

Beginner's Python Cheat Sheet - Lists

What are lists?

A list stores a series of items in a particular order. Lists allow you to store sets of information in one place, whether you have just a few items or millions of items. Lists are one of Python's most powerful features readily accessible to new programmers, and they tie together many important concepts in programming.

Defining a list

Use square brackets to define a list, and use commas to separate individual items in the list. Use plural names for lists, to make your code easier to read.

Making a list

```
users = ['val', 'bob', 'mia', 'ron', 'ned']
```

Accessing elements

Individual elements in a list are accessed according to their position, called the index. The index of the first element is 0, the index of the second element is 1, and so forth. Negative indices refer to items at the end of the list. To get a particular element, write the name of the list and then the index of the element in square brackets.

Getting the first element

```
first_user = users[0]
```

Getting the second element

```
second_user = users[1]
```

Getting the last element

```
newest_user = users[-1]
```

Modifying individual items

Once you've defined a list, you can change individual elements in the list. You do this by referring to the index of the item you want to modify.

Changing an element

```
users[0] = 'valerie'  
users[-2] = 'ronald'
```

Adding elements

You can add elements to the end of a list, or you can insert them wherever you like in a list.

Adding an element to the end of the list

```
users.append('amy')
```

Starting with an empty list

```
users = []  
users.append('val')  
users.append('bob')  
users.append('mia')
```

Inserting elements at a particular position

```
users.insert(0, 'joe')  
users.insert(3, 'bea')
```

Removing elements

You can remove elements by their position in a list, or by the value of the item. If you remove an item by its value, Python removes only the first item that has that value.

Deleting an element by its position

```
del users[-1]
```

Removing an item by its value

```
users.remove('mia')
```

Popping elements

If you want to work with an element that you're removing from the list, you can "pop" the element. If you think of the list as a stack of items, pop() takes an item off the top of the stack. By default pop() returns the last element in the list, but you can also pop elements from any position in the list.

Pop the last item from a list

```
most_recent_user = users.pop()  
print(most_recent_user)
```

Pop the first item in a list

```
first_user = users.pop(0)  
print(first_user)
```

List length

The len() function returns the number of items in a list.

Find the length of a list

```
num_users = len(users)  
print("We have " + str(num_users) + " users.")
```

Sorting a list

The sort() method changes the order of a list permanently. The sorted() function returns a copy of the list, leaving the original list unchanged. You can sort the items in a list in alphabetical order, or reverse alphabetical order. You can also reverse the original order of the list. Keep in mind that lowercase and uppercase letters may affect the sort order.

Sorting a list permanently

```
users.sort()
```

Sorting a list permanently in reverse alphabetical order

```
users.sort(reverse=True)
```

Sorting a list temporarily

```
print(sorted(users))  
print(sorted(users, reverse=True))
```

Reversing the order of a list

```
users.reverse()
```

Looping through a list

Lists can contain millions of items, so Python provides an efficient way to loop through all the items in a list. When you set up a loop, Python pulls each item from the list one at a time and stores it in a temporary variable, which you provide a name for. This name should be the singular version of the list name.

The indented block of code makes up the body of the loop, where you can work with each individual item. Any lines that are not indented run after the loop is completed.

Printing all items in a list

```
for user in users:  
    print(user)
```

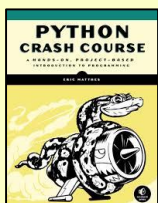
Printing a message for each item, and a separate message afterwards

```
for user in users:  
    print("Welcome, " + user + "!")  
  
print("Welcome, we're glad to see you all!")
```

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The range() function

You can use the range() function to work with a set of numbers efficiently. The range() function starts at 0 by default, and stops one number below the number passed to it. You can use the list() function to efficiently generate a large list of numbers.

Printing the numbers 0 to 1000

```
for number in range(1001):
    print(number)
```

Printing the numbers 1 to 1000

```
for number in range(1, 1001):
    print(number)
```

Making a list of numbers from 1 to a million

```
numbers = list(range(1, 1000001))
```

Simple statistics

There are a number of simple statistics you can run on a list containing numerical data.

