

Melbourne Haskell Workshop 2013

The workshop has been completed and ran on 21/09/2013.

See the [Post-Mortem](#) for an analysis of what we learned from running the workshop.

[\(HTML\)](#)

A 6-hour workshop intended to introduce and provide resources for working with Haskell.



This workshop is based around a central concept of domain modeling with Haskell.

Outcomes include...

- Creating, editing, running and interacting with Haskell programs
- Building the confidence to solve problems in the wild with Haskell
- Developing an understanding of the Haskell ecosystem
- Interacting with others in a collaborative environment

If you are attending the workshop, make sure that you RSVP via [Meetup](#). Please also attempt to have the required items from the 'Resources' section available for your use during the workshop.

If you would like to volunteer, please subscribe to the [mhw2013](#) sub-reddit and list yourself on the wiki.

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Required Resources

Before you begin you will require the following...

A Text-Editor

We are assuming previous programming experience, however, if you would like a recommendation, have a look at [Notepad++](#), [Sublime Text](#), or the ever-popular [Emacs](#) and [Vim](#). Just make sure that you are fluent enough to embark on exercises as they appear in the workshop.

The Haskell Platform

In order to run the programs written during this workshop you will need a Haskell installation. The easiest way to get up and running is to install the latest Haskell Platform. This is a “batteries included” installation of GHC and Cabal that includes many of the most useful packages available in the Hackage ecosystem.

A Copy of the Workshop Scaffold Project

https://github.com/sordina/haskell_workshop

Either clone with git:

```
git clone https://github.com/sordina/haskell_workshop.git
```

... or [download the zip](#) from GitHub.

Useful Resources

These resources are available to help you with any issues you face when learning Haskell:

#haskell on [Freenode](#)

An IRC channel dedicated to discussion of Haskell. This is often the easiest place to fire off a one-off question that is simple enough not to warrant a permanent listing on the internet.

[Hackage](#)

Hackage is the primary repository for Haskell packages. It is public, searchable, versioned, and uses Cabal package metadata for classification. Furthermore, this can be used to easily browse package contents, documentation and source-code.

For example, browse the [Shake](#) package and look at some of the [Modules](#).

Hoogle

Hoogle is a Haskell module and function search-engine. Hoogle allows you to take advantage of the granular type-system used by Haskell to search not just for function-names, but for function type-signatures.

For example, have a look for the function with signature `Text -> ByteString`.

MFUG

MFUG is the Melbourne Functional Programmer's User Group. This group discusses many topics, including Haskell.

/r/haskell

For Reddit users, /r/haskell is a very useful resource with a great deal of information regarding recent developments in the Haskell ecosystem and community. This is a good place to ask some more advanced questions or start a flame-war.

Haskell News

Haskell News is a firehose-style haskell news aggregator taking information from sources as varied as academic-journals, and GitHub accounts.

HLint

HLint is a [linting tool](#) for Haskell source - It can often provide some useful hints about refactoring avenues for your code.

Learn You a Haskell (For Great Good)

Learn You a Haskell (For Great Good) is a wonderful introductory text on Haskell.

Real World Haskell

Real World Haskell aims to focus on solving real problems with Haskell. Several chapters of the book are somewhat dated in terms of the libraries used, but it still serves as a useful example of getting real work done with Haskell.

Welcome

Welcome to the Melbourne Haskell Workshop 2013.

This intent of this workshop is to provide a working introduction to Haskell for programmers in Melbourne who have not yet used the language in anger.

The workshop is split into chapters. The chapters will start with a few trivial introductory exercises to get your fingers warmed up, then the meat - exercises that should be able to be solved using the material introduced up to that point (with help and hints available if needed).

Each chapter will conclude with an open-question. This question should provide inspiration for further consideration of how harder problems could be solved using Haskell, and for more advanced attendees, can be attacked instead of twiddling your thumbs after finishing the main exercise.

The workshop will be split into pre, and post lunch parts, with additional exercises available for busy beavers following the **MOAR** section of the table of contents.

Why run a free haskell workshop?

There are a few kinds of benefits that we anticipate will result as an outcome of the workshop:

- Benefits to Individuals
- Benefits to the Community
- Benefits to the Volunteers
- Benefits to the Organisers
- Benefits to Industry
- Benefits to Relationships

Benefits to Individuals

- New Tools
- Experience writing Haskell
- An Introduction to the Wider Community

What do we hope that an individual attendee will gain by coming to the workshop?

Since this workshop is targeted towards beginners, we want an attendee to come away from the workshop with new tools at their disposal. Yes, a new language to reimplement existing knowledge with various platform benefits, but more importantly, a new tool for dissecting problems.

Learning a new problem-solving approach will almost certainly be the most challenging part of the workshop, but through the consistent delivery of exercises that benefit from domain modelling, we hope that the attendee will walk away with the confidence to attack new problems from the “Haskell Mindset”.

Although there won't be time to work on any large-scale problems, we hope that the approaches we demonstrate will be able to be applied with confidence to problems of any size.

Aside from the technical benefits, the workshop should provide a great opportunity for attendees to meet many other members of the Melbourne Haskell using community.

Benefits to the Community

- Haskell as a Tool for Communication
- Local Network Effects
- Consolidation

Often, Haskell (especially the type-system) can be an extremely effective means of communication of certain kinds of behaviors, requirements, and problems. If this workshop can help advance Haskell as a common language for inter-personal discussion of technical topics, then the barriers of communication will be lowered and the community as a whole should become more productive.

Often, it isn't until a particular community reaches a critical mass that it comes into its own. Currently the Melbourne Haskell community is reasonably disparate and unconnected (especially outside of MFUG). If the various groups of people using Haskell can be consolidated, then we would consider starting a regular Melbourne Haskell meetup. Just having the ability to ask questions in person can go a long way to advancing confidence in a particular topic, therefore, as the number of Haskell users increases locally, so to will the overall skill of individuals and the community as a whole.

Benefits to the Volunteers

- Experience
- Networking

We hope that for the volunteers, providing administrative and in-person assistance will be a rewarding experience. We are very open to people of any skill level helping out and this could be a great opportunity for newcomers to the community to get their fingers dirty by providing assistance at the workshop.

The workshop should also be a good networking opportunity for volunteers, as a stratified group of Haskellers of this size has not yet convened in Melbourne.

Benefits to Industry

It has been said that once you are comfortable programming Haskell, you become spoiled, and won't want to go back to your previous languages. Rather than quit your day-job, if Haskell's presence can be advanced in industry, then the Joy of programming Haskell will become a possibility in your day-to-day work-life. A longer-term goal to be sure.

This benefit may be the most tenuous outcome of the workshop, but as the mindshare of Haskell grows, the chances of it being used for projects within industry increases.

- As an understanding of the language's strengths and weaknesses emerges, decision makers are empowered to weigh up if the language is a suitable candidate for solving the technical problems at hand.
- Confidence is gained that there are enough people using the language that hiring a programmer will not be a problem if this is required.

The technical benefits to industry will have the most impact where a rigorous solution to a problem is necessary. In the financial sector, Haskell is beginning to become more popular as the cost of bugs can be very high. Technical benefits, however, are a moot point if Haskell does not see adoption.

If this workshop can give project-leaders in industry, making programming-language choices, the confidence to consider Haskell as a real candidate, then it will have gone a long way towards making Melbourne a more attractive place to be for people who wish to use Haskell in day-to-day work.

Benefits to the Organisers

Last-but-not-least -

For us, the organisers, running this workshop will be a great opportunity to see the Melbourne Haskell community in action. We're looking forward to working with you all and expect that, above all else, we will have a lot of. . .

