

# Classes as data structures with methods

TEAM INFDEV

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## Lecture topics

- In this lecture we will “close the circle” of data structures and functions
- We will show how it is possible to form a new, even more powerful abstraction
- We will define **classes** as the joining of functions and data structures

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# Problem discussion

## Introduction

- Functions on lists always take a list as input
- This list is understood as the main **subject** of the computation
- We would like to create a stronger visual and semantic link between the subject of a computation and the computation itself

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## Examples

- length of a list
- sum of a list
- find in a list a given element
- map of a list wrt some transformation
- ...

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# General idea

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## Introduction

- To solve the problem, we will create classes
- A class is the union of a data structures and its characterizing functions
- The functions inside a class are known as methods



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## Blueprint of a class

- What are the fundamental attributes?
- What properties do the attributes have (relationships, etc.)?
- What are the fundamental methods of the class?
- What properties do the attributes have (relationships, returned values, etc.)?

# The blueprint of the list class (**THIS IS NOT CODE!**)

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```
1 Abstraction List =
2   the list may be Empty, with
3   no attributes
4   IsEmpty() method returns True
5   Length method returns 0
6   Map(f) method returns the empty list
7   Filter(p) method returns the empty list
8   ...
9
10  the list may be a Node
11  head attribute (the value of the element of this node)
12  tail attribute (the rest of the list)
13  IsEmpty() method returns False
14  Length method returns the length of the list
15  Map(f) method returns the the transformed list wrt function f
16  Filter(p) method returns the list with only elements respecting p
17  ...
```

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## Design of a class

- The hardest part of building a class is its design
- How do we build a reasonable class?
- What is a bad implementation?

## Design of a class

- The same logic that applies to the design of functions applies to classes
- **Encapsulation<sup>a</sup>** is the central property of both
- A class is well encapsulated if
  - it offers a clear interaction surface by not exposing its internals in a dangerous way
  - it is a cohesive unit that offers a single, clearly defined set of related services

---

<sup>a</sup>Also called **information hiding**

## Design of a class

- Thanks to **encapsulation**, a program can be built as a series of independent units
- These units are **loosely coupled**, in the sense that a change in the implementation (but not the methods offered) of one unit does not break the others<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup>Think about a faster implementation, for example.

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## Design of a class

- A bad example would be a `ListOrPlayer` class which contains a list or a player, with methods and fields such as:
  - `IsList`, `IsPlayer`
  - `Name`, `Score`, `Weapon`, ...
  - `Length`, `Map`, `Filter`, ...
- Why is it a bad example?

## Design of a class

- A bad example would be a `ListOrPlayer` class which contains a list or a player, with methods and fields such as:
  - `IsList`, `IsPlayer`
  - `Name`, `Score`, `Weapon`, ...
  - `Length`, `Map`, `Filter`, ...
- Why is it a bad example?
- Because it is not a clear unit, but two at the same time

## Design of a class

- A bad example would be a `List` which *leaks* parts of implementation
- A “leaky” list would have strange methods that rely on specific external usage patterns like:
  - `ComputeFirstPartOfLength` that computes the length of the first half of the list
  - `ComputeSecondPartOfLength` that computes the length of the second half of the list
  - `GetLengthParts` that returns the lengths of the two half lists
- Why is it a bad example?



## Design of a class

- A bad example would be a `List` which *leaks* parts of implementation
- A “leaky” list would have strange methods that rely on specific external usage patterns like:
  - `ComputeFirstPartOfLength` that computes the length of the first half of the list
  - `ComputeSecondPartOfLength` that computes the length of the second half of the list
  - `GetLengthParts` that returns the lengths of the two half lists
- Why is it a bad example?
- Because the implementation of length only happens if the user of the list calls it properly

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# Technical details

## Introduction

- We have already seen how we can define a class in Python, just without methods (beside `__init__`)
- Adding methods is surprisingly simple
- Simply declare a function within the class body, with the usual syntax
  - The function must<sup>a</sup> have a special parameter `self`, which is the first parameter

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<sup>a</sup>There are exceptions, we discuss them later.

# Concrete class implementation

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```
1 class Empty:
2     def IsEmpty(self):
3         return True
4     def Length(self):
5         return 0
```

