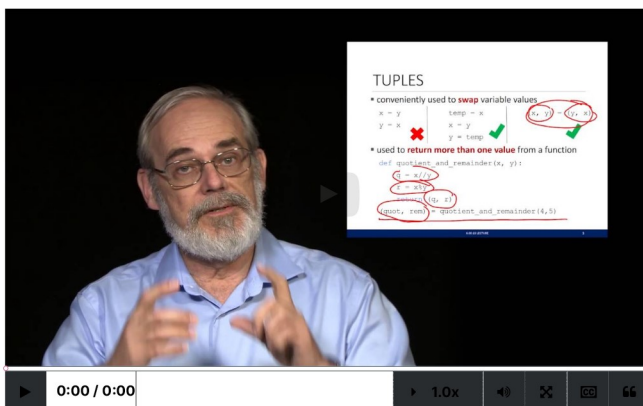


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[Tutorial] How to return several values from a function: Behind the Scenes

discussion posted 15 days ago by [Kiara-Elizabeth](#) (Community TA)

How to return several values from functions

Hi! Welcome to this new session where we will learn **HOW TO RETURN SEVERAL VALUES FROM A FUNCTION!** Let's get started! :)

Returning tuples from functions



How to return Several Values from Functions

What we've learned so far is that we can return a value from a function to the scope that called the function and then save it to a variable for later use.

But... what if we want to return more than one value?

So Far...



```
def functionName(parameters):
    # Code to execute
    return <VariableOrValue>
```

Using this we can only return **ONE** value per function call

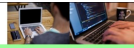
This is where our newly discovered friends come into play, **TUPLES AND LISTS!**

If we return a tuple or a list from a function, we can return several values and assign them individually to their corresponding variables

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(We will see this in detail in the next diagrams).

Tuples or Lists to the rescue!



```
def functionName(parameters):
    # Code
    return <TupleOrList>
```

With this we can now return **SEVERAL** values per function call

•For example:

```
def returnStringLengths(string1, string2, string3):
    len1 = len(string1)
    len2 = len(string2)
    len3 = len(string3)

    # Return a tuple!!! :)
    return (len1, len2, len3)
```

We've learned that we can display the values returned by a function using `print()`.

Since lists and tuples are iterables, we can iterate over their elements using a `for/in` loop like the examples below. We can also access each individual element by its corresponding index.

How can we display the values returned?



Example: `stringLengthsTuple = returnStringLengths("Hi", "Hello", "Bye")`

Approach #1 → `for length in stringLengthsTuple:`
`print(length)`

Approach #2 → `for i in range(len(stringLengthsTuple)):`
`print(stringLengthsTuple[i])`

Approach #3 → `stringLengthsTuple[0]`
`stringLengthsTuple[1]`
`stringLengthsTuple[2]`

USE VARIABLES TO STORE VALUES RETURNED

But... wait a minute! What if we want to store the values returned by the function call? Can we apply the principles we've learned? Yes, you can. But there is a new syntax that will allow you to store each element in the tuple into its corresponding variable.

Let's see why we need this...

In this example, we are using the function defined above, that returns a tuple with the length of each argument. In this case, (2, 5, 3).

To store them in separate variables, we would first need to create a new variable to store the entire tuple and then index individually and assign them to their variable. This is one way to achieve this but...

Keep reading to find out how you can do this in ONE LINE!

How can we store the values returned?



Example: `stringLengthsTuple = returnStringLengths("Hi", "Hello", "Bye")`

Approach #1 → `stringOneLength = stringLengthsTuple[0]`
`stringTwoLength = stringLengthsTuple[1]`
`stringThreeLength = stringLengthsTuple[2]`

But there's a shorter and clearer way to achieve this

To assign the variables individually in ONE LINE:

- On the left hand side we create as many variables as the number of values contained in the tuple returned by the function call. (In this case, 3 variables for a tuple that contains 3 values)
- On the right hand side we call the function

On the diagram below you can see this process broken down into steps with a "Behind the scenes" look of what happens when the value is

returned.

Assigning variables directly!



Example: `stringLengthsTuple = returnStringLengths("Hi", "Hello", "Bye")`

Code is executed and value is returned

`stringLengthsTuple = (2, 5, 3)`

The value returned is assigned to the variable

But if we do this, values are assigned individually!

`stringOneLength, stringTwoLength, stringThreeLength = returnStringLengths("Hi", "Hello", "Bye")`

Code is executed and value is returned

`stringOneLength, stringTwoLength, stringThreeLength = (2, 5, 3)`

Values are assigned to their corresponding variable (The first value is assigned to the first variable and so on...)

Let's check these values in Python's shell. As you can see, the values are assigned individually and you can now use these variables later in your code. Yes! : D

Let's check this in Python's shell



```
>>> stringOneLength, stringTwoLength, stringThreeLength = returnStringLengths("Hi", "Hello", "Bye")
>>> stringOneLength
2
>>> stringTwoLength
5
>>> stringThreeLength
9
```

TIPS

You can convert the arguments you pass into a function into a tuple by adding an asterisk before the function's parameter. This will convert all the arguments you pass in separated by commas into a single tuple that you can use inside your function.

Tips. How to convert arguments to a Tuple



```
>>> def returnArgsAsTuple(*itemsTuple):
    print(itemsTuple)
```

Adding an * before the parameter will convert all the arguments you pass into a tuple

```
>>> returnArgsAsTuple(1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
```

```
(1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
```

A tuple is printed!!! ☺

Notice that we are NOT passing a tuple, we are passing several parameters separated by commas

Hope this helps!

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to post them in forums or right below this post. Community TAs and your fellow classmates will be there to help you :)

Estefania.

This post is visible to everyone.

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2 odpowiedzi

Untangled1351

7 days ago

+

...

How can I see all similar parameters such as `*itemsTuple`? I imagine there must be on for lists as well?

...

In

```
def f(*vars):
```

`vars` is a tuple. But the elements of `vars` can include any objects including lists.

```
f(1,2,[1,2], 'me too',3)
```

Remember that a tuple is effectively just an immutable list.

posted 7 days ago by **kiwi** (Community TA)

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EisonB

5 days ago



While messing with this code:

```
def returnStringLengths(s1, s2, s3):  
    len1= len(s1)  
    len2= len(s2)  
    len3= len(s3)  
  
    return (len1, len2, len3)  
  
returnStringLengths('blue', '23', '5')  
stringLengthsTuple= returnStringLengths('Hi', 'Hello', 'Bye')  
  
for i in stringLengthsTuple:  
    print(length)
```

as you can see before the print, i accidentally typed in i instead of **length** and the result was **3 3 3** instead of an error. I ran it again in a clear environment in colab notes and still got the same. I'm confused.



I get an "NameError: name 'length' is not defined"

posted 3 days ago by **Slaski907**



Yes. length doesn't seem to be bound to anything. Perhaps a line like length = returnStringLengths('blue', '23', '5') was intended in your code EisonB. Or something similar?

posted 3 days ago by **__kiwi__** (Community TA)

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