

Python for Web Developers Learning Journal

Objective

We find that the students who do particularly well in our courses are those who practice metacognition. Metacognition is the art of thinking about thinking; developing a deeper understanding of your own thought processes. With the help of this Learning Journal, you'll broaden your metacognitive knowledge and skills by reflecting on what you learn in this course.

Thanks to this Learning Journal, when you finish the course you'll have a complete and detailed record of your learning journey and progress over time. We really recommend that you take the time to complete this Journal; students do better in CF courses and in the working world as a result!

Directions

First complete the pre-work section before you start your course. Then, once you've begun learning, take time after each Exercise to return to this Journal and respond to the prompts.

There will be 3 to 5 prompts per Exercise, and we recommend spending about 10 to 15 minutes in total answering them. Don't overthink it—just write whatever comes to mind!

Also make sure that, once you've started filling this document in, you upload it as a deliverable on the platform. This is so that your mentor can also see your Journal and how you're progressing over time. Don't worry though—what you write here won't affect how you're graded for the Exercise tasks. The learning journal is mostly for you and your self-evaluation!

Pre-Work: Before You Start the Course

Reflection questions (to complete before your first mentor call)

1. What experiences have you had with coding and/or programming so far? What other experiences (programming-related or not) have you had that may help you as you progress through this course?
 - a. The only coding experience that I've had to this point is the CareerFoundry Intro to Frontend Development and Immersion courses. Prior to that, I have zero experience whatsoever with it—not even a college course. Aside from programming, I have earned a Bachelors Degree and worked in a few different jobs to this point as a career changer, so having gone through adversity and coming out on the other side is always helpful not just for the course, but as a person. Additionally, my dad works in IT as well, so that is helpful to have conversations and look over things together.
2. What do you know about Python already? What do you want to know?
 - a. I don't know anything about Python yet. I've heard of it many times since beginning this course and I'm aware that it is a critical skill for many jobs in the industry today. Other than knowing it is a backend language, I know nothing.

3. What challenges do you think may come up while you take this course? What will help you face them? Think of specific spaces, people, and times of day of week that might be favorable to your facing challenges and growing. Plan for how to solve challenges that arise.
 - a. Imposter syndrome, which has been extremely present throughout the length of this entire program so far. It's not a feeling I am new to, so it just has to be overcome by continuing on and making sure I take care of myself outside of the program as well.
 - b. Another challenge I face regularly is the feeling that I am racing against the clock. I learn more slowly than I had anticipated and have a tendency to take too long trying to make something perfect before I move on. I am taking much longer than I planned on taking for this program as a whole, and it is a negative feeling/reality that I face daily.

Remember, you can always refer to [Exercise 1.4](#) of the Orientation course if you're not sure whom to reach out to for help and support.

Exercise 1.1: Getting Started with Python

Learning Goals

- Summarize the uses and benefits of Python for web development
- Prepare your developer environment for programming with Python

Reflection Questions

1. In your own words, what is the difference between frontend and backend web development? If you were hired to work on backend programming for a web application, what kinds of operations would you be working on?
 - a. Put simply, the frontend (client-side) is what the user interacts with directly (the user interface). The frontend is built with languages like HTML to build the skeleton, CSS for styling, and JavaScript to bring it to life if you so choose. It is what displays the contents of the site or app to the user. The backend (server-side) is the brains of the operations that contains the logic. The backend decides what to do when users make an interaction. For example, if a user types their name and email in form fields and clicks a "Submit" button, the backend figures out what to do with that information (sending and storing in a database, receiving a response, and sending that response back to the frontend).
 - b. Picture a pizza shop example: The customer is the user, the order ticket is the frontend, the cashier that inputs the order is the backend, the computer and food operation system is the logic. The cashier takes the order ticket from the customer, inputs it, and returns the response to the user.

