

Programming for Bioinformatics

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- 5/12 mid term exam on paper, it is worth 8/32 points
- Finals are on February and march
- This module is about Python
- Textbooks are not required but can be interesting for an in-depth understanding
- Slides are really synthetic
- Tutor: Giacomo Tartari
- 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
 - There are many Distros
- 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 shrotcut 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
- 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 (!)
- 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 parameter
- 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
- 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
- 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

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- I can run a script in the background using an `&` after the command
 - `~ python test.py &`

- 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 `+`
- 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