**What does '%s' mean in python?**

It is a placeholder for an input argument of type "string".

Format specifiers are special arguments (in our case **%s**) that specifies the format of input that has to be taken by the user and the format that has to be given to the user.

**%s** is a format specifier. The role of **%s** is that it tells the python interpreter about what format text it will be printing.

**%s** specifies it is type of format **string**.

So the syntax goes something like this. For example:

1. foo = "this is foo"
2. #that is the variable that has been initised
4. #now lets print it.
6. **print**("the data in foo is %s" %(foo))
8. # this is equivalent to
10. **print**("the data in foo is "+foo)

Some other format important specifiers are  
  
%d : integer  
%f : float

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This is something you use to fill in a variable in a string.  So if I make a variable, cookies.

cookies = 5

If I wanted a customizable statement, I would say

print("you have %s cookies" % (cookies))

The "s" after the "%" signifies that the variable you are inserting is of the type string.  There are many letters which signify the type of variable you are inserting.

I personally prefer the .format method, as it is a bit simpler way to achieve the same thing and it doesn't require you to declare what type the variable you are inserting, but it is all preference.

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