2. Imagine you're working as a full-stack developer in the near future. Your team is asking for your advice on whether to use JavaScript or Python for a project, and you think Python would be the better choice. How would you explain the similarities and differences between the two languages to your team? Drawing from what you learned in this Exercise, what reasons would you give to convince your team that Python is the better option? (*Hint: refer to the Exercise section "The Benefits of Developing with Python"*)
 - a. Python and JavaScript are both scripting languages where commands are executed line by line through a standardized syntax as opposed to all at once. Python was designed with quick deployment and easy readability in mind so that someone with a baseline understanding of programming would be able to grasp the concepts. This readability is thanks to the indentation of separate blocks of code. Similar to JavaScript, Python uses keywords that are clear and easy to understand to make commands (*import, return, continue, etc.*). A big similarity between JavaScript and Python is the use of dynamic typing, which essentially allows variables to have any data type as their value without producing errors. This is opposed to TypeScript that uses static typing. For example, with Python and JavaScript's use of dynamic typing, a variable called "z" can be a number at first and be reassigned to a string later on without producing errors. Both languages are open-source and can be used by anyone. With Python, it is almost always a backend language whereas JavaScript is most common for both, or more so frontend. Also, Python is certainly more readable, as it was designed with that in mind. JavaScript can be quite readable too, but you are likely to have an easier time with Python. Also, Python packages that come with many of its frameworks often integrate more smoothly for specific tasks than those of JavaScript which uses npm for packages. Development and deployment speed is quicker with Python and it also comes with built-in tools for common tasks where you might need to manually integrate many of these types of tools with JavaScript.
3. Now that you've had an introduction to Python, write down 3 goals you have for yourself and your learning during this Achievement. You can reflect on the following questions if it helps you. What do you want to learn about Python? What do you want to get out of this Achievement? Where or what do you see yourself working on after you complete this Achievement?
 - a. **Goal 1:** To have an intermediate understanding of Python and in what situations / projects it would be best to use.
 - b. **Goal 2:** By the end of this Achievement project, I want to be able to have a fluent conversation about Python and be able to discuss terminology, use cases, and display technical skills that I learned in an interview setting.
 - c. **Goal 3:** Have a better understanding of what jobs I want to apply for. I want my Python learning journey to give that final push I need to decide what I want my first job to entail and whether it will be frontend, backend, or full-stack.
 - d. **Goal 4:** Be able to move through Achievement 2 more quickly and efficiently by the time I finish Achievement 1, having just gained enough of a Python foundation to work more smoothly.

Exercise 1.2: Data Types in Python

Learning Goals

- Explain variables and data types in Python
- Summarize the use of objects in Python
- Create a data structure for your Recipe app

Reflection Questions

1. Imagine you're having a conversation with a future colleague about whether to use the iPython Shell instead of Python's default shell. What reasons would you give to explain the benefits of using the iPython Shell over the default one?
 - a. I would tell a future colleague that the iPython shell offers features like auto-indentation, auto-completion, and color-coding/syntax highlighting for readability and easier testing/debugging. All of these features make it a clear choice as a preferred shell in most cases.
2. Python has a host of different data types that allow you to store and organize information. List 4 examples of data types that Python recognizes, briefly define them, and indicate whether they are scalar or non-scalar.

Data type	Definition	Scalar or Non-Scalar?
int	Integers. Can be positive or negative whole numbers	Scalar
bool	Value of either true or false. Good for conditions	Scalar
tuple	Arrays that can store multiple values of any data type	Non-Scalar
dictionary	Stores values & objects within itself indexed by keys	Non-Scalar

3. A frequent question at job interviews for Python developers is: what is the difference between lists and tuples in Python? Write down how you would respond.
 - a. In Python, a list is a type of ordered sequence, similar to a tuple. However, the main difference between a list and a tuple in Python is that lists are mutable, meaning that the internal elements of a list can be modified, rearranged, deleted, added, etc, without affecting the rest of the sequence as opposed to the immutability of tuples, which are static. Lists would generally be the most recommended data structure when there is or will be a need for reordering or modification. While lists are more useful for messing with elements inside of them, tuples are faster to read and access when dealing with large amounts of data. As far as operations, the ones that you can perform on tuples can be performed on lists as well.

