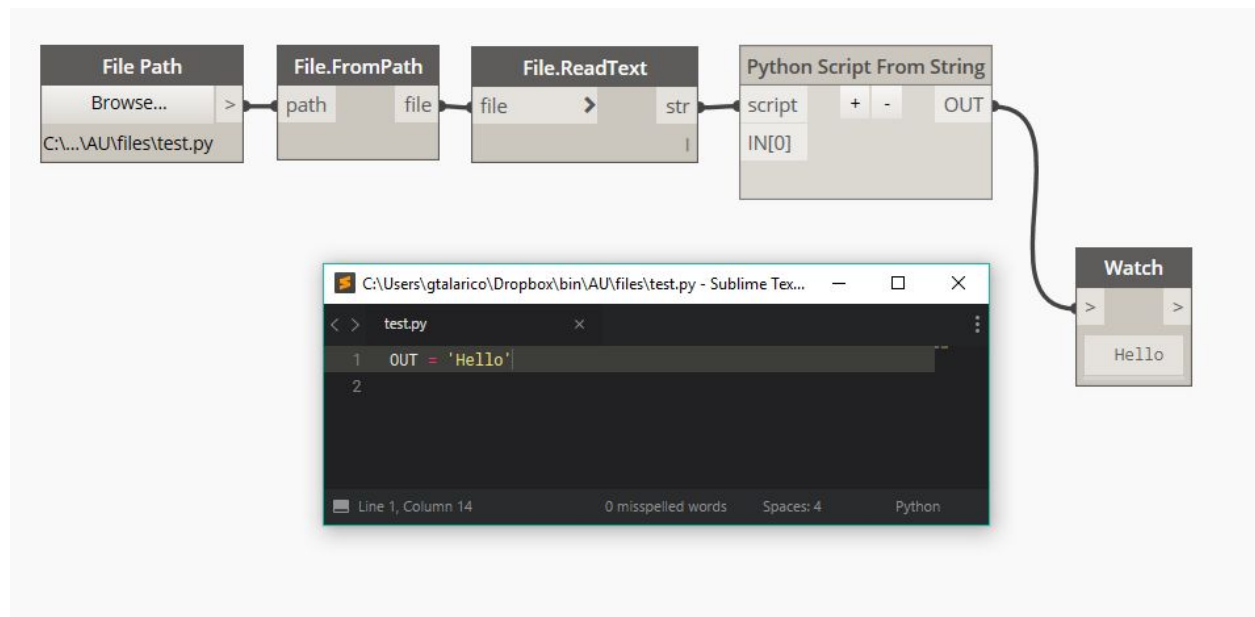
#### Note

The two methods above should be used sparingly and were only shown here for demonstration purposes. The best use of the *Script From String* is to load a script from external files, which is demonstrated in the section below.

### Script from External File

It is also possible to develop and store your Python scripts outside of Dynamo. With this approach, the user saves the scripts externally, and then load its content using the `File.ReadText` Node. By using `File.FromPath`, Dynamo will watch for changes and reload the script automatically after each save.

External scripts also allow you to keep several scripts open in parallel to your definition - Dynamo's editor in contrast, must be closed before a script can run.



Furthermore, this approach allows you to take advantage of full-featured text editors like Atom, Sublime or VSCode. These text editors offer features like configurable themes, code linting, shortcuts, multi-line editing, and powerful autocompletion engines.

### IronPython Autocompletion

While most editors are not capable of providing library autocompletion for Ironpython assemblies (RevitAPI, ProtoGeometry, etc), it's now possible to get Autocompletion on editors Sublime, Atom and VS Code. For more information see [github.com/gtalarico/ironpython-stubs/](https://github.com/gtalarico/ironpython-stubs/)

## Accessing Input Values

The examples below use a *Python Script* Node to demonstrate the use of the IN and OUT variables, and how you can access flat or nested values.

The IN variable contains a list of all the inputs. You can manipulate them as a list or you can retrieve each individual input using the Python list item syntax: the list name followed by the item index wrapped in square brackets - IN[0] for first input, IN[1] for second, etc

The OUT variable is a predefined name that will be *exported* by the node, passing its value on the OUT output connection.

