Python Iterators

* An iterator is an object that contains a countable number of values.
* An iterator is an object that can be iterated upon, meaning that you can traverse through all the values.
* Technically, in Python, an iterator is an object which implements the iterator protocol, which consist of the methods \_\_iter\_\_() and \_\_next\_\_().

## Iterator vs Iterable

Lists, tuples, dictionaries, and sets are all iterable objects. They are iterable containers which you can get an iterator from.

All these objects have a iter() method which is used to get an iterator:

### Example

Return an iterator from a tuple, and print each value:

mytuple = ("apple", "banana", "cherry")  
myit = iter(mytuple)  
  
print(next(myit))  
print(next(myit))  
print(next(myit))

## Looping Through an Iterator

We can also use a for loop to iterate through an iterable object. The for loop actually creates an iterator object and executes the next() method for each loop.

### Example

Iterate the values of a tuple:

mytuple = ("apple", "banana", "cherry")  
  
for x in mytuple:  
  print(x)

## Create an Iterator

To create an object/class as an iterator you have to implement the methods \_\_iter\_\_() and \_\_next\_\_() to your object.

As you have learned in the [Python Classes/Objects](https://www.w3schools.com/python/python_classes.asp) chapter, all classes have a function called \_\_init\_\_(), which allows you to do some initializing when the object is being created.

The \_\_iter\_\_() method acts similar, you can do operations (initializing etc.), but must always return the iterator object itself.

The \_\_next\_\_() method also allows you to do operations, and must return the next item in the sequence.

### Example

Create an iterator that returns numbers, starting with 1, and each sequence will increase by one (returning 1,2,3,4,5 etc.):

class MyNumbers:  
  def \_\_iter\_\_(self):  
    self.a = 1  
    return self  
  
  def \_\_next\_\_(self):  
    x = self.a  
    self.a += 1  
    return x  
  
myclass = MyNumbers()  
myiter = iter(myclass)  
  
print(next(myiter))  
print(next(myiter))  
print(next(myiter))  
print(next(myiter))  
print(next(myiter))

## StopIteration

The example above would continue forever if you had enough next() statements, or if it was used in a for loop.

To prevent the iteration to go on forever, we can use the StopIteration statement.

In the \_\_next\_\_() method, we can add a terminating condition to raise an error if the iteration is done a specified number of times:

### Example

Stop after 20 iterations:

class MyNumbers:  
  def \_\_iter\_\_(self):  
    self.a = 1  
    return self  
  
  def \_\_next\_\_(self):  
    if self.a <= 20:  
      x = self.a  
      self.a += 1  
      return x  
    else:  
      raise StopIteration  
  
myclass = MyNumbers()  
myiter = iter(myclass)  
  
for x in myiter:  
  print(x)