

Topic 2: Introduction to Programming

Recommended Readings

- Chapter 2

STARTING OUT WITH PYTHON®



Computer Programming

- Gain necessary knowledge of the problem domain
- Analyze the problem, breaking it into pieces
 - Repeat as necessary
- Synthesize a solution
- Run the program
- Validate program results
 - Correct problems that are identified

Programming Languages

- Many programming languages available
 - Offer different features
 - Each has its own strengths and weaknesses
- Common features
 - Allow us to control the behavior of a computer
 - Defined syntactic and semantic rules

Levels of Abstraction

- Human Languages
- High Level Programming Languages
- Low Level Programming Languages
- Machine Language

Python

- A high-level general purpose programming language
 - Reasonably simple, easy to learn
 - Reasonably easy to find and fix program errors
 - Available for many platforms
 - Powerful enough to solve interesting problems
 - Used in industry (eg. Civ4, YouTube)

Programming

- Computer programs are stored in source files
 - typically have the extension .py
- Once the file is created, it is run using the python interpreter
 - `python myfile.py`

A First Python Program

- Write a Python program that converts a pressure from kilopascals into
 - atmospheres
 - pounds per square inch
 - millimetres of mercury

A First Python Program

- What steps can we follow to reach this goal?

Variables

- Variable
 - A named location in memory
 - Holds a value
 - The programmer can
 - read the value of a variable without changing / destroying the value
 - change the value of the variable
 - change the type of information stored in the variable

Variable Names

- Variable names
 - should be meaningful
 - must begin with a letter or an underscore
 - may contain a mixture of letters, numbers and underscores
 - must not be a reserved word
 - shouldn't be a name already commonly used for another purpose
 - shouldn't be in all caps

Assignment

- A variable is created and given a value using an assignment statement
 - The variable that gets a value appears to the left of the assignment operator
 - An arbitrarily complex expression appears to the right of the assignment operator
 - Expression may include other variables

Getting Input

- Python includes a library of functions that perform useful tasks
 - Our program can use these functions
 - A function is “called” by using its name
 - The function name is always followed by round brackets
 - May include values inside the brackets that are used by the function
 - Function result can be stored in a variable
 - Use `input()` to read a value

Generating Output

- Use a print statement
 - Behaves much like a function
 - Exception: No brackets
 - Can print numbers, strings, contents of variables, ...
 - Multiple items can be printed
 - Separate each item with a comma

The Code

- In a file named Pressure.py:

Running the Program

- CPU can only execute machine language instructions
 - Can't execute programming language statements directly
 - Options:
 - Compile the program into machine language instructions
 - Use a Virtual Machine that reads your program and performs the tasks required to run it

Compilation

Virtual Machine

Comments

- Provide information to someone reading your code
 - Completely ignored by the computer
 - Should explain how or why
 - Should add value
 - A comment that says something that is immediately obvious from reading the code is not particularly useful

Magic Numbers

- Magic Number: An unnamed and/or poorly documented numeric constant without obvious meaning
 - Should be avoided
 - Program is difficult to understand
 - Errors are difficult to detect
 - If the value changes, it may need to be changed in many places

What Does this Program Do?

```
x = input()  
y = 32 + x * 9/5  
print y
```

- What's wrong with this program?

Expressions

- Python supports arbitrarily complex mathematical expressions
 - Integers / Floating Point Numbers / Parentheses
 - Operators
 - +: addition
 - -: subtraction
 - *: multiplication
 - /: division
 - %: remainder
 - **: exponentiation

Precedence

- The order evaluation is determined by operator precedence
 - $()$
 - $-x, x^{**}y$
 - $x*y, x/y, x\%y$
 - $x+y, x-y$
 - $=$
 - Evaluation is left to right at each level