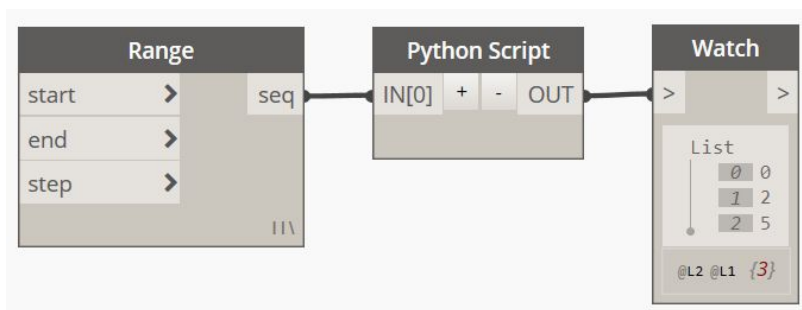
### Example 1 - Access Inputs and Set Output

```
text = IN[0]
OUT = text.upper()
```



### Example 2 - Access Nested Input

```
range = IN[0]
OUT = [ range[0], range[2], range[5] ]
```



## Starter Code Template

Before we get into writing more complex code, let's take a look at template code that is shipped with Dynamo.

The code below is provided by default every time a Python Node is created <sup>1</sup>. It does not have to be used as is, but we will go through it as line-by-line as an example as some of the concepts are commonly used and helpful to understand.

```
import clr
clr.AddReference('ProtoGeometry')
from Autodesk.DesignScript.Geometry import *
#The inputs to this node will be stored as a list in the IN variables.
dataEnteringNode = IN

#Assign your output to the OUT variable.
OUT = 0
```

The first line (`import clr`) imports the Common Language Runtime module (`clr`). This module is needed to interact with libraries that are written in .NET languages.

The second line, uses the `clr.AddReference()` method to load a reference to .NET dll assembly 'ProtoGeometry'.

Once an *assembly reference* is loaded, their corresponding namespaces become available to be imported. The table below lists commonly used assemblies and the corresponding namespaces they enable.

Assembly	Namespace Loaded	Usage example
ProtoGeometry	Autodesk.DesignScript	<code>from Autodesk.DesignScript.Geometry import Vector</code>
RevitAPI	Autodesk.Revit.DB	<code>from Autodesk.Revit.DB import Wall</code>
RevitAPIUI	Autodesk.Revit.UI	<code>from Autodesk.Revit.UI import TaskDialog</code>
RevitServices	RevitServices	<code>from RevitServices.Persistence import DocumentManager</code>
RevitNodes	Revit	<code>from Revit import Elements</code>
DSCoreNodes	DSCore	<code>from DSCore import Color</code>

---

<sup>1</sup> The latest Dynamo source code has a feature that will enable the user to configure the default template, however at the time of this writing this feature had not been released.

In other words, once we add a reference to the ProtoGeometry.dll assembly ('ProtoGeometry')<sup>2</sup>, the corresponding Namespace becomes available: Autodesk.DesignScript.<sup>3</sup>

```
from Autodesk.DesignScript.Geometry import *
```

And finally, the last few lines:

```
#The inputs to this node will be stored as a list in the IN variables.  
dataEnteringNode = IN  
#Assign your output to the OUT variable.  
OUT = 0
```

dataEnteringNode creates a variable and assigns the value of IN. This line is not needed and it only needs to be used if you want to refer to the IN variable using the name dataEnteringNode. OUT = 0 is only a placeholder, to indicate to uses that the OUT variable should receive a value.

#### Note on \* Imports

It's worth mentioning that although the template uses the syntax *from Namespace import \**, this is generally considered bad practice by the Python Community. The asterisk at the end tells Python to load *all* classes and methods inside the module. Depending on the namespace, you could be loading hundreds or even thousands of identifiers into the context of your script. This practice also has the following disadvantages:

1. Loading all modules can cause a namespace conflict. For example, if another module also contains a class with the same name, the first one loaded will be overwritten.
2. As objects loaded are used throughout our code, it's hard for other programmers to tell from which one of the Assemblies/Namespace the object came from.

A better solution is to either load only the class you need, or to reference them using the parent module. For example, if you want to use the Circle and Vector classes, you could use

```
from Autodesk.DesignScript.Geometry import Circle, Vector  
# or alternatively  
from Autodesk.DesignScript import Geometry  
# The classes would then be accessed using: Geometry.Circle and Geometry.Vector
```

This approach makes it more explicit what is being used, and also avoid name clashes with other modules.

