Understanding Reference Semantics in Python

Understanding Reference Semantics

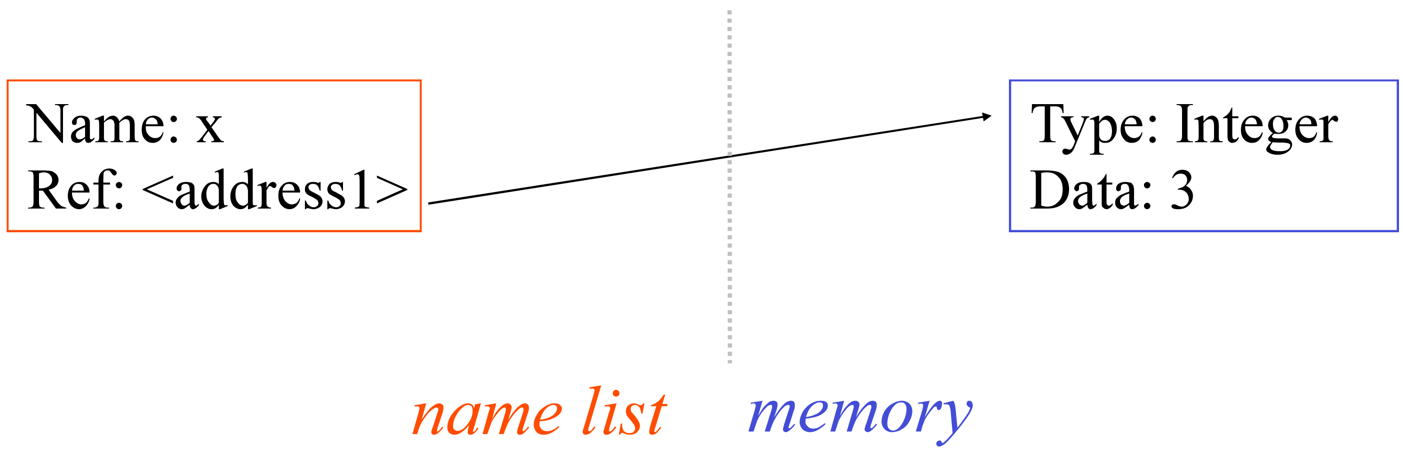
- **Assignment manipulates references**
  - x = y **does not make a copy** of the object y references
  - x = y makes x **reference** the object y references
- **Very useful; but beware!**
- **Example:**

```
>>> a = [1, 2, 3]    # a now references the list [1, 2, 3]
>>> b = a            # b now references what a references
>>> a.append(4)      # this changes the list a references
>>> print b          # if we print what b references,
[1, 2, 3, 4]         # SURPRISE!  It has changed…
```

Why??

Understanding Reference Semantics II

- **There is a lot going on when we type:**
  `x = 3`
- **First, an integer *3* is created and stored in memory**
- **A name *x* is created**
- **An *reference* to the memory location storing the *3* is then assigned to the name *x***
- **So: When we say that the value of *x* is *3***
- **we mean that *x* now refers to the integer *3***