Fun!

Setup

Ensure that you have the following programs installed and functioning correctly:

GHCi

At a command prompt, enter the following command:

```
ghci
```

This should launch the GHC Haskell REPL.

Type the following to ensure that you have a functioning REPL:

```
1 + 1
```

This should yield the result:

```
2
```

You can use GHCi to perform calculations other than just "1 + 1".

Here is an example session:

```
> ghci
GHCi, version 7.6.2: http://www.haskell.org/ghc/  :? for help
Loading package ghc-prim ... linking ... done.
Loading package integer-gmp ... linking ... done.
Loading package base ... linking ... done.
[Prelude] > 1 + 2 + 3
6
[Prelude] > 100 / 2
50.0
[Prelude] > 6 ^ 7
279936
[Prelude] > ^D
Leaving GHCi.
```

Using GHCi...

Calculate the price of 42-bakers-dozens of eggs at \$3 per-egg.

```
[Prelude] 42 * 13 * 3
1638
```


Loading files in GHCi

There are many ways to load and execute Haskell code. For the purposes of this workshop, if you do not already have a workflow you are comfortable with, then we suggest the following steps:

- Write and edit your programs in files ending in the extension “.hs”
- When you are ready to test your program, load it into GHCi
- After making modifications to your program, reload the program in GHCi

Say you had written the following program `test.hs` in your home directory:

```
main = print "hello world"
```

Load the file in GHCi to see it in action:

```
> ghci test.hs
GHCi, version 7.6.2: http://www.haskell.org/ghc/  :? for help
Loading package ghc-prim ... linking ... done.
Loading package integer-gmp ... linking ... done.
Loading package base ... linking ... done.
[1 of 1] Compiling Main                ( test.hs, interpreted )
Ok, modules loaded: Main.
[*Main] > main
"hello world"
```

... Unfortunately there is a bug in the program, so in your editor you make the change required to print “hello, world” with the mandated comma:

```
main = print "hello, world"
```

Now, back in GHCi, you can reload the program without exiting the REPL:

```
[*Main] > :reload
[1 of 1] Compiling Main                ( test.hs, interpreted )
Ok, modules loaded: Main.
[*Main] > main
"hello, world"
```

Much better!

You can inspect a value (of function) in ghci with the ‘:info’ command in order to find out a little about its type and definition:

```
ghci> :info main
```

```
main :: IO ()    -- Defined at test.hs:1:1
```

If you just wish to see the type of an expression, you can use the `:type` command:

```
ghci> :type main
main :: IO ()
```

- * Define a new numeric function in a source file
- * Load it in GHCi
- * Test your function in GHCi
- * Make a modification
- * Reload your changes without exiting GHCi
- * Test your changes

GHC

Create the following source file (program.hs):

```
main = print "hello world"
```

Compile the program as follows:

```
ghc --make program.hs
```

Run the program with the following command:

```
./program
```

The output should look as follows:

```
"hello world"
```

Compiled programs are almost always significantly faster than instructions run inside GHCi. Even greater speed-ups are possible by using the `-O` optimisation settings for GHC.

Using GHC...

Compile and run hello-world.

```
> echo 'main = print "hello friends"' > main.hs
> ghc --make main.hs
[1 of 1] Compiling Main                ( main.hs, main.o )
Linking main ...
> ./main
"hello friends"
```

Cabal

You should have access to a Cabal installation if you have installed the Haskell Platform.

Check that you have cabal by running:

```
cabal --version
```

This should output something similar to:

```
cabal-install version <VERSION>  
using version <VERSION> of the Cabal library
```

Install the QuickCheck package using cabal.

On OS X, The Haskell-Platform will install binaries in
\$HOME/Library/Haskell/bin

Make sure that this is on your path.

```
> cabal update # not required if done recently  
Downloading the latest package list from hackage.haskell.org  
> cabal install quickcheck  
...
```

An open-ended question:

Given that GHC is largely written in Haskell, how was GHC first compiled?

An open-ended question:

What are some of the current issues with the Haskell ecosystem?

Introduction

The following exercises are intended to be used to warm up your fingers, rather than your brain. These should be run through quickly to get you used to using your development environment.

Primitives

Haskell comes pre-packaged with many primitives available in the `Prelude` module that is included by default, but you should at least make yourself familiar with the following types, and literal syntax:

What?	Type	Literal Syntax
Machine Ints	<code>Int</code>	<code>42</code>
Strings	<code>String</code> , <code>[Char]</code>	<code>"Hello World"</code>
Booleans	<code>Bool</code>	<code>True</code> , <code>False</code>

You can type any literal directly into `GHCi` in order to have it echoed right back at you. This may be useful for sanity checking that you have the syntax right!

```
ghci> 42
42
```

Variables

In Haskell you can define a variable with the `=` sign.

Variables can be defined at the top-level (no-indentation):

```
myVariable = 2
```

Variable names should start with a lowercase letter and contain no spaces, or special characters, besides underscores, numbers, and `'`.

If you wish to define a variable inside `GHCi`, you have to prefix the definition with `"let"`... For example:

```
[Prelude] > let myName = "Simon"
```

Some examples of variable names are:

- a
- my_name
- data43'

Define your own variable.

```
x = "hello"
```

What is an example of an invalid variable name?

```
invalid-variable = 123
```

String literals look familiar:

```
myString = "hello world"
```

Define a variable containing a string.

Tuples

Tuples look like this:

```
myTuplePair = (1,"hello")
```

```
myTupleTrio = (1,"hello",3)
```

They can be used to group multiple, differently-typed (heterogeneous) values.

Define a variable containing a tuple.

Functions

Functions are a core part of Haskell. Function definitions look like this:

```
myFunction x y ... = ...
```

For example:

```
myAdd x y = x + y
```

myAdd takes two numbers and returns the result of the addition of those two numbers.

Define a function 'myMultiply' that multiplies 3 numbers.

```
myMultiply x y z = x * y * z
```

Lists

List are a commonly used data-structure in Haskell. Everything in a list has the same type (they are homogeneous).

Lists are built using the infix data-constructor `(:)` (pronounced “cons”). They also have a compact notation using `[...]`.

List literals look like:

```
list1 = [1,2,3]
list2 = 1 : 2 : []
list3 = "hello" : "world" : []
```

More information about why lists can be used the way that they are is contained in the [ADTs](#) chapter.

Define a variable containing a list.

You can deconstruct a list by pattern matching the head and tail like so:

```
f (x:xs) = ...
```

Define a function to get the first element of a list.

```
myHead (x:xs) = x -- This is a partial function, Beware!
```

In Prelude this function is called `head`.

"head" is a partial function - It will raise an exception if called with an empty list.

In Haskell we generally wish to avoid defining partial functions.

Define a variable containing the first element of your list.

```
myFirstElement = myHead myList
```

Define Length

Define a function that takes a list and returns the length.

Your solution should have the form of:

```
myLength []      = ...
myLength (x:xs) = ...
```

Things to consider:

- What is the length of an empty list? (the base case)
- What is the length of xs?

```
myLength [] = 0
myLength (x:xs) = 1 + myLength xs
```

Define myMap

Define a function that takes a function from a to b,
and a list of 'a', and returns a list of 'b's.

Some concrete examples of such a function may do the following:

- Take a function that divides integers by two, list of ints, and returns a list of doubles.
- Take a function that turns lowercase into uppercase characters, and a String, and returns a string in CAPS.