---

<sup>2</sup> Add reference automatically resolves the extension, hence why .dll can be omitted. The actual dll assembly can be found here: C:\Program Files\Dynamo\Dynamo Core\1.3

<sup>3</sup> Design Script is a Geometry library created by Autodesk it is the main Geometry engine used by Dynamo to create and operate on Geometry. Many, if not all of the classes available in DesignScript have a Dynamo Node counterpart (ir. Vector.Length is available as Node as well as in Python)



## Customized Starter Code Template

The default template provided rarely provides everything we need. Over time, most users will develop their own “boilerplate” code with everything they typically use.

The code below is an example of what is commonly used as boilerplate. We will touch on some of these imports and why they are needed later in this document.

```
import clr
# Import RevitAPI Classes
clr.AddReference("RevitAPI")
from Autodesk.Revit.DB import *
# As explained in the previous section, replace * with the class you need separated
by comma.

clr.AddReference("RevitNodes")
import Revit
# Adds ToDSType (bool) extension method to Wrapped elements
clr.ImportExtensions(Revit.Elements)
# Adds ToProtoType, ToRevitType geometry conversion extension methods to objects
clr.ImportExtensions(Revit.GeometryConversion)

# Import DocumentManager and TransactionManager
clr.AddReference("RevitServices")
from RevitServices.Transactions import TransactionManager
from RevitServices.Persistence import DocumentManager
# Create variable for Revit Document
doc = DocumentManager.Instance.CurrentDBDocument

# Start Transaction
TransactionManager.Instance.EnsureInTransaction(doc)
# Code that modifies Revit Database goes Here
# End Transaction
TransactionManager.Instance.TransactionTaskDone()

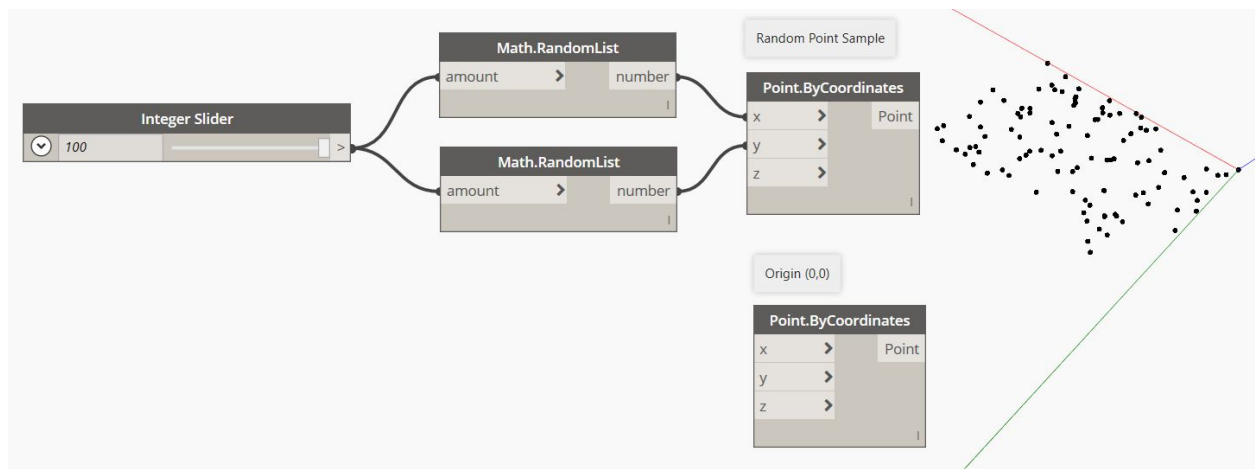
OUT = None
```

## Python Dynamo Examples

### Example 1 - Sort a List of Points by Distance to an Origin

In the example below we will walk through a short script that will sort a 2-dimensional random collection of points based on their proximity to a given origin,  $(0,0)$ .

