2.1.1 Argument Passing

When known to the interpreter, the script name and additional arguments thereafter are turned into a list of strings and assigned to the `argv` variable in the `sys` module. You can access this list by executing `import sys`. The length of the list is at least one; when no script and no arguments are given, `sys.argv[0]` is an empty string. When the script name is given as `'-'` (meaning standard input), `sys.argv[0]` is set to `'-'`. When `-c` *command* is used, `sys.argv[0]` is set to `'-c'`. When `-m` *module* is used, `sys.argv[0]` is set to the full name of the located module. Options found after `-c` *command* or `-m` *module* are not consumed by the Python interpreter's option processing but left in `sys.argv` for the command or module to handle.

2.1.2 Interactive Mode

When commands are read from a tty, the interpreter is said to be in *interactive mode*. In this mode it prompts for the next command with the *primary prompt*, usually three greater-than signs (>>>); for continuation lines it prompts with the *secondary prompt*, by default three dots (...). The interpreter prints a welcome message stating its version number and a copyright notice before printing the first prompt:

```
$ python3.9
Python 3.9 (default, June 4 2019, 09:25:04)
[GCC 4.8.2] on linux
Type "help", "copyright", "credits" or "license" for more information.
>>>
```

Continuation lines are needed when entering a multi-line construct. As an example, take a look at this `if` statement:

```
>>> the_world_is_flat = True
>>> if the_world_is_flat:
...     print("Be careful not to fall off!")
...
Be careful not to fall off!
```

For more on interactive mode, see *Interactive Mode*.

2.2 The Interpreter and Its Environment

2.2.1 Source Code Encoding

By default, Python source files are treated as encoded in UTF-8. In that encoding, characters of most languages in the world can be used simultaneously in string literals, identifiers and comments — although the standard library only uses ASCII characters for identifiers, a convention that any portable code should follow. To display all these characters properly, your editor must recognize that the file is UTF-8, and it must use a font that supports all the characters in the file.

To declare an encoding other than the default one, a special comment line should be added as the *first* line of the file. The syntax is as follows:

```
# -*- coding: encoding -*-
```

where *encoding* is one of the valid `codecs` supported by Python.

For example, to declare that Windows-1252 encoding is to be used, the first line of your source code file should be:

```
# -*- coding: cp1252 -*-
```

One exception to the *first line* rule is when the source code starts with a *UNIX "shebang" line*. In this case, the encoding declaration should be added as the second line of the file. For example: