

Optional Imports

Optional imports are used when you have a preferred module or package that you want to use, but you also want a fallback in case it doesn't exist. You might use optional imports to support multiple versions of software or for speed ups, for example. Here's an example from the package `github2` that demonstrates how you might use optional imports to support different versions of Python:

```
try:
    # For Python 3
    from http.client import responses
except ImportError: # For Python 2.5-2.7
    try:
        from httplib import responses # NOQA
    except ImportError: # For Python 2.4
        from BaseHTTPServer import BaseHTTPRequestHandler as _BHRH
        responses = dict([(k, v[0]) for k, v in _BHRH.responses.items()])
```



The `lxml` package also makes use of optional imports:

```
try:
    from urlparse import urljoin
    from urllib2 import urlopen
except ImportError:
    # Python 3
    from urllib.parse import urljoin
    from urllib.request import urlopen
```



As you can see, it's used all the time to great effect and is a handy tool to add to your repertoire.