4. In the task for this Exercise, you decided what you thought was the most suitable data structure for storing all the information for a recipe. Now, imagine you're creating a language-learning app that helps users memorize vocabulary through flashcards. Users can input vocabulary words, definitions, and their category (noun, verb, etc.) into the flashcards. They can then quiz themselves by flipping through the flashcards. Think about the necessary data types and what would be the most suitable data structure for this language-learning app. Between tuples, lists, and dictionaries, which would you choose? Think about their respective advantages and limitations, and where flexibility might be useful if you were to continue developing the language-learning app beyond vocabulary memorization.
 - a. For creating individual flashcards, I've chosen dictionaries as the data structure. Dictionaries are ideal for organizing labeled data, which is great for something like flashcards, where each piece of info (word, definition, category) can be labeled as a key. Values can be any data type, giving flexibility to expand on each flashcard's info if needed (difficulty level, synonyms, etc.). Also, lists are mutable, so key-value pairs can be added or deleted at any time (great for growth and expansion). For the outer structure containing all flashcards, a list would be best for its flexibility and mutability. A list can store and organize multiple flashcards as individual items, so users can add, delete, and rearrange flashcards. Lists are ordered, so users can have a set order or shuffle the flashcards for quizzing. Because lists are mutable, changes to individual flashcards within the list don't affect the overall sequence, which makes them great for managing multiple flashcards as a flexible and easily accessible collection.
 - b. One reason I had previously considered a list for the individual flashcards is because each piece of info on the flashcards (word, definition, category) would all be strings, making it simple and easy. However, this choice would make for little flexibility and that can be tough if the app were to eventually grow or add keys to the flashcards requiring different data types.

Exercise 1.3: Functions and Other Operations in Python

Learning Goals

- Implement conditional statements in Python to determine program flow
- Use loops to reduce time and effort in Python programming
- Write functions to organize Python code

Reflection Questions

1. In this Exercise, you learned how to use **if-elif-else** statements to run different tasks based on conditions that you define. Now practice that skill by writing a script for a simple travel app using an **if-elif-else** statement for the following situation:
 - The script should ask the user where they want to travel.
 - The user's input should be checked for 3 different travel destinations that you define.

- If the user's input is one of those 3 destinations, the following statement should be printed: "Enjoy your stay in _____!"
- If the user's input is something other than the defined destinations, the following statement should be printed: "Oops, that destination is not currently available."

Write your script here. (Hint: remember what you learned about indents!)

```
destination = input('Where would you like to travel? ')

dest_1 = 'London'
dest_2 = 'Japan'
dest_3 = 'India'

if destination == dest_1:
    print('Enjoy your stay in London!')
elif destination == dest_2:
    print('Enjoy your stay in Japan!')
elif destination == dest_3:
    print('Enjoy your stay in India!')
else:
    print('Oops, that destination is not currently available.')
```

2. Imagine you're at a job interview for a Python developer role. The interviewer says "Explain logical operators in Python". Draft how you would respond.
 - a. Logic operators are best used when you need to check for more than one condition at the same time (e.g., if a car is blue and less than 10 years old). You would use the boolean logic operators "and" and "or" to combine the checks. Truth tables are sometimes used to describe what an output would look like for a logical statement given its inputs.
 - i. If you need to check if both conditions are met, use the "and" operator. If both conditions are met, it will return a boolean value of True. If one or both condition are not met, it will return a boolean value of False. The first and second conditions must be met in order to return True with the "and" operator.
 - ii. The "or" operator is different in that it check whether either (not both) of the conditions are met. If both are met, it's True. If both are False, it's False. If one of the two is met, it's True.
 - iii. There is also the "not" operator. The "not" operator doesn't require a condition on either side of it because it isn't looking for how the two conditions may or may not relate to each other. It is actually used to reverse the result of what follows it and, essentially, flips whether or not a conditional statement was True or False. For example, if the conditional statement `print(5 > 3)` printed True, the conditional statement with the "not" operator `print(not 5 > 3)` would print False. It just does the opposite, or reverse.
3. What are functions in Python? When and why are they useful?
 - a. Functions in python are blocks of code that process and work with data in order to perform tasks and actually make things happen. Python comes with some built-in

