Algorithms and Data Structures
A2. A Very Brief Introduction to Python

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Python
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Brief Language Overview
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Selection Sort in Python
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Python

Python

- interpreted high-level programming language
- supports imperative, object-oriented and functional programming
- easily readable code
- high productivity: for the same functionality, we need significantly less code than e.g. with Java
- extensive libraries
- execution often slower than with compiled languages
- named after Monty Python (English comedy troupe from the 1970s)

Python Interpreter

- we use Python 3.x
- program `python3` can execute programs or be used as an interactive interpreter:

Python Interpreter

```
Python 3.12.3 (main, Jan 17 2025, 18:03:48)
[GCC 13.3.0] on linux
Type "help", "copyright", "credits" or "license"
for more information.
>>> 5 * 4
20
>>> exit()   (Linux: Ctrl+d)
```

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Resources

- Python: https://www.python.org/downloads/
  or from a package repository (Ubuntu: apt install python3)
  - alternatively: scientific computing distribution Anaconda
    (https://www.anaconda.com/), contains much more than
    you need for this course
- reference and tutorial: https://docs.python.org/3/
- IDE: e.g.. PyCharm
  (https://www.jetbrains.com/pycharm/)
- or editor: e.g. emacs or vim (if you already know them),
  otherwise e.g. Visual Studio Code (https://code.
  visualstudio.com/docs/python/python-tutorial)
- style checker: e.g. Flake 8 (http://flake8.pycqa.org/)
  (Ubuntu: apt install python3-flake8)

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Jupyter Notebook

Jupyter notebook: `jupyter_intro.ipynb`

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Dynamic Typing

- variables are type-less, only the objects they are referring to have a type.
- type checking only during runtime

```
>>> a = 3
>>> a/2
1.5
>>> a = "now the variable references a string"
>>> a/2
Traceback (most recent call last):
  File "<stdin>", line 1, in <module>
TypeError: unsupported operand type(s) for /: 'str' and 'int'
```

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Indentation instead of Braces

indentation defines statement blocks
(such as functions, loop bodies, . . .)

```
def count(to):
    for val in range(to):  # val = 0, ..., to-1
        print(val + 1)
    print("done")
```

Java: braces

tab $\neq$ space
recommendation: 4 spaces per level

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range

- `range(stop)` generates integers from 0 to stop - 1
  - → `range(3)` yields 0, 1, 2
- `range(start, stop[, step])`:
  generates integers from `start` to (excluding) `stop` with steps
  size `step`
  - → `range(3, 11, 2)` yields 3, 5, 7, 9
  - → `range(2, -3, -1)` yields 2, 1, 0, -1, -2
  - → `range(2, 5)` yields 2, 3, 4

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Lists and Tuples

- lists and tuples contain sequences of objects
- lists are written with brackets:
  `[3, "egg", "bacon"]`
- tuples are written with parentheses:
  `("sausage", 31, ["spam", "baked beans"])`
- difference
  - lists are mutable, we can add and remove elements.
  - tuples are immutable, they always contain the same objects in the same order (but the objects can be mutable).

Indexing and Manipulation

- We can index sequences from the front (non-negative integers) or the back (negative integers).
- The first element has index 0.
  (4, 5, 2, 9)[1] references 5.
- The last element has index -1.
  (4, 5, 2, 9)[-2] references 2.
- In mutable sequences, new assignments are possible.
  a[2] = 4 for list a
- With append, we can extend a list by one element.
  a.append(8) appends 8 at the end of the list.

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Example for Indexing and Manipulation

```
>>> fibonacci = (1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8)
>>> print(fibonacci[0], fibonacci[2], fibonacci[-1])
1 2 8
>>> fibonacci_list = list(fibonacci)
>>> print(fibonacci_list)
[1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8]
>>> fibonacci_list.append(14)
>>> print(fibonacci_list)
[1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 14]
>>> fibonacci_list[-1] = 13
>>> print(fibonacci_list)
[1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13]
```

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Immutability of Tuples

```
>>> l = (3, "egg", ["bacon"])
>>> l[2].append("spam")
>>> l
(3, 'egg', ['bacon', 'spam'])
>>> l[1] = 3
Traceback (most recent call last):
  File "<stdin>", line 1, in <module>
  TypeError: 'tuple' object does not support item assignment
```

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More on Tuples

- **Tuple Unpacking** "unpacks" values on the right-hand side to assign them to the variables on the left-hand side.
  `(number, name) = (3, "Johann Gambolputty")`
- In general, we can omit parentheses around tuples if there is no ambiguity.

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More on Tuples

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- In general, we can omit parentheses around tuples if there is no ambiguity.
- tuple unpacking thus possible without parentheses:
  `number, name = 3, "Johann Gambolputty"`
- often used to swap the values of two variables:
  `var1, var2 = var2, var1`

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More on Tuples

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- In general, we can omit parentheses around tuples if there is no ambiguity.
- tuple unpacking thus possible without parentheses:
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- often used to swap the values of two variables:
  `var1, var2 = var2, var1`
- note: tuples with only one element written with a comma:
  `(2,)`

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Control Structures: `if`, `elif`, `else`

```python
if x > 0:
    print("x is positive")
elif x == 0:
    print("x is zero")
else:
    print("x is negative")
```

conditions: logical connectives with and, or, not

e.g. x > 5 and y < 3

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Control Structures: `while`, `for`

Count down from 9 to 1 (two variants):

```
x = 9
while x > 0:
    print(x)
    x -= 1

for x in range(9, 0, -1):
    print(x)
```

- exit a loop with break
- skip the current iteration with continue

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Functions and Main Function

```python
import sys

def power(base, exponent):
    return base ** exponent

def main():
    base, exp = int(sys.argv[1]), int(sys.argv[2])
    print(power(base, exp))

if __name__ == "__main__":
    # called if file is executed but not at import
    main()
```

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Example: Selection Sort

```python
def selection_sort(a):
    """Selection sort sorting algorithm

    >>> selection_sort([3, 1, 6, 3, 2])
    [1, 2, 3, 3, 6]
    >>> selection_sort([])
    []
    """
    for i in range(len(a) - 1):
        min_index = i
        for j in range(i + 1, len(a)):
            if a[j] < a[min_index]:
                min_index = j
        a[i], a[min_index] = a[min_index], a[i]
    return a
```

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Example: Selection Sort

selection_sort.py

```python
import random

def selection_sort(a):
    cf. previous slide

if __name__ == "__main__":
    a = [n for n in range(40)]  # [0, 1, ... 39]
    random.shuffle(a)  # randomly shuffle the array
    print(a)
    selection_sort(a)
    print(a)
```

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Example: Selection Sort

- unit test with `python3 -m doctest selection_sort.py`
- style check with `python3 -m flake8 selection_sort.py`
- execute with `python3 selection_sort.py`