

Python

L. Schenato

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A very basic
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A not so short introduction to Python

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The origin

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Guido Van Rossum, researcher in Amsterdam, was working on an educational language, named ABC, and he came up with this new language: the Python. The language is named after the BBC show “Monty Python’s Flying Circus” and has nothing to do with reptiles.



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Characteristics

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Python is an object-oriented scripting language. It is as flexible and simple as other scripting languages but it is powerful and rich of functions as standard languages. Python is:

- Free
- Cross-platform
- Fast
- “Garbage-collector” featured
- Easy-to-read & Easy-to-write
- Rich of libraries



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Invoking the Interpreter

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Unix

The Python interpreter is usually installed as `/usr/local/bin/python` and can be started by typing the command `python`.

Windows

The Python installation is usually placed in `C:\python27`. To add this directory to your path, type the command `set path=%path%;C:\python27` into the command prompt of a DOS box. The starting command is again `python`.

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The interpreter works like the Unix shell:

- when called with standard input connected to a tty device (dos prompt), it reads and executes commands interactively;
- when called with a file name argument or with a file as standard input, it reads and executes a script from that file. By passing `-i` before the script you enter interactive mode afterwards, otherwise the interpreter exit.



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By calling the interpreter it is also possible to execute:

- the statement(s) in command (like shell's -c option) with
`python -c command [arg] ...` (it is strongly recommended to quote command with single quotes);
- Python modules as script, as if you had spelled out its full name on the command line, by invoking
`python -m module [arg] ...`

Exiting the interpreter

To exit (with a zero exit status), type an end-of-file character (Ctrl-D on Unix, Ctrl-Z on Windows) at the primary prompt of the interpreter. Alternatively, type `quit()`.

Argument passing from command line

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By executing `import sys` you can access the list of strings `sys.argv` into which the script name and additional arguments are turned: the length of the list is at least one and

- when no script and no arguments are given, `sys.argv[0]` is an empty string;
- when the script name is given as `'-'` (meaning standard input), `sys.argv[0]` is set to `'-'`;
- then `-c` command is used, `sys.argv[0]` is set to `'-c'`;
- when `-m` module is used, `sys.argv[0]` is set to the full name of the located module;
- any other options found after `-c` or `-m` are not consumed by the Python interpreter's option processing but left in `sys.argv`.

Interactive mode

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What does it means

The interpreter is said to be in “interactive mode” when commands are read from a tty or dos prompt. In this mode, it looks like this:

```
$python
Python 2.5.2 (r252:60911, Jan 24 2010, 14:53:14)
[GCC 4.3.2] on linux2
Type "help", "copyright", "credits" or "license" for
      more information.

>>>
```

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Multi-line construct requires for continuation lines as in the following if statement:

```
>>> python_is_cool = 1
>>> if python_is_cool:
...     print "Man I love Python!"
...
Man I love Python!
```



Interactive mode

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...
Man I love Python!
```



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Error handling

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Errors belongs to two classes:

Handled Not real error but “exceptions” handled by an `except` clause in a `try` statement.

Unhandled The interpreter prints an error message to the standard error stream and a stack trace. Typing the interrupt character (Control-C or DEL) to the primary prompt cancels the input and returns to the primary prompt (producing a `KeyboardInterrupt` exception).



Error handling

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This is an example

```
>>> python_ic_cool = 1
>>> if python_is_cool
    File "<stdin>", line 1
        if python_is_cool
            ^
SyntaxError: invalid syntax
>>>
```



How to make a Python script executable

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Unix

Putting the line `#! /usr/bin/env python` at the beginning of the script make them executable by the shell. Possibly, make it executable by typing `chmod +x script.py`.

Windows

There is no a corresponding executable mode: any `.py` or `.pyw` file are automatically associated to the python interpreter.

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How to read the code at the interactive shell

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```
>>> # An example
... python_is_cool = 1
>>> if python_is_cool:
...     print "Man I love Python!"
...
Man I love Python!
```

```
>>> # this is the 1st comment
... CNR = 1 # the 2nd comment
>>>           # ... and now a 3rd!
... STRING = "# This is not a comment."
```



