

Functions As Objects

Function object

In Python, everything is an object. Including functions.

```
>>> def f(n):  
...     return n+2  
...  
>>> id(f)  
4402795928  
>>> g = f  
>>> g(3)  
5  
>>> id(g)  
4402795928
```

You can use this fact to do amazing things.

Example: maximum

Suppose you have a list of numbers as strings:

```
nums = [ "12", "7", "30", "14", "3" ]
```

How can you find the element with biggest numeric value? The `max` builtin does not help:

```
>>> max(nums)  
'7'
```

`max` is evaluating the element by a different criteria than what we want.

max int value

```
>>> def max_by_int_value(items):  
...     # For simplicity, assume len(items) > 0  
...     biggest = items[0]  
...     for item in items[1:]:  
...         if int(item) > int(biggest):  
...             biggest = item  
...     return biggest  
...  
>>> max_by_int_value(nums)  
'30'
```

max by absolute value

Different data, different criteria:

```
integers = [3, -2, 7, -1, -20]
```

Suppose we want to the element with maximum absolute value. That would be -20 here, but standard `max` won't do that:

```
>>> max(integers)  
7
```

max by absolute value

Again, let's roll our own, using the built-in abs function:

```
>>> def max_by_abs(items):  
...     biggest = items[0]  
...     for item in items[1:]:  
...         if abs(item) > abs(biggest):  
...             biggest = item  
...     return biggest  
...  
>>> max_by_abs(integers)  
-20
```

list of dictionaries

One more example - a list of dictionary objects:

```
student_joe = {'gpa': 3.7, 'major': 'physics',  
              'name': 'Joe Smith'}  
student_jane = {'gpa': 3.8, 'major': 'chemistry',  
               'name': 'Jane Jones'}  
student_zoe = {'gpa': 3.4, 'major': 'literature',  
              'name': 'Zoe Grimwald'}  
students = [student_joe, student_jane, student_zoe]
```

Now, what if we want the record of the student with the highest GPA?

max gpa

Here's a suitable max function:

```
>>> def max_by_gpa(items):  
...     biggest = items[0]  
...     for item in items[1:]:  
...         if item["gpa"] > biggest["gpa"]:  
...             biggest = item  
...     return biggest  
...  
>>> max_by_gpa(students)  
{'name': 'Jane Jones', 'gpa': 3.8, 'major': 'chemistry'}
```


What's the difference?

Just one line of code is different between `max_by_int_value`, `max_by_abs`, and `max_by_gpa`:

```
# for max_by_int_value
if int(item) > int(biggest):

# for max_by_abs
if abs(item) > abs(biggest):

# for max_by_gpa
if item["gpa"] > biggest["gpa"]:
```

Other than that, the `max` functions are identical.

Comparison key function

Let's define a key function for each of them, which extracts the relevant value:

```
# for max_by_int_value
int

# for max_by_abs
abs

# for max_by_gpa
def get_gpa(student):
    return student["gpa"]
```

Max by key

This lets us define a very generic max function:

```
>>> def max_by_key(items, key):  
...     biggest = items[0]  
...     for item in items[1:]:  
...         if key(item) > key(biggest):  
...             biggest = item  
...     return biggest  
...  
>>> # Old way:  
... max_by_int_value(nums)  
'30'  
>>> # New way:  
... max_by_key(nums, int)  
'30'  
>>> # Old way:  
... max_by_abs(integers)  
-20  
>>> # New way:  
... max_by_key(integers, abs)  
-20
```

Using the key function

This is the important line:

```
# key is actually int, abs, etc.  
if key(item) > key(biggest):
```

IMPORTANT: You never invoke the key function yourself. You pass the function object to `max_by_key`, which then invokes it for you.