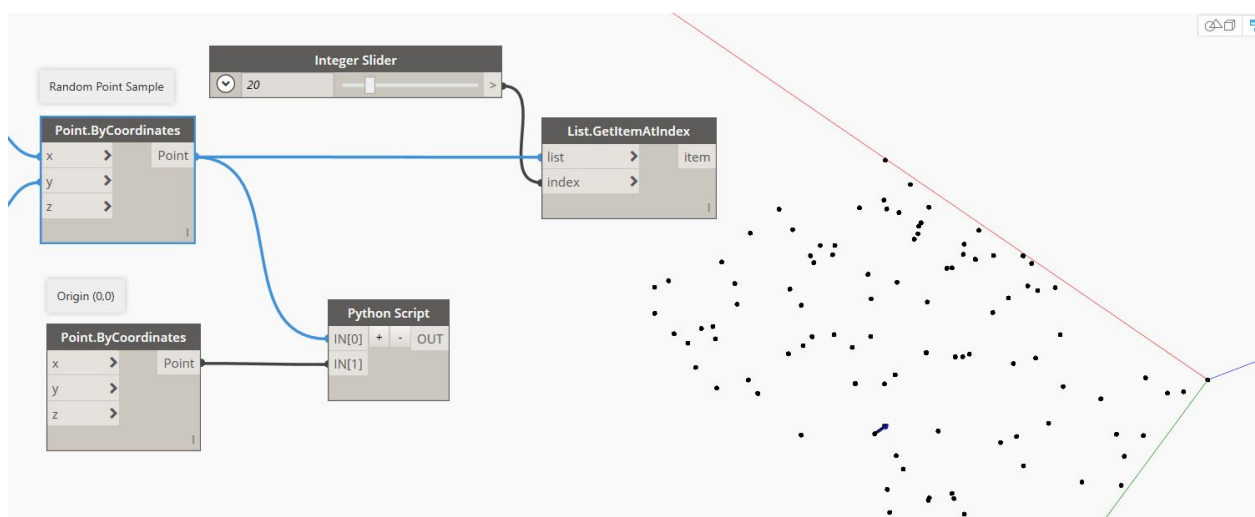
We will start by creating a random collection of points and an Origin points using a slider, `Math.RandomList` and `Point.ByCoordinates`.



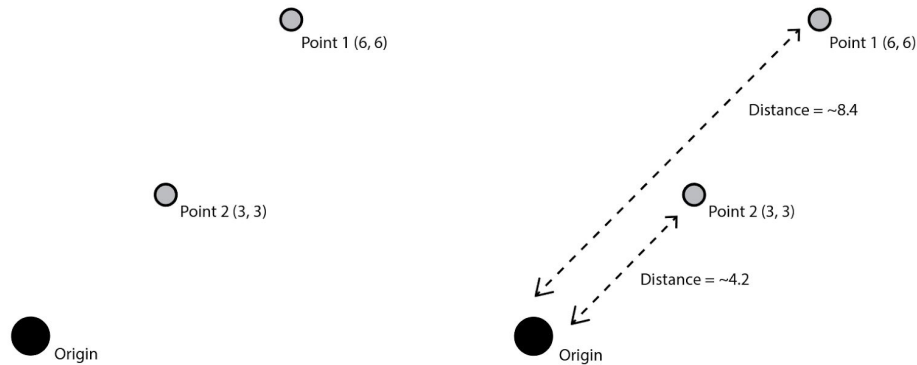
Connect the Random Points and Origin to the Python Node:

- `IN[0]` should be the Random Points
- `IN[1]` the Origin

Lastly, connect the Python Output to a `List.GetItemAtIndex`. We will use this Node to select points and verify the list order.



Before we get into the Python code, let's review our goal and strategy - **the goal** is to sort the point list based on their distance to the origin. The point closest to the origin should be the first item in the list, the farthest should be last. For example, given the list of points  $[[6, 6], [3, 3]]$  and the origin  $[0,0]$  the final sorted list should be  $[[3, 3], [6, 6]]$ .



Our strategy is simple:: we will *iterate* through each point using a `for` loop and record their distance to the origin. With that additional information, we can sort them by their distance.

Using the diagram above as an example, we would first create:  $[[8.4, [6, 6]], [4.2, [3, 3]]]$  Using Python's `sorted()` function, we can sort the list to create  $[[4.2, [3, 3]], [8.4, [6, 6]]]$ .

Note if you sort the list without the distance number prepended, a point like  $[2, 30]$  would be placed before  $[5, 5]$  even though it's further away, hence, why the distance is important.

