

# Understanding the Implementation of Basic Data Structures in Python

March 26, 2025

If you're curious to see **how basic data structures like lists, dictionaries, sets, and tuples are implemented in Python**, there are a few ways to explore this depending on how deep you want to go:

## 1. Quick Info via `help()` or `__doc__`

You won't see the full implementation, but you'll get a summary of how it works.

```
help(list)
help(dict)
```

## 2. Browse the CPython Source Code (Actual Implementation)

Python's most widely used implementation is **CPython**, and most of the core data structures are written in **C** for performance.

You can browse the source code here: <https://github.com/python/cpython>

**Key files:**

```
list listobject.c
dict dictobject.c
set setobject.c
tuple tupleobject.c
str unicodeobject.c
```

## 3. Use the `collections` Module for Higher-Level Structures

Some data structures like `deque`, `defaultdict`, and `OrderedDict` are implemented in Python or C extensions.

```
from collections import deque
help(deque)
```

You can find their implementation in:

- `collections/_init_.py`
- `_collectionsmodule.c` (C backend)

## 4. Use Pure Python Versions (For Educational Purposes)

There are many educational re-implementations of Python data structures in pure Python online. For instance:

- `cpython-data-structures` on GitHub – great for understanding the logic behind them.

Would you like to see a simplified Python version of, say, a `list` or `dict`?

## 5. Official Reference

<https://wiki.python.org/moin/TimeComplexity>