GPA

For the student GPA, there's no built-in... so we make our own.

```
>>> # Old way:
... max_by_gpa(students)
{'gpa': 3.8, 'name': 'Jane Jones', 'major': 'chemistry'}

>>> # New way:
... def get_gpa(who):
...     return who["gpa"]
...
>>> max_by_key(students, get_gpa)
{'gpa': 3.8, 'name': 'Jane Jones', 'major': 'chemistry'}
```

Quick exercise: passing functions to functions

In your labs folder, open `functions/maxbykey.py`. Type in the following for `max_by_key`, so that the tests pass:

```
def max_by_key(items, key):  
    biggest = items[0]  
    for item in items[1:]:  
        if key(item) > key(biggest):  
            biggest = item  
    return biggest
```

Key Functions in Python

Too bad the built-in `max()` doesn't do this, huh?

```
>>> nums = ["12", "7", "30", "14", "3"]  
>>> max(nums)  
'7'
```

Oh wait! It DOES!!

```
>>> max(nums, key=int)  
'30'
```


max, min, sorted

It also works with `min()` and `sorted()`.

```
>>> # Default behavior...  
... min(nums)  
'12'  
>>> sorted(nums)  
['12', '14', '3', '30', '7']  
>>>  
>>> # And with a key function:  
... min(nums, key=int)  
'3'  
>>> sorted(nums, key=int)  
['3', '7', '12', '14', '30']
```

Many algorithms can be cleanly expressed using `min`, `max`, or `sorted`, along with an appropriate key function.

Warning: Use "key="

```
>>> nums = ["12", "7", "30", "14", "3"]
>>> # This works...
... max(nums, key=int)
'30'
>>> # And this does not.
... max(nums, int)
Traceback (most recent call last):
  File "<stdin>", line 2, in <module>
TypeError: '>' not supported between instances of 'type' and 'list'
```

Student data

Sorting by GPA:

```
>>> student_joe = {'gpa': 3.7, 'major': 'physics', 'name': 'Joe Smith'}
>>> student_jane = {'gpa': 3.8, 'major': 'chemistry', 'name': 'Jane Jones'}
>>> student_zoe = {'gpa': 3.4, 'major': 'literature', 'name': 'Zoe Grimwald'}
>>> students = [student_joe, student_jane, student_zoe]
>>>
>>> def get_gpa(who):
...     return who["gpa"]
...
>>> sorted(students, key=get_gpa)
[{'gpa': 3.4, 'major': 'literature', 'name': 'Zoe Grimwald'},
 {'gpa': 3.7, 'major': 'physics', 'name': 'Joe Smith'},
 {'gpa': 3.8, 'major': 'chemistry', 'name': 'Jane Jones'}]
```

operator module tools

Instead of defining `get_gpa`, we can use `operator.itemgetter`.

```
>>> from operator import itemgetter
>>>
>>> # Sort by GPA...
... sorted(students, key=itemgetter("gpa"))
[{'gpa': 3.4, 'major': 'literature', 'name': 'Zoe Grimwald'},
 {'gpa': 3.7, 'major': 'physics', 'name': 'Joe Smith'},
 {'gpa': 3.8, 'major': 'chemistry', 'name': 'Jane Jones'}]
>>>
>>> # Now sort by major:
... sorted(students, key=itemgetter("major"))
[{'gpa': 3.8, 'major': 'chemistry', 'name': 'Jane Jones'},
 {'gpa': 3.4, 'major': 'literature', 'name': 'Zoe Grimwald'},
 {'gpa': 3.7, 'major': 'physics', 'name': 'Joe Smith'}]
```

Functions returning functions

Note: `itemgetter` is a function that creates and returns a function. The following two key functions are completely equivalent:

```
# What we did above:  
def get_gpa(who):  
    return who["gpa"]  
  
# Using itemgetter instead:  
from operator import itemgetter  
get_gpa = itemgetter("gpa")
```

It works like:

```
def itemgetter(dict_key):  
    def key_func(mapping):  
        return mapping[dict_key]  
    return key_func
```

A powerful example of using function objects!

Lab: Key Functions

This lab challenges you to use key functions along with `max`, `min`, and `sorted`.

Lab file: `functions/keyfunc.py`

- In `labs` folder
- When you are done, study the solution - compare to what you wrote.
- ... and then optionally do the extra lab.

Extra Credit:

Copy your completed `keyfunc.py` to a new file, `lambda.py`.

Read about lambda expressions in the Python docs:

<https://docs.python.org/3/tutorial/controlflow.html#lambda-expressions>

Modify your solutions in `lambda.py` to use lambdas as much as possible.
What are the trade-offs for readability?