## Introduction

# Concrete class implementation

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```
1 class Empty:
2     def IsEmpty(self):
3         return True
4     def Length(self):
5         return 0
```

## Introduction

- Notice the `self` parameter of each method

# Concrete class implementation

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```
1 class Node:
2     def IsEmpty(self): return False
3     def __init__(self, x, xs):
4         self.head = x
5         self.tail = xs
6     def Length(self):
7         return 1 + self.tail.Length()
```

## Introduction

# Concrete class implementation

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```
1 class Node:
2     def IsEmpty(self): return False
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7         return 1 + self.tail.Length()
```

## Introduction

- Notice the `self` parameter of each method

## Using classes

- Usage of classes remains quite intuitive
- Instance a class by using its name and giving parameters that will end up in `__init__`
- The returned class can be assigned to a variable
- The methods and attributes of the class can be called with a `.` between the instance of a class and the method/attribute name



# Actual class usage

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```
1  l = Node(1, Empty())  
2  print(l.Length())
```

## Constructor

- You may now have realized that `__init__` is just another method<sup>a</sup>, the **constructor** of a class
- It is called transparently when creating an instance of a class
- We call it with a parameter less (`self`), which is given automatically by Python as a new empty container
- `Node(1, Empty())` invokes the constructor with two parameters, `self` is implicit

---

<sup>a</sup>A special one, in that it is called automatically by Python, but a regular method nonetheless

## Methods

- Methods work like the constructor
- We call them with a parameter less (`self`), which is given automatically by Python as the object from which the method was called
- `l.Length()` calls method `Length` with zero parameters, `self` is implicitly passed as `l`

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## Syntax and semantics of methods

- The only new element of semantics is indeed the passing of self
- This is described with a code transformation that happens at runtime
- Method call is not really a new feature, but rather a handy way to use existing features

## Syntax and semantics of methods

- Whenever Python encounters a call such as  $x.M(p_1, \dots, p_2)$  then it *transforms* it into a similar call  $C.M(x, p_1, \dots, p_n)$  where  $C$  is the type of  $x$  in memory
- This way  $x$  automatically becomes `self` inside  $M$

$$\langle x.M(p_1, \dots, p_n), S, H \rangle \rightarrow \langle H[S[x]][C].M(x, p_1, \dots, p_n) \rangle$$

- This presupposes that the heap contains, for each class, an additional attribute  $C$  that is the class of declaration

...	n	...
...	[...; $C \mapsto \text{TypeOfInstance}$ ]	...

## Syntax and semantics of methods

- Methods defined with a `self` parameter are called **instance methods**
- Using them is bound to the calling context (represented by `self`)
- Some methods can be defined without a `self` parameter
- Such methods are called **static methods**, because they are independent of a specific instance

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## Syntax and semantics of methods

- Static methods are used by specifying the name of the class to which the method belongs to  $C.M(p_1, \dots, p_n)$
- There is nothing special about them, they just behave like any function call
- They are useful to group functionality related to a single class that is not related to the class instances

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## Special method names

- Some special method names are reserved by Python
- These names represent operators that are automatically called by Python
- A typical example is `__str__`, which is automatically invoked whenever `print` or `str` are used



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## Special method names

- Other special names represent operators
- For example:
  - `__le__` is called whenever `x <= y` was used
  - `__add__` is called whenever `x + y` was used
  - `__lshift__` is called whenever `x << y` was used
  - ...