Example

Math Functions

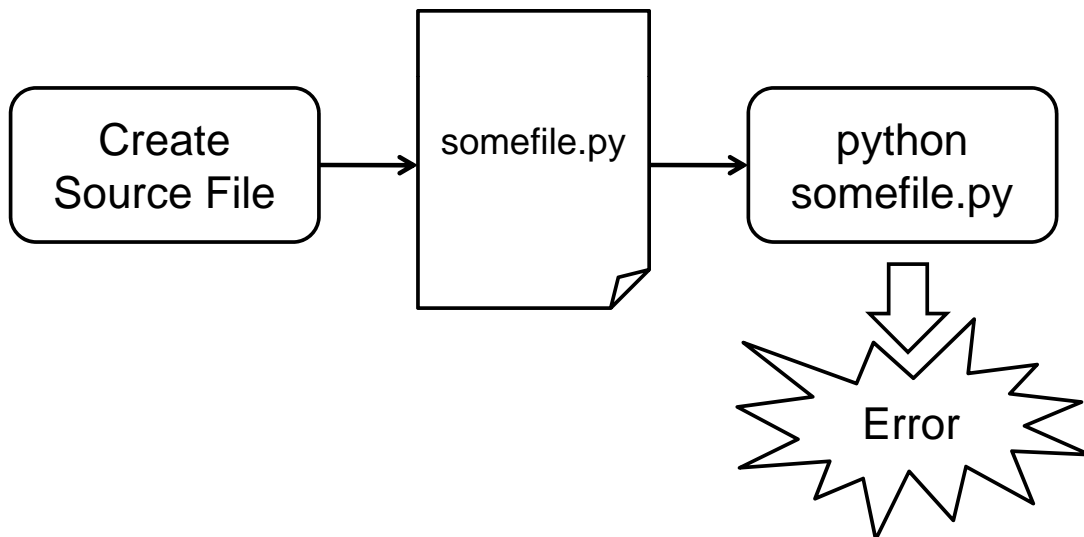
- Many additional math functions are available
 - Located in the math library
 - Import the math library
 - Precede the name of the function with math.
 - Examples:
 - `math.sqrt(x)`
 - `math.floor(x)`
 - `math.ceil(x)`
 - `math.cos(x)`