Understanding Reference Semantics III

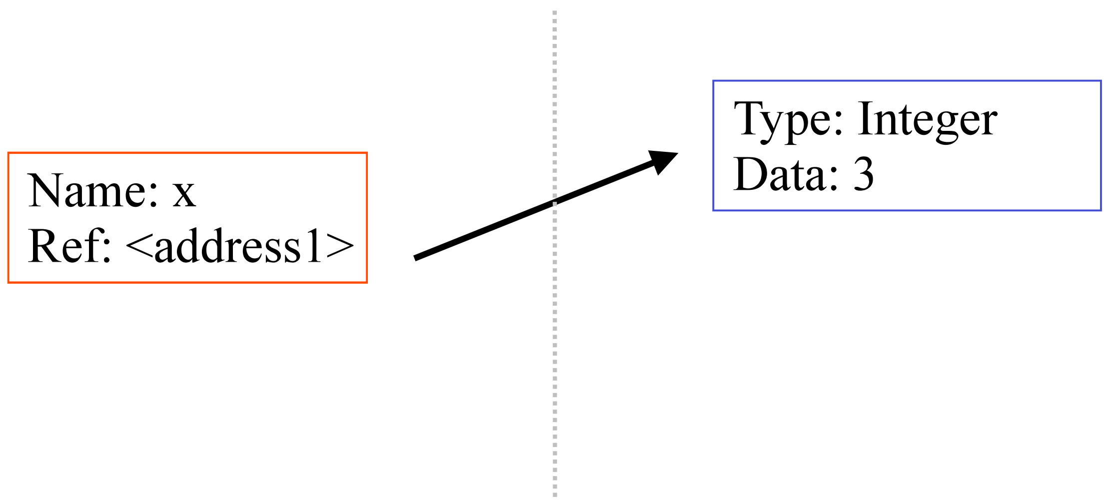
- The data 3 we created is of type integer. In Python, the datatypes integer, float, and string (and tuple) are "immutable."
- This doesn't mean we can't change the value of x, i.e. *change what x refers to* …
- For example, we could increment x:

```
>>> x = 3
>>> x = x + 1
>>> print x
4
```

Understanding Reference Semantics IV

- **If we increment x, then what's really happening is:**
  1. *The reference of name **x** is looked up.*
  2. *The value at that reference is retrieved.*

```
>>> x = x + 1
```



Understanding Reference Semantics IV

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  1. The reference of name ***x*** is looked up.
  2. The value at that reference is retrieved.
  3. *The 3+1 calculation occurs, producing a new data element* ***4*** *which is assigned to a fresh memory location with a new reference.*

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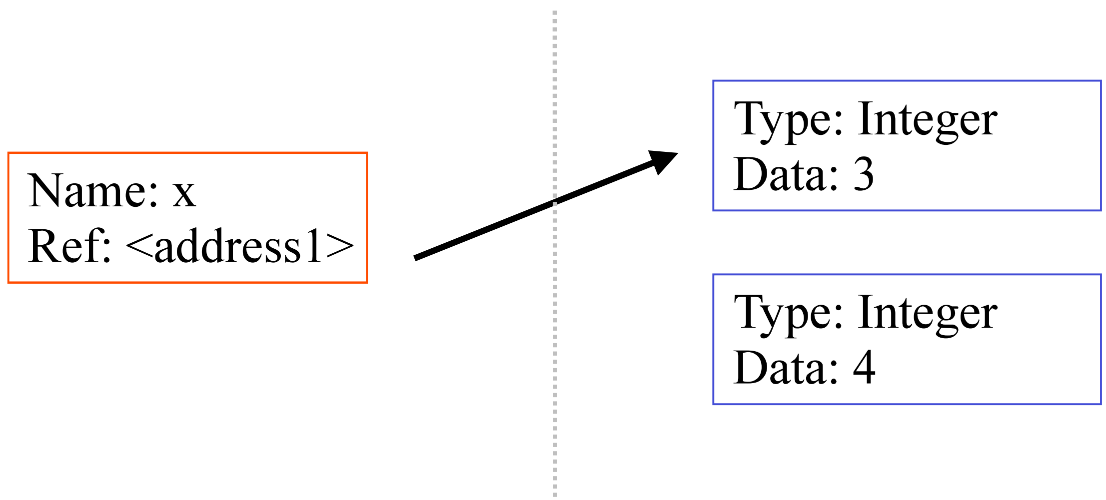

