

JD Learning Journal

Exercise 1.1: Getting Started with Python

Learning Goals

- Summarize the uses and benefits of Python for web development
- Prepare your developer environment for programming with Python

Reflection Questions

1. ***In your own words, what is the difference between frontend and backend web development? If you were hired to work on backend programming for a web application, what kinds of operations would you be working on?***

Frontend, also known as client-side, is what the user sees. When developing the frontend of an application you'd be focusing on any functions that a user will interact with. This includes the basic webstack of HTML, CSS, and JS. Backend, on the other hand, can also be referred to as server-side development. In this role developers are focused on data handling and integrating the many pieces of an application.

In a backend role one would be handling operations pertaining to database interactions and API creation/management.

2. ***Imagine you're working as a full-stack developer in the near future. Your team is asking for your advice on whether to use JavaScript or Python for a project, and you think Python would be the better choice. How would you explain the similarities and differences between the two languages to your team? Drawing from what you learned in this Exercise, what reasons would you give to convince your team that Python is the better option?***

Both JavaScript and Python are very popular languages. As such they both offer a wide range of online communities and are constantly evolving to provide better features and modules.

For this project, I'd propose Python over JavaScript for a couple of reasons. Python is user friendly and comes with a minimal learning curve. While JavaScript has many modules that can be installed, Python comes with a wide range of operations that are offered out of the box. Additionally, Python was built to be readable, which helps to make the language simple to pick up. This is opposed to JavaScript, which has a far steeper learning curve and requires a bit more skill when picking up on existing code bases.

3. ***Now that you've had an introduction to Python, write down 3 goals you have for yourself and your learning during this Achievement. You can reflect on the following questions if it helps you. What do you want to learn about Python? What do you want to get out of this Achievement? Where or what do you see yourself working on after you complete this Achievement?***

1. I want to learn how to take an idea and put it into practice with Python. There are often ideas for automation that I have and am currently unable to cleanly and concisely turn those ideas into a script.
2. The main thing I want to get out of this Achievement is how I can use Python to automate tasks that would otherwise be manual and time consuming. This can be applied both to pet projects and in my professional projects.
3. I see myself implementing my new Python skills in my current position as a Security Engineer. With these skills I'd be able to cut down on the time to complete tasks significantly, and improve current processes as well.

Exercise 1.2: Data Types in Python

1. ***Imagine you're having a conversation with a future colleague about whether to use the iPython Shell instead of Python's default shell. What reasons would you give to explain the benefits of using the iPython Shell over the default one?***

Python's default shell is great when it comes to actually executing python. However, iPython is far more user friendly. The iPython shell uses coloring to distinguish between data types. Additionally, iPython clearly defines input and output, making it far easier to keep track of what's going on than with Python's default terminal.

2. ***Python has a host of different data types that allow you to store and organize information. List 4 examples of data types that Python recognizes, briefly define them, and indicate whether they are scalar or non-scalar.***

Data type	Definition	Scalar or Non-Scalar?
Float	An integer	Scalar
Integer	A number	Scalar
List	Mutable, ordered sequence	Non-Scalar
Dictionary	Unordered list that stores key-value pairs	Non-Scalar

3. ***A frequent question at job interviews for Python developers is: what is the difference between lists and tuples in Python? Write down how you would respond.***

Both lists and tuples are ordered structures, as such, they can both be indexed. However, they do differ in the fact that tuples are immutable while lists are mutable. While you can append a value onto a tuple, it doesn't quite work the same as with a list. When appending to a tuple, there is a new data structure created in storage that contains a copy of the original tuple plus the appended value(s). With a list, one can make changes to the original list by adding, deleting, and even modifying existing values.

4. ***In the task for this Exercise, you decided what you thought was the most suitable data structure for storing all the information for a recipe. Now, imagine you're creating a language-learning app that helps users memorize vocabulary through flashcards. Users can input vocabulary words, definitions, and their category (noun, verb, etc.) into the flashcards. They can then quiz themselves by flipping through the flashcards. Think about the necessary data types and what would be the most suitable data structure for this language-learning app. Between tuples, lists, and dictionaries, which would you choose? Think about their respective advantages and limitations, and where flexibility might be useful if you were to continue developing the language-learning app beyond vocabulary memorization.***

In this situation I'd use an inner and outer structure. The inner structure would contain the details of the words (vocabulary word, definition(s), part of speech, etc.). I would structure this using a dictionary. The details of each word is going to be mapped to a specific key, allowing flexibility when returning specific information to a user down the line. The outer structure would be a list. By adding each dictionary to a list, the user would be able to search through the list based on a specific key.