

## Make Canopy User Python be your default Python (i.e. on the PATH)



Jonathan March

posted this on April 21, 2013 10:48

(Updated August 27, 2014)

### tl;dr -- Quick & easy method for a single terminal/command session

In Canopy 1.4 and above, you can make Canopy be the default Python for the duration of a single terminal session:

Windows: Open a "Canopy Command Prompt" window from the Canopy Tools menu. Please see Note #3 below.

Mac/Linux: Open a "Canopy Terminal" window from the Canopy Tools menu.

For more persistent settings, read on.

### Background

At the end of Canopy's initial setup, there is an option, which is **selected by default**, to make Canopy's Python be your default Python at the terminal / shell / command prompt. (This option will not apply to any terminal sessions that are already open, but rather to terminal windows opened subsequently.)

You might reasonably decide not to accept this default, for example if you are currently using another Python distribution (such as EPD) for production work, or do not want .py files to be associated with Canopy's editor at this time. This will usually not affect operation inside the Canopy GUI application.

However not making Canopy your default Python does complicate your ability to use Canopy Python from a command prompt, including installing external packages, because it may not be immediately obvious where Canopy's User Python is actually located if you want to refer to it explicitly. Canopy uses virtual environments [as described here](#), so that **there are actually three Canopy Pythons**. You should only use the **Canopy User Python**! Running the wrong Python (or IPython) will lead to confusing misbehavior.

### How to check whether Canopy User Python is your default Python

Start python or ipython from a terminal session, do `import sys; sys.prefix`, and check that the output value ends in "Enthought/Canopy[something]/User" (specifically, it should match most of the path shown in the platform-specific table below. It should also match the value of sys.prefix that is shown when you type the same command in the Canopy GUI's Python panel.

**If you did not initially make Canopy your default Python, but would now like to make it so persistently, you have two options:**

### Set Canopy Preference - usually very easy but not for everyone:

Open the Canopy Preferences dialog (on the General tab) and click on "Set [Canopy] as default".

Notes:

1. This does not always succeed; sometimes this Canopy GUI dialog can't actually decide whether Canopy Python would be the default in a terminal. We apologize for the inconvenience, and are working to improve the behavior. If this happens to you, we suggest using one of the other options below.
2. This will subsequently cause the OS to open all python files, by default, in the Canopy editor (file association). This is the safest approach because it protects you from inadvertently running malicious scripts. After a python file has been opened in the Canopy editor, you can run it with a single keystroke. Nonetheless, this will not be the desired behavior for all users, and in this case you should not use this functionality.
3. (Windows): If you wish to use binary package installers such as Chris Gohlke's, this is your only option; such installers typically require that Windows registry entries be set, so just modifying PATH, as is done by the following options, will not suffice.

### Manually set PATH - fairly easy:

To make Canopy be your default Python in all subsequent Terminal/Command sessions, you can manually prepend your PATH with the following platform-specific directory:

Platform	Word length	Location
Windows XP	64	C:\Documents and Settings\<username>\Local Settings\Application Data\Enthought\Canopy\User\Scripts
Windows XP	32	C:\Documents and Settings\<username>\Local Settings\Application Data\Enthought\Canopy32\User\Scripts
Windows 7 & Vista	64	C:\Users\<username>\AppData\Local\Enthought\Canopy\User\Scripts
Windows 7 & Vista	32	C:\Users\<username>\AppData\Local\Enthought\Canopy32\User\Scripts
Mac OSX	64	~/Library/Enthought/Canopy_64bit/User/bin
Mac OSX	32	~/Library/Enthought/Canopy_32bit/User/bin
Linux	64	~/Enthought/Canopy_64bit/User/bin
Linux	32	~/Enthought/Canopy_32bit/User/bin

To do this:

#### Linux or Mac OS X

Edit your ~/.bash\_profile file, and uncomment (remove the initial "# " from) the line that looks like one of the following (depending on how early you installed Canopy; [more details here](#)):

```
# source [...] /activate
# VIRTUAL_ENV_DISABLE_PROMPT=1 source [...] activate
```

(On some systems, this line will be in the ~/.profile or ~/.bashrc file. Wherever you find it, you can usually just uncomment it when you want Canopy to be your default

Python. Note that if you have both `.bash_profile` and `.profile` on OSX, then only `.bash_profile` will be used, unless another config file explicitly invokes `.profile`.)

## Windows

Editing the Windows PATH through the Control Panel (System / Advanced / Environment / User) is awkward and error-prone. We recommend using a utility such as the free [Rapid Environment Editor](#), to back up your existing PATH settings, modify them, and/or switch between different PATH settings.