How to read the code at the interactive shell

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```
>>> # An example A COMMENT
... python_is_cool = 1
>>> if python_is_cool:
...     print "Man I love Python!"
...
Man I love Python!
```

```
>>> # this is the 1st comment
... CNR = 1 # the 2nd comment
>>>           # ... and now a 3rd!
... STRING = "# This is not a comment."
```



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```
>>> # An example A COMMENT
... python_is_cool = 1INPUT LINE
>>> if python_is_cool:INPUT LINE
...     print "Man I love Python!"INPUT LINE
...
Man I love Python!
```

```
>>> # this is the 1st comment
... CNR = 1 # the 2nd comment
>>>           # ... and now a 3rd!
... STRING = "# This is not a comment."
```



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```
>>> # An example A COMMENT
... python_is_cool = 1INPUT LINE
>>> if python_is_cool:INPUT LINE
...     print "Man I love Python!"INPUT LINE
... SECONDARY PROMPT OF INPUT LINE
Man I love Python!
```

```
>>> # this is the 1st comment
... CNR = 1 # the 2nd comment
>>>           # ... and now a 3rd!
... STRING = "# This is not a comment."
```



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```
>>> # An example A COMMENT
... python_is_cool = 1 INPUT LINE
>>> if python_is_cool: INPUT LINE
...     print "Man I love Python!" INPUT LINE
... SECONDARY PROMPT OF INPUT LINE
Man I love Python! OUTPUT LINE
```

```
>>> # this is the 1st comment
... CNR = 1 # the 2nd comment
>>>           # ... and now a 3rd!
... STRING = "# This is not a comment."
```



Python as a calculator

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The interpreter is also a simple calculator: you can type an expression and it will compute the value. Expression syntax is straightforward with the operators +, -, *, and / that works just like in most other languages; parentheses () can be used for grouping. Let's try:

```
>>> 1+32
33
>>> # This is a comment
... 1+32
33
>>> 1+32 # and a comment on the same line as code
4
>>> (20-3*4)/6
2
```



Python as a calculator: implicit casting

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Please note the following example:

```
>>> # Division of floating points give a double
... 10.0/3.0
3.3333333333333335
>>> # Division of integers gives an integer (the floor):
... 10/3
3
>>> # Division of integer and floating point give a
      floating point
... 10.0/3
3.3333333333333335
>>> 10/3.0
3.3333333333333335
```



Python as a calculator: variable assignment

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To assign a value to a variable use the equal sign ('='). No result is displayed before the next interactive prompt:

```
>>> a = 10
>>> b = 3*4
>>> a * b
120
```

Multiple assignment is allowed (like in C):

```
>>> a = b = c = 0 # Zero a, b and c
>>> a
0
>>> b
0
>>> c
0
```



Python as a calculator: variable assignment

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Before using a variable, it
has to be defined (i.e. assigned to a value) or an error will occur:

```
>>> # trying to access an undefined variable
... x
Traceback (most recent call last):
  File "<stdin>", line 1, in <module>
NameError: name 'x' is not defined
```



Python as a calculator: numerical types

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Floating points are fully supported and operators with mixed type operands convert the integer operand to floating point:

```
>>> 3 * 3.75 / 1.5
7.5
>>> 7.0 / 2
3.5
>>> 2.5 ** 2
6.25
>>
>> _
6.25
>> _ * 2
12.50
```

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Floating points are fully supported and operators with mixed type operands convert the integer operand to floating point:

```
>>> 3 * 3.75 / 1.5
7.5
>>> 7.0 / 2
3.5
>>> 2.5 ** 2 Power operator
6.25
>> _
6.25
>> _ * 2
12.50
```

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Floating points are fully supported and operators with mixed type operands convert the integer operand to floating point:

```
>>> 3 * 3.75 / 1.5
7.5
>>> 7.0 / 2
3.5
>>> 2.5 ** 2 Power operator
6.25
>> _ last printed expression
6.25
>> _ * 2
12.50
```