## Examples

- Let's begin with a simple example
- A counter that keeps track of how many times some event has happened
- The constructor of the counter starts the count at zero
- A Tick method increments the count
- A pretty printer to nicely format instances when they are output

# “Counter” example

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```
1 class Counter:
2     def __init__(self):
3         self.cnt = 0
4     def Tick(self, n):
5         self.cnt = self.cnt + n
6     def __str__(self):
7         return "Ticked_" + str(self.cnt) + "_times."
8
9 c = Counter()
10 for i in range(0, 20):
11     c.Tick(i)
12     print(c)
```

## What does this program do?

# “Counter” example

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```
1 class Counter:
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8
9 c = Counter()
10 for i in range(0, 20):
11     c.Tick(i)
12     print(c)
```

## What does this program do?

Prints the “ticked” message for 0, 1, 3, 6, 10

## Examples

- Let's move to an almost full implementation of lists
- Lists come in two flavours: `Empty`, and `Node`
- We want at least the following methods:
  - `IsEmpty`
  - String conversion
  - `<<` to create lists more easily
  - `Sum` to add all elements of the list
  - `Length` to find the list length
  - `Map` to transform all elements of the list
  - `Filter` to remove some elements of the list
  - `Fold` to collapse the list

# Let's start with the empty list

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```
1 class Empty:
2     def IsEmpty(self): return True
3     def __str__(self):
4         return "[]"
5     def __rshift__(self, v):
6         return Node(v, self)
7     def Sum(self):
8         return 0
9     def Length(self):
10        return 0
11    def Map(self,f):
12        return self
13    def Filter(self,p):
14        return self
15    def Fold(self,f,z):
16        return z
17 Empty = Empty()
```

# The non-empty list

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```
1 class Node:
2     def IsEmpty(self): return False
3     def Head(self): return self.Head
4     def Tail(self): return self.Tail
5     def __init__(self, x, xs):
6         self.head = x
7         self.tail = xs
8     def __rlshift__(self, v):
9         return Node(v, self)
10    def __str__(self):
11        return str(self.head) + "<<" + str(self.tail)
12    def Sum(self):
13        return self.head + self.tail.Sum()
14    def Length(self):
15        return 1 + self.tail.Length()
16    def Map(self, f):
17        return Node(f(self.head), self.tail.Map(f))
18    def Filter(self, p):
19        xs = self.tail.Filter(p)
20        if p(self.head):
21            return Node(self.head, xs)
22        else:
23            return xs
24    def Fold(self, f, z):
25        return f(self.head, self.tail.Fold(f, z))
```

## Assignments

- Find the implementation (or the slides) online and open them to reference `Node` and `Empty`
- What does `1 = 1 << (2 << (3 << (4 << Empty)))` do?



## Assignments

- Find the implementation (or the slides) online and open them to reference `Node` and `Empty`
- What does `l = 1 << (2 << (3 << (4 << Empty)))` do?
  - It creates list `Node(1, Node(2, Node(3, Node(4, Empty))))`
- Why did we write `Empty` instead of `Empty()`?

## Assignments

- Find the implementation (or the slides) online and open them to reference `Node` and `Empty`
- What does `l = 1 << (2 << (3 << (4 << Empty)))` do?
  - It creates list `Node(1, Node(2, Node(3, Node(4, Empty))))`
- Why did we write `Empty` instead of `Empty()`?
  - Aesthetics: we define a single instance of `Empty = Empty()` to avoid recalling the constructor every time

# Using lists

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```
1 l = 1 << (2 << (3 << (4 << Empty)))
2 print("length(" + str(l) + ")_=" + str(l.Length()))
3 print("incr(" + str(l) + ")_=" + str(l.Map(lambda x: x + 1)))
4 print("even(" + str(l) + ")_=" + str(l.Filter(lambda x: x % 2 == 0)))
5 print("sum(" + str(l) + ")_=" + str(l.Sum()))
6 print("mul(" + str(l) + ")_=" + str(l.Fold(lambda x,y: x * y, 1)))
```

What does this program print?

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```
1 l = 1 << (2 << (3 << (4 << Empty)))
2 print("length(" + str(l) + ")_=" + str(l.Length()))
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5 print("sum(" + str(l) + ")_=" + str(l.Sum()))
6 print("mul(" + str(l) + ")_=" + str(l.Fold(lambda x,y: x * y, 1)))
```

What does this program print?