Finding the minimum value in a list

```
ages = [93, 99, 66, 17, 85, 1, 35, 82, 2, 77]
youngest = min(ages)
```

Finding the maximum value

```
ages = [93, 99, 66, 17, 85, 1, 35, 82, 2, 77]
oldest = max(ages)
```

Finding the sum of all values

```
ages = [93, 99, 66, 17, 85, 1, 35, 82, 2, 77]
total_years = sum(ages)
```

Slicing a list

You can work with any set of elements from a list. A portion of a list is called a slice. To slice a list start with the index of the first item you want, then add a colon and the index after the last item you want. Leave off the first index to start at the beginning of the list, and leave off the last index to slice through the end of the list.

Getting the first three items

```
finishers = ['kai', 'abe', 'ada', 'gus', 'zoe']
first_three = finishers[:3]
```

Getting the middle three items

```
middle_three = finishers[1:4]
```

Getting the last three items

```
last_three = finishers[-3:]
```

Copying a list

To copy a list make a slice that starts at the first item and ends at the last item. If you try to copy a list without using this approach, whatever you do to the copied list will affect the original list as well.

Making a copy of a list

```
finishers = ['kai', 'abe', 'ada', 'gus', 'zoe']
copy_of_finishers = finishers[:]
```

List comprehensions

You can use a loop to generate a list based on a range of numbers or on another list. This is a common operation, so Python offers a more efficient way to do it. List comprehensions may look complicated at first; if so, use the for loop approach until you're ready to start using comprehensions.

To write a comprehension, define an expression for the values you want to store in the list. Then write a for loop to generate input values needed to make the list.

Using a loop to generate a list of square numbers

```
squares = []
for x in range(1, 11):
    square = x**2
    squares.append(square)
```

Using a comprehension to generate a list of square numbers

```
squares = [x**2 for x in range(1, 11)]
```

Using a loop to convert a list of names to upper case

```
names = ['kai', 'abe', 'ada', 'gus', 'zoe']

upper_names = []
for name in names:
    upper_names.append(name.upper())
```

Using a comprehension to convert a list of names to upper case

```
names = ['kai', 'abe', 'ada', 'gus', 'zoe']

upper_names = [name.upper() for name in names]
```

Styling your code

Readability counts

- Use four spaces per indentation level.
- Keep your lines to 79 characters or fewer.
- Use single blank lines to group parts of your program visually.

Tuples

A tuple is like a list, except you can't change the values in a tuple once it's defined. Tuples are good for storing information that shouldn't be changed throughout the life of a program. Tuples are designated by parentheses instead of square brackets. (You can overwrite an entire tuple, but you can't change the individual elements in a tuple.)

Defining a tuple

```
dimensions = (800, 600)
```

Looping through a tuple

```
for dimension in dimensions:
    print(dimension)
```

Overwriting a tuple

```
dimensions = (800, 600)
print(dimensions)
```

```
dimensions = (1200, 900)
```

Visualizing your code

When you're first learning about data structures such as lists, it helps to visualize how Python is working with the information in your program. pythontutor.com is a great tool for seeing how Python keeps track of the information in a list. Try running the following code on pythontutor.com, and then run your own code.

Build a list and print the items in the list

```
dogs = []
dogs.append('willie')
dogs.append('hootz')
dogs.append('peso')
dogs.append('goblin')
```

```
for dog in dogs:
    print("Hello " + dog + "!")
print("I love these dogs!")
```

```
print("\nThese were my first two dogs:")
old_dogs = dogs[:2]
for old_dog in old_dogs:
    print(old_dog)
```

```
del dogs[0]
dogs.remove('peso')
print(dogs)
```

More cheat sheets available at
ehmatthes.github.io/pcc/

Beginner's Python Cheat Sheet — Dictionaries

What are dictionaries?

Python's dictionaries allow you to connect pieces of related information. Each piece of information in a dictionary is stored as a key-value pair. When you provide a key, Python returns the value associated with that key. You can loop through all the key-value pairs, all the keys, or all the values.

Defining a dictionary

Use curly braces to define a dictionary. Use colons to connect keys and values, and use commas to separate individual key-value pairs.

Making a dictionary

```
alien_0 = {'color': 'green', 'points': 5}
```

Accessing values

To access the value associated with an individual key give the name of the dictionary and then place the key in a set of square brackets. If the key you're asking for is not in the dictionary, an error will occur.

You can also use the `get()` method, which returns `None` instead of an error if the key doesn't exist. You can also specify a default value to use if the key is not in the dictionary.