Things to consider:

- What is the base-case of myMap?
- What is the inductive-case of myMap?

```
myMap f [] = []
myMap f (x:xs) = f x : myMap f xs
```

Fun List Functions

For your reading pleasure, here are some definitions of common functions:

```
myFilter f [] = []
myFilter f (x:xs) = if f x then x : myFilter f xs
                   else      myFilter f xs
```

```
myFold f z [] = z
myFold f z (x:xs) = f x (myFold f z xs)
```

```
myReverse [] = []
myReverse (x:xs) = myReverse xs ++ [x]
```

```
myElem e [] = False
myElem e (x:xs) = if e == x then True
                  else myElem e xs
```

An open-ended question:

What is a good balance between safety and expressiveness in a programming-language?

Types

Question: How do you create a great program?

Answer: You type it!

In this chapter, we will go over the exercises from the introduction and add types to the examples.

In Haskell, type signatures can be provided inline, or above definitions.

For example:

```
x :: Int
x = 3
```

or

```
x = (3 :: Int)
```

It is far more common to place the type-signature above the definition, with inline types only used in situations where ambiguities need to be resolved.

You are defining a floating point variable:

```
myFloat = 1.1
```

Give your variable a type-signature.

```
myFloat :: Float
myFloat = 1.1
```

Type Synonyms

In Haskell, we can give type-expressions an alias (or synonym) by using the `type` keyword. This allows you to cut down the verbosity and chance of errors in your code when you have type expressions that would otherwise be repeated frequently.

An example of this is the `String` type-synonym, which is defined as follows:

```
type String = [Char]
```

Give your string variable from the previous chapter a type-signature.

```
myString :: String
myString = "Hello Haskell"
```

Tuples

Tuple type signatures look the same as the tuples themselves, with types in place of the data.

For example, if you had a tuple of a `String` and an `Int`, the type would look as follows:

```
myTuple :: (String, Int)
myTuple = ("The meaning of life", 42)
```

Give your previous tuple definition a type signature.

Functions

The type signatures of functions in Haskell are a little different from how they look in the more familiar C family languages, but the syntax is very elegant, and will allow a higher-level of reasoning than less consistent forms.

The syntax for a function type-signature is of the form:

```
{functionName} :: {argument} -> {result}
```

The main idea is that functions in Haskell only ever take one argument. If you wish to define a function that takes more than one argument, then you should, in fact, define a function that takes one argument, then returns another function.

Luckily the syntax for doing this in Haskell looks identical to defining a multi-argument function:

```
myMultiply x y z = x * y * z
```

However, the distinction becomes clear with the type-signature:

```
myMultiply :: Int -> (Int -> (Int -> Int))  
myMultiply x y z = x * y * z
```

It is clear, that the function only takes one argument, then returns a function (that only takes one argument, and returns a function (that only takes one argument, that returns an Int.))

Fortunately, Haskell's function syntax is right-associative, allowing us to drop the parentheses:

```
myMultiply :: Int -> Int -> Int -> Int  
myMultiply x y z = x * y * z
```

Define a function 'myMultiply' that multiplies 4 numbers.
Give your function a type-signature

```
myMultiply :: Int -> Int -> Int -> Int -> Int  
myMultiply w x y z = w * x * y * z
```

Lists

List type-signatures look like:

```
list1 :: [Int]
list2 :: [Int]
list3 :: [String]

list1 = [1,2,3]
list2 = 1 : 2 : []
list3 = "hello" : "world" : []

list1A :: ([]) Int
list1A = [1]
```

List type signatures are special in that the type-constructor is “Around”-fix. This is not generally possible, and lists are a special case in that regard.

If you find you need to, you can use the list type in prefix-form, as per variable `list1A`.

Define a list variable and give it a type-signature.

```
myList :: [Int]
myList = [1,2,3]
```

Give your ‘head’ deconstructor function a type-signature.

```
myHead :: [a] -> a
myHead (x:xs) = x
```

Length Signature

Give your length function a type-signature.

```
myLength :: [a] -> Int
myLength [] = 0
myLength (x:xs) = 1 + myLength xs
```

Map Signature

Give your ‘map’ function a type-signature.

Things to consider:

- What is the type of the first argument of `myMap`?
- What is the second argument, etc?
- What is the type of the result of `myMap`?

```
myMap :: (a -> b) -> [a] -> [b]
myMap f [] = []
myMap f (x:xs) = f x : myMap f xs
```

Fun List Functions Types

Here are the types for the definitions of the list functions from the previous chapter:

```
myFilter :: (a -> Bool) -> [a] -> [a]
myFilter f []      = []
myFilter f (x:xs) = if f x then x : myFilter f xs
                  else      myFilter f xs
```

```
myFold :: (a -> b -> b) -> b -> [a] -> b
myFold f z []      = z
myFold f z (x:xs) = f x (myFold f z xs)
```

```
myReverse :: [a] -> [a]
myReverse []      = []
myReverse (x:xs) = myReverse xs ++ [x]
```

```
myElem :: Eq a => a -> [a] -> Bool
myElem e []      = False
myElem e (x:xs) = if e == x then True
                  else myElem e xs
```

Try to understand the type-signatures for these functions.

Hint: Try finding a way to say them in English.

An open-ended question:

How many types could a type-checker check...
... if a type checker could check types?

ADTs (Algebraic Data Types)

[Haskell Wiki Link](#)

Algebraic Data Types are THE bread and butter of Haskell programs.

- Functions evaluate data by pattern-matching against ADTs
- Domains are modeled using ADTs
- Laziness is linked to ADTs
- Types can be derived from ADT definitions

But how does that help me?

An example of an ADT in Haskell:

```
data MyBool = MyTrue | MyFalse | MyNotSure

should_I_eat_something_bigger_than_my_own_head :: MyBool
should_I_eat_something_bigger_than_my_own_head = MyFalse
```

With this functionality, you are able to introduce your own "Enum" values.

The MyBool example is somewhat equivalent to the following C++ code:

```
enum MyBool { MyTrue, MyFalse, MyNotSure };
```

With the added bonus of not having out-of-bounds casting ruin your day.

If your problem space can be modeled using various discrete values, then this form of ADT will allow you to create a program that mirrors your problem!

You can add parameters to the data constructors:

```
data MyNullString = Nada | MyString String

stringy :: MyNullString
stringy = MyString "Whatever, It's just a string"

blanky :: MyNullString
blanky = Nada
```

Constructors can take multiple parameters:

```
data SomeJunk = Rubbish String | TrashPile String Int Bool
```

```
discards :: SomeJunk
discards = TrashPile "Junk Yard" 42 True
```

Furthermore, ADTs can be recursive:

```
data MyNumberList = Nada | SomeNumbers Int MyNumberList
```

```
numbers :: MyNumberList
numbers = SomeNumbers 1 (SomeNumbers 2 Nada)
```

Finally, ADTs can be parametrised by other types:

```
data MyContainer x = Jar x

contained :: MyContainer Int
contained = Jar 1

pun :: MyContainer (MyContainer String)
pun = Jar (Jar "Binks")
```

In general, the syntax of an ADT looks similar to the following:

```
ADT           := data <TypeName> <Variables> = <Constructors>
TypeName      := [A-Z] + [a-z'_]*
Parameters    := <ConcreteType> + (" " + <ConcreteType>)*
Constructors  := <Constructor> + (" | " + <Constructor>)*
Constructor   := <TypeName> + <Parameters>
Variables     := <Variable> + (" " + <Variable>)*
Variable      := [a-z] + [a-z'_]*
```

ConcreteType can't be defined syntactically, but it means that your type is "Fully Applied" (in Haskell terms, has a kind of *). An example of some concrete types are:

- String
- Int
- Maybe String
- [Int]

Examples of some non-concrete types are:

- Maybe
- IO
- (->)

Deriving

One final thing to note is that in order to be able to print values of your data types at the GHCi REPL, you will need your data to be a member of the `Show` type-class.