Open the Python Script Editor, delete the default template, and type the code below line by line. Don't copy and paste - typing the code helps you memorize and become better at catching typos and mistakes. After the script has executed, you can verify the script has worked by selecting the points in order.

```
import clr # Imports Ironpython's Common Language Runtime module
clr.AddReference('ProtoGeometry') # Imports DesignScript Dll Assembly
from Autodesk.DesignScript.Geometry import Vector # Import the Vector Class

random_points = IN[0] # Assigns random point to a variable
origin = IN[1] # Assigns Origin to a variable

distance_and_points = [] # Create an empty list to hold our new list
for point in random_points: # Iterate through each point
    vector = Vector.ByTwoPoints(origin, point) # Create vector from PT to origin
    distance = vector.Length # store vector's length in a variable
    group = [distance, point] # Create a new sublist with distance and the point
    distance_and_points.append(group) # append the sublist to our main list

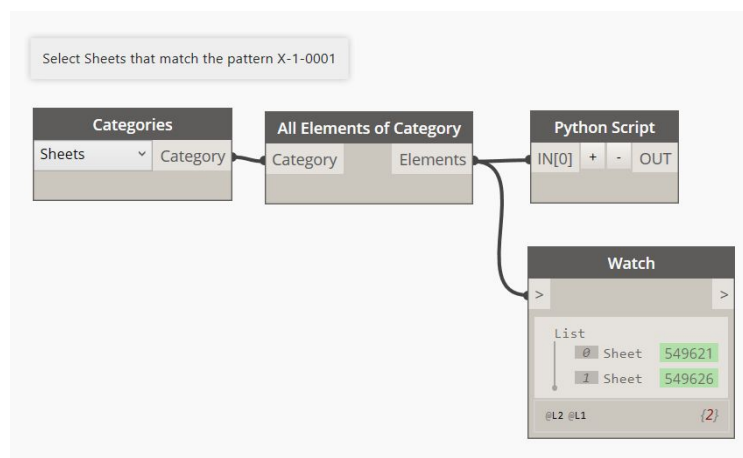
sorted_points = sorted(distance_and_points) # Sort the nested list
OUT = sorted_points # Output sorted list
```

## Example 2 - Select Sheets based on a given Text Pattern

In this example, we will use Python's powerful regular expression module to detect text patterns in Sheet Numbers. The goal is to ensure Sheet Numbers adhere to a given standard.

Suppose we want all our sheets to be numbered with the following structure: **A-1-0001**. **A** being a letter for a discipline (ie. A for architecture), **1** the Sheet Type (1 for plans, 2 for elevations, etc), and **0000** being a 4 digit number indicating the sheet number within a section.

We will start by collecting all elements of the View category using standard Dynamo nodes and then connecting them into a Python Node:



To create a search pattern we will use Python's Regular Expression (Regex). Regexes are a fascinating but lengthy topic, so we won't be able to go into much depth, however, there are powerful tools such as [Pythex.org](http://Pythex.org) that can help us build text search patterns. Once again, read the comments and then type the code below line by line:

```
import re # Imports the Regular Expression Module

sheets = IN[0] # Assigns the Input IN[0] to the variable `sheets`
pattern = '[A-Z]-\d-\d{4}' # Creates a regular expression pattern, explained below
bad_sheets = [] # Creates an empty list. We will use this to store sheets
# Iterates through all sheets.
for sheet in sheets:
    sheet_number= sheet.SheetNumber # Get sheet name and assign to variable
    # re.search takes a pattern, and a sheet name as arguments
    match = re.search(pattern , sheet_number)
    # if a match is not found, match will be None, else it will return the match
    if not match:
        bad_sheets.append(sheet)
OUT = bad_sheets
```

Now let's review the regular expression we used:

```
'[A-Z]-\d-\d{4}'
```

[A-Z]	Matches all characters between A and Z
-	Matches a dash
\d	Matches a single "Digit" character
-	Matches a dash
\d{4}	Matches a sequence of 4 digits

Regular expressions are a powerful tool and are used widely in programming. They are often used to detect things like phone numbers, emails, website address, etc. You can read more about regular expressions here: <https://docs.python.org/2.7/howto/regex.html>

# pythex

Your regular expression:

Your test string:

1-1000  
A-2-1001  
BadSheetName  
B-1000  
E-4-2012

Match result:

1-1000  
A-2-1001  
BadSheetName  
B-1000  
E-4-2012

Match captures:

**Match 1**  
1. A-2-1001

**Match 2**  
1. E-4-2012

Tools like Pythex.org can be used to create and validate Regular Expressions

### Example 3 - Find all doors that have been Mirrored

In this final example, we will try to achieve the following goal: find a list of all the Doors in a model that have been mirrored, and add a note on the Comment Parameter. This is useful for cases when a Door family is supposed to represent a given handedness, and mirroring it could create incorrect schedules. This example is almost identical to the very first Dynamo Python Script I wrote about 2 years ago.