Getting the value associated with a key

```
alien_0 = {'color': 'green', 'points': 5}
```

```
print(alien_0['color'])  
print(alien_0['points'])
```

Getting the value with `get()`

```
alien_0 = {'color': 'green'}
```

```
alien_color = alien_0.get('color')  
alien_points = alien_0.get('points', 0)
```

```
print(alien_color)  
print(alien_points)
```

Adding new key-value pairs

You can store as many key-value pairs as you want in a dictionary, until your computer runs out of memory. To add a new key-value pair to an existing dictionary give the name of the dictionary and the new key in square brackets, and set it equal to the new value.

This also allows you to start with an empty dictionary and add key-value pairs as they become relevant.

Adding a key-value pair

```
alien_0 = {'color': 'green', 'points': 5}
```

```
alien_0['x'] = 0  
alien_0['y'] = 25  
alien_0['speed'] = 1.5
```

Adding to an empty dictionary

```
alien_0 = {}  
alien_0['color'] = 'green'  
alien_0['points'] = 5
```

Modifying values

You can modify the value associated with any key in a dictionary. To do so give the name of the dictionary and enclose the key in square brackets, then provide the new value for that key.

Modifying values in a dictionary

```
alien_0 = {'color': 'green', 'points': 5}  
print(alien_0)
```

```
# Change the alien's color and point value.  
alien_0['color'] = 'yellow'  
alien_0['points'] = 10  
print(alien_0)
```

Removing key-value pairs

You can remove any key-value pair you want from a dictionary. To do so use the `del` keyword and the dictionary name, followed by the key in square brackets. This will delete the key and its associated value.

Deleting a key-value pair

```
alien_0 = {'color': 'green', 'points': 5}  
print(alien_0)
```

```
del alien_0['points']  
print(alien_0)
```

Visualizing dictionaries

Try running some of these examples on pythontutor.com.

Looping through a dictionary

You can loop through a dictionary in three ways: you can loop through all the key-value pairs, all the keys, or all the values.

A dictionary only tracks the connections between keys and values; it doesn't track the order of items in the dictionary. If you want to process the information in order, you can sort the keys in your loop.

Looping through all key-value pairs

```
# Store people's favorite languages.  
fav_languages = {  
    'jen': 'python',  
    'sarah': 'c',  
    'edward': 'ruby',  
    'phil': 'python',  
}
```

```
# Show each person's favorite language.  
for name, language in fav_languages.items():  
    print(name + ": " + language)
```

Looping through all the keys

```
# Show everyone who's taken the survey.  
for name in fav_languages.keys():  
    print(name)
```

Looping through all the values

```
# Show all the languages that have been chosen.  
for language in fav_languages.values():  
    print(language)
```

Looping through all the keys in order

```
# Show each person's favorite language,  
# in order by the person's name.  
for name in sorted(fav_languages.keys()):  
    print(name + ": " + language)
```

Dictionary length

You can find the number of key-value pairs in a dictionary.

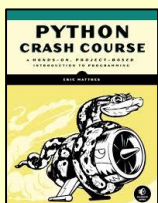
Finding a dictionary's length

```
num_responses = len(fav_languages)
```

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Nesting — A list of dictionaries

It's sometimes useful to store a set of dictionaries in a list; this is called nesting.

Storing dictionaries in a list

```
# Start with an empty list.
users = []

# Make a new user, and add them to the list.
new_user = {
    'last': 'fermi',
    'first': 'enrico',
    'username': 'efermi',
}
users.append(new_user)

# Make another new user, and add them as well.
new_user = {
    'last': 'curie',
    'first': 'marie',
    'username': 'mcurie',
}
users.append(new_user)

# Show all information about each user.
for user_dict in users:
    for k, v in user_dict.items():
        print(k + ": " + v)
    print("\n")
```

You can also define a list of dictionaries directly, without using `append()`:

```
# Define a list of users, where each user
# is represented by a dictionary.
users = [
    {
        'last': 'fermi',
        'first': 'enrico',
        'username': 'efermi',
    },
    {
        'last': 'curie',
        'first': 'marie',
        'username': 'mcurie',
    },
]

# Show all information about each user.
for user_dict in users:
    for k, v in user_dict.items():
        print(k + ": " + v)
    print("\n")
```

Nesting — Lists in a dictionary

Storing a list inside a dictionary allows you to associate more than one value with each key.

