

How to know/change current directory in Python shell?

[Ask Question](#)

▲
180
▼
★
53

I am using Python 3.2 on Windows 7. When I open the Python shell, how can I know what the current directory is and how can I change it to another directory where my modules are?

python windows

python-3.x

python-3.2

asked Nov 23 '11 at 20:06



astay13


2,920 6 32 49

1 @Ignacio, What do you mean? – [astay13](#) Nov 23 '11 at 20:10

This has already been discussed [here] [1]:

stackoverflow.com/questions/431684/how-do-i-cd-in-python – [mudda](#) Nov 23 '11 at 20:11

4 @astay13 -- I think Ignacio means that you aren't intended to

out the
PYTHONPATH
environment
variable. – [simon](#)
Nov 23 '11 at
20:12 

6 Answers



You can use the
os module.

249



```
>>> import os
>>> os.getcwd()
'/home/user'
>>> os.chdir("/tmp")
>>> os.getcwd()
'/tmp'
```

But if it's about
finding other
modules: You can
set an environment
variable called
PYTHONPATH ,
under Linux would
be like

```
export PYTHONPATH=
```

Then, the
interpreter
searches also at
this place for
imported
modules. I guess
the name would be
the same under
Windows, but don't
know how to
change.

edit

Under Windows:

```
set PYTHONPATH=%F
```

(taken from
<http://docs.python.org/2/library/os.html>)

edit 2

... and even better:
use `virtualenv`
and
`virtualenv-wrapper`, this will allow
you to create a
development
environment where
you can add
module paths as
you like
(`add2virtualenv`)
without polluting
your installation or
"normal" working
environment.

http://virtualenvwrapper.readthedocs.org/en/latest/commands_and_ref.html

edited Apr 2 '14 at 7:42

answered Nov 23 '11 at 20:08



wal-o-mat

4,144 3 23 34


you're right to
edit your
question to add
the suggestion
about
`PYTHONPATH` ,
but note that the
OP specifies
Windows... —
[simon](#) Nov 23
'11 at 20:13

And what's the
problem with
`PYTHONPATH`
under Windows?
But I fixed my
answer. —
[wal-o-mat](#) Nov
23 '11 at 20:16

Do I have to set
`PYTHONPATH`

[astay13](#) Nov
23 '11 at 20:17

- 2 @astray13: You also have the option of ignoring the environment variable and instead appending to `sys.path` inside of your script. – [Steven Rumbalsk](#) Nov 23 '11 at 20:31

- 3 @astay13: don't set `PYTHONPATH` globally if you have more than one Python installed (or have programs installed that bundle Python with them -- in other words you'll never know): it may break your installation in [mysterious ways](#) – [jfs](#) Apr 22 '14 at 4:21 

▲ you want

14 **import** os
os.getcwd()
os.chdir('..')

answered Nov 23 '11 at 20:09



[simon](#)

9,389 3 33 54

1 os.chdir('C:\user

string literal – [AAI](#)
Sep 4 '16 at 0:31

- 1 @Whatever, you need to double up backslashes if you use them in a regular (non-raw) Python string. Python also lets you use forward slashes instead. Thus, either
- ```
os.chdir('C:/Users/Ajeya/Documents') , or
os.chdir('C:\\Users\\Ajeya\\Documents') ,
or
os.chdir(r'C:\Users\Ajeya\Documents') . –
Charles Duffy
Oct 13 '17 at 19:31
```


It would be good to note that you call


```
os.getcwd()
```

only for debugging purposes so that we can see what the working directory is before we change it. The code to actually change the `cwd` is just

```
os.chdir('..')
```

– [Toothpick Anemor](#)  
Mar 21 '18 at 21:18

12  `>>> import os`  
`>>> os.system('cd`

 In fact, `os.system()` can execute any command that windows command

edited Mar 29 '12 at 1:39



**Tim Cooper**

123k 32 250 233

answered Mar 28 '12 at 18:23



**shankar\_pratap**

794 6 7

```
File "<stdin>",
line 1
os.system('cd
c:\Users\Ajeya\Documents') ^
SyntaxError: EOL
while scanning
string literal – AAI
Sep 4 '16 at 0:32
```



6

Changing the current directory is not the way to deal with finding modules in Python.

Rather, see the docs for [The Module Search Path](#) for how Python finds which module to import.

Here is a relevant bit from [Standard Modules](#) section:

The variable `sys.path` is a list of strings that determines the interpreter's search path for modules. It is initialized to a default path taken from the environment variable `PYTHONPATH`, or from a built-in default if

using standard  
list operations:

```
>>> import
sys
>>>
sys.path.append
('/ufs/guido/li
b/python')
```

In answer your  
original question  
about getting and  
setting the current  
directory:

```
>>> help(os.getcwd)

getcwd(...)
getcwd() -> p

Return a strin

>>> help(os.chdir)

chdir(...)
chdir(path)

Change the cu
```

ited Nov 23 '11 at 20:22

answered Nov 23 '11 at 20:13



[Steven Rumbalski](#)

34.3k 6 62 96

This answer is  
gold.. Just add  
your project  
directory like  
this: import sys  
sys.path.append  
( '/home/g/Pyc  
harmProjects/y  
our\_project/')

– [gies0r](#) Dec 30  
'18 at 20:54



The easiest way to  
change the current



for windows  
computer:

```
Import the os module
import os

Confirm the current directory
os.getcwd()

Use '\\' while changing directory
os.chdir("C:\\use
```

edited Dec 4 '18 at 12:22



[Rem-D](#)

68 1 4

answered Jun 7 '17 at 8:39



[sambeet](#)

71 1 1

---

How does this differ from the accepted answer? – [Eyeslandic](#) Jun 7 '17 at 8:43

---

use of "\\" and clarification about Windows computer. But I agree the accepted answer is more descriptive. – [sambeet](#) Jun 14 '17 at 12:00

---



4



If you `import os` you can use `os.getcwd` to get the current working directory, and you can use `os.chdir` to change your directory

answered Nov 23 '11 at 20:08



[deontologician](#)

1,921 1 14 27



