



SKILLPILLS

Skill Pill: Julia

Lecture 1: Introduction

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- 1 Introduction
 - Why does Julia exist
 - What is wrong with the status quo
- 2 Getting started
- 3 Language syntax and semantics
- 4 The ecosystem

Key Points

- ❶ Low-level languages are fast, but high level languages are readable.
- ❷ Recent advances in compiler design could bridge these two aspects.
- ❸ Julia is being openly developed by researchers, for researchers.

The old mission statement is available [here](#) and some good discussion is available at [here](#).

My personal reason

A fast, open-source, high level language that is powerful enough to do serious numerical work, while being designed to encourage good code.

The typical languages used in science are

- 1 Python
- 2 Matlab
- 3 R

Once a problem is becoming too big we usually move to

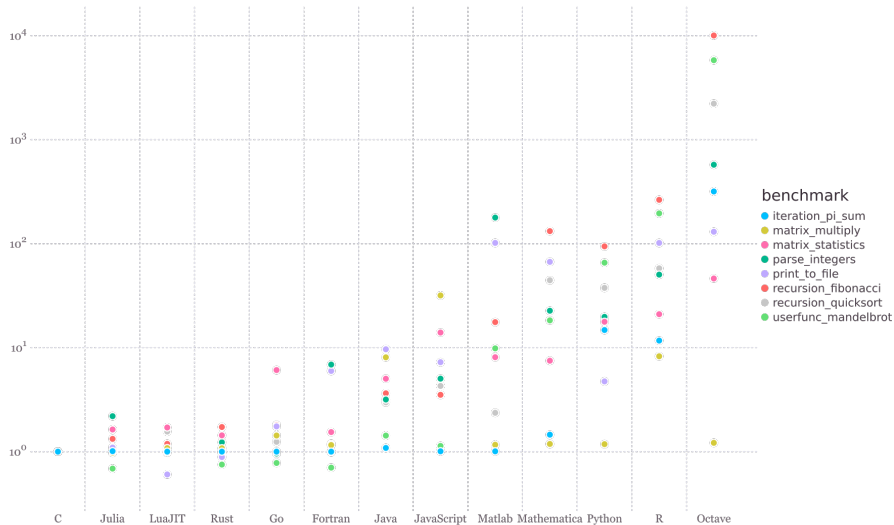
- 1 C/C++
- 2 Fortran

This is called the 2+ language problem and Julia is trying to solve that.

- The compilers that exist (Numba) only work on primitive types and not user defined ones.
- GIL (Global Interpreter Lock) makes multi-threading hard.
- For fast code you need to write it in C.
- Numpy is great, but awful syntax for math.

- It costs a lot of money and is not open-source.
- Matlab will only be fast for a subset of operations.
- Matlab tends to hide the computer from the programmer.

A (biased) performance comparison



The Read-Eval-Print-Loop

The REPL is a command-line interface to Julia and is ideal for short experiments.

```
      _      _ _(_) _      | Documentation: https://docs.julialang.org
    (_)      | (_) (_)      |
      _ _    _| | _ _ _ _   | Type "?" for help, "]"? for Pkg help.
    | | | | | | | / _ ' |    |
    | | | _| | | | ( _| |    | Version 1.1.1 (2019-05-16)
  _/ | \ _ ' _| | | \ _ ' _| | Official https://julialang.org/ release
| _ _/                          |
```

julia>

In the REPL you can use `?` to switch your REPL mode into help mode and get information about functions.

There are two main IDEs that are *feature* complete and can be used for Julia. The main one is based on Atom and is called Juno
<http://junolab.org/>.

The second one is based on Visual Studio Code and available at
<https://marketplace.visualstudio.com/items?itemName=julialang.language-julia>.

We will not be using these during the course, but you are welcome to try them out

Jupyter is an interactive web-based client for Python, Julia, R and many other languages. It offers a programming environment that is well suited for explorative data analysis or prototyping.