One possible source of confusion in Windows: if Canopy was installed for current user, and you already have a Python (e.g. EPD 7.3) which was installed for all users, then even if you specified that Canopy should be your default Python, the "all user" python default will take precedence. The way to override this is to modify the System PATH environment variable to begin with the Canopy Python directory, or to remove Python altogether from this environment variable. (Again, Rapid Environment Editor makes this much easier to do.) You will need admin permission to do this.

## Undoing Canopy as the default Python

To remove Canopy from your PATH, simply reverse the (OS-specific) manual process described above.

Manually changing file associations (`.py` in this case) is more difficult. The usual process, which applies to most applications including Canopy, is that when you install another application which you wish to assume control of a particular file association, it will do so for you. Metaphorically speaking, you change color by re-painting rather than by attempting to scrape off the previous layer.

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## Comments



pierre puiieux

Anyway it's not completely clear.

From user point of view, Yes or No, setting/unsetting CanoPython as default python, is EQUIVALENT to uncomment/comment this line in the `.profile` user ?

```
# VIRTUAL_ENV_DISABLE_PROMPT=1 source [...] activate
```

November 22, 2013 09:03



Marc Moncrief

Hi. I very stupidly and very rashly deleted the lines above from my `bash_profile`. I have tried re-installing Canopy to replace the text, but this hasn't worked.

I set up the environment in the default location, but did not make Canopy my default Python. Are you able to provide the text of the lines that Canopy adds to `bash_profile` so I can re-instate them?

November 24, 2013 18:06



Jonathan March  
Enthought

@Marc, see the end of the "Environment setup" section of the Users Guide for your OS:

<http://docs.enthought.com/canopy/quick-start.html>

November 24, 2013 18:39



Deatrick Foster

Hello,

Is there an "activate" script for c-shell users (especially in the recently released version 1.2)? I use tcsh as my shell for a number of reasons, so the bash-only activate script doesn't do me any good. I know that using c-shell makes me a horrible person, but I can't switch to bash and would really like to use canopy-installed python at the command line for my work. If there's no c-shell version of activate, could you please outline a useful workaround? Many thanks for your help!

January 13, 2014 12:39



Jonathan March  
Enthought


@Deatrick, you don't need activate at all; just write an alias that prefixes `<home-dir>/Enthought/Canopy_64bit/User/bin` to your PATH.

January 13, 2014 12:50

I am unable to set Canopy as default right after installing. My system is 64-bit Mac OS X. I tried uninstall and remove all associated files then reinstall. I clicked on "Start using Canopy", but it was unable to start the application.



Honglin Han

 [Screen Shot 2014-01-17 at 8.20.00 PM.png \(quick view\)](#)

January 17, 2014 19:22



dong qunxi

The first time I use it and set the Canopy to be my default Python. But now I want to cancel the option, how to do?

January 22, 2014 14:46

Sharath Chandra  
Guntuku

When I start python, I get the following:

Enthought Canopy Python 2.7.6 | 64-bit | (default, Jan 29 2014, 17:35:36)  
[GCC 4.1.2 20080704 (Red Hat 4.1.2-52)] on linux2

Does this mean it is running GCC version 4.1.2?

I am working with CUDA and that throws an error that gcc 4.6 and up are not supported. Is there any workaround for making GCC 4.1.2 system-wide?

I am on a cluster and do not have root access!

Thanks :)

January 31, 2014 21:19

Jonathan March  
Enthought

Update: simplified the article, reflecting that Canopy 1.4 provides a "Canopy Command Prompt" or "Canopy Terminal" command in the Tools menu.

May 14, 2014 14:42



Andrew Gin

Under Win7 (64-bit) I forgot that I had Python 2.5 already on my computer when I installed Canopy 1.4.1975. I got the dreaded "Canopy is not your default Python environment" and the pushbutton 'Set as default' was disabled.

An "import sys; sys.prefix" in python started from a terminal showed "C:\\Python25" and in Canopy showed 'C:\\Users\\ACG\\AppData\\Local\\Enthought\\Canopy\\User'.

I read the above, but did not want to delete the previous install or work with the registry.

My Quick fix without deleting anything or messing with the registry was to rename the 'Python25' directory to 'Python25xx'.

Then 'import sys; sys.prefix' showed 'C:\\Users\\ACG\\AppData\\Local\\Enthought\\Canopy\\User' in both the terminal launch python and Canopy .

The 'Edit | Preference' tab dialog box in Canopy showed 'Canopy is your default Python environment' with the pushbutton labeled 'Unset as default' was enabled.

Hope that helps someone.

ACG

September 17, 2014 00:38