For this exercise, we will need to import a few more things than in the previous examples. We will also now leave the other Dynamo nodes aside and do this 100% in Python.

```
import clr
# Import RevitAPI Dll Assembly Classes
clr.AddReference("RevitAPI")
from Autodesk.Revit.DB import FilteredElementCollector, BuiltInCategory

# Adds RevitServices Assembly and Import DocumentManager and TransactionManager
clr.AddReference("RevitServices")
from RevitServices.Transactions import TransactionManager
from RevitServices.Persistence import DocumentManager
# Create variable for Revit Document
doc = DocumentManager.Instance.CurrentDBDocument

# Start Transaction
TransactionManager.Instance.EnsureInTransaction(doc)
# >>> OUR CODE WILL GO HERE <<<
# End Transaction
TransactionManager.Instance.TransactionTaskDone()
```

After importing the `clr` module, we will use `clr.AddReference()` to add a reference to the RevitAPI assembly (RevitAPI.dll). With this reference loaded we can import objects from the `Autodesk.Revit.DB` Namespace. We will start by importing 2 of them: `FilteredElementCollector`, and `BuiltInCategory`<sup>4</sup>.

In the next block, we add a reference to `RevitServices` - `clr.AddReference('RevitServices')`. This assembly enables namespaces from which you can import `TransactionManager` and `DocumentManager`. These are classes that bridge the Dynamo environment with Revit, hence the name *RevitServices*.

`TransactionManager` is used to *start* and *commit* changes to the Revit Database. This is typically done by Dynamo on each Run but when we modify the database through code, we must start and close manually. `DocumentManager` will allow us to get a *handler* for the Active Revit Document. This handler will be used to start the transaction, as well as to use the `FilteredElementCollector` class.

---

<sup>4</sup> These are two objects defined within the Revit API. The full list of classes and everything you need to know about them is listed on the Official Api Documentation or [RevitApiDocs.com](http://RevitApiDocs.com).

The `FilteredElementCollector` is a class used to query a Revit model. To use it we must first *instantiate* the class using its constructor. FIC's constructor requires that you pass a Document instance. We will use the one we extracted from the `DocumentManager` class above.

```
collector = FilteredElementCollector(doc)
```

Once a collector is created, we can use any of the available methods, including `OfCategory()`, which will enable to retrieve all elements of a given category. As a parameter, it requires a `BuiltInCategory Enum`. You can see a full list of available on the API Documentation. `OST_Doors` is the enumeration member used to retrieve elements of the Door Category. Note we also chain the call with the `WhereElementIsNotElementType()`. This ensures only Element Instances, but not Element Types are returned.

```
doors = collector.OfCategory(BuiltInCategory.OST_Doors).WhereElementIsNotElementType()
```

Finally, we iterate through each door using a for loop and verify if each door has been Mirrored by checking the `.Mirrored` property. This property returns `True` or `False` based on whether the door has been Mirrored. Once run into a mirrored door, we retrieve the "Comments" Parameter object, and set it to the string: 'Is Mirrored'.

```
for door in doors:
    if door.Mirrored:
        comment_param = door.LookupParameter('Comments')
        # returns a parameter object
        comment_param.Set('Is Mirrored')
```

### LookupParameter Method

While it is acceptable to use the `Lookup()` method in some cases, it has a few caveats. First, it will not work when Revit is set to other Languages - lookup uses the "display value" of a parameter. Second, if there are two parameters with the same name, only the first is returned. A safer way to implement this would be to use `comment_param.get_Parameter()` method, and pass an instance of the `BuiltInParameter` (see API Docs for a full list). That would look something like this:

```
from Autodesk.Revit.DB import BuiltInParameter
param = door.get_Parameter(BuiltInParameter.ALL_MODEL_INSTANCE_COMMENTS)
```

Final Script

```
import clr
# Import RevitAPI Dll Assembly Classes
clr.AddReference("RevitAPI")
from Autodesk.Revit.DB import FilteredElementCollector, BuiltInCategory

# Import DocumentManager and TransactionManager
clr.AddReference("RevitServices")
from RevitServices.Transactions import TransactionManager
from RevitServices.Persistence import DocumentManager
# Create variable for Revit Document
doc = DocumentManager.Instance.CurrentDBDocument

# Start Transaction
TransactionManager.Instance.EnsureInTransaction(doc)

collector = FilteredElementCollector(doc)
doors = collector.OfCategory(BuiltInCategory.OST_Doors).WhereElementIsNotElementType()

for door in doors:
    if door.Mirrored:
        comment_param = door.LookupParameter('Comments')
        # returns a parameter object
        comment_param.Set('Is Mirrored')

# End Transaction
TransactionManager.Instance.TransactionTaskDone()
```



## Additional Tips

It takes time to learn and get to know all the available modules and classes. Even then, it is impossible to memorize every important detail about them.