• '4', '2<<3<<4<<5', '2<<4', '10', '24']

## Let's see build a 2D vector

- We want things to move over the screen
- We define 2D vectors to store the position of objects
- 2D vectors contain only X, Y attributes
- Methods are:
  - Vector addition, subtraction, negation, multiplication by scalar
  - Length of the vector (according to Pythagoras' theorem)
  - Some static methods to get some special vectors (null, (0,1), (1,0))

# Implementation of vector 2D

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```
1 class Vector2:
2     def __init__(self, x, y):
3         self.X = x
4         self.Y = y
5     def Length(self):
6         return math.sqrt(self.X * self.X + self.Y * self.Y)
7     def __neg__(self):
8         return Vector2(-self.X, -self.Y)
9     def __add__(self, other):
10        return Vector2(self.X + other.X, self.Y + other.Y)
11    def __sub__(self, other):
12        return self + (-other)
13    def __mul__(self, k):
14        return Vector2(self.X * k, self.Y * k)
15    def __str__(self):
16        return "(" + str(self.X) + "," + str(self.Y) + ")"
17    def Zero():
18        return Vector2(0.0, 0.0)
19    def UnitX():
20        return Vector2(1.0, 0.0)
21    def UnitY():
22        return Vector2(0.0, 1.0)
```

# Let's build a 2D vector

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```
1 v = Vector2.UnitX() * 10.0 - Vector2.UnitY() * 2.0  
2 print(str(v))
```

What does this program print?

# Let's build a 2D vector

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```
1 v = Vector2.UnitX() * 10.0 - Vector2.UnitY() * 2.0  
2 print(str(v))
```

What does this program print?

• (10.0, -2.0)]



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## Let's make a car

- A car has a Position and a Velocity, both Vector2's
- A car also has Gas in the tank
- A car can Travel: Position moves forward, Gas is burned

# Implementation of car

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```
1 class Car:
2     def __init__(self, p, v, g):
3         self.Position = p
4         self.Velocity = v
5         self.Gas = g
6     def Travel(self, dt):
7         if self.Gas > 0.0:
8             self.Position = self.Position + self.Velocity * dt
9             self.Gas = self.Gas - 1.0 * dt
10    def __str__(self):
11        return "A_car_at_" + str(self.Position) + "_with_a_tank_of_" + str(self.
            Gas) + "_liters"
```

# Let's build a car!

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```
1 c = Car(Vector2.Zero(), Vector2.UnitX(), 10.0)
2 while(c.Gas > 0.0):
3     c.Travel(2.0)
4     print(c)
```

What does this program print?

# Let's build a car!

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```
1 c = Car(Vector2.Zero(), Vector2.UnitX(), 10.0)
2 while(c.Gas > 0.0):
3     c.Travel(2.0)
4     print(c)
```

## What does this program print?

- A car at (2.0,0.0) with a tank of 8.0 liters
- A car at (4.0,0.0) with a tank of 6.0 liters
- A car at (6.0,0.0) with a tank of 4.0 liters
- A car at (8.0,0.0) with a tank of 2.0 liters
- A car at (10.0,0.0) with a tank of 0.0 liters

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# A few advanced design topics

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## General idea

- There are countless ways to design classes
- Each of these has advantages and disadvantages
- It is a design discipline, and as such “artsier” than strictly needed
- Experience will show the way
- For the moment, we just illustrate one such possibility

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## Immutable and mutable classes

- Not all classes modify the values of their attributes as methods are called
- Some classes can be designed to be **immutable**
- An instance never changes values after creation
- Methods **return a new instance with the new attribute values** instead of changing the attribute values of the starting instance

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## Immutable and mutable classes

- Never changing attributes is a powerful technique
- Sharing of instances is safer, because unexpected changes will never happen
- **Can you think of examples when this might be useful?**



## Immutable and mutable classes

- Never changing attributes is a powerful technique
- Sharing of instances is safer, because unexpected changes will never happen
- **Can you think of examples when this might be useful?**
- **Breaking another class which assumes that the given instance will always remain as expected**
- **Multiple threads**
- **Rollback/checkpoints/transactional systems**
- ...

