

# Interpreter Discovery

Most Ansible modules that execute under a POSIX environment require a Python interpreter on the target host. Unless configured otherwise, Ansible will attempt to discover a suitable Python interpreter on each target host the first time a Python module is executed for that host.

To control the discovery behavior:

- for individual hosts and groups, use the `ansible_python_interpreter` inventory variable
- globally, use the `interpreter_python` key in the `[defaults]` section of `ansible.cfg`

Use one of the following values:

`auto_legacy` :

Detects the target OS platform, distribution, and version, then consults a table listing the correct Python interpreter and path for each platform/distribution/version. If an entry is found, and `/usr/bin/python` is absent, uses the discovered interpreter (and path). If an entry is found, and `/usr/bin/python` is present, uses `/usr/bin/python` and issues a warning. This exception provides temporary compatibility with previous versions of Ansible that always defaulted to `/usr/bin/python`, so if you have installed Python and other dependencies at `/usr/bin/python` on some hosts, Ansible will find and use them with this setting. If no entry is found, or the listed Python is not present on the target host, searches a list of common Python interpreter paths and uses the first one found; also issues a warning that future installation of another Python interpreter could alter the one chosen.

`auto` : *(default in 2.12)*

Detects the target OS platform, distribution, and version, then consults a table listing the correct Python interpreter and path for each platform/distribution/version. If an entry is found, uses the discovered interpreter. If no entry is found, or the listed Python is not present on the target host, searches a list of common Python interpreter paths and uses the first one found; also issues a warning that future installation of another Python interpreter could alter the one chosen.

`auto_legacy_silent`

Same as `auto_legacy`, but does not issue warnings.

`auto_silent`

Same as `auto`, but does not issue warnings.

You can still set `ansible_python_interpreter` to a specific path at any variable level (for example, in `host_vars`, in vars files, in playbooks, and so on). Setting a specific path completely disables automatic interpreter discovery; Ansible always uses the path specified.