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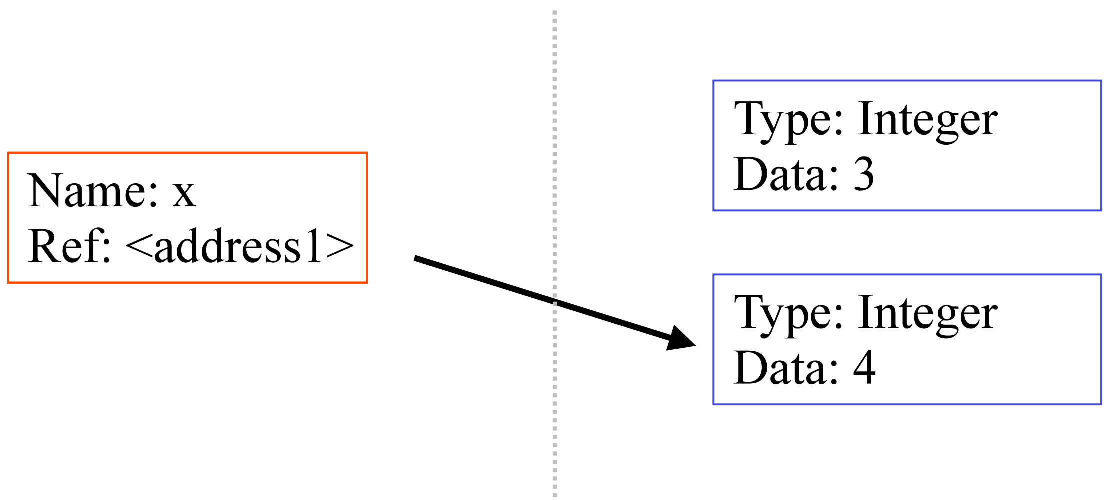

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  4. The name **x** is changed to point to this new reference.
  5. *The old data **3** is garbage collected if no name still refers to it.*

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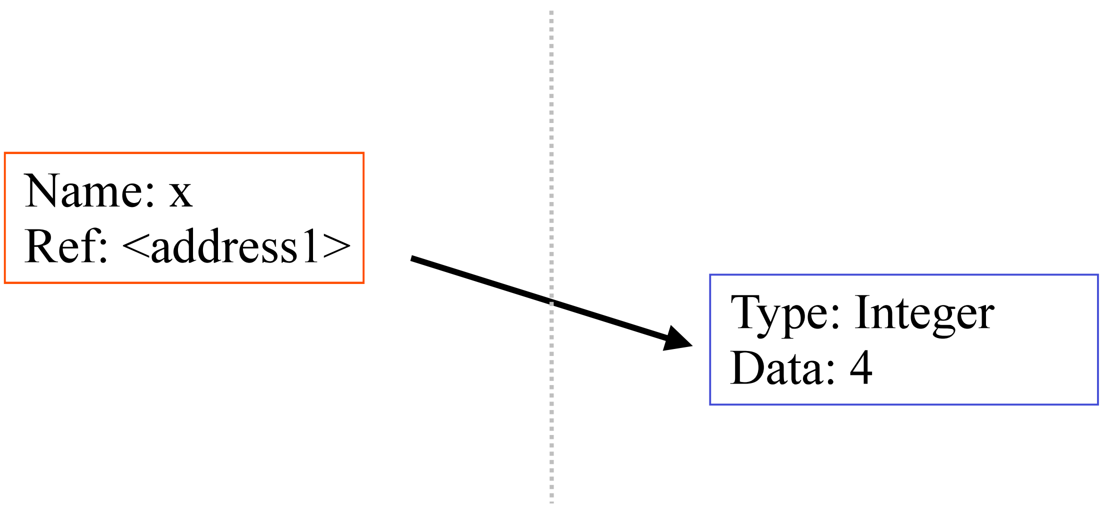

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- **So, for simple built-in datatypes (integers, floats, strings), assignment behaves as you would expect:**