# A few advanced design topics

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## Let's make an immutable car

- A car has a Position and a Velocity, both Vector2's
- A car also has Gas in the tank
- A car can Travel: **a new car is returned where** Position is moved forward, Gas is burned

# Implementation of an immutable car

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```
1 class ImmutableCar:
2     def __init__(self, p, v, g):
3         self.Position = p
4         self.Velocity = v
5         self.Gas = g
6     def Travel(self, dt):
7         if self.Gas > 0.0:
8             return Car(self.Position + self.Velocity * dt, self.Velocity, self.Gas
9                           - 1.0 * dt)
10        else:
11            return self
12    def __str__(self):
13        return "A car at " + str(self.Position) + " with a tank of " + str(self.
14            Gas) + " liters"
```

# Let's build an immutable car!

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```
1 c = ImmutableCar(Vector2.Zero(), Vector2.UnitX(), 10.0)
2 while(c.Gas > 0.0):
3     c = c.Travel(2.0)
4     print(c)
```

What does this program print?

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```
1 c = ImmutableCar(Vector2.Zero(), Vector2.UnitX(), 10.0)
2 while(c.Gas > 0.0):
3     c = c.Travel(2.0)
4     print(c)
```

## What does this program print?

- A car at (2.0,0.0) with a tank of 8.0 liters
- A car at (4.0,0.0) with a tank of 6.0 liters
- A car at (6.0,0.0) with a tank of 4.0 liters
- A car at (8.0,0.0) with a tank of 2.0 liters
- A car at (10.0,0.0) with a tank of 0.0 liters

## Rolling back time

- Suppose we stored the initial value of the car `c0 = ImmutableCar(Vector2.Zero(), Vector2.UnitX(), 10.0)` before the loop
- Then we just run the loop
- **Can we “roll back time” by going back to the initial value of the car?**

## Rolling back time

- Suppose we stored the initial value of the car `c0 = ImmutableCar(Vector2.Zero(), Vector2.UnitX(), 10.0)` before the loop
- Then we just run the loop
- **Can we “roll back time” by going back to the initial value of the car?**
- Yes!
- **Was this possible with the first implementation?**

## Rolling back time

- Suppose we stored the initial value of the car `c0 = ImmutableCar(Vector2.Zero(), Vector2.UnitX(), 10.0)` before the loop
- Then we just run the loop
- **Can we “roll back time” by going back to the initial value of the car?**
- Yes!
- **Was this possible with the first implementation?**
- No!



# Rolling back time

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```
1  c = ImmutableCar(Vector2.Zero(), Vector2.UnitX(), 10.0)
2  c0 = c
3  while(c.Gas > 0.0):
4      c = c.Travel(2.0)
5      print(c)
6  print(c0)
```

## What is stored in `c0`?

# Rolling back time

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```
1 c = ImmutableCar(Vector2.Zero(), Vector2.UnitX(), 10.0)
2 c0 = c
3 while(c.Gas > 0.0):
4     c = c.Travel(2.0)
5     print(c)
6 print(c0)
```

**What is stored in `c0`? The initial value of the car, unchanged!**

## Choices, choices

- Why would you use one design instead of the other?
- Mutable classes have
  - the advantage that they are simple to build and intuitive
  - the disadvantage that they are “destructive”, in the sense that all modification destroys previous information that might still be in use
- Immutable classes have
  - the advantage that they are not destructive
  - the disadvantage that they are more complex to build and structure
- Mutable classes for current state of an object
- Immutable classes for things that are not supposed to change (vectors, numbers) or that might need to be rolled back

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## Lecture topics

- In this lecture we have “closed the circle” of data structures and functions
- We have defined **classes** as the joining of functions and data structures
- We have seen a series of class implementation examples in action
- We have discussed different design balances that might come into consideration when choosing the structure of a class

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The best of luck, and thanks for the  
attention!