Python File Open

File handling is an important part of any web application.

Python has several functions for creating, reading, updating, and deleting files.

File Handling

The key function for working with files in Python is the `open()` function.

The `open()` function takes two parameters; *filename*, and *mode*.

There are four different methods (modes) for opening a file:

`"r"` - Read - Default value. Opens a file for reading, error if the file does not exist

`"a"` - Append - Opens a file for appending, creates the file if it does not exist

`"w"` - Write - Opens a file for writing, creates the file if it does not exist

`"x"` - Create - Creates the specified file, returns an error if the file exists

In addition you can specify if the file should be handled as binary or text mode

`"t"` - Text - Default value. Text mode

`"b"` - Binary - Binary mode (e.g. images)

Syntax

To open a file for reading it is enough to specify the name of the file:

```
f = open("demofile.txt")
```

The code above is the same as:

```
f = open("demofile.txt", "rt")
```

Because `"r"` for read, and `"t"` for text are the default values, you do not need to specify them.

Note: Make sure the file exists, or else you will get an error.

Python File Open

Open a File on the Server

Assume we have the following file, located in the same folder as Python:

demofile.txt

```
Hello! Welcome to demofile.txt
This file is for testing purposes.
Good Luck!
```

To open the file, use the built-in `open()` function.

The `open()` function returns a file object, which has a `read()` method for reading the content of the file:

Example

```
f = open("demofile.txt", "r")
print(f.read())
```

Output:

Hello! Welcome to demofile.txt

This file is for testing purposes.

Good Luck!

If the file is located in a different location, you will have to specify the file path, like this:

Example

Open a file on a different location:

```
f = open("D:\\myfiles\welcome.txt", "r")
print(f.read())
```

Read Only Parts of the File

By default the `read()` method returns the whole text, but you can also specify how many characters you want to return:

Example

Return the 5 first characters of the file:

```
f = open("demofile.txt", "r")
print(f.read(5))
```

Output:

Hello

Read Lines

You can return one line by using the `readline()` method:

Example

Read one line of the file:

```
f = open("demofile.txt", "r")
print(f.readline())
```

Output:

Hello! Welcome to demofile.txt

By calling `readline()` two times, you can read the two first lines:

Example

Read two lines of the file:

```
f = open("demofile.txt", "r")
print(f.readline())
print(f.readline())
```

Output:

Hello! Welcome to demofile.txt

This file is for testing purposes.

By looping through the lines of the file, you can read the whole file, line by line:

Example

Loop through the file line by line:

```
f = open("demofile.txt", "r")
for x in f:
  print(x)
```

Output:

Hello! Welcome to demofile.txt

This file is for testing purposes.

Good Luck!

Close Files

It is a good practice to always close the file when you are done with it.

Example

Close the file when you are finish with it:

```
f = open("demofile.txt", "r")
print(f.readline())
f.close()
```

Output:

Hello! Welcome to demofile.txt

Note: You should always close your files, in some cases, due to buffering, changes made to a file may not show until you close the file.

Python File Write

Write to an Existing File

To write to an existing file, you must add a parameter to the `open()` function:

`"a"` - Append - will append to the end of the file

`"w"` - Write - will overwrite any existing content

Example

Open the file "demofile2.txt" and append content to the file:

```
f = open("demofile2.txt", "a")
f.write("Now the file has more content!")
f.close()

#open and read the file after the appending:
f = open("demofile2.txt", "r")
print(f.read())
```

Output:

Hello! Welcome to demofile.txt

This file is for testing purposes.

Good Luck!

Now the file has more content!

Example

Open the file "demofile3.txt" and overwrite the content:

```
f = open("demofile3.txt", "w")
f.write("Woops! I have deleted the content!")
f.close()

#open and read the file after the appending:
f = open("demofile3.txt", "r")
print(f.read())
```

Output:

Woops! I have deleted the content!

Note: the "w" method will overwrite the entire file.

Create a New File

To create a new file in Python, use the `open()` method, with one of the following parameters:

`"x"` - Create - will create a file, returns an error if the file exist

`"a"` - Append - will create a file if the specified file does not exist

`"w"` - Write - will create a file if the specified file does not exist

Example

Create a file called "myfile.txt":

```
f = open("myfile.txt", "x")
```

Result: a new empty file is created!

Example

Create a new file if it does not exist:

```
f = open("myfile.txt", "w")
```

Python Delete File

Delete a File

To delete a file, you must import the OS module, and run its `os.remove()` function:

Example

Remove the file "demofile.txt":

```
import os
os.remove("demofile.txt")
```

Check if File exist:

To avoid getting an error, you might want to check if the file exists before you try to delete it:

Example

Check if file exists, *then* delete it:

```
import os
if os.path.exists("demofile.txt"):
  os.remove("demofile.txt")
else:
  print("The file does not exist")
```

Delete Folder

To delete an entire folder, use the `os.rmdir()` method:

Example

Remove the folder "myfolder":

```
import os
os.rmdir("myfolder")
```

Note: You can only remove *empty* folders.

Checking the End of file

To check if we have hit the end of the file, we check if the read() method returns an empty string:

Example

Remove the folder "myfolder":

```
file1 = open("demofile.txt",'r')

while True:
    line = file1.readline()

    if line == "":
        print("End of file")
        break
    print(line)
```

Output:

Hello! Welcome to demofile.txt

This file is for testing purposes.

Good Luck!

End of file

readlines() method

readline() method will read one line at a time. We can get all the lines in the file with readlines() method. readlines() will return a list of lines:

Example

Get the list of lines:

```
file1 = open("demofile.txt",'r')

lines = file1.readlines()

print(lines)
```

Output:

['Hello! Welcome to demofile.txt\n', 'This file is for testing purposes.\n', 'Good Luck!']

Python File Methods

Python has a set of methods available for the file object.

Method	Description
close()	Closes the file
detach()	Returns the separated raw stream from the buffer
fileno()	Returns a number that represents the stream, from the operating system's perspective
flush()	Flushes the internal buffer
isatty()	Returns whether the file stream is interactive or not
read()	Returns the file content
readable()	Returns whether the file stream can be read or not
readline()	Returns one line from the file
readlines()	Returns a list of lines from the file
seek()	Change the file position
seekable()	Returns whether the file allows us to change the file position
tell()	Returns the current file position
truncate()	Resizes the file to a specified size
writable()	Returns whether the file can be written to or not
write()	Writes the specified string to the file

writelines()	Writes a list of strings to the file