I find the tricks below helpful when trying to understand a class or method that I am not familiar with.

## Exploring Objects

### dir()

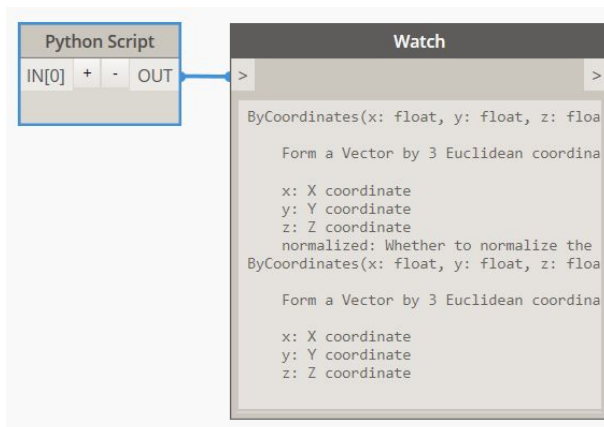
The built-in `dir()` function can be used to get a list of all methods and attributes of a given object.

```
import clr
clr.AddReference('ProtoGeometry')
from Autodesk.DesignScript import Geometry
# Get all attributes and methods of the Vector Class:
OUT = dir(Geometry.Vector)
```

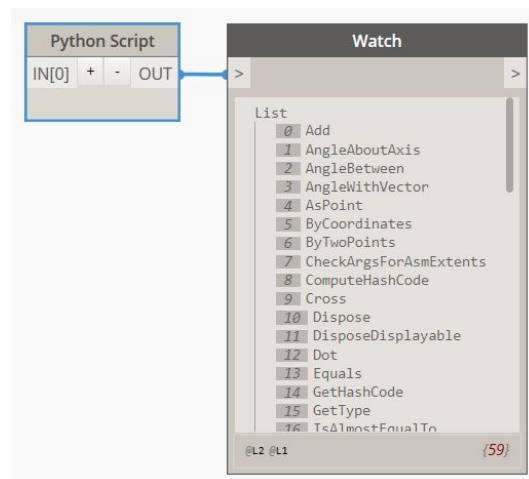
### The \_\_doc\_\_ Attribute

The `__doc__` attribute is used internally by python to get any documentation that might have been written on a function or method. In some cases it can be helpful to access manually

```
import clr
clr.AddReference('ProtoGeometry')
from Autodesk.DesignScript import Geometry
# Get Documentation of the ByCoordinates Method
OUT = Geometry.Vector.ByCoordinates.__doc__
```



Output of `__doc__` attribute



Output of `dir` function call

## Wrap and Unwrap Elements <sup>5</sup>

### UnwrapElement

“All Elements coming out of Dynamo Nodes are actually wrappers around core Revit Elements. Inside of Python, you can operate on these types directly by calling our nodes from inside of Python, which are all located in the Revit.Elements namespace [..].

If you would prefer to use the RevitAPI directly, you will need to unwrap the Element before operating on it, use our TransactionManager to ensure that you're operating inside of a RevitAPI Transaction, and wrap any Element you wish to return.”

### Wrapping

“In order to interoperate with our Revit nodes, any raw Autodesk.Revit.DB.Element being returned from a Python script must be wrapped in a Revit.Elements.Element. This can be done by using the ToDSType(bool) extension method. The bool argument determines whether or not the Element is “Revit-owned.” This distinction is important: Revit-owned Elements are not controlled by Dynamo, non-Revit-owned Elements are. Basically, if you are creating a new Element in your Python script, then you should not mark the wrapped Element as Revit-owned. If you are selecting an Element from the Document, then you should mark the wrapped Element as Revit-owned.”

```
clr.AddReference("RevitNodes")
import Revit
# Adds ToDSType(bool) extension method to Wrapped elements
clr.ImportExtensions(Revit.Elements)
# Adds ToProtoType, ToRevitType geometry conversion extension methods
clr.ImportExtensions(Revit.GeometryConversion)
```

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://github.com/DynamoDS/Dynamo/wiki/Python-0.6.3-to-0.7.x-Migration>

## Appendix

### Packages and Relevant Projects

#### Exploring Packages

Many Dynamo Packages are written in python and the code is available for you to explore.