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>>> print x        # No effect on x, still ref 3.
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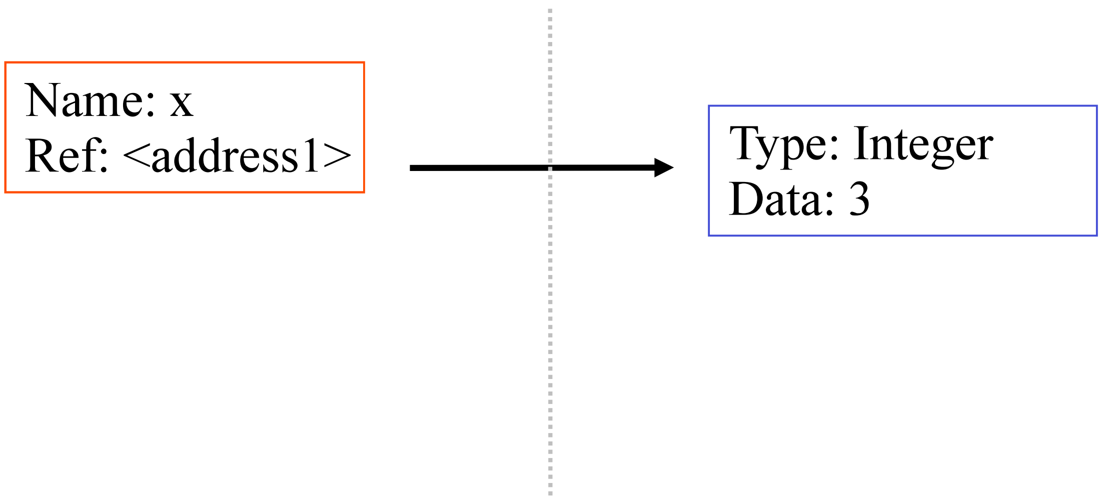

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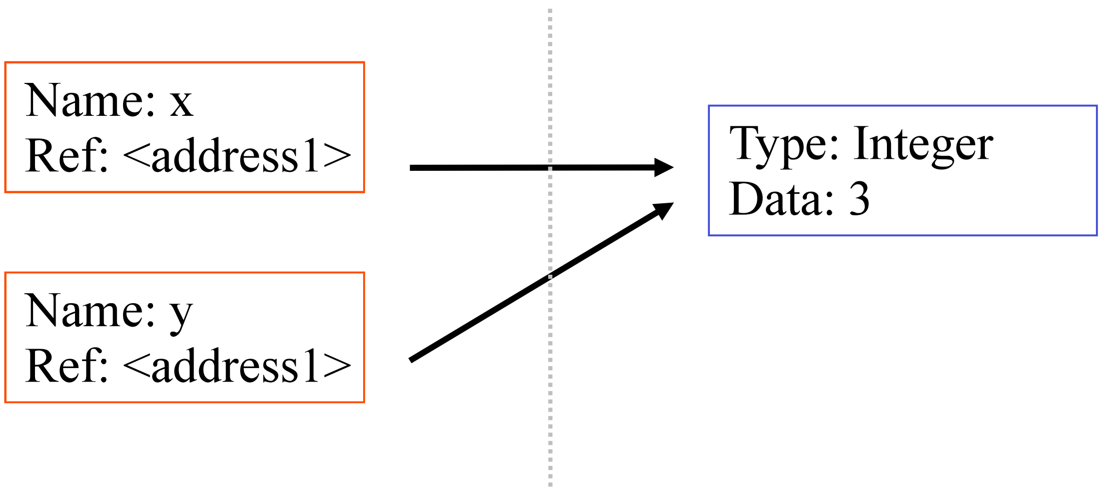

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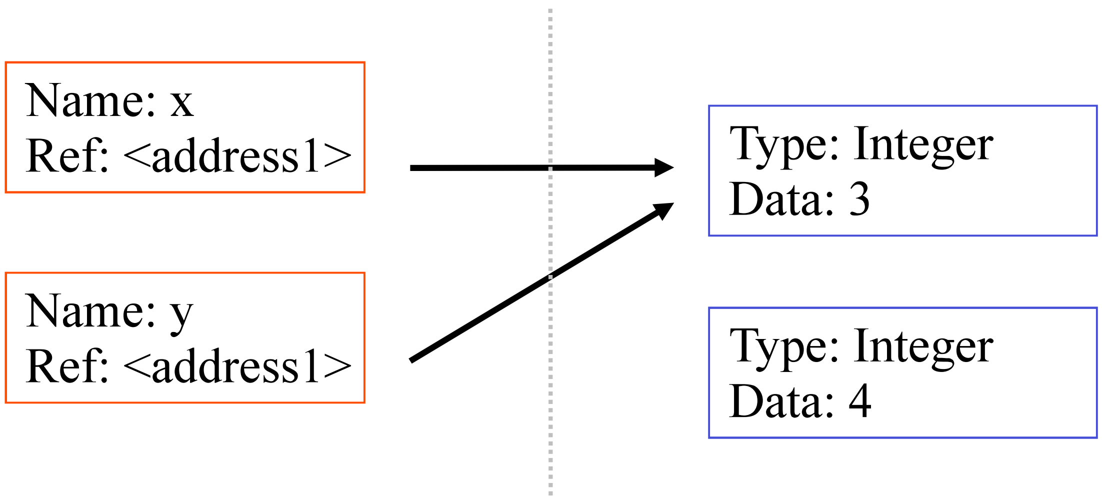

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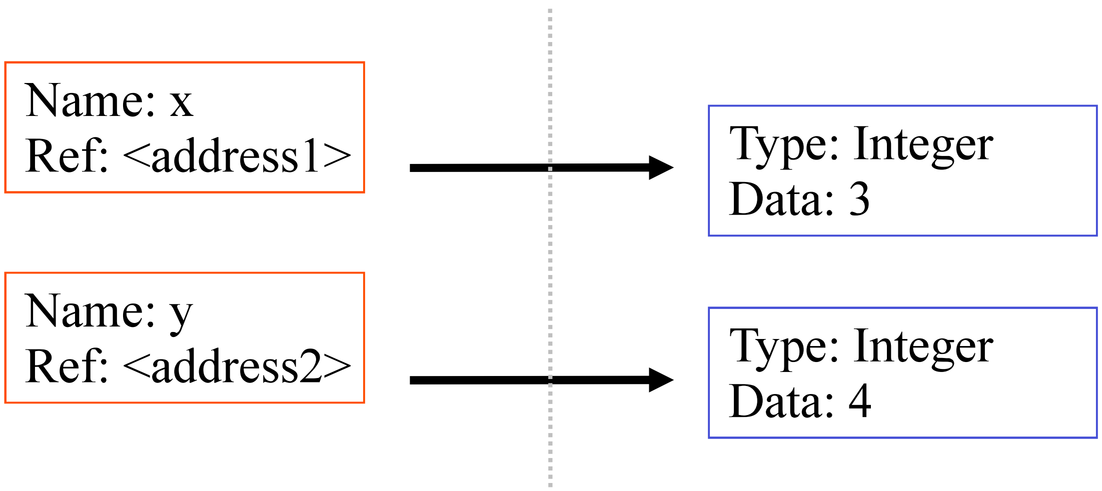

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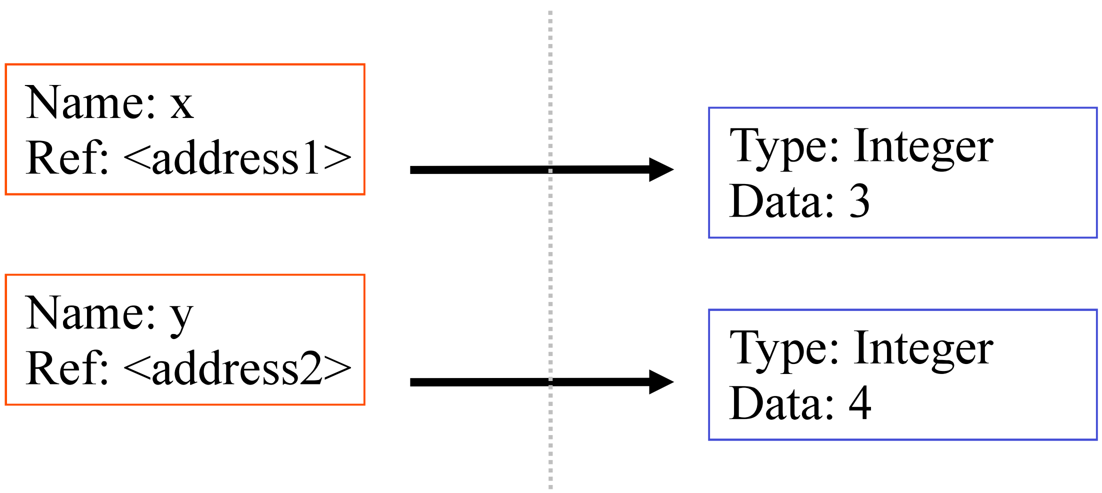


Assignment 2

- **For other data types (lists, dictionaries, user-defined types), assignment works differently.**
  - These datatypes are **"mutable."**
  - When we change these data, we do it *in place.*
  - We don't copy them into a new memory address each time.
  - If we type y=x and then modify y, both x and y are changed.

immutable

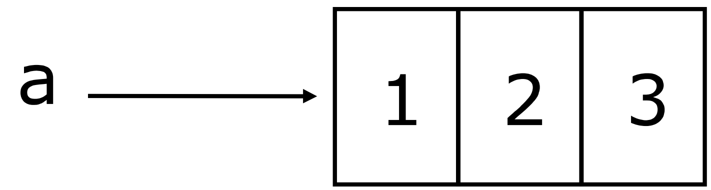
```
>>> x = 3
>>> y = x
>>> y = 4
>>> print x
3
```

mutable

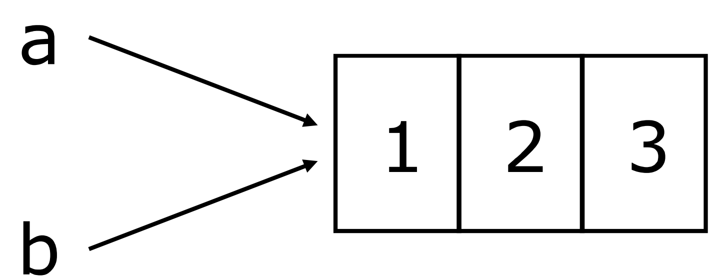
```
x = some mutable object
y = x
make a change to y
look at x
x will be changed as well
```

Why? Changing a Shared List

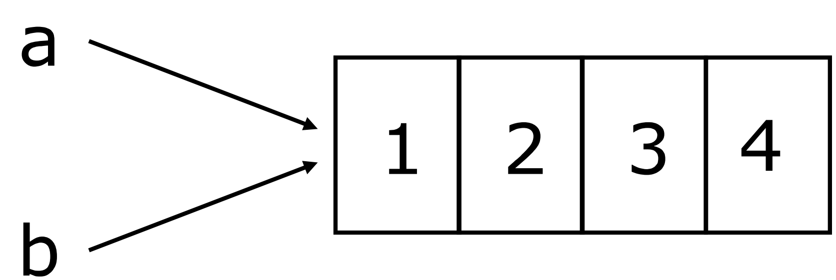
```
a = [1, 2, 3]
```




```
b = a
```




```
a.append(4)
```



Our surprising example surprising no more...

- **So now, here's our code:**

```
>>> a = [1, 2, 3]    # a now references the list [1, 2, 3]
>>> b = a            # b now references what a references
>>> a.append(4)      # this changes the list a references
>>> print b          # if we print what b references,
[1, 2, 3, 4]         # SURPRISE!  It has changed…
```

Sequence types: Tuples, Lists, and Strings

Sequence Types

1. Tuple
   - A simple ***immutable*** ordered sequence of items
   - Items can be of mixed types, including collection types

2. Strings
   - ***Immutable***
   - **Conceptually very much like a tuple**

3. List
   - ***Mutable*** ordered sequence of items of mixed types

Similar Syntax

- **All three sequence types (tuples, strings, and lists) share much of the same syntax and functionality.**

- Key difference:
  - **Tuples and strings are *immutable***
  - **Lists are *mutable***
- The operations shown in this section can be applied to *all* sequence types
  - **most examples will just show the operation performed on one**

Sequence Types 1

- **Tuples are defined using parentheses (and commas).**

```
>>> tu = (23, 'abc', 4.56, (2,3), 'def')
```

- **Lists are defined using square brackets (and commas).**

```
>>> li = ["abc", 34, 4.34, 23]
```

- **Strings are defined using quotes (", ', or """).**

```
>>> st = "Hello World"
>>> st = 'Hello World'
>>> st = """This is a multi-line
string that uses triple quotes."""
```

