More on Functions

Genome 559: Introduction to Statistical and Computational Genomics

Elhanan Borenstein
A quick review

- **Functions:**
  - Reusable pieces of code (*write once, use many*)
  - Take arguments, “do stuff”, and (usually) return a value
  - Use to organize & clarify your code, reduce code duplication

- **Defining a function:**
  ```python
def <function_name>(<arguments>):
    <function code block>
    <usually return something>
  ```

- **Using (calling) a function:**
  ```python
<function defined here>

<my_variable> = function_name(<my_arguments>)
```
A close analogy is the mathematical function

A Python Function

arguments go in

things happen

return value comes out

A mathematical Function

\[ y = x^2 + e^x \]

\( x \) is an argument

the function itself

\( y \) is the return value
import sys

def makeDict(fileName):
    myFile = open(fileName, "r")
    myDict = {}
    for line in myFile:
        fields = line.strip().split("\t")
        myDict[fields[0]] = float(fields[1])
    myFile.close()
    return myDict

FirstFileName = sys.argv[1]
FirstDict = makeDict(FirstFileName)

SecondFileName = sys.argv[2]
SecondDict = makeDict(SecondFileName)

... 

FlyGenesDict = makeDict("FlyGeneAtlas.txt")
import sys

def makeDict(fileName):
    myFile = open(fileName, "r")
    myDict = {}
    for line in myFile:
        fields = line.strip().split("\t")
        myDict[fields[0]] = float(fields[1])
    myFile.close()
    return myDict

FirstFileName = sys.argv[1]
FirstDict = makeDict(FirstFileName)

SecondFileName = sys.argv[2]
SecondDict = makeDict(SecondFileName)

... 

FlyGenesDict = makeDict("FlyGeneAtlas.txt")
import sys

def makeDict(fileName):
    myFile = open(fileName, "r")
    myDict = {}
    for line in myFile:
        fields = line.strip().split("\t")
        myDict[fields[0]] = float(fields[1])
    myFile.close()
    return myDict

FirstFileName = sys.argv[1]
FirstDict = makeDict(FirstFileName)

SecondFileName = sys.argv[2]
SecondDict = makeDict(SecondFileName)

... 

FlyGenesDict = makeDict("FlyGeneAtlas.txt")
Returning values

- Check the following function:

```python
# This function ...
# ...
def CalcSum(a_list):
    sum = 0
    for item in a_list:
        sum += item
    return sum
```

- What does this function do?
Returning values

- Check the following function:

```python
# This function calculates the sum
# of all the elements in a list
def CalcSum(a_list):
    sum = 0
    for item in a_list:
        sum += item
    return sum
```

- What does this function do?

```python
>>> my_list = [1, 3, 2, 9]
>>> print CalcSum(my_list)
15
```
Returning more than one value

- Let’s be more ambitious:

```python
# This function calculates the sum
# AND the product of all the
# elements in a list
def CalcSumAndProd(a_list):
    sum = 0
    prod = 1
    for item in a_list:
        sum += item
        prod *= item
    return ???
```

- How can we return both values?
Returning more than one value

- We can use a list as a return value:

```python
# This function calculates the sum
# AND the product of all the
# elements in a list
def CalcSumAndProd(a_list):
    sum = 0
    prod = 1
    for item in a_list:
        sum += item
        prod *= item
    return [sum, prod]

>>> my_list = [1, 3, 2, 9]
>>> print CalcSumAndProd(my_list)
[15, 54]
```

```python
>>> res = CalcSumAndProd(my_list)
```

```python
>>> [s,p] = CalcSumAndProd(my_list)
```
 Returning lists

- An increment function:

```python
# This function increment every element in
# the input list by 1
def incrementEachElement(a_list):
    new_list = []
    for item in a_list:
        new_list.append(item + 1)
    return new_list

# Now, create a list and use the function
my_list = [1, 20, 34, 8]
print(my_list)
print(my_incremended_list = incrementEachElement(my_list))
Print my_incremended_list
```

- Is this good practice?
Returning lists

- An increment function (modified):

```python
# This function increment every element in
# the input list by 1
def incrementEachElement(a_list):
    new_list = []
    for item in a_list:
        new_list.append(item + 1)
    return new_list

# Now, create a list and use the function
my_list = [1, 20, 34, 8]
print(my_list)
my_list = incrementEachElement(my_list)
Print my_list

[1, 20, 34, 8]
[2, 21, 35, 9]
```

