



SKILLPILLS

Skill Pill: Julia

Lecture 1: Introduction

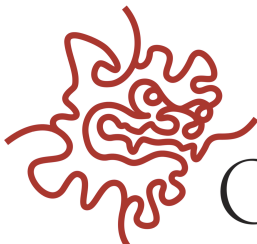
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OIST

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

Windows, Linux, and Mac OSX

Download a precompiled version of 0.6 from
<https://julialang.org/downloads/>

Linux and Mac OSX

- 1 Use your package manager (Mac OSX: `brew cask install julia`)
- 2 Follow the build instructions from
<https://github.com/JuliaLang/julia/>

Sango and Tombo

OIST has Julia installed on Sango and Tombo, in case the version you need is not there let it-help@oist.jp know.

Documentation <https://docs.julialang.org/en/release-0.6/>

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/>

Why does Julia exist?



Hypothesis

- ① Scientist like to work in a high productivity programming language.
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My personal reason

A fast, elegant, high level language that is fast enough to do serious numerical work on a super computer, while also having a language design that encourages efficient 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.

- Object are essentially dicts and can be changed at runtime.
- The compilers that exist (Numba) only work on primitive types and not user defined ones.
- GIL (Global Interpreter Lock) make 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.

```
      _      _ _(_) _      | A fresh approach to technical computing
  (_)      | (_) ( )      | Documentation: https://docs.julialang.org
      _ _    _| | _ _ _ _  | Type "?help" for help.
  | | | | | | | | / _ ' |   |
  | | | _| | | | | ( _ | |   | Version 0.6.0 (2017-06-19 13:05 UTC)
 _/ | \_ _ ' _| | | \_ _ ' _| |
| _ _/                          | x86_64-pc-linux-gnu
```

```
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>.

I do not use either of them, but if that is the kind of environment you like and are used to give them a try.

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> Pkg.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`, `ifelse` 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 not scripts to organise 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 specialise functions for others. You can also create your own types. The names of types are typically capitalised 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
```

Julia is not an Object-Oriented programming language 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 MyModule
```

Julia has an inbuilt package manager called `Pkg`. 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:

```
Pkg.add("Distributions")
```

A few other commands:

```
# Updating the installed packages
Pkg.update()
# What packages are installed?
Pkg.status()
```

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

Most of the development of Julia packages and the base language happens on Github.

Check out <https://github.com/JuliaLang/julia> for the main action.

Question?!

What do you want to hear learn about?

Next Session How does the compiler work and how do we get performance.

Next Tuesday Data Structures and Algorithms

Last Session Parallel computing, threading, GPUs? Up to grabs.