Sequence Types 2

- **We can access individual members of a tuple, list, or string using square bracket “array” notation.**
- ***Note that all are 0 based…***

```
>>> tu = (23, ‘abc’, 4.56, (2,3), ‘def’)
>>> tu[1]      # Second item in the tuple.
 ‘abc’

>>> li = [“abc”, 34, 4.34, 23]
>>> li[1]       # Second item in the list.
 34

>>> st = “Hello World”
>>> st[1]    # Second character in string.
 ‘e’
```

Positive and negative indices

```
>>> t = (23, 'abc', 4.56, (2,3), 'def')
```

Positive index: count from the left, starting with 0.

```
>>> t[1]
'abc'
```

Negative lookup: count from right, starting with –1.

```
>>> t[-3]
4.56
```

Slicing: Return Copy of a Subset 1

```
>>> t = (23, 'abc', 4.56, (2,3), 'def')
```

Return a copy of the container with a subset of the original members. Start copying at the first index, and stop copying *before* the second index.

```
>>> t[1:4]
('abc', 4.56, (2,3))
```

You can also use negative indices when slicing.

```
>>> t[1:-1]
('abc', 4.56, (2,3))
```

Slicing: Return Copy of a Subset 2

```
>>> t = (23, 'abc', 4.56, (2,3), 'def')
```

Omit the first index to make a copy starting from the beginning of the container.

```
>>> t[:2]
(23, 'abc')
```

Omit the second index to make a copy starting at the first index and going to the end of the container.

```
>>> t[2:]
(4.56, (2,3), 'def')
```

Copying the Whole Sequence

To make a *copy* of an entire sequence, you can use `[:]`.

```
>>> t[:]
(23, 'abc', 4.56, (2,3), 'def')
```

Note the difference between these two lines for mutable sequences:

```
>>> list2 = list1     # 2 names refer to 1 ref
                      # Changing one affects both

>>> list2 = list1[:] # Two independent copies, two refs
```

The 'in' Operator

- **Boolean test whether a value is inside a container:**

```
>>> t = [1, 2, 4, 5]
>>> 3 in t
False
>>> 4 in t
True
>>> 4 not in t
False
```

- **For strings, tests for substrings**

```
>>> a = 'abcde'
>>> 'c' in a
True
>>> 'cd' in a
True
>>> 'ac' in a
False
```

- **Be careful: the *in* keyword is also used in the syntax of *for loops* and *list comprehensions*.**

The + Operator

- **The + operator produces a *new* tuple, list, or string whose value is the concatenation of its arguments.**

```
>>> (1, 2, 3) + (4, 5, 6)
 (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

>>> [1, 2, 3] + [4, 5, 6]
 [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6]

>>> “Hello” + “ ” + “World”
 ‘Hello World’
```

The * Operator

- The * operator produces a *new* tuple, list, or string that “repeats” the original content.

```
>>> (1, 2, 3) * 3
(1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3)

>>> [1, 2, 3] * 3
[1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3]

>>> “Hello” * 3
‘HelloHelloHello’
```

Mutability:
Tuples vs. Lists

Tuples: Immutable

```
>>> t = (23, 'abc', 4.56, (2,3), 'def')
>>> t[2] = 3.14

Traceback (most recent call last):
  File "<pyshell#75>", line 1, in -toplevel-
    tu[2] = 3.14
TypeError: object doesn't support item assignment
```

You can't change a tuple.

You can make a fresh tuple and assign its reference to a previously used name.

```
>>> t = (23, 'abc', 3.14, (2,3), 'def')
```

Lists: Mutable

```
>>> li = ['abc', 23, 4.34, 23]
>>> li[1] = 45
>>> li
  ['abc', 45, 4.34, 23]
```

- **We can change lists *in place.***
- **Name *li* still points to the same memory reference when we're done.**
- **The mutability of lists means that they aren't as fast as tuples.**

Operations on Lists Only 1

```
>>> li = [1, 11, 3, 4, 5]

>>> li.append('a')    # Our first exposure to method syntax
>>> li
[1, 11, 3, 4, 5, 'a']

>>> li.insert(2, 'i')
>>>li
[1, 11, 'i', 3, 4, 5, 'a']
```

The *extend* method vs the + operator.