Storing lists in a dictionary

```
# Store multiple languages for each person.
fav_languages = {
    'jen': ['python', 'ruby'],
    'sarah': ['c'],
    'edward': ['ruby', 'go'],
    'phil': ['python', 'haskell'],
}

# Show all responses for each person.
for name, langs in fav_languages.items():
    print(name + ": ")
    for lang in langs:
        print("- " + lang)
```

Nesting — A dictionary of dictionaries

You can store a dictionary inside another dictionary. In this case each value associated with a key is itself a dictionary.

Storing dictionaries in a dictionary

```
users = {
    'aeinstein': {
        'first': 'albert',
        'last': 'einstein',
        'location': 'princeton',
    },
    'mcurie': {
        'first': 'marie',
        'last': 'curie',
        'location': 'paris',
    },
}

for username, user_dict in users.items():
    print("\nUsername: " + username)
    full_name = user_dict['first'] + " "
    full_name += user_dict['last']
    location = user_dict['location']

    print("\tFull name: " + full_name.title())
    print("\tLocation: " + location.title())
```

Levels of nesting

Nesting is extremely useful in certain situations. However, be aware of making your code overly complex. If you're nesting items much deeper than what you see here there are probably simpler ways of managing your data, such as using classes.

Using an OrderedDict

Standard Python dictionaries don't keep track of the order in which keys and values are added; they only preserve the association between each key and its value. If you want to preserve the order in which keys and values are added, use an `OrderedDict`.

Preserving the order of keys and values

```
from collections import OrderedDict

# Store each person's languages, keeping
# track of who responded first.
fav_languages = OrderedDict()

fav_languages['jen'] = ['python', 'ruby']
fav_languages['sarah'] = ['c']
fav_languages['edward'] = ['ruby', 'go']
fav_languages['phil'] = ['python', 'haskell']

# Display the results, in the same order they
# were entered.
for name, langs in fav_languages.items():
    print(name + ":")
    for lang in langs:
        print("- " + lang)
```

Generating a million dictionaries

You can use a loop to generate a large number of dictionaries efficiently, if all the dictionaries start out with similar data.

A million aliens

```
aliens = []

# Make a million green aliens, worth 5 points
# each. Have them all start in one row.
for alien_num in range(1000000):
    new_alien = {}
    new_alien['color'] = 'green'
    new_alien['points'] = 5
    new_alien['x'] = 20 * alien_num
    new_alien['y'] = 0
    aliens.append(new_alien)

# Prove the list contains a million aliens.
num_aliens = len(aliens)

print("Number of aliens created:")
print(num_aliens)
```

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Beginner's Python Cheat Sheet — If Statements and While Loops

What are if statements? What are while loops?

If statements allow you to examine the current state of a program and respond appropriately to that state. You can write a simple if statement that checks one condition, or you can create a complex series of if statements that identify the exact conditions you're looking for.

While loops run as long as certain conditions remain true. You can use while loops to let your programs run as long as your users want them to.

Conditional Tests

A conditional test is an expression that can be evaluated as True or False. Python uses the values True and False to decide whether the code in an if statement should be executed.

Checking for equality

A single equal sign assigns a value to a variable. A double equal sign (==) checks whether two values are equal.

```
>>> car = 'bmw'
>>> car == 'bmw'
True
>>> car = 'audi'
>>> car == 'bmw'
False
```

Ignoring case when making a comparison

```
>>> car = 'Audi'
>>> car.lower() == 'audi'
True
```

Checking for inequality

```
>>> topping = 'mushrooms'
>>> topping != 'anchovies'
True
```

Numerical comparisons

Testing numerical values is similar to testing string values.

Testing equality and inequality

```
>>> age = 18
>>> age == 18
True
>>> age != 18
False
```

Comparison operators

```
>>> age = 19
>>> age < 21
True
>>> age <= 21
True
>>> age > 21
False
>>> age >= 21
False
```

Checking multiple conditions

You can check multiple conditions at the same time. The and operator returns True if all the conditions listed are True. The or operator returns True if any condition is True.

Using and to check multiple conditions

```
>>> age_0 = 22
>>> age_1 = 18
>>> age_0 >= 21 and age_1 >= 21
False
>>> age_1 = 23
>>> age_0 >= 21 and age_1 >= 21
True
```

Using or to check multiple conditions

```
>>> age_0 = 22
>>> age_1 = 18
>>> age_0 >= 21 or age_1 >= 21
True
>>> age_0 = 18
>>> age_0 >= 21 or age_1 >= 21
False
```

Boolean values

A boolean value is either True or False. Variables with boolean values are often used to keep track of certain conditions within a program.

