
Chapter 3. First Steps

Introduction

We will now see how to run a traditional 'Hello World' program in Python. This will teach you how to write, save and run Python programs.

There are two ways of using Python to run your program - using the interactive interpreter prompt or using a source file. We will now see how to use both the methods.

Using the interpreter prompt

Start the interpreter on the command line by entering `python` at the shell prompt. Now enter `print 'Hello World'` followed by the **Enter** key. You should see the words `Hello World` as output.

For Windows users, you can run the interpreter in the command line if you have set the `PATH` variable appropriately. Alternatively, you can use the IDLE program. IDLE is short for Integrated DeveLopment Environment. Click on Start -> Programs -> Python 2.3 -> IDLE (Python GUI). Linux users can use IDLE too.

Note that the `<<<` signs are the prompt for entering Python statements.

Example 3.1. Using the python interpreter prompt

```
$ python
Python 2.3.4 (#1, Oct 26 2004, 16:42:40)
[GCC 3.4.2 20041017 (Red Hat 3.4.2-6.fc3)] on linux2
Type "help", "copyright", "credits" or "license" for more information.
>>> print 'hello world'
hello world
>>>
```

Notice that Python gives you the output of the line immediately! What you just entered is a single Python *statement*. We use `print` to (unsurprisingly) print any value that you supply to it. Here, we are supplying the text `Hello World` and this is promptly printed to the screen.

How to quit the Python prompt

To exit the prompt, press **Ctrl-d** if you are using IDLE or are using a Linux/BSD shell. In case of the Windows command prompt, press **Ctrl-z** followed by **Enter**.

Choosing an Editor

Before we move on to writing Python programs in source files, we need an editor to write the source files. The choice of an editor is crucial indeed. You have to choose an editor as you would choose a car you would buy. A good editor will help you write Python programs easily, making your journey more comfortable and helps you reach your destination (achieve your goal) in a much faster and safer way.