

A Byte of Python

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Abstract

This book will help you to learn the Python programming language, whether you are new to computers or are an experienced programmer.

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Table of Contents

Preface	x
Who This Book Is For	x
History Lesson	x
Status of the book	x
Official Website	xi
License Terms	xi
Feedback	xi
Something To Think About	xi
1. Introduction	1
Introduction	1
Features of Python	1
Summary	2
Why not Perl?	3
What Programmers Say	3
2. Installing Python	4
For Linux/BSD users	4
For Windows Users	4
Summary	5
3. First Steps	6
Introduction	6
Using the interpreter prompt	6
Choosing an Editor	6
Using a Source File	7
Output	7
How It Works	8
Executable Python programs	8
Getting Help	9
Summary	10
4. The Basics	11
Literal Constants	11
Numbers	11
Strings	11
Variables	13
Identifier Naming	13
Data Types	14
Objects	14
Output	15
How It Works	15
Logical and Physical Lines	15
Indentation	17
Summary	18
5. Operators and Expressions	19
Introduction	19
Operators	19
Operator Precedence	21
Order of Evaluation	22
Associativity	22
Expressions	22
Using Expressions	22
Summary	23
6. Control Flow	24
Introduction	24
The if statement	24

Using the if statement	24
How It Works	25
The while statement	26
Using the while statement	26
The for loop	27
Using the for statement	27
The break statement	28
Using the break statement	28
The continue statement	30
Using the continue statement	30
Summary	30
7. Functions	32
Introduction	32
Defining a Function	32
Function Parameters	32
Using Function Parameters	33
Local Variables	33
Using Local Variables	34
Using the global statement	34
Default Argument Values	35
Using Default Argument Values	35
Keyword Arguments	36
Using Keyword Arguments	37
The return statement	37
Using the literal statement	38
DocStrings	38
Using DocStrings	39
Summary	40
8. Modules	41
Introduction	41
Using the sys module	41
Byte-compiled .pyc files	42
The from..import statement	42
A module's <code>__name__</code>	42
Using a module's <code>__name__</code>	43
Making your own Modules	43
Creating your own Modules	43
from..import	44
The dir() function	45
Using the dir function	45
Summary	46
9. Data Structures	47
Introduction	47
List	47
Quick introduction to Objects and Classes	47
Using Lists	47
Tuple	49
Using Tuples	49
Tuples and the print statement	50
Dictionary	51
Using Dictionaries	51
Sequences	53
Using Sequences	53
References	54
Objects and References	55
More about Strings	56
String Methods	56
Summary	57

10. Problem Solving - Writing a Python Script	58
The Problem	58
The Solution	58
First Version	58
Second Version	60
Third Version	61
Fourth Version	63
More Refinements	64
The Software Development Process	65
Summary	65
11. Object-Oriented Programming	67
Introduction	67
The self	67
Classes	68
Creating a Class	68
object Methods	69
Using Object Methods	69
The <code>__init__</code> method	69
Using the <code>__init__</code> method	69
Class and Object Variables	70
Using Class and Object Variables	71
Inheritance	73
Using Inheritance	73
Summary	75
12. Input/Output	76
Files	76
Using file	76
Pickle	77
Pickling and Unpickling	77
Summary	78
13. Exceptions	79
Errors	79
Try..Except	79
Handling Exceptions	79
Raising Exceptions	80
How To Raise Exceptions	81
Try..Finally	82
Using Finally	82
Summary	83
14. The Python Standard Library	84
Introduction	84
The sys module	84
Command Line Arguments	84
More sys	86
The os module	86
Summary	87
15. More Python	88
Special Methods	88
Single Statement Blocks	88
List Comprehension	89
Using List Comprehensions	89
Receiving Tuples and Lists in Functions	89
Lambda Forms	90
Using Lambda Forms	90
The exec and eval statements	91
The assert statement	91
The repr function	91
Summary	92

16. What Next?	93
Graphical Software	93
Summary of GUI Tools	94
Explore More	94
Summary	95
A. Free/Libré and Open Source Software (FLOSS)	96
B. About	98
Colophon	98
About the Author	98
C. Revision History	99
Timestamp	99

