

Encodings

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Basic ideas

- Terms

- The key point

- What the well-known encodings encode

Examples of encodings in programming life

- Character encodings in Python 2

- Output from methods in the standard library

To recapitulate: the key point

Terms

► encoding

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- ▶ **encoding**: process for converting information into patterns or symbols

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- ▶ **codec** = coder-decoder: tool (normally a program or routine) for changing encodings

The key point

Encodings collectively are like a system of types for characters and strings of characters.

They can cause problems if you don't realize that a particular encoding is required or being supplied.

Well known encodings

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What the well-known encodings encode

- ▶ ASCII

What the well-known encodings encode

- ▶ ASCII: English

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Character encodings in Python 2

Python 2.7 assumes all strings are ASCII, but this is sometimes concealed from me because the Ipython interpreter tries to convert silently to something it can print, showing non-ASCII bytes explicitly:

```
1 In [1]: a = 'Tin  '
2
3 In [2]: a
4 Out[2]: 'Tin\x03\xa9'
```

Unicode in Python 2

Python 2.7 also allows strings to be specified as Unicode with a `u` prefix, and here again the Ipython interpreter converts silently to something it can print:

```
1 In [1]: a = 'Tin  '
2
3 In [2]: a
4 Out[2]: 'Tin\\xc3\\xa9'
5
6 In [3]: b = u'Tin  '
7
8 In [4]: b
9 Out[4]: u'Tin\\xe9'
```

Explicit encodings in Python 2

Python 2.7 also lets you convert explicitly to known encodings:

```
1 In [3]: b = u'Tiné'
2
3 In [4]: b
4 Out[4]: u'Tin\xe9'
5
6 In [5]: b.encode('utf-8')
7 Out[5]: 'Tin\xc3\xa9'
8
9 In [6]: b.encode('latin-1')
10 Out[6]: 'Tin\xe9'
```

See <http://docs.python.org/2.7/library/codecs.html#standard-encodings> for a long list of these.

Unicode in Python 3

Python 3 treats all strings as Unicode; the alternative is “bytecode”:

```
1 In [1]: a = 'Tiné'
2
3 In [2]: a
4 Out[2]: 'Tiné'
5
6 In [3]: a.encode()
7 Out[3]: b'Tin\xc3\xa9'
8
9 In [4]: type(a.encode())
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Explicit encoding as in Python 2 is still possible, but Unicode is now the norm.

Bytecode in Python 3

Many modules in the standard library return bytecode that has to be explicitly converted to the `str` type (i.e., Unicode) before it can be used easily.

Example. . .

Bytecode returned by Python 3 methods

```
1 In [5]: import urllib.request
2         url = 'http://hackerschool.com'
3         x = urllib.request.urlopen(url).read()
4         type(x)
5 Out[5]: builtins.bytes
```

To convert to true str type:

```
1 In [6]: y = x.decode()
2         type(y)
3 Out[6]: builtins.str
```

Among the methods that are available to str but not to bytes are `format()` and `isprintable()`.

Bytecode vs Unicode in Python 3

And if a function (for instance in the `re` module) requires a true string as its argument, you must use `decode()` on bytecode before passing it in:

```
1 In [7]: import re
2         z = re.compile('.')
3         z.search(x)
4 -----
5
6 TypeError                                Traceback (
7     most recent call last)
8
9 <ipython-input-17-ad5b6e1ce192> in <module>()
10 ----> 1 z.search(x)
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Bytecode vs Unicode in Python 3, cont'd

`decode()` changes it to a true (Unicode) string first — after that, it can be used with all sorts of methods that require a string:

```
1 In [8]: z.search(x.decode())
2 Out[8]: <_sre.SRE_Match at 0x231bbf8>
3
4 In [9]: z.search(x.decode()).group()
5 Out[9]: '<'
```

To recapitulate: the key point

To recapitulate: the key point

Encodings collectively are like a system of types for characters and strings of characters.

They can cause problems if you don't realize that a particular encoding is required or being supplied.

END