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How to set up Visual Studio Code for Python development



Jose Salvatierra

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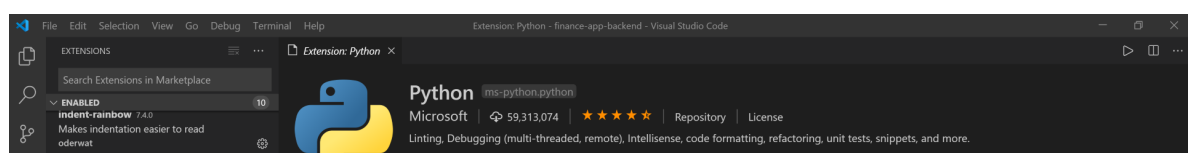
In this post we'll look at how to develop in Python using Visual Studio Code. I'll also show you a few extensions that can make your life much easier while working with Python!

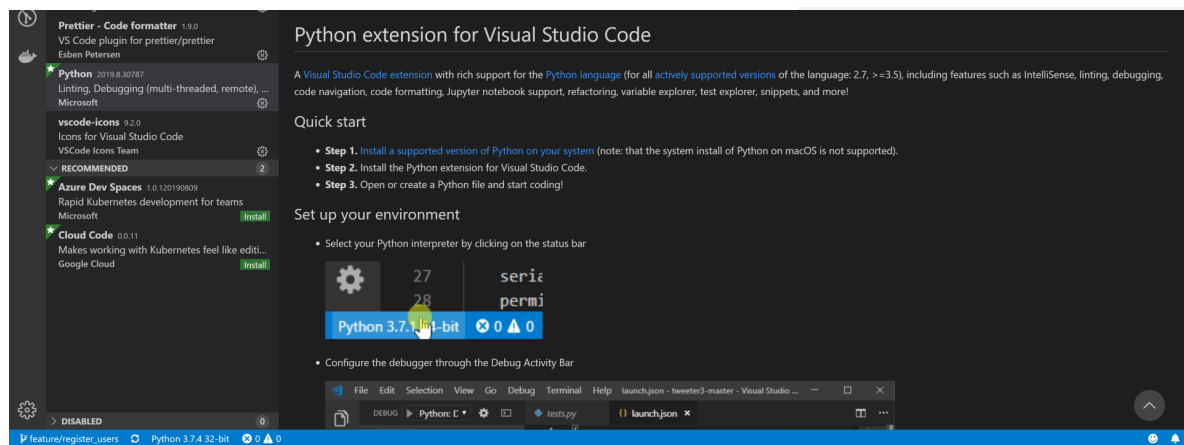
Initial setup

When you install Python (which I recommend you do via the [official installer](#)), remember in which folder it was installed. And on Windows, make sure to tick the "Add Python to PATH" in the first screen of the official installer.

Download [Visual Studio Code](#) and install it like you would any other application.

Open Visual Studio Code and navigate to the Extensions panel on the left hand side. There, look for the Python extension and install it





Once that's installed, you can open any folder using Visual Studio Code and create a file that ends in `.py`. The Python extension will use appropriate syntax highlighting and also help you code by offering you suggestions and hints.

You can change which version of Python the extension uses by clicking on the bottom left, where in the screenshot it says "Python 3.7.4 32-bit". This will let you select a different version from those you have already installed. Note that if you only have one version, you'll only be able to select that.

Here's a link to the Python extension:

<https://marketplace.visualstudio.com/items?itemName=ms-python.python>

The Code Runner extension

Another extension, aptly called "Code Runner", allows you to run your code more easily than normal. It gives VSCode a "Play" icon at the top right, and when you click it, the selected code will run.

This is great because it allows you to either:

- Select a portion of your code and run it, for example if you want to double-check what it does.

- Be select all your code and just open a file, and press the "Play" icon to run the entire file.

