

Programming for Bioinformatics

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Course organization

- 5/12 mid term exam on paper, it is worth 8/32 points, finals are on February and march
- This module of the course is about Python

Linux and CS basics

- The main resource of a computer are RAM and CPU
- The OS allocates resources to programs, and impedes interference among them
- Linux is a kernel, it manages resources for the OS
 - It derives from Unix, like also MacOS
 - It is multithreaded (it can run more than 1 program at the same time) and multiuser
 - The users are isolated from each other, they cannot interfere
- A Linux distro includes an install system for the distro itself, drivers, a package manager, tools
 - Some tools are really specific, and probably I will never need them
 - A package manager allows to install and remove tools
- One user is root, the superuser
 - It should be used only when needed and with extreme caution
- The shell is the main interface of the OS
- The directory structure is a rooted tree
 - The root directory in linux is called /
- A file is the name given to a set of data
- A file needs to be contained in a directory
- An extension is an indication of the filetype, but does not determine it
- Python programs are text files with extension .py
- Some basic shell commands
 - The Tab button autocompletes the commands in the shell
 - `cd` is used to enter in a directory
 - `mkdir` creates a directory
 - `ls` lists all files and directories inside the current directory
 - * `ls -l` gives more informations on the file, e.g. permissions
 - `.` is a shortcut for the current dir
 - `..` is a shortcut for the parent dir
 - `~` is a shortcut for the home dir of the current user
 - Starting my path with the root dir / makes the path absolute
 - Starting with a directory directly is like starting with `./`
 - Writing `cd` without parameters is like writing `cd ~`
 - `pwd` prints the current dir
 - `cp` and `mv` are the copy and move commands
 - `rm` permanently deletes files
- Files can have different permissions

- Users can be selectively allowed to read, write and/or execute files
- The owner of a file can set permissions for everyone, users and groups
- Permissions can be read as `-rwxrwr--`, where the first 3 characters refer to user, then group, then others, then all
- Permissions are added and removed with the `chmod` command
- `chmod u+x` adds execute permission to user, while `chmod o-w` removes write permission to others
- `chmod 777` gives full permissions to everyone
- A running program is identified by a unique PID (program id)
 - `ps -a` lists all the running processes with PID
 - `kill PID` kills the running process
 - * This should be used only as a last option, I risk to lose data (!)
- A single program can span multiple processes
- `sleep` suspends the current shell for the specified time
- `man` opens the manual of a command
- The argument of a command is the subject of the operation
- The parameters of a command are the options that specify its action
- The output of a command can be written to a file with the redirect operator `>`
 - `ps -a > output.txt`
 - The error messages will still be printed on screen
 - If the file already exists, it is overwritten (!)
 - If I use the append operator `>>` instead, it adds the output at the end of the file
- To redirect errors we use `2>`, while to redirect both normal output and error `>>` is used
- To show the content of a file we can open it in a text editor, or use the following commands
 - `head` shows the first 10 lines
 - `tail` shows the last 10 lines
 - `cat` shows the whole file, and it is impractical with long files
 - `more` shows the whole file page by page
 - `less` shows the whole file allowing to scroll
- There is a plethora of text editors
 - `nano` and `pico` are easy to use
 - `vim` and `emacs` are more advanced but less easy
 - Some have a GUI version, like `gvim` and `xemacs`
- A computer is fast, but stupid, It does exactly what you tell it to do
- Programming is useful for dealing with complex operations, repetitive tasks, huge amounts of data
- Sometimes I can do things with a PC without knowing how they are done: libraries
- Documentation is really useful as a reference, but is not really good for learning
- Things work most of the time, until they do not work once and no one knows why
- I can run a script in the background using an `&` after the command
 - `~ python test.py &`

Python basics

- Python is fast to implement, widely used, has many libraries, it is well documented
 - It is not used so much by computer scientists, but a lot by non computer scientists
 - We want to be as efficient as needed, not as efficient as possible (!)
 - * Using C can improve efficiency, but not as much as writing a good program
 - It is an imperative language
 - We can use C when we need to work really low-level, but often it is not needed
- A Python program can be written and used in different ways
 - I can create a text file and run it from the shell
 - I can use an IDE to write, execute, access documentation
 - I can write directly in the Python interpreter without creating a file
- The operator `/` is division in python2, while in python 3 the operator `//` is integer division

- The result of integer division is itself an integer
- Floating point division in python3 is done by the operator /
- In python2 the type of division is determined by the context
 - * It is integer division only if both numbers are integers, otherwise it is floating point
 - * If I want to do floating point division between integers, I need to first convert one of them to a float
- The operator % is the remainder of an integer division
- The operator * is multiplication, ** is exponentiation, + and - are sum and addition
- There are many built-in functions to perform calculations
- e and pi are recognised as the respective constants
- To use functions from libraries I need to use the syntax
 - `from math import *`
 - * * is a wildcard that means everything
 - * I can also import a single command
 - The need to import commands is due to avoid an enormous number of function name clashes when I define a custom function
- A variable is the name of a memory location that can store a value
- Strings can be accessed by character by putting the index in parentheses
 - `str[0]`
- Substrings can be extracted as
 - `str[2:5]` extracts 2 included until 5 excluded
 - If I omit beginning or end, it considers the beginning or the end
 - `str[-2:2:-1]` specific to go by jumps of -1 (go backwards)
- String concatenation is done with the operator +
- If I multiply a string for an integer I get the string repeated for a number of times equal to the integer
- You cannot change a string by assigning a value to an element of the string, you need to create a new string
- User input is collected with `input("message")` in python3 and `raw_input("message")` in python2
- Some methods for strings
 - `s.upper()`
 - `s.lower()`
 - `s.replace("a","b")`
 - `s.startswith("a")`

Functions

- A function is a code block with a name
- A built-in function is readily understood by the python interpreter
- The syntax is

```
def fun(par):
    my code+par
x = "some data"
fun(x)
```

- The return statement assigns its value to the function
- In the following `x=1`

```
def fun():
    return 1
x = fun()
```

- The first statement in a function is called docstring
- It is the output that you get when you call help on your function

```
def fun():
```

```
"""This function doesn't do anything"""
```

- Comments in python are made with `#` and they are useful to make code more readable

Lists

- Lists behave similarly to strings
- To check if an element is in a string or list

```
my_list = [1,2,3,4]
print (2 in my_list)
>>> True
```

- The main difference is that in lists I can change elements, but not in strings
- The split function splits a string in a list separated by the separator given as an argument
- I cannot split for the empty character, to separate a string in any character I should use `list(str)`

For loop

```
my_list = [1,2,3,4]
for num in my_list:
    print(num)
>>> 1
>>> 2
>>> 3
>>> 4
```