Type-classes are covered in depth in the [type-classes](#) chapter.

This is achieved by appending the following text after your data definition:

```
data MyData = SuperGreat deriving (Show)
```

Similar classes are needed for ordering and equality. If you get stuck on a missing class, just add the following deriving triple for now:

```
data MyData = SuperGreat deriving (Eq, Ord, Show)
```

Exercises

With all of this power at your disposal, it's time to define a list ADT yourself.

Define your own generic list ADT.

Things to consider:

- Should this ADT be parametrised?
- Should this ADT be recursive?
- Should this ADT have multiple constructors?
- Should the constructors be parametrised?

```
data MyList a = Empty | Items a (MyList a)
```

An open-ended question:

What would the ADT for a Lisp-like language look like?

If you wish to learn about why ADTs are “Algebraic”, then have a look at:

- [The Algebra of Algebraic Data Types, Part 1](#)
- [The Algebra of Algebraic Data Types, Part 2](#)
- [The Algebra of Algebraic Data Types, Part 3](#)

Lunch Break

Lunch is provided courtesy of [ThoughtWorks](#)



Laziness

Haskell's evaluation strategies ~ Exploring the magic.

Often when looking at examples of Haskell functions you will come across examples of laziness in action. The canonical example used to demonstrate the lazy recursive approach of Haskell is the definition of the list of Fibonacci numbers -

```
fibs = 1 : 1 : zipWith (+) fibs (tail fibs)
```

This solution has a reputation for being somewhat mind-bending for beginners... What is going on here?

In order to show the start of an infinite list, use the 'take' function -

For example:

```
[Prelude] > let fibs = 1 : 1 : zipWith (+) fibs (tail fibs)
[Prelude] > take 10 fibs
[1,1,2,3,5,8,13,21,34,55]
```

Here is a Fibonacci solution in Javascript:

```
function fib(n) {
    if(n < 2) return 1
    return fib(n-1) + fib(n-2)
}
```

Most programmers won't have any problem with the usual recursive definition of `fibs`, so what makes the Haskell one special? Let's see if we can implement the Haskell version in Javascript:

```
// The Fibonacci Sequence in all its glory~
//
function fibs() { return [1, cons(1, zipWith(add, fibs, tail( fibs )))] }

exports.main = function() { runList(fibs, 13) }

// Helpers
//
function cons(h,t)      { return function() { return [h,t] }}
function head(list)     { return list()[0] }
function add(x,y)       { return x + y }
function tail(list)     { return function() { return list()[1]() }}

function zipWith(f, x, y) { return function() {
```

```

        return [ f(head(x), head(y)),
                  zipWith(f, tail(x), tail(y))] } }

function runList(list, n) { while(n --> 0) {
    console.log(head(list)); list = tail(list)}}

```

The main difference between a normal recursive definition and this one is that the recursion happens at the value level, as opposed to the function-call location.

Implement an infinite list of ascending numbers using lazy, value-based recursion.

```
ascending = 1 : zipWith (+) ascending ascending
```

An open-ended question:

Can all numeric-lists be defined by using value-based recursion?

Type Classes

A big part of writing clean reusable code is controlled polymorphism. We are like a carny at the roller-coaster, anybody can ride the roller coaster, but you must be at least this tall.

In the object oriented world we use the inheritance heirachy, we know that if something is a subclass, it has at least all of the features of its parent. Of course this is all intertwined with the sharing of data and state, and that's bad.

In the functional world we get type classes, which is just controlled polymorphism without the baggage. They basically say, that I don't need to know exactly what type you'll call me with but you need to provide a bunch of functions for me to use.

A function tells you what type classes it needs with a "context", The context is the bit to the left of the double arrow " $=>$ "

```
(+) :: Num a => a -> a -> a
```

```
show :: Show a => a -> String
```

In the above example, we have (+). It can work for any type that is a number. There are built in types for numbers and you can also define your own.

`show` can turn any "Showable" type into a string. this is analogous to the `toString()` method in Java.

Define a function that adds one to everything in a list.
What is the type of this function?

```
read :: Read a => String -> a
```

```
incrementAndshow :: (Num a, Show a) => a -> String
```

Unlike most other languages, with some kind of type driven function dispatch (e.g. methods, overloading). Haskell can also use the *return* type of the function to choose functionality, this can take a little getting used to, but it is powerful.

`read` turns a string into a value of another type, although we don't know what this is yet. It depends, for example on the type of the function that you are passing the result of `read` into.

`incrementAndShow` demonstrates a function that uses two type classes in its context.

In `ghci`, convert a string to an integer using `read`, then covert a string into a list of integers using `read`.

(Hint: use `(::)` to add a type to an expression)

If you just type `'read "1"'` in `ghci` you get an error, why is this?

Define `'incrementAndShow'` which adds one to a number and converts it to a string.

What is they type of this function?

How did haskell infer your context?

Defining Your Own Type Classes

Let's define a type class of things that can be rated, as in 1 to 5 stars or awesome to lame.

```
data Rating =
  SoAwesomeICried |
  PrettyCool      |
  Meh              |
  ForTheLoveOfGodMakeItEnd
  deriving Show
```

```
class Rateable r where
  rating :: r -> Rating
```

```
data Beer = Coopers | Fosters | CarltonDraught
  deriving Show
```

```
instance Rateable Beer where
```

```

rating Coopers = PrettyCool
rating Fosters = ForTheLoveOfGodMakeItEnd
rating CarltonDraught = Meh

data Movie = Movie String
    deriving Show

instance Rateable Movie where
    rating (Movie "Bladerunner") = SoAwesomeICried
    rating (Movie "Tron") = PrettyCool
    rating _ = Meh

```

When we define a type class we write out the name and the types of the functions that we want associated with this type class. We also put a type variable in our definition which refers to whatever type may instance this type class later. We can use this type variable in the definitions below. At this point we can also define default definitions for the functions.

We then define two new data types, **Beer** and **Movie** for which we add an “instance declaration” this is where we write the definitions of the type class functions specialized for beers of movies.

We now know how to manually add type class definitions and we could add custom **Show** instances for each of our new datatypes. However this would be a bunch of boilerplate nonsense, so we can use the handy **deriving** directive to automatically add a **Show** instance for us.

Create your own **Rateable** type class and wacky **Rating** datatype.
Then create datatypes and instances for something you have a strong opinion about, like cars or a political party.

Add a review function to your type class that returns a short textual review.

Add a **Rateable** instance for a native type, like **String**.

There are a few other cool things you can do with typeclasses that are not covered here. So if you want to know more, check out some of these other articles:

<http://www.haskell.org/tutorial/classes.html>

Music

When you are modeling a problem of a sufficient level of complexity you will find that your data-types often become recursive. One domain that sits roughly on this threshold is music.



Here is a small musical target-language:

```
data Music
  = A_ -- Underscore Represents a Flat
  | A
  | A' -- Prime represents a Sharp
      -- ... B, C, D, E, F, G ...
  | Sequence [Music]
  | Sharp Music
  | Longer Integer Music
  | Higher Integer Music
```

Certainly not comprehensive enough to write Beethoven's 5th Symphony, but good enough for Baa Baa Black-Sheep.

```
intro  = Sequence [ C, C, G, G ]
run     = Sequence [ A, B, C, A ]
middle = Sequence [ F, F, E, E ]
run2    = Sequence [ D, C, D, E ]
baaBaa = Sequence [ Longer 2  intro
                   , Higher 12 run
                   , Longer 4   G
                   , Longer 2  middle
                   , run2
                   , Longer 4   C ]
```

In order to listen to this music, create a file with the following code:

```
import Midi
import qualified Data.ByteString as BS

main = BS.writeFile "baaBaa.mid" (make_music baaBaa)
```

Write a melody using this language. Try to write and compose functions, rather than declaring one big data-structure.