- What about this?
Returning lists

- What will happen if we do this?

```python
# This function increment every element in
# the input list by 1
def incrementEachElement(a_list):
    for index in range(len(a_list)):
        a_list[index] += 1

# Now, create a list and use the function
my_list = [1, 20, 34, 8]
print(my_list)
incrementEachElement(my_list)
print(my_list)
```

- (note: no return value!!!)
Returning lists

What will happen if we do this?

```python
# This function increment every element in
# the input list by 1
def incrementEachElement(a_list):
    for index in range(len(a_list)):
        a_list[index] += 1

# Now, create a list and use the function
my_list = [1, 20, 34, 8]
print(my_list)
incrementEachElement(my_list)
print(my_list)
```

(note: no return value)

[2, 21, 35, 9]

Why is this working?
Pass-by-reference vs. pass-by-value

- Two fundamentally different function calling strategies:

  - **Pass-by-Value:**
    - The value of the argument is copied into a local variable inside the function
    - C, Scheme, C++

  - **Pass-by-reference:**
    - The function receives an implicit reference to the variable used as argument, rather than a copy of its value
    - Perl, VB, C++

- So, how does Python pass arguments?
Python passes arguments by reference
(almost)

- So ... this will work!

```python
# This function increment every element in
# the input list by 1
def incrementEachElement(a_list):
    for index in range(len(a_list)):
        a_list[index] += 1

>>> my_list = [1, 20, 34, 8]
>>> incrementEachElement(my_list)
>>> my_list
[2, 21, 35, 9]
>>> incrementEachElement(my_list)
>>> my_list
[3, 22, 36, 10]
```
Python passes arguments by reference (almost)

- How about this?

```python
def addQuestionMark(word):
    print "word inside function (1):", word
    word = word + "?"
    print "word inside function (2):", word

my_word = "really"
addQuestionMark(my_word)
print "word after function:”, my_word
```
Python passes arguments by reference
(almost)

- How about this?

```python
def addQuestionMark(word):
    print "word inside function (1):", word
    word = word + "?"
    print "word inside function (2):", word

my_word = "really"
addQuestionMark(my_word)
print "word after function: ", my_word
```

- Remember:
  1. Strings/numbers are immutable
  2. The assignment command often creates a new object
Passing by reference: the bottom line

- You can (and should) use this option when:
  - Handling large data structures
  - “In place” changes make sense

- Be careful (a double-edged sword):
  - Don’t lose the reference!
  - Don’t change an argument by mistake

- When we learn about objects and methods we will see yet an additional way to change variables
Required Arguments

- How about this?

```python
def printMulti(text, n):
    for i in range(n):
        print text
```

```python
>>> printMulti("Bla",4)
Bla
Bla
Bla
Bla
```

- What happens if I try to do this:

```python
>>> printMulti("Bla")
Traceback (most recent call last):
  File "<stdin>", line 1, in <module>
TypeError: printMulti() takes exactly 2 arguments (1 given)
```
Default Arguments

- Python allows you to define defaults for various arguments:

```python
def printMulti(text, n=3):
    for i in range(n):
        print text

>>> printMulti("Bla",4)
Bla
Bla
Bla
Bla
Bla
Bla

>>> printMulti("Yada")
Yada
Yada
Yada
Yada
```
Default Arguments

- This is very useful if you have functions with numerous arguments/parameters, most of which will rarely be changed by the user:

```python
def runBlast(fasta_file, costGap=10, E=10.0, desc=100,
             max_align=25, matrix="BLOSUM62", sim=0.7, corr=True):
    <runBlast code here>
```

- You can now simply use:

```python
>>> runBlast(“my_fasta.txt”)
```

- Instead of:

```python
>>> runBlast(“my_fasta.txt”, 10, 10.0, 100, 25, “BLOSUM62”, 0.7, True)
```
Keyword Arguments

- You can still provide values for specific arguments using their label:

```python
def runBlast(fasta_file, costGap=10, E=10.0, desc=100, 
             max_align=25, matrix="BLOSUM62", sim=0.7, corr=True):
    <runBlast code here>
    ...

>>> runBlast("my_fasta.txt", matrix="PAM40")
```
Code like a pro ...
Code like a pro ...

Write comments!
Why comments

- Uncommented code = useless code

- Comments are your way to communicate with:
  - Future you!
  - The poor bastard that inherits your code
  - Your users (most academic code is open source!)