functions like `print()` and `append()`, but you can create your own functions as well. If you need something to happen in your code, you can make custom functions to condense the amount of code and save on time as well. Functions can be called on throughout your code so that you don't have to write something new each time you need something to happen (like filtering lists). In Python, you use the `def` keyword to before the name of the function to define it. Function names have to be all lowercase and/or underscores, and are followed by a set of parentheses (which you can include parameters in if need be). You can call functions in your code by typing the function name and the set of parentheses.

4. In the section for Exercise 1 in this Learning Journal, you were asked in question 3 to set some goals for yourself while you complete this course. In preparation for your next mentor call, make some notes on how you've progressed towards your goals so far.
 - a. I've gained a ton more knowledge on Python since starting the course (had none before).
 - b. I've gained a better appreciation for the backend so far. Not as stale/boring as I thought.
 - c. I could have a conversation about Python now even through three Exercises. Don't know much yet, but I can at least talk about it as it seems easy to relate to in the way it that it reads.

Exercise 1.4: File Handling in Python

Learning Goals

- Use files to store and retrieve data in Python

Reflection Questions

1. Why is file storage important when you're using Python? What would happen if you didn't store local files?
 - a. File storage is so important with Python because if you are only running commands on the CLI, your data is not getting saved anywhere and you would essentially be left with standalone sessions in your Terminal, and that doesn't serve much of a purpose beyond testing and learning for yourself. You can store data in files in different ways and read and write to them, so it is critical that you learn about the different options and methods.
2. In this Exercise you learned about the pickling process with the `pickle.dump()` method. What are pickles? In which situations would you choose to use pickles and why?
 - a. Pickles are a way to store complex Python data structures, like dictionaries and lists, in a binary format that preserves their structure. This is useful when text files can't handle the complexity of the data, such as saving a list of recipes with nested attributes. The `pickle.dump()` method serializes the data into a binary file, and `pickle.load()` restores it, allowing easy reuse of structured data across programs.

3. In Python, what function do you use to find out which directory you're currently in? What if you wanted to change your current working directory?
 - a. For accessing files across different directories, Python uses the **os** module that includes features for file management. To figure out which directory you are currently in: **os.getcwd()** command. To change the current / working directory: **os.chdir()** command.
4. Imagine you're working on a Python script and are worried there may be an error in a block of code. How would you approach the situation to prevent the entire script from terminating due to an error?
 - a. I would add a try-except block. You try a block of code where you expect that an error can occur. If no errors are found, the code is executed as normal. If an error does occur, the except block will notify the user of the specific error (if you have an except block for that error) and guide them in how to fix it.
5. You're now more than halfway through Achievement 1! Take a moment to reflect on your learning in the course so far. How is it going? What's something you're proud of so far? Is there something you're struggling with? What do you need more practice with? Feel free to use these notes to guide your next mentor call.
 - a. I'm most proud of making it this far. There have been moments of confusion, mostly having to do with the course structure causing some confusion. I've found so far that Python is easy to understand as far as the actual language itself and how it relates a lot to the English language in how it reads. Obviously it all takes practice and repetition to fully understand on a consistent basis, but it seems like the most readable language that I've learned so far, and I know it was designed with that in mind. I need a ton more practice with all of it, but I like it more than I thought I would so far.

