What is Python?

Python is an interpreted, interactive, object-oriented programming language. It incorporates modules,

exceptions, dynamic typing, very high level dynamic data types, and classes. Python combines

remarkable power with very clear syntax. It has interfaces to many system calls and libraries, as well

as to various window systems, and is extensible in C or C++. It is also usable as an extension language

for applications that need a programmable interface. Finally, Python is portable: it runs on many Unix

variants, on the Mac, and on PCs under MS-DOS, Windows, Windows NT, and OS/2.

To find out more, start with The Python Tutorial. The Beginner’s Guide to Python links to other

introductory tutorials and resources for learning Python.

What is Python good for?

Python is a high-level general-purpose programming language that can be applied to many different

classes of problems.

The language comes with a large standard library that covers areas such as string processing (regular

expressions, Unicode, calculating differences between files), Internet protocols (HTTP, FTP, SMTP, XML-

PC, POP, IMAP, CGI programming), software engineering (unit testing, logging, profiling, parsing Python

code), and operating system interfaces (system calls, filesystems, TCP/IP sockets). Look at the table of

contents for The Python Standard Library to get an idea of what’s available. A wide variety of third-party

extensions are also available. Consult the Python Package Index to find packages of interest to you.

Why is it called Python

When he began implementing Python, Guido van Rossum was also reading the published

scripts from “Monty Python’s Flying Circus”, a BBC comedy series from the 1970s. Van Rossum

thought he needed a name that was short, unique, and slightly mysterious, so he decided to call

the language Python.