- \+ creates a fresh list (with a new memory reference)
- *extend* operates on list `li` in place.

```
>>> li.extend([9, 8, 7])
>>>li
[1, 2, 'i', 3, 4, 5, 'a', 9, 8, 7]
```

***Confusing*:**

- **Extend takes a list as an argument.**
- **Append takes a singleton as an argument.**

```
>>> li.append([10, 11, 12])
>>> li
[1, 2, 'i', 3, 4, 5, 'a', 9, 8, 7, [10, 11, 12]]
```

Operations on Lists Only 3

```
>>> li = ['a', 'b', 'c', 'b']

>>> li.index('b')      # index of first occurrence
1

>>> li.count('b')      # number of occurrences
2

>>> li.remove('b')     # remove first occurrence
>>> li
  ['a', 'c', 'b']
```

Operations on Lists Only 4

```
>>> li = [5, 2, 6, 8]

>>> li.reverse()    # reverse the list *in place*
>>> li
  [8, 6, 2, 5]

>>> li.sort()       # sort the list *in place*
>>> li
  [2, 5, 6, 8]

>>> li.sort(some_function)
    # sort in place using user-defined comparison
```

Tuples vs. Lists

- **Lists slower but more powerful than tuples.**
  - Lists can be modified, and they have lots of handy operations we can perform on them.
  - Tuples are immutable and have fewer features.

- **To convert between tuples and lists use the list() and tuple() functions:**

```
li = list(tu)
tu = tuple(li)
```

Dictionaries

Dictionaries: A Mapping type

- **Dictionaries store a mapping between a set of keys and a set of values.**
  - Keys can be any immutable type.
  - Values can be any type
  - A single dictionary can store values of different types
- **You can define, modify, view, lookup, and delete the key-value pairs in the dictionary.**

Using dictionaries

```
>>> d = {'user':'bozo', 'pswd':1234}
>>> d['user']
'bozo'
>>> d['pswd']
1234
>>> d['bozo']

Traceback (innermost last):
  File '<interactive input>' line 1, in ?
KeyError: bozo

>>> d = {'user':'bozo', 'pswd':1234}
>>> d['user'] = 'clown'
>>> d
{'user':'clown', 'pswd':1234}

>>> d['id'] = 45
>>> d
{'user':'clown', 'id':45, 'pswd':1234}
```

```
>>> d = {'user':'bozo', 'p':1234, 'i':34}
>>> del d['user']          # Remove one.
>>> d
{'p':1234, 'i':34}
>>> d.clear()              # Remove all.
>>> d
{}
```

```
>>> d = {'user':'bozo', 'p':1234, 'i':34}
>>> d.keys()             # List of keys.
['user', 'p', 'i']
>>> d.values()           # List of values.
['bozo', 1234, 34]
>>> d.items()        # List of item tuples.
[('user','bozo'), ('p',1234), ('i',34)]
```

Functions

Functions

- *def* creates a function and assigns it a name
- return sends a result back to the caller
- Arguments are passed by assignment
- Arguments and return types are not declared

```
def <name>(arg1, arg2, ..., argN):
  <statements>
  return <value>

def times(x,y):
  return x*y
```

Passing Arguments to Functions

- ***Arguments are passed by assignment***
- ***Passed arguments are assigned to local names***
- ***Assignment to argument names don't affect the caller***
- ***Changing a mutable argument may affect the caller***

```
def changer (x,y):
  x = 2                        # changes local value of x only
  y[0] = 'hi'                  # changes shared object
```

Optional Arguments

- **Can define defaults for arguments that need not be passed**

```
def func(a, b, c=10, d=100):
  print a, b, c, d

>>> func(1,2)
1 2 10 100

>>> func(1,2,3,4)
1,2,3,4
```

Gotchas

- **All functions in Python have a return value**
  - even if no return line inside the code.
- **Functions without a return return the special value *None*.**
- **There is no function overloading in Python.**
  - Two different functions can't have the same name, even if they have different arguments.
- **Functions can be used as any other data type. They can be:**
  - Arguments to function
  - Return values of functions
  - Assigned to variables
  - Parts of tuples, lists, etc