Being comfortable exploring code written by other developers is an essential skill to master. You can learn the patterns and tricks experience developers use by reading their code. Below is a list of some packages I have personally explored during my learning journey:

<https://github.com/andydandy74/ClockworkForDynamo/tree/master/nodes/1.x/python>  
<https://github.com/dimven/SpringNodes/tree/master/Nodes>  
<https://github.com/eirannejad/pyRevit/tree/master/extensions/pyRevitTools.extension/pyRevit.tab>  
<https://github.com/ladybug-tools/ladybug-dynamo>

#### RevitPythonShell

Revit Python Shell is an interactive Ironpython Console that can run inside of Revit. I find RPS to be one of the most useful tools for learning the API. Before spending time trying to do something with the Revit API within a Dynamo script, test the API and objects interactively.

<https://github.com/architecture-building-systems/revitpythonshell>  
<https://daren-thomas.gitbooks.io/scripting-autodesk-revit-with-revitpythonshell/content>

#### pyRevit

*pyRevit is an IronPython script library for Revit.* The pyRevit framework allows you to create Ironpython .py files and add them directly to your ribbon. If you are not familiar with the project be sure to check it out: <http://eirannejad.github.io/pyRevit/whatspyrevit/>

#### RevitPythonWrapper

*Revit Python Wrapper was created to help Python programmers write Revit API code.*

Wrapper classes make the interaction with API objects less repetitive, and more consistent with Python's conventions.

The library contains many helpful classes, helpers and easy to use Wpf Forms.  
For more information see: [revitpythonwrapper.readthedocs.io](http://revitpythonwrapper.readthedocs.io)

## Dynamo - Python Resources

### Dynamo Wiki

<https://github.com/DynamoDS/Dynamo/wiki/Python-0.6.3-to-0.7.x-Migration>

### Namespaces, Moduls, DSCore

[http://dynamoprimer.com/en/12\\_Best-Practice/12-3\\_Scripting-Reference.html](http://dynamoprimer.com/en/12_Best-Practice/12-3_Scripting-Reference.html)

### DesignScript Code Syntax

[http://dynamoprimer.com/en/07\\_Code-Block/7-2\\_Design-Script-syntax.html](http://dynamoprimer.com/en/07_Code-Block/7-2_Design-Script-syntax.html)

## Dynamo Learning Resources

### Dynamo Primer

<http://dynamoprimer.com>

### Dynamo Primer - Python

[http://dynamoprimer.com/en/09\\_Custom-Nodes/9-4\\_Python.html](http://dynamoprimer.com/en/09_Custom-Nodes/9-4_Python.html)

### Parametric Monkey

<https://parametricmonkey.com/tutorials/>

### Learn Dynamo

<https://learndynamo.com/>

## Communities

### Revit API Forum

<http://forums.autodesk.com/t5/revit-api/bd-p/160>

### Revit API Docs

<http://www.revitapidocs.com>

### Dynamo Forum

<https://forum.dynamobim.com>

### Stackoverflow: revit-api

<http://stackoverflow.com/questions/tagged/revit-api>



## Revit API Blogs and Resources

### **Building Coder Blog**

<http://thebuildingcoder.typepad.com>

### **BoostYourBim**

<https://boostyourbim.wordpress.com>

### **SpiderInNet**

<http://spiderinnet.typepad.com>

### **Archi-lab.net**

<http://archi-lab.net/>

### **dp-stuff.org**

<http://dp-stuff.org>

### **Nathan's Revit API Notebook**

<http://wiki.theprovingground.org/revit-api>

## Official Autodesk Resources

### **Autodesk Developer Network**

<http://usa.autodesk.com/adsk/servlet/index?siteID=123112&id=2484975>

### **2017: Developer's Guide**

<http://help.autodesk.com/view/RVT/2017/ENU/?guid=GUID-F0A122E0-E556-4D0D-9D0F-7E72A9315A42>



## Python Documents and Guides

**Python Official Documentation - for IronPython use 2.7 docs**

<https://docs.python.org>

**Official Python Style Guide**

<https://www.python.org/dev/peps/pep-0008/>

**Code Academy**

<https://www.codecademy.com/learn/python>

**Dive into Python Book**

<http://www.diveintopython.net/>

**Automate the Boring Stuff**

<https://automatetheboringstuff.com/>

## IronPython Documentation

**Official IronPython Documentation**

<http://ironpython.net/documentation/>

**IronPython History**

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IronPython>

**IronPython Episode on Talk Python To Me**

<https://talkpython.fm/episodes/show/74/past-present-and-future-of-ironpython>