Simple boolean values

```
game_active = True
can_edit = False
```

If statements

Several kinds of if statements exist. Your choice of which to use depends on the number of conditions you need to test. You can have as many elif blocks as you need, and the else block is always optional.

Simple if statement

```
age = 19

if age >= 18:
    print("You're old enough to vote!")
```

If-else statements

```
age = 17

if age >= 18:
    print("You're old enough to vote!")
else:
    print("You can't vote yet.")
```

The if-elif-else chain

```
age = 12

if age < 4:
    price = 0
elif age < 18:
    price = 5
else:
    price = 10

print("Your cost is $" + str(price) + ".")
```

Conditional tests with lists

You can easily test whether a certain value is in a list. You can also test whether a list is empty before trying to loop through the list.

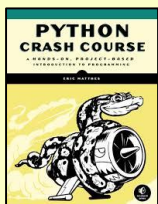
Testing if a value is in a list

```
>>> players = ['al', 'bea', 'cyn', 'dale']
>>> 'al' in players
True
>>> 'eric' in players
False
```

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Conditional tests with lists (cont.)

Testing if a value is not in a list

```
banned_users = ['ann', 'chad', 'dee']
user = 'erin'
```

```
if user not in banned_users:
    print("You can play!")
```

Checking if a list is empty

```
players = []
```

```
if players:
    for player in players:
        print("Player: " + player.title())
else:
    print("We have no players yet!")
```

Accepting input

You can allow your users to enter input using the input() statement. In Python 3, all input is stored as a string.

Simple input

```
name = input("What's your name? ")
print("Hello, " + name + ".")
```

Accepting numerical input

```
age = input("How old are you? ")
age = int(age)

if age >= 18:
    print("\nYou can vote!")
else:
    print("\nYou can't vote yet.")
```

Accepting input in Python 2.7

Use raw_input() in Python 2.7. This function interprets all input as a string, just as input() does in Python 3.

```
name = raw_input("What's your name? ")
print("Hello, " + name + ".")
```

While loops

A while loop repeats a block of code as long as a condition is True.

Counting to 5

```
current_number = 1

while current_number <= 5:
    print(current_number)
    current_number += 1
```

While loops (cont.)

Letting the user choose when to quit

```
prompt = "\nTell me something, and I'll "
prompt += "repeat it back to you."
prompt += "\nEnter 'quit' to end the program. "
```

```
message = ""
while message != 'quit':
    message = input(prompt)

    if message != 'quit':
        print(message)
```

Using a flag

```
prompt = "\nTell me something, and I'll "
prompt += "repeat it back to you."
prompt += "\nEnter 'quit' to end the program. "
```

```
active = True
while active:
    message = input(prompt)
```

```
    if message == 'quit':
        active = False
    else:
        print(message)
```

Using break to exit a loop

```
prompt = "\nWhat cities have you visited?"
prompt += "\nEnter 'quit' when you're done. "
```

```
while True:
    city = input(prompt)

    if city == 'quit':
        break
    else:
        print("I've been to " + city + "!")
```

Accepting input with Sublime Text

Sublime Text doesn't run programs that prompt the user for input. You can use Sublime Text to write programs that prompt for input, but you'll need to run these programs from a terminal.

Breaking out of loops

You can use the break statement and the continue statement with any of Python's loops. For example you can use break to quit a for loop that's working through a list or a dictionary. You can use continue to skip over certain items when looping through a list or dictionary as well.

While loops (cont.)

Using continue in a loop

```
banned_users = ['eve', 'fred', 'gary', 'helen']
```

```
prompt = "\nAdd a player to your team."
prompt += "\nEnter 'quit' when you're done. "
```

```
players = []
while True:
    player = input(prompt)
    if player == 'quit':
        break
    elif player in banned_users:
        print(player + " is banned!")
        continue
    else:
        players.append(player)
```

```
print("\nYour team:")
for player in players:
    print(player)
```

Avoiding infinite loops

Every while loop needs a way to stop running so it won't continue to run forever. If there's no way for the condition to become False, the loop will never stop running.

An infinite loop

```
while True:
    name = input("\nWho are you? ")
    print("Nice to meet you, " + name + "!")
```

Removing all instances of a value from a list

The remove() method removes a specific value from a list, but it only removes the first instance of the value you provide. You can use a while loop to remove all instances of a particular value.