Why not try writing Beethoven's 5th Symphony after all?

An open question:

What kinds of music is this language incapable of modeling?
How would you modify this language to be more inclusive?

Monads

No seriously, what are Monads?

A monad is just a bunch of rules. There are many, many analogies for monads out there. Each of these analogies are useful, but can be obscuring on their own, they are just one view point. To effectively wield monads we must use many different view points together, each one revealing a little piece of the underlying structure of monads. Each view point becomes another tool in our mental toolbox.

So there is no one magic-bullet analogy for monads, only many complementary ones.

Haskell uses monads to represent side-effects. The simplest and most practical analogy is the "tainted value" analogy. In Haskell the function that reads a file looks like this:

```
readFile :: FilePath -> IO String
```

This function can't return a normal string, because the return value has been tainted by side effects. So the IO monad is acting as a tag saying that the returned string must be treated specially.

But an `IO String` is not very useful to us, because we want to actually do things with it. So Haskell, in its normal paternalistic style, allows us access the `String` inside an `IO String` only in a very careful way. We use an operation called `bind (>>=)` to access the string.

```
(>>=) :: Monad m => m a -> (a -> m b) -> m b
```

```
-- Here specialized for IO and String
```

```
(>>=) :: IO String -> (String -> IO b) -> IO b
```

This says the only way we can "look inside" an `IO String` is by providing a function that takes a `String` and returns some other new value that has also been tainted by the outside world. In other words we can only look at a value "inside" the IO monad if we promise to make sure our result will also be tainted.

This means that if some code uses a value from the outside world, even deep inside, it cannot be hidden, it must be made explicit in the type. Tainting is a one way street, once you are tainted you can't be untainted. There is no function `untaint :: IO a -> a`. One can't get an untainted value from a tainted one.

In fact, in haskell, the very way we construct a useful program is by ultimately creating value of type `IO ()` that we assign to special variable called `main`.

Why can't one write `untaint`?

If you could what problems would this cause?

One thing that can be a little strange is the type of `getLine`. In imperative languages, functions of zero arguments make some sense. They can be thought of recipes or to-do lists. In haskell a total function of type `() -> Foo` is isomorphic to a constant `Foo`. Because the function only has one input value and therefore only one possible output value.

So let us return to `getLine`. In an imperative language it would look like `getLine :: () -> String`. Our first problem is that the return value of this function is tainted by the outside world, so we need to use the `IO` monad, `getLine :: () -> IO String`. Now because of the isomorphism between unit domain functions and constants we can just write `getLine :: IO String`. We call a constant of type `IO a` an "IO action". Because it stands for a bunch of side effects that will be performed together.

This will seem strange at first, because `getLine` isn't really a function – it's just a constant value! But that's okay because while the `IO String` is a constant (i.e. there is only one distinct IO action that reads a line from the console) the value *inside* the monad is not constant. It can be different each time we look inside.

```
> getLine
hello
"hello"

> getLine
monad
"monad"

> getLine >>= (\name -> putStrLn ("Hello " ++ name))
andy
Hello andy
```

One thing leads to another

Often when doing IO one wants to make sure one thing happens after another, We can use `(>>=)` and just ignore the unwrapped value:

```
putStr "Hello " >>= (\_ -> putStrLn "World")

putStrLn "One" >>= (\_ -> putStrLn "Two") >>= (\_ -> putStrLn "Three")
```

This pattern can be easily abstracted, it has been standardized as `(>>) :: IO a -> IO b -> IO b`. This can be read as “and then”.

```
putStr "Hello " >> putStrLn "World"
```

```
putStrLn "One" >> putStrLn "Two" >> putStrLn "Three"
```

Write a program that prints something stupid, funny or rude.
Make sure to use `(>>)` somewhere.

Monad Wars III: Return of the Value

We mentioned before that there is no way to untaint a value, once it has been tainted, we can make new tainted values from it, but never untainted ones. But that begs the question, can we choose to taint a value? Indeed we can, in fact, this is a fundamental operation of a Monad. In haskell it is confusingly called `return :: a -> IO a`.

A common pattern is to “open up” an IO with bind `(>>=)`, mess around with the contents then wrap it back up again with `return`. We have a function to help us with this called `lift`. Specialized for IO it has type `lift :: (a -> b) -> (IO a -> IO b)`. We can use this to take a vanilla function and “lift” it into the IO monad. It works by unwrapping the IO monad calling our function and then wrapping the result back up again.

```
use return to write 'myLiftIO :: (a -> b) -> IO a -> IO b'
```

Do it, do it good.

Sometimes when you are doing a lot of ad-hoc interleaved IO, using bind and return all over the place can become a pain in the fingers. So haskell provides special syntax for using monads, called “do notation”.

To use do notation, we start a “do block” with the keyword `do`. Inside a do block, statements can be written line by line and they are automatically joined using “and then” `(>>)`. This causes them to be run one after the other like in an imperative programming language. One can also easily unwrap monad values and bind them to a variable with using a left arrow `<-` syntax.

```
main = do
  putStrLn "Hello World"
  putStrLn "Enter your name: "
  name <- getLine
  putStrLn ("Hello: " ++ name)
```

The do-notation is like a DSL, under the hood it is just expanded to a chain of bind `(>>=)` calls. Here is what the above code would look like without do-notation:


```

main =
  putStrLn "Hello World" >>
  putStrLn "Enter your name: " >>
  getLine >>= (\ name ->
    putStrLn ("Hello: " ++ name))

```

Write a program that asks for someone's first and second name, then complements them (or makes fun of them).

For extra points ask for their age, and customize the complement (insult) depending on how old they are.

Do it with `do`-notation first, then "desugar" it into raw `bind (>>=)` calls

My father once told me about an "amazing AI" that his magician/programmer friend build, which could answer any yes/no question as well as a human.

Of course it only worked if his friend was the one typing the question! The trick being that it just counted the number of spaces in the question. If there was an even number it would output true, if there was an odd number, false. You just fiddled with the wording, or snuck in an extra space, to get the answer that you wanted...

Looks like it's time to write your super-doooper human-level AI and see if your friends can figure out how it works.

Stay Functional, San Diego

Even when we are programming with side effects, we still want our programs to follow functional principals. To stop our code ending up like C written in `do`-notation, there are some principals we can try to follow:

1. Try to do most of the work inside pure functions.
2. Don't create an IO action until the last possible moment.
3. Be declarative, think of program as declaring a pipeline or specifying an interaction, instead of being a to-do list.
4. Avoid mixing control, state and calculation. Instead abstract them into small composable pieces. For inspiration see the monad combinators in `Control.Monad` (e.g. `sequence`, `forever`, `mapM`).

These principals are not specific to monads. They are applicable to all side-effect heavy programing problems. These principles can also be applied to imperative programs for great justice.

A lot of patterns like reactive programming, dataflow programming and CQRS are consequences of following principals such as these.

The pithy take-away is don't "update, execute, update". Instead "represent, transform, compose".

An open-ended question:

Why is it a good idea to make side effects explicit?

Ecosystem

The Haskell ecosystem is large and interesting, it is held together more by convention than by dictation, with the current convention being that open source packages are made available through `cabal` on Hackage.

Cabal

Cabal is a library package, but “cabal” is often used to refer to the cabal executable provided by the “cabal-install” package. These packages are both provided by the Haskell Platform.