Exercise 1.5: Object-Oriented Programming in Python

Learning Goals

- Apply object-oriented programming concepts to your Recipe app

Reflection Questions

1. In your own words, what is object-oriented programming? What are the benefits of OOP?
2. What are objects and classes in Python? Come up with a real-world example to illustrate how objects and classes work.
3. In your own words, write brief explanations of the following OOP concepts; 100 to 200 words per method is fine.

Method	Description
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Inheritance	
Polymorphism	
Operator Overloading	

Exercise 1.6: Connecting to Databases in Python

Learning Goals

- Create a MySQL database for your Recipe app

Reflection Questions

1. What are databases and what are the advantages of using them?
2. List 3 data types that can be used in MySQL and describe them briefly:

Data type	Definition

3. In what situations would SQLite be a better choice than MySQL?
4. Think back to what you learned in the Immersion course. What do you think about the differences between JavaScript and Python as programming languages?
5. Now that you're nearly at the end of Achievement 1, consider what you know about Python so far. What would you say are the limitations of Python as a programming language?

Exercise 1.7: Finalizing Your Python Program

Learning Goals

- Interact with a database using an object-relational mapper
- Build your final command-line Recipe application

Reflection Questions

1. What is an Object Relational Mapper and what are the advantages of using one?
2. By this point, you've finished creating your Recipe app. How did it go? What's something in the app that you did well with? If you were to start over, what's something about your app that you would change or improve?
3. Imagine you're at a job interview. You're asked what experience you have creating an app using Python. Taking your work for this Achievement as an example, draft how you would respond to this question.
4. You've finished Achievement 1! Before moving on to Achievement 2, take a moment to reflect on your learning in the course so far:
 - a. What went well during this Achievement?
 - b. What's something you're proud of?
 - c. What was the most challenging aspect of this Achievement?
 - d. Did this Achievement meet your expectations? Did it give you the confidence to start working with your new Python skills?
 - e. What's something you want to keep in mind to help you do your best in Achievement 2?

Well done—you've now completed the Learning Journal for Achievement 1. As you'll have seen, a little metacognition can go a long way!

Pre-Work: Before You Start Achievement 2

In the final part of the learning journal for Achievement 1, you were asked if there's anything—on reflection—that you'd keep in mind and do similarly or differently during Achievement 2. Think about these questions again:

- Was your study routine effective during Achievement 1? If not, what will you do differently during Achievement 2?
- Reflect on your learning and project work for Achievement 1. What were you most proud of? How will you repeat or build on this in Achievement 2?
- What difficulties did you encounter in the last Achievement? How did you deal with them? How could this experience prepare you for difficulties in Achievement 2?

Note down your answers and discuss them with your mentor in a call if you like.

Remember that can always refer to [Exercise 1.4](#) of the Orientation course if you're not sure whom to reach out to for help and support.

Exercise 2.1: Getting Started with Django

Learning Goals

- Explain MVT architecture and compare it with MVC
- Summarize Django's benefits and drawbacks
- Install and get started with Django

Reflection Questions

1. Suppose you're a web developer in a company and need to decide if you'll use vanilla (plain) Python for a project, or a framework like Django instead. What are the advantages and drawbacks of each?
2. In your own words, what is the most significant advantage of Model View Template (MVT) architecture over Model View Controller (MVC) architecture?
3. Now that you've had an introduction to the Django framework, write down three goals you have for yourself and your learning process during this Achievement. You can reflect on the following questions if it helps:
 - What do you want to learn about Django?
 - What do you want to get out of this Achievement?
 - Where or what do you see yourself working on after you complete this Achievement?

Exercise 2.2: Django Project Set Up

Learning Goals

- Describe the basic structure of a Django project
- Summarize the difference between projects and apps
- Create a Django project and run it locally
- Create a superuser for a Django web application

Reflection Questions

1. Suppose you're in an interview. The interviewer gives you their company's website as an example, asking you to convert the website and its different parts into Django terms. How would you proceed? For this question, you can think about your dream company and look at their website for reference.
(*Hint: In the Exercise, you saw the example of the CareerFoundry website in the Project and Apps section.*)
2. In your own words, describe the steps you would take to deploy a basic Django application locally on your system.
3. Do some research about the Django admin site and write down how you'd use it during your web application development.