Installation

```
julia> ENV["JUPYTER"] = ""  
julia> ] add IJulia
```

Starting a Jupyter session

```
julia> using IJulia  
julia> notebook()
```

JuliaBox

There is an online service provided by JuliaComputing at <https://juliabox.com> that gives you a cloud version of Jupyter.

Julia is a dynamic language and so you can simply create variables in any scope.

```
x = 1    # x will be of type Int64
y = 1.0  # y will be of type Float64
z = 1.0 - 2.0im # z will be an Complex{Float64}
1//2 # Rational numbers
"This is a String"
"""
This is a multiline
String
"""
'C' # Character literal
1.0f0 # Float32 literal
```

Use `typeof` to check the type of any variable. Variable names can be unicode and so greek symbols can be used. In the REPL and most editors you can insert them by entering their $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ name and press [Tab].

Julia has all the typical conditionals `if`, `else`, `elseif` which have to end in an `end`. Blocks in Julia are not whitespace sensitive and conditionals do not need to be wrapped in round brackets.

```
if rand() < 0.5
    println("Hello there!")
else
    println("Go away!")
end
```

Julia has `for` and `while` loops. A `while` loop takes a condition and a `for` loop takes a iterator. One can use `break` to break out of a loop and `continue` to skip to the next iteration. It is noteworthy that a `for` loop can take an arbitrary iterator and even `desugar` tuples.

```
for (i, x) in enumerate(['A', 'B', 'C'])
    if x == 'B'
        continue
    end
    println(i)
end

while true
    # ternary operator ?!
    rand() < 0.1 ? break : println("You are trapped!")
end
```

Julia uses functions to organize operations. Every function is compiled for the combination of input parameters.

```
"""  
    f(x, y)  
  
    'f' will add two numbers together.  
"""  
function f(x, y)  
    return x + y  
end  
  
g(x) = x^2  
  
h = (x)-> 1/x  
map(lowercase, ['A', 'B', 'C'])  
map((x)->x+2, [1, 2, 3])
```

Julia's type system allows you to restrict functions to certain types and specialized functions for others. You can also create your own types. The names of types are typically capitalized while functions are lowercase.

```
abstract type Entity end
mutable struct Player <: Entity
    mass::Float64
    name::String
    position::Tuple{Float64, Float64}
end
struct Object <: Entity
    position::Tuple{Float64, Float64}
end
newObject=Object(0,0)
```

Julia is not an Object-Oriented programming language so functions do not belong to an object. A function is a set of multiple methods each with their own signatures. When you call a function the most specific methods is executed.

```
function h(x::Number)
    println("x is most definitely a number.")
end
function h(x::Integer)
    println("x is a integer")
end
function h(x::Int8)
    println("Specific method for Int8")
end
```

This becomes really powerful when having multiple arguments and being able to select the most specific method.

Julia code is organised as modules (namespaces). Module names are capitalised and you can nest modules as well.

```
module MyModule
    export f

    g() = "Internal function"
    f() = println(g())
end
using Main.MyModule
```

Julia has an inbuilt package manager called Pkg. You can access it from the REPL by entering `]`. Julia packages end in `.jl` and it is customary to refer to them by their full name online, but within Julia you drop the `.jl`. So to install the Julia package `Distributions.jl` in the REPL just run:

```
] add Distributions
```

A few other commands:

```
# Updating the installed packages
] update
# What packages are installed?
] status
```

In order to create your own packages you have to install `PkgDev.jl`.

Documentation <https://docs.julialang.org/en/v1.1/>

Forum <https://discourse.julialang.org>

Issue Tracker <https://github.com/JuliaLang/julia>

Downloads <https://julialang.org/downloads/>

Packages <https://pkg.julialang.org/>
<https://juliaobserver.com/>

Question?!

What do you want to hear learn about?

Next Session How to use Julia for computation and plotting

Next Tuesday Data Structures and Algorithms.