The premiere online Cabal package repository is [Hackage](#).

Cabal provides mechanisms for download and installing packages from Hackage onto your system. It also provides a consistent way to structure, export, test, and package your own programs.

Install the `hlint` package from hackage.

Use the ‘`hlint`’ command-line program to to check for stylistic issues in one of your previous solutions.

Information about the `hlint` package can be found at

- * hackage.haskell.org/package/hlint
- * <http://www.haskell.org/hoogle/?hoogle=hlint>

etc.

The command used to install the `hlint` package is

```
> cabal install hlint
```

Although you may have to run

```
> cabal update
```

to ensure that your list of packages is up to date.

Once you have the `hlint` tool installed you can run it like so:

```
> hlint dragon.hs
```

```
dragon.hs:35:17: Warning: Redundant $
Found:
```

```
flip zip (map toLower text) $ dragon_points  
Why not:  
flip zip (map toLower text) dragon_points
```

An open-ended question:

How would you go about publishing your own package to Hackage?

MOAR PLZ!

Hungry for more? Here are some extra sections that cover more advanced haskell awesomeness.



Testing

Haskell's type-system allows you to eliminate many kinds of errors that are usually combated using testing in more dynamic languages.

However, just because the type system can prevent some classes of error, doesn't mean that it can catch them all.



There are a couple of really useful approaches to testing used commonly by Haskell programmers:

- [QuickCheck](#)
- [HUnit](#)

QuickCheck focuses primarily on testing pure code, while HUnit provides means to test code that lives in the IO monad.

In the world of unit-testing, generating data can be a pain. Coming up with concise examples that test edge-cases and don't bother repeating useless properties is a real art-form that can take longer than writing the code to solve the problem at hand.

In many languages, frameworks and libraries have sprung up to aid with this problem by providing ways to generate various forms of valid and invalid test-data on demand.

An example of this form of library in Ruby is [Factory Girl](#). You specify the structure and properties of the data you want generated, and using the helpers provided by the framework you will be able to generate many unit tests to ensure that your application's code behaves as expected!

But hang-on... Why would we go about telling a Haskell library what the structure of our data looks like when in a great-deal of cases - Haskell already knows?

This is where the `Arbitrary` type-class from QuickCheck steps up to bat for us!

Let's say that we have a function `hyphenate` that takes a sentence and turns the spaces into hyphens - There should be no trailing or leading hyphens unless they were already there to begin with, and there should be no instance of multiple hyphens in a row in our output - For example:

```
"hello world"      => "hello-world"
"say      whaaaaa?" => "say-whaaaat?"
```

We get pretty excited and code up an enterprise solution ~

```
hyphenate :: String -> String
hyphenate s = map (replace ' ' '-') s

replace :: Char -> Char -> Char -> Char
replace x y c | c == x    = y
               | otherwise = c
```

Great!

Those examples we looked at earlier kind of look like some test-data. Let's write some unit-tests.

```
test1 :: Bool
test1 = hyphenate "hello world" == "hello-world"

test2 :: Bool
test2 = hyphenate "say      whaaaaa?" == "say-whaaaat?"
```

Awwwwwww yis.

... Except test2 fails spectacularly... Hmm...

So we fix our test-data, we fix our function (hopefully?) and code up a few more tests, only to find we missed another edge-case when our client comes back with some trailing hyphens and mad as a raging bull... There has to be a better way!

Enter QuickCheck -

Rather than writing tests for individual applications, we write properties that cover the various specifications of the desired behavior:

```
import Data.List

prop_no_spaces :: String -> Bool
prop_no_spaces s = not (elem ' ' (hyphenate s))

prop_no_leading :: String -> Bool
prop_no_leading s = case hyphenate s of (x:xs) -> x /= '-'
                                         _       -> True

prop_no_trailing :: String -> Bool
prop_no_trailing s = prop_no_leading (reverse s)

prop_no_multiple :: String -> Bool
prop_no_multiple s = not (elem "--" (concatMap tails (inits s)))
```

The QuickCheck program looks for function names starting with "prop_". The program generates random data to test with and expects a True result.

That's all well and good, but how does that help us?

Check this out!

```
> quickCheck +names hyphen-solution-and-tests.hs
[Prelude] > [1 of 1] Compiling Main ( hy.hs, interpreted )
Ok, modules loaded: Main.
[*Main] > prop_no_spaces: +++ OK, passed 100 tests.
[*Main] > prop_no_leading: *** Failed! (after 44 tests and 7 shrinks):
" "
[*Main] > prop_no_trailing: +++ OK, passed 100 tests.
[*Main] > prop_no_multiple: +++ OK, passed 100 tests.
[*Main] > Leaving GHCi.
```

ZOMG - So much free test data!

This found an edge-case for us without too much trouble, and what's more, narrowed it down to the minimal failing example!

If you want to be able to take advantage of QuickCheck in the fashion performed in the example you will need to install QuickCheck and quickcheck-script:

```
> cabal install quickcheck quickcheck-script
```

In order to take advantage of QuickCheck's data-generation for custom data-types - take a look at the [Arbitrary](#) type-class.

Given that the Fibonacci sequence is defined as follows:

```
fibs = 1 : 1 : zipWith (+) fibs (tail fibs)
```

Write a property checking that successive Fibonacci term pairs sum to the next term.

Symbolic Differentiation

Your Highschool math teacher has decided to introduce differentiation of single-variable polynomials...

This is in super easy once you grasped the concept:

Polynomial term differentiation:

$$a.x^n.\frac{d}{dx} = n.a.x^{n-1}$$

Linearity of differentiation:

$$(a + b)\frac{d}{dx} = a\frac{d}{dx} + b\frac{d}{dx}$$

But you don't wish to perform the undoubtedly large number of rote-examples required after your moment of epiphany.

```
differentiate :: Polynomial -> Polynomial
differentiate = ...
```

The data-types used to represent a `Polynomial` are as follows:

```
data Constant    = C Int           deriving (Show, Eq)
data Power       = U Int           deriving (Show, Eq)
data Term        = T Constant Power deriving (Show, Eq)
data Polynomial  = P [ Term ]      deriving (Show, Eq)
```

The `x` variable is implicit in the `Term` data-type.

Create a function "differentiate" that takes a `Polynomial`, and returns a new `Polynomial` that has been differentiated with respect to `x`.

An open ended question:

What would an ADT look like that could model partially-differentiable multi-variable equations?



Figure 1: Beam me Up

Making a Web-Site with Scotty

The Haskell library [Scotty](#) is similar to the ruby web-library [Sinatra](#).

Scotty can be installed by using the following Cabal command:

```
> cabal install scotty
```

Scotty's behaviour is based around [REST](#) verbs and routes.

For example - A simple Hello-World website:

```
{-# LANGUAGE OverloadedStrings #-}

import Web.Scotty
import Data.Monoid (mconcat)

main = scotty 3000 $ do
  get "/:word" $ do
    beam <- param "word"
    html $ mconcat ["<h1>Scotty, ", beam, " me up!</h1>"]
```

If we inspect the type of `get` in GHCi we see this:

```
> import Web.Scotty
> :info get
get :: Action action => RoutePattern -> action -> ScottyM ()
   -- Defined in 'scotty-0.4.6:Web.Scotty.Route'
```

The `ActionM` `Action` type-class instance allows us to perform any IO action we desire, such as printing to the console, reading files, etc - through the use of the `liftIO` function.

```
{-# LANGUAGE OverloadedStrings #-}

import Web.Scotty
import Control.Monad.IO.Class
import Data.Monoid

myRoute = get "/hello" $ do
  liftIO $ putStrLn "What is your name?"
  myName <- liftIO readLn
  html $ mconcat ["Your name is ", myName, "... Thanks!"]
```

Make a simple website using Scotty that shows the current time.