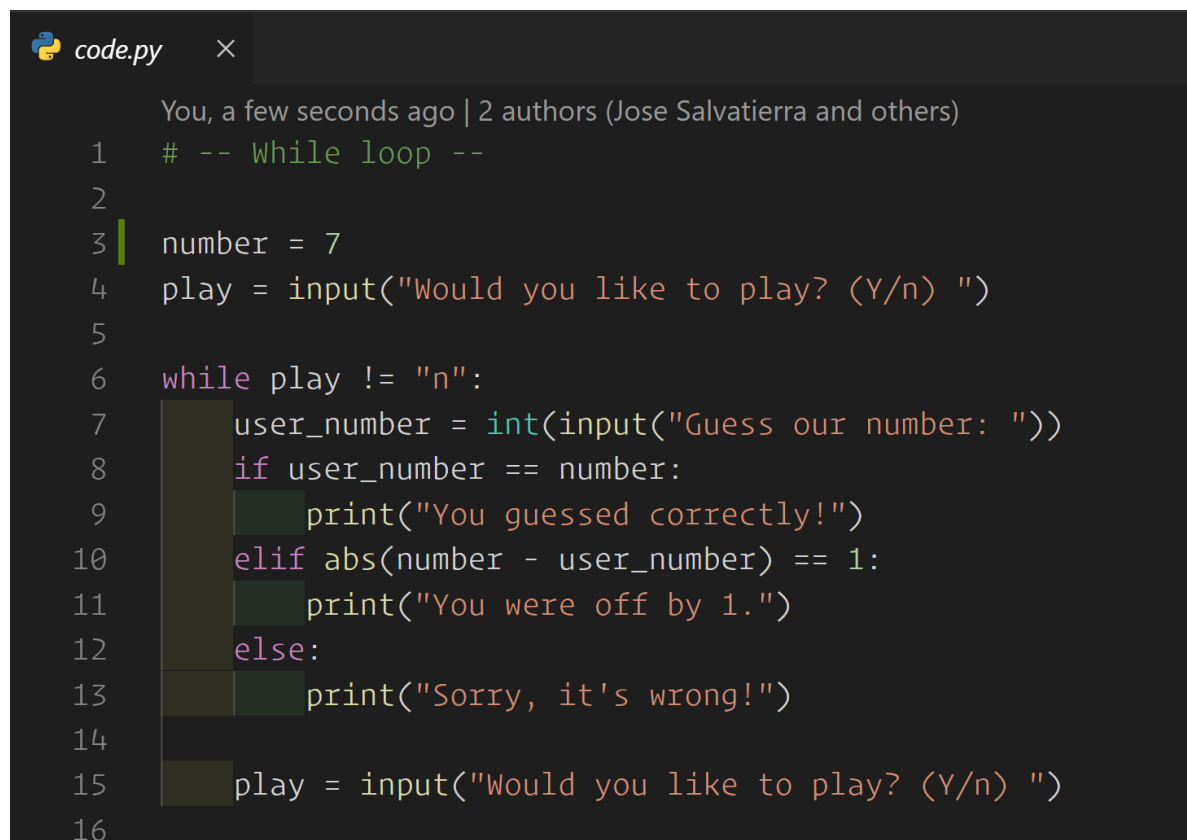
Do note that if you select only a portion of the code and run it, this portion cannot depend on variables or functions defined elsewhere in the code.

Link: <https://marketplace.visualstudio.com/items?itemName=formulahendry.code-runner>

The indent-rainbow extension

An extension called "indent-rainbow" will color every indentation level in Python in a slightly different color, so you can very easily tell which parts of your code are at which indentation level.

This is what the extension will do:

A screenshot of a code editor window titled 'code.py'. The code is a Python script for a number guessing game. The indentation levels are highlighted with different colors: the first level is dark blue, the second is light blue, the third is green, and the fourth is yellow. The code is as follows:

```
code.py x
You, a few seconds ago | 2 authors (Jose Salvatierra and others)
1  # -- While loop --
2
3  number = 7
4  play = input("Would you like to play? (Y/n) ")
5
6  while play != "n":
7      user_number = int(input("Guess our number: "))
8      if user_number == number:
9          print("You guessed correctly!")
10         elif abs(number - user_number) == 1:
11             print("You were off by 1.")
12         else:
13             print("Sorry, it's wrong!")
14
15     play = input("Would you like to play? (Y/n) ")
16
```

Link: <https://marketplace.visualstudio.com/items?itemName=oderwat.indent-rainbow>

The Rainbow Brackets extension

If you like the indent-rainbow extension, you might also like Rainbow Brackets extension, which highlights nested parentheses, square brackets, and curly braces in different colours, making it easier to keep track of nested brackets.

Link: <https://marketplace.visualstudio.com/items?itemName=2gua.rainbow-brackets#overview>

The vscode-icons extension

While this extension is by no means required to run Python code, I use it and like it very much as it allows me to more easily scan my open files and folders by giving them nicer icons.

You can install this in order to change the icons displayed beside files and folders in your currently open project.

Link: <https://marketplace.visualstudio.com/items?itemName=vscode-icons-team.vscode-icons>

The LiveShare extension

VSCoDe has a great extension for collaborating with others. It lets you share your whole VSCoDe workspace so that others can join it and code with you. I often use it for pair programming, although it's great for asking for getting help as well!

Download and install the LiveShare extension here:

<https://marketplace.visualstudio.com/items?itemName=MS-vsliveshare.vsliveshare>

After you've installed it, you'll see a "Live Share" icon and text at the bottom of your VSCode window. Pressing that will start a Live Share session and give you a link that you can share with whomever you want joining your shared session.

Conclusion

That's it! As long as your Python version is in your PATH (which happens automatically on Mac and Linux, and you must tick the box

in the installer in Windows), the Python extension will straight work out of the box!

If you have persistent issues, Google is your best friend as tens of thousands of people use this extension, and almost all potential problems have already been discussed and solved in other occasions. The development team is also very helpful in their [GitHub page](#).

The GitHub page also contains extensive guides and information on how to get the extension up and running, in case it's necessary!

Hope this has been helpful and your environment is now all set up. Happy coding!



Jose Salvatierra

I'm a software engineer turned instructor! I founded Teclado to help me do this for everyone. I hope you enjoy the content!

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