- At minimum, write a comment to explain:
  - Each function: target, arguments, return value
  - Each File: purpose, major revisions
  - Non-trivial code blocks
  - Non-trivial variables
  - Whatever you want future you to remember
Best (real) comments ever

# When I wrote this, only God and I understood what I was doing
# Now, God only knows

# I dedicate all this code, all my work, to my wife, Darlene,
# who will have to support me and our three children and the
# dog once it gets released into the public.

# I am not responsible of this code.
# They made me write it, against my will.

# drunk. fix later

# Magic. Do not touch.

# I am not sure if we need this, but too scared to delete.

# Dear future me. Please forgive me.
# I can't even begin to express how sorry I am.

# no comments for you!
# it was hard to write so it should be hard to read

# someonov1 - 6/7/02 Adding temporary tracking of Logic screen
# someonov2 - 5/22/07 Temporary my ass
Sample problem #1

- Write a function that calculates the first n elements of the Fibonacci sequence.
  - Reminder: In the Fibonacci sequence of numbers, each number is the sum of the previous two numbers, starting with 0 and 1. This sequence begins: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144, 233, 377, 610, 987, ...

- The function should return these n elements as a list
# Calculate Fibonacci series up to n

def fibonacci(n):
    fib_seq = [0, 1];
    for i in range(2,n):
        fib_seq.append(fib_seq[i-1] + fib_seq[i-2])

    return fib_seq[0:n]  # Why not just fib_seq?

print fibonacci(10)

[0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34]
Sample problem #2

Make the following improvements to your function:

1. Add two optional arguments that will denote alternative starting values (instead of 0 and 1).
   - fibonacci(10) \(\rightarrow\) [0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34]
   - fibonacci(10,4) \(\rightarrow\) [4, 1, 5, 6, 11, 17, 28, 45, 73, 118]
   - fibonacci(10,4,7) \(\rightarrow\) [4, 7, 11, 18, 29, 47, 76, 123, 199, 322]

2. Return, in addition to the sequence, also the ratio of the last two elements you calculated (how would you return it?).
def fibonacci(n, start1=0, start2=1):
    fib_seq = [start1, start2]
    for i in range(2, n):
        fib_seq.append(fib_seq[i-1] + fib_seq[i-2])
    ratio = float(fib_seq[n-1]) / float(fib_seq[n-2])
    return [fib_seq[0:n], ratio]

seq, ratio = fibonacci(1000)
print "first 10 elements:" , seq[0:10]
print "ratio:" , ratio

# Will print:
# first 10 elements:[0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21,34]
# ratio: 1.61803398875
Challenge problem

- Write your own sort function!
- Sort elements in ascending order.
- The function should sort the input list in-place (i.e. do not return a new sorted list as a return value; the list that is passed to the function should itself be sorted after the function is called).
- As a return value, the function should return the number of elements that were in their appropriate ("sorted") location in the original list.
- You can use any sorting algorithm. Don’t worry about efficiency right now.
def swap(a_list, k, l):
    temp = a_list[k]
    a_list[k] = a_list[l]
    a_list[l] = temp

def bubbleSort(a_list):
    n = len(a_list)
    a_list_copy = []  # note: why don't we use assignment
    for item in a_list:
        a_list_copy.append(item)

    # bubble sort
    for i in range(n):
        for j in range(n-1):
            if a_list[j] > a_list[j+1]:
                swap(a_list, j, j+1)  # note: in place swapping

    # check how many are in the right place
    count = 0
    for i in range(n):
        if a_list[i] == a_list_copy[i]:
            count += 1
    return count

>>> ls = [1, 3, 2, 15, 7, 4, 8, 12]
>>> print bubbleSort(ls)
2
>>> print ls
[1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 12, 15]
def swap(a_list, k, l):
    temp = a_list[k]
    a_list[k] = a_list[l]
    a_list[l] = temp

def bubbleSort(a_list):
    n = len(a_list)
    a_list_copy = []  # note: why don't we use assignment
    for item in a_list: a_list_copy.append(item)

    # bubble sort
    for i in range(n):
        for j in range(n-1-i):
            if a_list[j] > a_list[j+1]:
                swap(a_list, j, j+1)  # note: in place swapping

    # check how many are in the right place
    count = 0
    for i in range(n):
        if a_list[i] == a_list_copy[i]: count += 1
    return count

>>> ls = [1, 3, 2, 15, 7, 4, 8, 12]
>>> print bubbleSort(ls)
2
>>> print ls
[1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 12, 15]