

## 61A Lecture 16

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## Announcements

# String Representations

## String Representations

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An object value should behave like the kind of data it is meant to represent

For instance, by producing a string representation of itself

Strings are important: they represent language and programs

In Python, all objects produce two string representations:

- The **str** is legible to humans
- The **repr** is legible to the Python interpreter

The **str** and **repr** strings are often the same, but not always

## The repr String for an Object

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The `repr` function returns a Python expression (a string) that evaluates to an equal object

```
repr(object) -> string
```

Return the canonical string representation of the object.  
For most object types, `eval(repr(object)) == object`.

The result of calling `repr` on a value is what Python prints in an interactive session

```
>>> 12e12
12000000000000.0
>>> print(repr(12e12))
12000000000000.0
```

Some objects do not have a simple Python-readable string

```
>>> repr(min)
'<built-in function min>'
```

## The str String for an Object

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Human interpretable strings are useful as well:

```
>>> from fractions import Fraction
>>> half = Fraction(1, 2)
>>> repr(half)
'Fraction(1, 2)'
>>> str(half)
'1/2'
```

The result of calling `str` on the value of an expression is what Python prints using the `print` function:

```
>>> print(half)
1/2
```

(Demo)

# Polymorphic Functions

## Polymorphic Functions

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Polymorphic function: A function that applies to many (poly) different forms (morph) of data

**str** and **repr** are both polymorphic; they apply to any object

**repr** invokes a zero-argument method `__repr__` on its argument

```
>>> half.__repr__()
'Fraction(1, 2)'
```

**str** invokes a zero-argument method `__str__` on its argument

```
>>> half.__str__()
'1/2'
```



## Implementing repr and str

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The behavior of `repr` is slightly more complicated than invoking `__repr__` on its argument:

- An instance attribute called `__repr__` is ignored! Only class attributes are found
- *Question:* How would we implement this behavior?



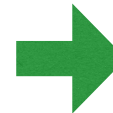
```
def repr(x):  
    return x.__repr__(x)
```

The behavior of `str` is also complicated:

- An instance attribute called `__str__` is ignored
- If no `__str__` attribute is found, uses `repr` string
- (By the way, `str` is a class, not a function)
- *Question:* How would we implement this behavior?



```
def repr(x):  
    return x.__repr__()
```



```
def repr(x):  
    return type(x).__repr__(x)
```



```
def repr(x):  
    return type(x).__repr__()
```



```
def repr(x):  
    return super(x).__repr__()
```

(Demo)

## Interfaces

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**Message passing:** Objects interact by looking up attributes on each other (passing messages)

The attribute look-up rules allow different data types to respond to the same message

A **shared message** (attribute name) that elicits similar behavior from different object classes is a powerful method of abstraction

An interface is a set of shared messages, along with a specification of what they mean

### Example:

Classes that implement `__repr__` and `__str__` methods that return Python-interpretable and human-readable strings implement an interface for producing string representations

(Demo)

## Special Method Names

## Special Method Names in Python

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Certain names are special because they have built-in behavior

These names always start and end with two underscores

<code>__init__</code>	Method invoked automatically when an object is constructed
<code>__repr__</code>	Method invoked to display an object as a Python expression
<code>__add__</code>	Method invoked to add one object to another
<code>__bool__</code>	Method invoked to convert an object to True or False
<code>__float__</code>	Method invoked to convert an object to a float (real number)

```
>>> zero, one, two = 0, 1, 2
>>> one + two
3
>>> bool(zero), bool(one)
(False, True)
```

*Same  
behavior  
using  
methods*

```
>>> zero, one, two = 0, 1, 2
>>> one.__add__(two)
3
>>> zero.__bool__(), one.__bool__()
(False, True)
```

## Special Methods

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Adding instances of user-defined classes invokes either the `__add__` or `__radd__` method

```
>>> Ratio(1, 3) + Ratio(1, 6)
Ratio(1, 2)
```

```
>>> Ratio(1, 3).__add__(Ratio(1, 6))
Ratio(1, 2)
```

```
>>> Ratio(1, 6).__radd__(Ratio(1, 3))
Ratio(1, 2)
```

<http://getpython3.com/diveintopython3/special-method-names.html>

<http://docs.python.org/py3k/reference/datamodel.html#special-method-names>

(Demo)

## Generic Functions

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A polymorphic function might take two or more arguments of different types

**Type Dispatching:** Inspect the type of an argument in order to select behavior

**Type Coercion:** Convert one value to match the type of another

```
>>> Ratio(1, 3) + 1
Ratio(4, 3)
```

```
>>> 1 + Ratio(1, 3)
Ratio(4, 3)
```

```
>>> from math import pi
>>> Ratio(1, 3) + pi
3.4749259869231266
```

(Demo)