Removing all cats from a list of pets

```
pets = ['dog', 'cat', 'dog', 'fish', 'cat',
        'rabbit', 'cat']
print(pets)
```

```
while 'cat' in pets:
    pets.remove('cat')
```

```
print(pets)
```

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Beginner's Python Cheat Sheet — Functions

What are functions?

Functions are named blocks of code designed to do one specific job. Functions allow you to write code once that can then be run whenever you need to accomplish the same task. Functions can take in the information they need, and return the information they generate. Using functions effectively makes your programs easier to write, read, test, and fix.

Defining a function

The first line of a function is its definition, marked by the keyword `def`. The name of the function is followed by a set of parentheses and a colon. A docstring, in triple quotes, describes what the function does. The body of a function is indented one level.

To call a function, give the name of the function followed by a set of parentheses.

Making a function

```
def greet_user():  
    """Display a simple greeting."""  
    print("Hello!")  
  
greet_user()
```

Passing information to a function

Information that's passed to a function is called an argument; information that's received by a function is called a parameter. Arguments are included in parentheses after the function's name, and parameters are listed in parentheses in the function's definition.

Passing a single argument

```
def greet_user(username):  
    """Display a simple greeting."""  
    print("Hello, " + username + "!")  
  
greet_user('jesse')  
greet_user('diana')  
greet_user('brandon')
```

Positional and keyword arguments

The two main kinds of arguments are positional and keyword arguments. When you use positional arguments Python matches the first argument in the function call with the first parameter in the function definition, and so forth.

With keyword arguments, you specify which parameter each argument should be assigned to in the function call. When you use keyword arguments, the order of the arguments doesn't matter.

Using positional arguments

```
def describe_pet(animal, name):  
    """Display information about a pet."""  
    print("\nI have a " + animal + ".")  
    print("Its name is " + name + ".")  
  
describe_pet('hamster', 'harry')  
describe_pet('dog', 'willie')
```

Using keyword arguments

```
def describe_pet(animal, name):  
    """Display information about a pet."""  
    print("\nI have a " + animal + ".")  
    print("Its name is " + name + ".")  
  
describe_pet(animal='hamster', name='harry')  
describe_pet(name='willie', animal='dog')
```

Default values

You can provide a default value for a parameter. When function calls omit this argument the default value will be used. Parameters with default values must be listed after parameters without default values in the function's definition so positional arguments can still work correctly.

Using a default value

```
def describe_pet(name, animal='dog'):  
    """Display information about a pet."""  
    print("\nI have a " + animal + ".")  
    print("Its name is " + name + ".")  
  
describe_pet('harry', 'hamster')  
describe_pet('willie')
```

Using None to make an argument optional

```
def describe_pet(animal, name=None):  
    """Display information about a pet."""  
    print("\nI have a " + animal + ".")  
    if name:  
        print("Its name is " + name + ".")  
  
describe_pet('hamster', 'harry')  
describe_pet('snake')
```

Return values

A function can return a value or a set of values. When a function returns a value, the calling line must provide a variable in which to store the return value. A function stops running when it reaches a return statement.

Returning a single value

```
def get_full_name(first, last):  
    """Return a neatly formatted full name."""  
    full_name = first + ' ' + last  
    return full_name.title()  
  
musician = get_full_name('jimi', 'hendrix')  
print(musician)
```

Returning a dictionary

```
def build_person(first, last):  
    """Return a dictionary of information  
    about a person."""  
    person = {'first': first, 'last': last}  
    return person  
  
musician = build_person('jimi', 'hendrix')  
print(musician)
```

Returning a dictionary with optional values

```
def build_person(first, last, age=None):  
    """Return a dictionary of information  
    about a person."""  
    person = {'first': first, 'last': last}  
    if age:  
        person['age'] = age  
    return person  
  
musician = build_person('jimi', 'hendrix', 27)  
print(musician)  
  
musician = build_person('janis', 'joplin')  
print(musician)
```

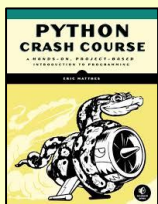
Visualizing functions

Try running some of these examples on pythontutor.com.

Python Crash Course

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Passing a list to a function

You can pass a list as an argument to a function, and the function can work with the values in the list. Any changes the function makes to the list will affect the original list. You can prevent a function from modifying a list by passing a copy of the list as an argument.