List of Tables

5.1. Operators and their usage	19
5.2. Operator Precedence	21
15.1. Some Special Methods	88

List of Examples

3.1. Using the python interpreter prompt	6
3.2. Using a Source File	7
4.1. Using Variables and Literal constants	14
5.1. Using Expressions	22
6.1. Using the if statement	24
6.2. Using the while statement	26
6.3. Using the for statement	27
6.4. Using the break statement	29
6.5. Using the continue statement	30
7.1. Defining a function	32
7.2. Using Function Parameters	33
7.3. Using Local Variables	34
7.4. Using the global statement	35
7.5. Using Default Argument Values	36
7.6. Using Keyword Arguments	37
7.7. Using the literal statement	38
7.8. Using DocStrings	39
8.1. Using the sys module	41
8.2. Using a module's <code>__name__</code>	43
8.3. How to create your own module	43
8.4. Using the <code>dir</code> function	45
9.1. Using lists	47
9.2. Using Tuples	49
9.3. Output using tuples	50
9.4. Using dictionaries	51
9.5. Using Sequences	53
9.6. Objects and References	55
9.7. String Methods	56
10.1. Backup Script - The First Version	58
10.2. Backup Script - The Second Version	60
10.3. Backup Script - The Third Version (does not work!)	62
10.4. Backup Script - The Fourth Version	63
11.1. Creating a Class	68
11.2. Using Object Methods	69
11.3. Using the <code>__init__</code> method	69
11.4. Using Class and Object Variables	71
11.5. Using Inheritance	73
12.1. Using files	76
12.2. Pickling and Unpickling	77
13.1. Handling Exceptions	80
13.2. How to Raise Exceptions	81
13.3. Using Finally	82
14.1. Using <code>sys.argv</code>	84
15.1. Using List Comprehensions	89
15.2. Using Lambda Forms	90

Preface

Python is probably one of the few programming languages which is both simple and powerful. This is good for both and beginners as well as experts, and more importantly, is fun to program with. This book aims to help you learn this wonderful language and show how to get things done quickly and painlessly - in effect 'The Perfect Anti-venom to your programming problems'.

Who This Book Is For

This book serves as a guide or tutorial to the Python programming language. It is mainly targeted at newbies. It is useful for experienced programmers as well.

The aim is that if all you know about computers is how to save text files, then you can learn Python from this book. If you have previous programming experience, then you can also learn Python from this book.

If you do have previous programming experience, you will be interested in the differences between Python and your favorite programming language - I have highlighted many such differences. A little warning though, Python is soon going to become your favorite programming language!

History Lesson

I first started with Python when I needed to write an installer for my software Diamond [<http://www.g2swaroop.net/software/>] so that I could make the installation easy. I had to choose between Python and Perl bindings for the Qt library. I did some research on the web and I came across an article where Eric S. Raymond, the famous and respected hacker, talked about how Python has become his favorite programming language. I also found out that the PyQt bindings were very good compared to Perl-Qt. So, I decided that Python was the language for me.

Then, I started searching for a good book on Python. I couldn't find any! I did find some O'Reilly books but they were either too expensive or were more like a reference manual than a guide. So, I settled for the documentation that came with Python. However, it was too brief and small. It did give a good idea about Python but was not complete. I managed with it since I had previous programming experience, but it was unsuitable for newbies.

About six months after my first brush with Python, I installed the (then) latest Red Hat 9.0 Linux and I was playing around with KWord. I got excited about it and suddenly got the idea of writing some stuff on Python. I started writing a few pages but it quickly became 30 pages long. Then, I became serious about making it more useful in a book form. After a *lot* of rewrites, it has reached a stage where it has become a useful guide to learning the Python language. I consider this book to be my contribution and tribute to the open source community.

This book started out as my personal notes on Python and I still consider it in the same way, although I've taken a lot of effort to make it more palatable to others :)

In the true spirit of open source, I have received lots of constructive suggestions, criticisms and feedback from enthusiastic readers which has helped me improve this book a lot.

Status of the book

This book is a **work-in-progress**. Many chapters are constantly being changed and improved. However, the book has matured a lot. You should be able to learn Python easily from this book. Please do tell me if you find any part of the book to be incorrect or incomprehensible.

More chapters are planned for the future, such as on wxPython, Twisted and maybe even Boa Construct-

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