Python as a calculator: numerical types

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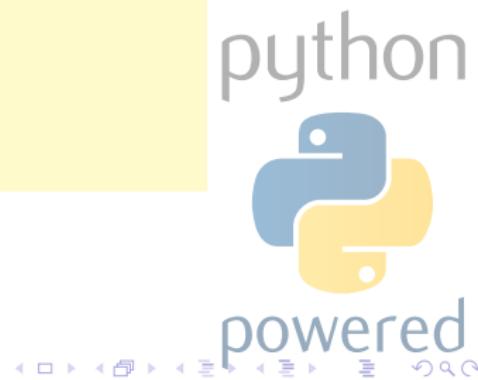
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Complex numbers are supported in Python; imaginary numbers are written with a suffix of `j` or `J`. Complex numbers with a nonzero real component are written as `(real+imagj)`, or can be created with the `complex(real, imag)` function (like in Matlab[®]).

```
>>> 1j * 1J
(-1+0j)
>>> 1j * complex(0,1)
(-1+0j)
>>> (3+1j)*3
(9+3j)
>>> (1+2j)/(1+1j)
(1.5+0.5j)
```



Python as a calculator: numerical types

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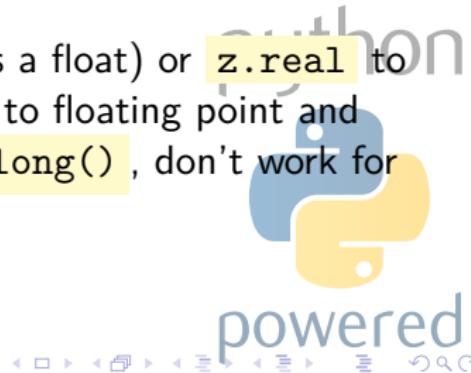
A very basic
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Complex numbers are always represented as two floating point numbers, the real and imaginary part. To extract these parts from a complex number `z`, use `z.real` and `z.imag`.

```
>>> a=0.5+2.5j
>>> a.real
0.5
>>> a.imag
2.5
```

Use `abs(z)` to get its magnitude (as a float) or `z.real` to get its real part (conversion functions to floating point and integer, i.e. `float()`, `int()` and `long()`, don't work for complex numbers).



Python as a calculator: numerical types

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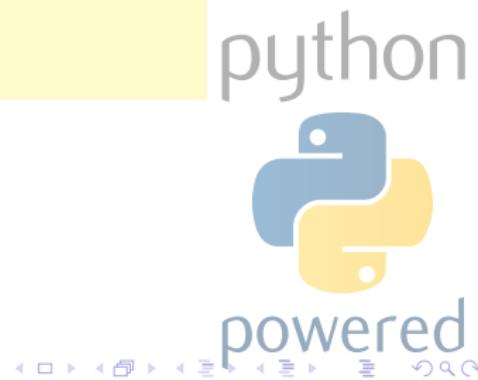
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An example:

```
>>> a=3.0+4.0j
>>> float(a)
Traceback (most recent call last):
  File "<stdin>", line 1, in ?
TypeError: can't convert complex to float; use abs(z)
>>> a.real
3.0
>>> a.imag
4.0
>>> abs(a)  # sqrt(a.real**2 + a.imag**2)
5.0
```



Strings

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Python strings can be expressed in several ways. They can be enclosed in single quotes or double quotes:

```
>>> 'spam eggs'  
'spam eggs'  
>>> 'doesn\'t'  
"doesn't"  
>>> "doesn't"  
"doesn't"  
>>> '"Yes," he said.'  
'"Yes," he said.'  
>>> "\"Yes,\" he said."  
'"Yes," he said.'  
>>> 'Isn\'t," she said.'  
'"Isn\'t," she said.'
```

Strings

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String literals can span multiple lines in several ways.
Continuation lines can be used, with a backslash as the last character on the line indicating that the next line is a logical continuation of the line:

```
>>> hello = "This is a rather long string containing\n\"  
... several lines of text just as you would do in C.\n\"  
...     Whitespace is  
... significant."  
>>>  
>>> print hello  
This is a rather long string containing  
several lines of text just as you would do in C.  
    Whitespace is significant.
```



Eventually, strings can be surrounded in a pair of matching triple-quotes: "''' or ''' : end of lines can be omitted in this case.