Exercise 2.3: Django Models

Learning Goals

- Discuss Django models, the “M” part of Django's MVT architecture
- Create apps and models representing different parts of your web application
- Write and run automated tests

Reflection Questions

1. Do some research on Django models. In your own words, write down how Django models work and what their benefits are.
2. In your own words, explain why it is crucial to write test cases from the beginning of a project. You can take an example project to explain your answer.

Exercise 2.4: Django Views and Templates

Learning Goals

- Summarize the process of creating views, templates, and URLs
- Explain how the “V” and “T” parts of MVT architecture work
- Create a frontend page for your web application

Reflection Questions

1. Do some research on Django views. In your own words, use an example to explain how Django views work.
2. Imagine you're working on a Django web development project, and you anticipate that you'll have to reuse lots of code in various parts of the project. In this scenario, will you use Django function-based views or class-based views, and why?
3. Read Django's documentation on the Django template language and make some notes on its basics.

Exercise 2.5: Django MVT Revisited

Learning Goals

- Add images to the model and display them on the frontend of your application
- Create complex views with access to the model
- Display records with views and templates

Reflection Questions

1. In your own words, explain Django static files and how Django handles them.
2. Look up the following two Django packages on Django's official documentation and/or other trusted sources. Write a brief description of each.

Package	Description
ListView	
DetailView	

3. You're now more than halfway through Achievement 2! Take a moment to reflect on your learning in the course so far. How is it going? What's something you're proud of so far? Is there something you're struggling with? What do you need more practice with? You can use these notes to guide your next mentor call.

Exercise 2.6: User Authentication in Django

Learning Goals

- Create authentication for your web application
- Use GET and POST methods
- Password protect your web application's views

Reflection Questions

1. In your own words, write down the importance of incorporating authentication into an application. You can take an example application to explain your answer.
2. In your own words, explain the steps you should take to create a login for your Django web application.
3. Look up the following three Django functions on Django's official documentation and/or other trusted sources and write a brief description of each.

Function	Description
authenticate()	
redirect()	
include()	

Exercise 2.7: Data Analysis and Visualization in Django

Learning Goals

- Work on elements of two-way communication like creating forms and buttons
- Implement search and visualization (reports/charts) features
- Use QuerySet API, DataFrames (with pandas), and plotting libraries (with matplotlib)

Reflection Questions

1. Consider your favorite website/application (you can also take CareerFoundry). Think about the various data that your favorite website/application collects. Write down how analyzing the collected data could help the website/application.
2. Read the Django [official documentation on QuerySet API](#). Note down the different ways in which you can evaluate a QuerySet.
3. In the Exercise, you converted your QuerySet to DataFrame. Now do some research on the advantages and disadvantages of QuerySet and DataFrame, and explain the ways in which DataFrame is better for data processing.

Exercise 2.8: Deploying a Django Project

Learning Goals

- Enhance user experience and look and feel of your web application using CSS and JS
- Deploy your Django web application on a web server
- Curate project deliverables for your portfolio

Reflection Questions

1. Explain how you can use CSS and JavaScript in your Django web application.
2. In your own words, explain the steps you'd need to take to deploy your Django web application.
3. (Optional) Connect with a few Django web developers through LinkedIn or any other network. Ask them for their tips on creating a portfolio to showcase Python programming and Django skills. Think about which tips could help you improve your portfolio.
4. You've now finished Achievement 2 and, with it, the whole course! Take a moment to reflect on your learning:
 - a. What went well during this Achievement?
 - b. What's something you're proud of?
 - c. What was the most challenging aspect of this Achievement?
 - d. Did this Achievement meet your expectations? Did it give you the confidence to start working with your new Django skills?

Well done—you've now completed the Learning Journal for the whole course.