Passing a list as an argument

```
def greet_users(names):
    """Print a simple greeting to everyone."""
    for name in names:
        msg = "Hello, " + name + "!"
        print(msg)

usernames = ['hannah', 'ty', 'margot']
greet_users(usernames)
```

Allowing a function to modify a list

The following example sends a list of models to a function for printing. The original list is emptied, and the second list is filled.

```
def print_models(unprinted, printed):
    """3d print a set of models."""
    while unprinted:
        current_model = unprinted.pop()
        print("Printing " + current_model)
        printed.append(current_model)

# Store some unprinted designs,
# and print each of them.
unprinted = ['phone case', 'pendant', 'ring']
printed = []
print_models(unprinted, printed)

print("\nUnprinted:", unprinted)
print("Printed:", printed)
```

Preventing a function from modifying a list

The following example is the same as the previous one, except the original list is unchanged after calling print_models().

```
def print_models(unprinted, printed):
    """3d print a set of models."""
    while unprinted:
        current_model = unprinted.pop()
        print("Printing " + current_model)
        printed.append(current_model)

# Store some unprinted designs,
# and print each of them.
original = ['phone case', 'pendant', 'ring']
printed = []

print_models(original[:], printed)
print("\nOriginal:", original)
print("Printed:", printed)
```

Passing an arbitrary number of arguments

Sometimes you won't know how many arguments a function will need to accept. Python allows you to collect an arbitrary number of arguments into one parameter using the * operator. A parameter that accepts an arbitrary number of arguments must come last in the function definition.

The ** operator allows a parameter to collect an arbitrary number of keyword arguments.

Collecting an arbitrary number of arguments

```
def make_pizza(size, *toppings):
    """Make a pizza."""
    print("\nMaking a " + size + " pizza.")
    print("Toppings:")
    for topping in toppings:
        print("- " + topping)

# Make three pizzas with different toppings.
make_pizza('small', 'pepperoni')
make_pizza('large', 'bacon bits', 'pineapple')
make_pizza('medium', 'mushrooms', 'peppers',
            'onions', 'extra cheese')
```

Collecting an arbitrary number of keyword arguments

```
def build_profile(first, last, **user_info):
    """Build a user's profile dictionary."""
    # Build a dict with the required keys.
    profile = {'first': first, 'last': last}

    # Add any other keys and values.
    for key, value in user_info.items():
        profile[key] = value

    return profile

# Create two users with different kinds
# of information.
user_0 = build_profile('albert', 'einstein',
                        location='princeton')
user_1 = build_profile('marie', 'curie',
                        location='paris', field='chemistry')

print(user_0)
print(user_1)
```

What's the best way to structure a function?

As you can see there are many ways to write and call a function. When you're starting out, aim for something that simply works. As you gain experience you'll develop an understanding of the more subtle advantages of different structures such as positional and keyword arguments, and the various approaches to importing functions. For now if your functions do what you need them to, you're doing well.

Modules

You can store your functions in a separate file called a module, and then import the functions you need into the file containing your main program. This allows for cleaner program files. (Make sure your module is stored in the same directory as your main program.)

Storing a function in a module

File: pizza.py

```
def make_pizza(size, *toppings):
    """Make a pizza."""
    print("\nMaking a " + size + " pizza.")
    print("Toppings:")
    for topping in toppings:
        print("- " + topping)
```

Importing an entire module

File: making_pizzas.py

Every function in the module is available in the program file.

```
import pizza

pizza.make_pizza('medium', 'pepperoni')
pizza.make_pizza('small', 'bacon', 'pineapple')
```

Importing a specific function

Only the imported functions are available in the program file.

```
from pizza import make_pizza

make_pizza('medium', 'pepperoni')
make_pizza('small', 'bacon', 'pineapple')
```

Giving a module an alias

```
import pizza as p

p.make_pizza('medium', 'pepperoni')
p.make_pizza('small', 'bacon', 'pineapple')
```

Giving a function an alias

```
from pizza import make_pizza as mp

mp('medium', 'pepperoni')
mp('small', 'bacon', 'pineapple')
```

Importing all functions from a module

Don't do this, but recognize it when you see it in others' code. It can result in naming conflicts, which can cause errors.

```
from pizza import *

make_pizza('medium', 'pepperoni')
make_pizza('small', 'bacon', 'pineapple')
```

More cheat sheets available at
ehmatthes.github.io/pcc/