Check out the website project in the scaffold folder for an example of how to put together a Scotty based web-project.

An open question:

What features do the more advanced Haskell web-frameworks include that Scotty lacks?

Compression

In the scaffold folder `compression` there is a Cabal project that implements a compression strategy based on [Huffman Coding](#).

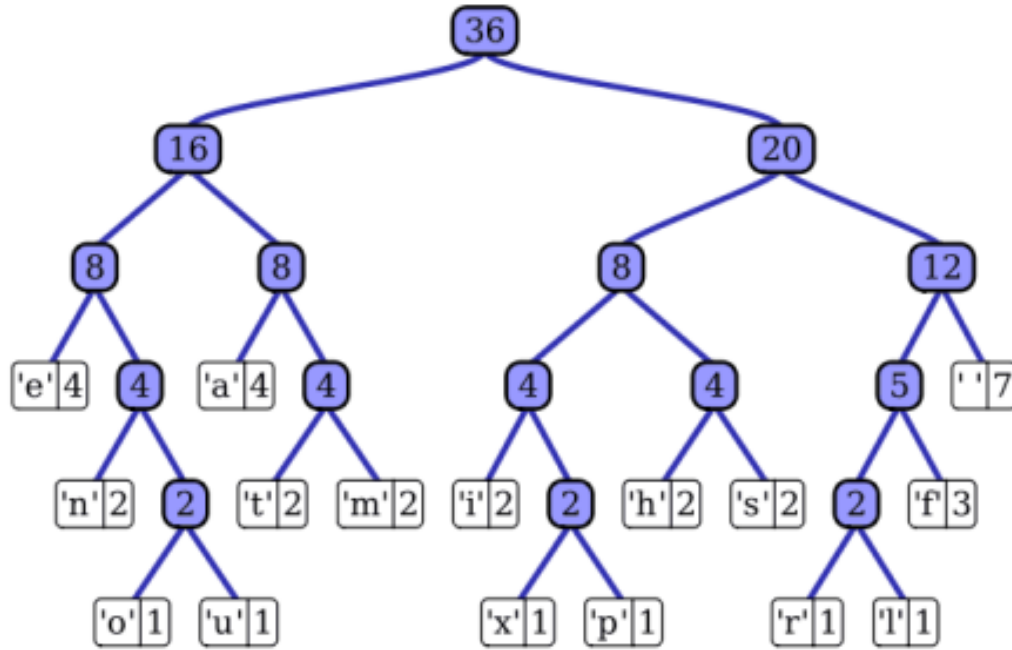


Figure 2: Huffman Tree

A Huffman Tree is built by recursively constructing a tree by combining the two lowest-scored trees in a list, then adding the new tree to the list, until there is only one tree left.

```

data FingerTree k v = L k (Maybe v) | B k (FingerTree k v) (FingerTree k v)

type HuffmanTree = FingerTree (Sum Int) Char

instance Monoid k => Monoid (FingerTree k v)
  where x 'mappend' y = B (getKey x 'mappend' getKey y) x y
        mempty       = L mempty Nothing

getKey :: FingerTree t t1 -> t
getKey (L k _ ) = k
getKey (B k _ _) = k

step :: [HuffmanTree] -> [HuffmanTree]
step [] = []
  
```

```

step [x]    = [x]
step [x,y] = [ x <> y ]
step xs     = step (take 2 sorted) ++ drop 2 sorted
  where
    sorted = sortBy (comparing getKey) xs

build :: [HuffmanTree] -> HuffmanTree
build = head . fromJust . find ((<= 1) . length) . iterate step

```

The basic idea is that in a non-random string, some combinations of tokens will be more frequent than others, and as-such, common substrings can be represented with a short-hand encoding to save space.

The project contains two executables: `compression` and `decompression`. These accept data on STDIN and output data on STDOUT. `compression` accepts text on STDIN and outputs binary data. Decompression does the reverse.

The Haskell package "binary" exposes the module "Data.Binary" that allows for very easy binary serialisation and parsing, with most existing types already containing a marshalling implementation.

If you install these executables by using `cabal install`, then you will be able to use them in the following manner:

```

> # Compress
> compression < lyrics.txt > lyrics.txt.compressed
> # Decompress
> decompression < lyrics.txt.compressed

```

Top down, the compression algorithm works as follows:

- * Determine the frequencies of the characters in the input text from STDIN
- * Build a Huffman Tree from the frequency table
- * Traverse the tree, outputting Bit-String encodings for each character
- * Map a lookup of the encoding table over the input text
- * Pack the resulting bits into a ByteString
- * Attach a header (containing length, and frequency table)
- * Output the result to STDOUT

With the decompression algorithm performing the following:

- * Read a ByteString
- * Unpack into header (length and frequency table) and body
- * Translate frequency-table into encoding table as per compression
- * For each encoding match against the start of the compressed body
- * Output the character if there is a match
- * Process the left-over body

Unfortunately, the compression algorithm contains a bug.

In the compression scaffolding project, locate and fix the bug that causes the test-suite to fail.

You can run the tests by calling "cabal test" from within the project folder.

-- Line 131 should be:

```
treeToBits t = map (second reverse) result
```

Although the algorithm itself is very basic, and the use of strings instead of binary-data is not a common way to perform compression, the structure itself is typical of a real-world Haskell project. The project structures itself around the Cabal toolkit, and uses several libraries. It exposes a library, several executables, and a test-suite.

An open question:

How would you implement a more efficient compression algorithm in Haskell?

Post-Mortem



tl;dr

- Background colors allowed a birds-eye view of progress
- Volunteers rock - One on one time is invaluable
- Make sure your building has water
- Buy beer for your volunteers

We ran the Haskell workshop on the 21st of September, 2013 from 10am until 5pm, with an hour for lunch at 12:30pm. Responsibilities were split into three categories with name-tag colorings available to match:

- Attendee
- Volunteer
- Admin / Contributor

After running the workshop and having a few days to reflect, there are many aspects that warrant analysis. Some things could have been run more efficiently, or scrapped all-together. Certain administrative processes could have been arranged in a manner that avoided some pitfalls. There were also some non-conventional approaches adopted that worked far better than anticipated, and these deserve some discussion. Over-all, the workshop was a resounding success. The success stemmed primarily from a drive to ensure that everyone attending was able to extract tangible value from the workshop by the end of the day.

A listing of all the aspects that come to mind follows, with a break-down of the more significant items following that:

Venue

- Water WTF - Have contingency plans for existential crises
- Lifts - Bottlenecks
- Lunch - Vegans, etc.
- Wifi - What to do when the net is slow / out
- Time spent ensuring that we had a venue delayed the workshop significantly

Admin

- Reddit fail - Should have used email-based admin tool like Google Groups
- Meetup - Sending messages to attendees / limits
- Delegated responsibilities
- Nailing down the Venue

People

- Regulating Numbers - Back-Pressure
- Ratios of Volunteers to Attendees
- Categories helped - Admin | Volunteer | Contributor | Participant
- Soliciting Volunteers

Consolidation

- Maintaining Centralised contacts list
- Have more concrete plans for post-workshop activities

Future Workshop Ideas

- Intermediate workshop that aims to focus on just one project
- Spit into groups
- Similar to future-proofing software - Very difficult to get right
- School-of-Haskell integration

Bootstrapping a Dedicated Haskell Meetup

- Workshop is a good opportunity to bootstrap a dedicated meetup

Other Failures

- Stratification?
- Missing connections between concepts
- External community outreach
- Cross-Platform Midi Players
- Cabal Constraints on Web-Site scaffold