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A string literal can be made a “raw” string: in this case, `\n` sequences are not converted to newlines, but the backslash at the end of the line, and the newline character in the source, are both included in the string as data.

```
>>> hello = r"This is a rather long string containing\n\"... several lines of text much as you would do in C."
>>> print hello
This is a rather long string containing\n\
several lines of text much as you would do in C.
```

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Strings

can be concatenated with the `+` operator, and repeated with `*`:

```
>>> word = 'CNR' + '-' + 'IRPI'  
>>> word  
'CNR-IRPI'  
>>> '<' + word*5 + '>'  
'<CNR-IRPICNR-IRPICNR-IRPICNR-IRPICNR-IRPI>'
```

Two string literals next to each other are automatically concatenated:

```
>>> word = 'CNR' '-' 'IRPI'  
>>> word  
'CNR-IRPI'
```

Length of a string can be obtained by the built-in function `len()`.

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Indexing of strings are allowed and like in C, the first character of a string has index 0. In python there is no character type, but a character is simply a one-sized string. Substrings can be specified with the slice notation: two indices separated by a colon (like in Matlab[®]).

```
>>> word[4]  
'I'  
>>> word[0:2]  
'CN'  
>>> word[2:4]  
'R-'
```

An omitted first index defaults to zero, an omitted second index defaults to the size of the string being sliced.

```
>>> word[:2]      # The first two characters  
'CN'  
>>> word[2:]      # Everything except the first two  
                  # characters  
'R-IRPI'
```

Strings

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Python strings are not like C string: they cannot be changed, as is the following example:

```
>>> word[0] = 'c'
Traceback (most recent call last):
  File "<stdin>", line 1, in <module>
TypeError: 'str' object does not support item assignment
>>> word[:1] = 'cnr'
Traceback (most recent call last):
  File "<stdin>", line 1, in <module>
TypeError: 'str' object does not support item assignment
```

Please, try the following code: word[1:100] , word[10:] ,
word[2:1] , word[-1] , word[-2] ,
word[-2:] , word[:-2] , word[-0] , word[-10] ,...

Data Types

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Type	Internal representation	Example
Integer	32 bit ("C" long int)	1220, 0, -15
Long integer	more than 32 bit	10000000L, -1243574L
Float	32 bit ("C" double)	1.23 2.32e-9, 5.0E201
Boolean	integer	0, 1
Complex	couple of float	1+2j, 4.0+1.1j, 2j
String	array of characters	'CNR', "l'acqua"



Standard numeric operators

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Operator	Description	Example
<code>+-</code>	Sum, Difference	$1+2=3, 3-4=-1$
<code>*, /</code>	Multiplication, Division	$4*3=12, 10/5=2$
<code>**</code>	Power	$2^{**}3=8, 3^{**}0.5=1.73$
<code>%</code>	Modulo operation	$10\%3=1, 5.3\%2.5=0.3$
<code>«, »</code>	bitwise left-, right-shift	$15«1=30, 18»1=9$



Standard boolean operators

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Operator	Description	Example
or, and	logic or, and	$x \text{ or } y$, $z \text{ and } k$
not	logic not	$(\text{not } 0)=1$
$<$, \leq , $>$, \geq	comparison	$(10==10)=1$, $('a'!= 'a')=0$
$==$, \neq , $!=$		
	bit-or	$x \mid y$
&	bit-and	$x \& y$
$^$	bit-xor	$x ^ y$



Standard string operators

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Operator	Description	Example
+	cat	('a'+'b')='ab'
*	repetition	('a'*3)='aaa'
s[i]	indexing	s='abc',s[0]='a'
s[i:j]	slicing	s='abc',s[1:2]='b'
len(s)	length	s='abc',len(s)=3
%	formatting	'hi %s' % 'luca'='hi luca'

Parameter	Description
%s	stringa
%c	single char string
%d	number
%u	unsigned integer
%o	octal number
%x	hex number
%g	float
%e	float, scientific notation



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Credit goes to www.python.org and herein contents.

