What Is Python, and Installing It

Python for Absolute Beginners · Lesson 2

What you'll learn

- What Python is and why it is called a high-level language
- How to download Python from python.org
- How to install it on Windows, Mac, or Linux
- How to open IDLE, the tool that comes with Python
- How to check that your installation works

What Python is

- Python is a programming language: a way of writing instructions that looks much like plain English
- It is called a high-level language because it sits far above the numbers the computer really runs on
- You write words like print and name, and Python handles the translation
- A low-level language, by contrast, forces you to manage tiny details yourself
- High-level means easier for humans — exactly what a beginner wants

Python is interpreted

- Python reads and runs your code one line at a time, right away
- You do not have to wait for a separate “build” step before seeing a result
- Type a line, press Enter, see what happens
- That instant feedback is a big part of why Python is friendly to learn
- Python 3 is the current version — older Python 2 is out of date, so this course uses Python 3

Download Python from python.org

- Python is free — download it from its official website, python.org
- Open your web browser and go to python.org
- Click Downloads and choose the download for your system: Windows, macOS, or Linux
- Download the installer file and run it
- Do not download Python from anywhere else — the official site always has the current, safe version

Install it on your system

- Windows: start with the Python install manager — get it from python.org/downloads or the Microsoft Store; there is no “Add python.exe to PATH” box with this method, and you don't need one
- Only if the install manager doesn't work: use the traditional installer, and tick “Add python.exe to PATH” on the very first screen
- Mac: run the downloaded macOS installer and follow the steps — it installs Python and IDLE together
- Linux: Python 3 is usually already installed; if not, use your system's package manager
- You do not need to install anything else for this course: no paid software, no extra tools, no accounts

IDLE: the tool that comes with Python

- IDLE is the small programming tool that comes bundled with Python itself
- It has two jobs in this course: a window where you type Python lines and see results at once, called the shell
- And an editor that lets you write and save program files
- After installing, you do not need the Terminal for this course — IDLE is enough



Open IDLE

- Windows: open the Start menu, type IDLE, and open the IDLE app for your Python 3 version
- Mac: open Finder, go to Applications, open the Python 3 folder, and open IDLE
- Linux: open a terminal and type idle3, then press Enter
- You should see a window titled “IDLE Shell” with a prompt that looks like >>> — Python waiting for your first instruction

Check that it works

```
print("Hello, Python!")
```

```
Output:
Hello, Python!
```

Type this line in the IDLE shell and press Enter. If you see Hello, Python! printed back, your installation works.

If it does not work, check two things

- That you installed Python 3, not Python 2
- That you typed the line exactly, quotes and all
- You can also check the version: the first lines IDLE prints when it opens include the Python version number
- As long as it starts with 3, you are set — the exact number after that does not matter for this course



Hands-on exercise

- Install Python 3 with the install manager (Option A) — if you use the traditional installer instead, tick “Add python.exe to PATH” on its first screen
- Open IDLE and confirm you see the >>> prompt
- In the shell, print your own name in quotes
- Print the result of 10 + 5 in the shell and check you get 15

Key takeaways

- Python is a free, high-level, interpreted language that reads much like English
- Download it only from python.org; Python 3 is the current version
- On Windows, use the Python install manager; if you use the traditional installer instead, tick “Add python.exe to PATH” on its first screen
- IDLE comes with Python and is all you need: a shell for trying lines, and an editor for saving programs
- print("Hello, Python!") in the shell is your installation check

Take the quiz

Take the Lesson 2 quiz — 5 quick questions to check what you learned.

Next lesson

Your First Program: Print, and Running Code