Types of Errors

- Three categories of errors:
 - Syntax Errors
 - Runtime Errors
 - Logic Errors

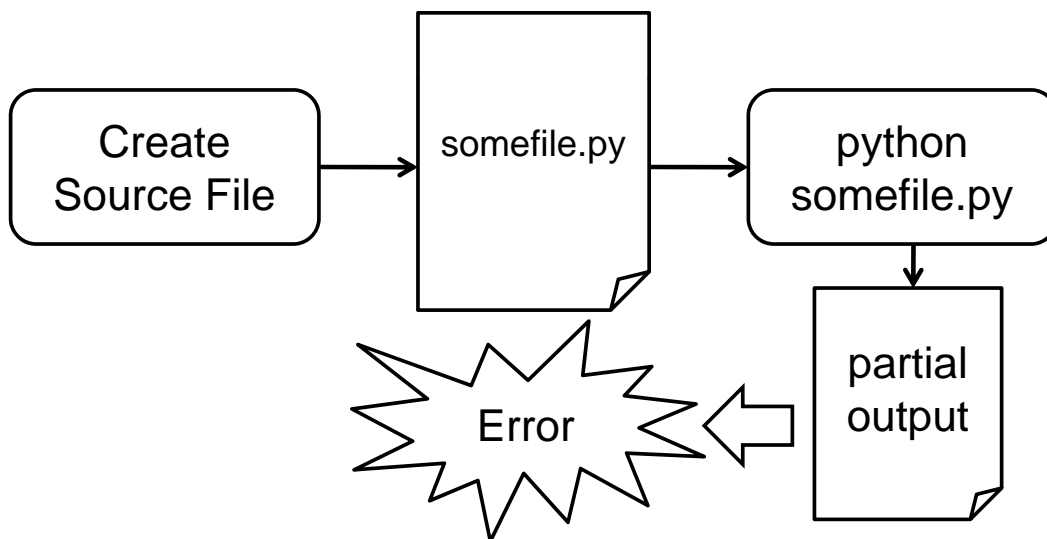
Syntax Errors

- Identified as code is loaded
- No statements are executed



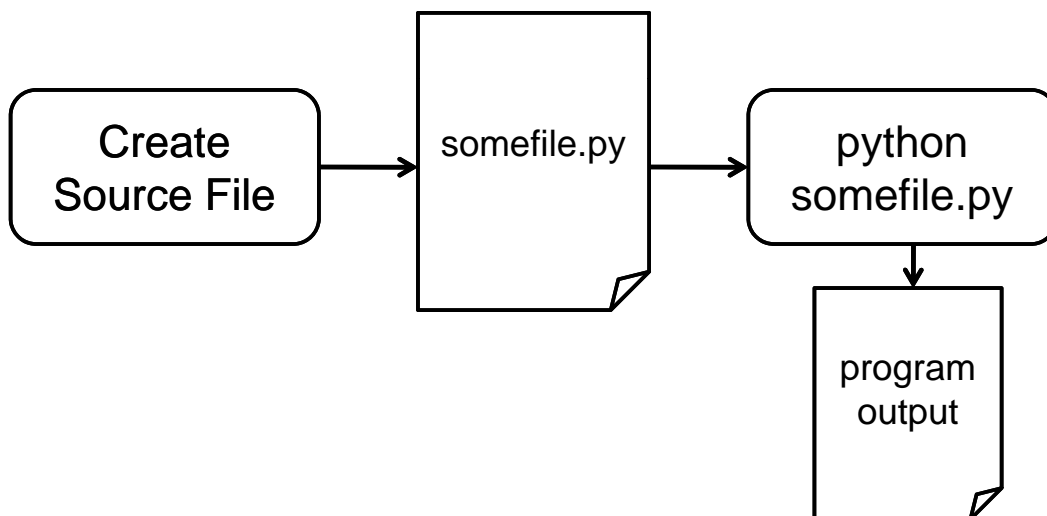
Runtime Errors

- Identified as the program runs
- Program does not complete successfully



Logic Errors

- Program runs to completion, but generates incorrect results



Types

- Variables hold values
 - Each value has a type
 - Integer
 - Float
 - Boolean
 - String
 - ...

Types

- Some operations are only well defined for certain types
 - $1 + 2 =$
 - “Hello” + “ World” =
 - $1 + \text{“Hello”} =$
 - $2 + \text{“4”} =$
 - $1 / 3 =$
 - $2.0 / 4 =$

Type Conversions

- Python permits you to “cast” from one type to another
 - “1.0” / “3.0” =
 - float(“1.0”) / float(“3.0”) =
 - float(“asdf”) =
- Other type casts: int, bool, str

Strings

- Reading Strings
 - `input()` function reads integers, floats and Booleans
 - Generates an error if used to read a string
 - `raw_input()` function reads strings
 - Value is stored as a string even if the characters form a number

String Methods

- Methods also available for
 - Formatting
 - Searching
 - Counting
 - Separating
 - Testing Properties
- Will discuss strings in detail later...

Example

- Consider getting a loan for a sports car
 - Want to compare payments for different
 - Amount borrowed
 - Interest rate (percentage per year)
 - Amortization period
 - Write a program that
 - reads the amount borrowed, interest rate and amortization period
 - Displays monthly payment & total borrowing cost

Example

- Useful Equation: $P = \frac{iA}{1 - (1+i)^{-N}}$
 - P: Payment amount
 - i: Interest rate per payment period as a decimal value
 - 5% should be 0.05
 - A: Amount borrowed
 - N: Total number of payments

Example

Formatting Output

- Sometimes print doesn't display things the way we would like
 - print $1 / 3.0$ gives 0.3333333333333333
 - What if we want 0.33?
 - What if we want to center the result on the line?
 - What if we want to right-justify the result?

Formatting Numbers

- The % operator can be used to format numbers
 - Format specifier to its left
 - A string that controls how the value will be formatted
 - Expression that evaluates to a number on its right
 - Example: `“%.2f” % 3.14159265`

Format Specifiers

- A string
 - Format starts with a %
 - Number(s) and optional decimal point control formatting
 - Letter indicates type
 - f to format floating point numbers
 - d to format an integer in decimal format
 - x to format an integer in hexadecimal format

Wrapping Up

- Programming
 - Process of converting an algorithm to a form that can be executed by a computer
- A program
 - Uses variables to hold values
 - Evaluates expressions
 - Calls functions to get input, perform mathematical operations
 - Uses print statements to generate output

Where Are We Going

- Programs we can write are limited
 - What if we want different behaviour depending on a value entered by the user?
 - What if we want to perform a task several times?
- What kinds of data can a computer manipulate?
 - How does the computer represent data?