- The “Domain Modelling” aspect was somewhat sidelined
- Not enough focus on types as language for communication
- Compilation errors in the IDE were hard to pinpoint
- Expand-Contract in Material loses position
- Public speaking in a workshop context is very different to a lecture context. Why?
- Unknown unknowns emerged very late in the process
- Not initially having copies of static assets on hand

Other Wins

- Incremental approach to material construction - Map-Reduce
- Taking a firm-stance on the experience level of attendees
- Name-Tags
- Ambitious goal achieved
- Fast-Pace with volunteers to provide hands-on assistance
- Open-Ended questions
- Easy-going approach
- Interactivity
- Material
- Project structure on GitHub facilitating collaboration
- Academic aspects were marginalised for the sake of practicality
- In response to stratification - On demand workflow
- Shotgun approach to concepts - Don’t try to build a perfect in-order dependency graph. Introduce groups of concepts all at once, then provide hands-on-assistance with issues
- Snippet error-checking in the IDE
- Research on running workshops and talking to people with previous experience helped catch some mistakes before they occurred
- Relaxed approach worked - Didn’t try to control every aspect
- Color coding of the material

The first rude shock of the day came just as I was helping to set up the venue. I received a text saying that the water to the building would be cut off at 1pm until the end of the day. There was no real way this could have been predicted, but having a general plan to deal with such potentially existential crises would have been a good idea. In the end, the water wasn’t a problem as we made sure that everyone was aware of the situation and advised of the location of the nearest public toilets, etc.

Another piece of foresight that would have been valuable was that the internet may not have the bandwidth to support 50 people all trying to `cabal update`, etc. At the start of the workshop, local copies of the workshop material and scaffold projects were downloaded so that people could get a copy if their wifi wasn’t performing as needed. Luckily, for the most part, the wifi held up and we only had to distribute a couple of thumb-drives around to get the people who hadn’t come prepared set up. This could have gone much worse if the wifi was flakier.

In order to organise the various aspects of the administrative effort, I decided to use a dedicated sub-reddit. I hoped that this would aid in helping to prevent discussion topics

from becoming side-tracked and allow voting to dictate the importance of various issues. In reality a mailing-list approach such as Google Groups would have been a much wiser choice. The main issue was that people weren't notified when new messages were posted to the subreddit. I still see value in taking the subreddit approach, but wouldn't recommend it for organising an event with less than about 200 participants.

Making sure that we had the venue available was a fairly involved process which ended up delaying the workshop somewhat. There was a lot of back and forth communication between various parties and little direct communication with the people involved in making the final call. In retrospect, ensuring that the venue was considered a hard-dependency for announcing the workshop was a wise decision, but I would have pressed for firmer answers about the availability and worried less about offending people.

Regulating attendance involved some consideration, but worked out in the end. Although I set up the workshop on Meetup.com I wasn't able to set limits on the attendance. I had to get the creator of the group to change it for me. It would have been very convenient if this was an option and it seems like a fairly serious issue with the meetup interface that various controls are absent from meetup creators settings and only available to the group admin. Having the participation numbers highly visible was very useful and allowed us to make the decision not to promote the workshop outside of Meetup.com as we had originally planned. This avoided having a large waiting list, or too many attendees for the capacity of the venue. Another tactic we used in limiting the number of attendees was to heavily recommend that people with more advanced experience with Haskell consider attending in a volunteer capacity as opposed to as a regular participant. This also had the positive effect of boosting numbers of volunteers.

Since the announcement there has been a great deal of interest in follow-up or ongoing workshops. The idea of running an intermediate-to-advanced workshop is fairly daunting. The best alternative we have thought of is to, instead, create a regular dedicated Haskell meetup where people are free to bring their own ideas forward and work collaboratively if they wish to do so. This would also alleviate concerns of venue capacity saturation, as since it would be an ongoing event, there would be less of a nexus of turnout. One of the original goals of the workshop was to consolidate the Melbourne Haskell community - this had to be abandoned somewhat when it was decided that this would only serve as an introductory workshop. Having a meetup that accommodates various skill levels and topics would definitely serve as a platform that would be more amenable to promotion to the wider Melbourne Haskell community.

It was always a concern of ours that the various previous exposure, general skill-levels, and disposition of the attendees would heavily stratify progress through the exercises during the workshop. Our plan was originally to proceed with the chapters in time-allotments decided in advance. This is how we approached the workshop for the before-lunch segment, however, it became apparent that it would not be viable to continue this approach for the remainder of the afternoon. After a discussion with the volunteers, Logan suggested that we provide a summary of the remaining material in a short talk after lunch, then allow participants to continue at their own pace. This increased stratification, but drastically lessened the impact that the stratification was having.

Another of the original goals of the workshop was to take a "domain modelling" driven approach to the exercises. I still believe that this is a noble goal, however, when addressing all of the concerns that we had, this took a lower priority and ended up not playing a

significant role in the workshop structure. Compromises like this become accentuated when a deadline approaches and hard decisions have to be made about priorities. I believe that we made the right choice by sacrificing this goal, but I would definitely like to see a workshop structured around this principle some time in the future.

As far as failings are concerned, that is the meat of it. Here are some of the aspects of the workshop that went very well...

The material for the workshop was constructed in a shot-gun fashion. Any and every idea was given a go and included in the material with the intention that later in the process poor or irrelevant material would be removed, overlapping material consolidated, and insufficiently explained material expanded upon. Given that I had no idea if this would work, it worked remarkably well. Andy Kitchen and myself produced a large quantity of whatever took our fancy at the time in markdown, and dumped it all into one large `index.html` through the judicious use of make-files. Various tools emerged during the process to help aid the construction and verification of material, such as snippet checkers, pre-processors, and change-watching scripts that built the content automatically as changes were made.

The goal of the workshop was fairly ambitious - Introduce a group of nearly 50 people to a significant chunk of the Haskell language with the desired outcome being that they would be able to have confidence in attacking problems using Haskell on their own once the workshop was over. This made it quite important that we not only covered a self-consistent subset of the language, but a fair chunk of what they might come across in real projects. If the workshop had been run as a “here is the material - go for your life” fashion, then there would have been a great deal of issues with trying to cover this much ground. The way we mitigated this was by having a good ratio of volunteers to attendees. People were heavily encouraged to ask for help as soon as they had any issues with an exercise or concept, and this managed to keep, at least from my perspective, any people from becoming hopelessly confused or frustrated.

A decision I made early on for purely stylistic reasons - the color coding of the various chapters of the material - ended up being immensely helpful in gauging the progress of the group, as a simple glance around the room was enough to spot anyone who was falling behind. I never would have predicted this and it was just a happy coincidence that it worked out that way. If I had have predicted the utility of the colors then I would have ensured that I knew which color corresponded to which chapter, and would have made the colors unique.

After-workshop beers were much appreciated, as running the workshop the way we did, while rewarding, was also tiring. I look forward to engaging with the participants, volunteers, administrators, and sponsors in the future and if we have increased awareness, proliferation and acceptance of Haskell in the Melbourne community then I feel that the workshop was a resounding success :-)

Appendix

Links

- [Hutton's Razor](#)
- [Implementing Functional Languages: A Tutorial](#)
- [QuickCheck Wikipedia Page](#)
- [QuickCheck on Hackage](#)
- [99 Haskell Problems](#)
- [Hackage](#)
- [BZip](#)
- [Scotty](#)
- [Sinatra](#)
- [REST](#)
- [HaskSymb - Symbolic Algebra](#)
- [Type-Classes](#)
- [School of Haskell](#)

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