One More Version of the Primality Testing Program

FEB 7TH, 2014
Our primality testing program has become complicated enough that it needs documentation.

Programming languages typically allow programmers to insert “comments” that are ignored when the program is executed.

There are several ways of doing this in Python.
# Programmer: Sriram Pemmaraju
# Date: Jan 30th, 2012
# This program reads a positive integer, greater than 1 and
# determines whether this integer is a prime or not.
# Version 3

import math

n = int(input("Please type a positive integer, greater than 1: "))

factor = 2 # initial value of possible factor
isPrime = True # variable to remember if n is a prime or not
factorUpperBound = math.sqrt(n) # the largest possible factor we need to test is sqrt(n)

# loop to generate and test all possible factors
while (factor <= factorUpperBound):
    # test if n is evenly divisible by factor
    if (n % factor == 0):
        isPrime = False
        break

    factor = factor + 1

# Output
if isPrime:
    print n, " is a prime."
else:
    print n, " is a composite."
Discussing the code: Comments in Python

- The program contains “comments,” i.e., text that is ignored by Python but serves to help the reader understand the code.

- Writing code first and then adding comments is backwards! We will never do this again. Now that we have talked about comments, we will always write comments and code together.

- Comments are preceded by the “#” symbol.

- Documenting code using comments is a critical part of programming.

- Comments are typically provided:
  - at the beginning of the program,
  - at the start of a block of code that performs a particular task, e.g., the while-loop that generates and tests factors,
  - to document the purpose of variables, etc.

- Later we will discuss a different mechanism for commenting a Python program called documentation strings.
Discussing the code: Basic guidelines for commenting

- Comments that contradict the code are worse than no comments at all!

- Comments that state the obvious (e.g., # This is a while-loop) make for unnecessary clutter are also worse than no comments at all.

- For now the comments you write should (i) help the reader understand your algorithm and (ii) help the reader understand tricky snippets of code.

- Comments can also be used to turn off lines of code that were inserted for the purposes of debugging.

- Your intended audience for documentation: your classmates, your graders, yourself a few weeks into the future.
Is using break bad programming?

- Some programming “purists” think that the use of the break statement is bad programming practice.
- Comment from an online discussion on programming:

  Generally, breaking out of loops is considered bad form because it tends to obfuscate your code. It's harder to follow the "flow" of a program with continue/break thrown in everywhere. It's especially worse if you use it in nested loops, etc.

- I don’t think using the break statement is bad programming practice, but yes it needs to be used with caution.
An alternative to using break

- We want to stay in the loop while

  \[ n \leq \text{factorUpperBound} \]
  (there are more factors to consider)
  \[ \text{and} \]
  \[ \text{isPrime} == \text{True} \]
  (we have not yet found a factor)

- We can express this using the \textit{boolean operator and} in Python.
# Programmer: Sriram Pemmaraju
# Date: Jan 30th, 2012
# This program reads a positive integer, greater than 1 and
# determines whether this integer is a prime or not.
# Version 3

import math

n = int(raw_input("Please type a positive integer, greater than 1: "))

factor = 2 # initial value of possible factor
isPrime = True # variable to remember if n is a prime or not
factorUpperBound = math.sqrt(n) # the largest possible factor we need to test is sqrt(n)

# loop to generate and test all possible factors
while (factor <= factorUpperBound) and (isPrime):
    # test if n is evenly divisible by factor
    if (n % factor == 0):
        isPrime = False

    factor = factor + 1

# Output
if isPrime:
    print n, " is a prime."
else:
    print n, " is a composite."
Python boolean operators

- and, or, and not are the three Python boolean operators.
- A and B is true only when both A *and* B are true.
- *Truth table for the* and *operator:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A and B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>False</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples: play with these

- \((x \leq 10) \text{ and } (x > 4)\)
- \((x < 4) \text{ and } (x > 10)\)
- \((x < 10) \text{ and } True\)
- \((x \geq 0) \text{ and } False\)
The or operator

- A or B is True when A is True or B is True or both.

- In other words, A or B is False only when both A and B are False.

- Truth table for or operator:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A or B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>False</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples: play with these

- \((x \leq 10) \lor (x > 4)\)
- \((x < 4) \lor (x > 10)\)
- \((x < 10) \lor \text{True}\)
- \((x \geq 0) \lor \text{False}\)
The not operator

- This is a *unary* operator, i.e., it operates on only one operand.

- Truth table for the *or* operator:
  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>not A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Examples:**
  - not (x < 10)
  - not (x == 10)
  - not (x>=-10)
How fast is our algorithm?

- In the *worst case*, the while-loop in the programs makes $\sqrt{n}$ iterations.

- For an input with, say 100 digits, what might the running time be?

- $n = 10^{100}$. Therefore $\sqrt{n} = 10^{50}$. Even if each iteration of the while-loop took a nanosecond ($10^{-9}$ seconds), the program would take $3.17 \times 10^{33}$ years!
The `time` module contains functions that allow us to determine (within the program), how much time different blocks of code take.

There are many functions defined in this module. The one we will use most often is called `time` and is called with no arguments.

So once the `time` module has been imported, a call to this function will look like

```
time.time()
```

It returns the number of seconds (as floating point number) elapsed since 12 am (midnight), Jan 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1970.
Timing Python programs

```python
import time
...
start = time.time()
...
# code you want timed
...
end = time.time()
elapsedTime = end - start
```

This is typically how you would time a piece of Python code.
import time
n = 10000000
originalN = n

start = time.time()
while n > 0:
    n = n - 1

end = time.time()
print "It takes", end-start, " seconds for", originalN, "iterations of the while loop."

Output:
It takes 1.54960203171  seconds for 10000000 iterations of the while loop.
Timed version of Primality Testing

- Take a look at the posted program called `primalityTestingTimed.py`

- Here is the output of this program on a 10-digit prime.

Please type a positive integer, greater than 1: 5915587277
5915587277 is a prime.
The while-loop took 0.0328981876373 seconds.
So how are numbers with 300 digits tested?

- Based on facts in *number theory* (an area of mathematics), several fast primality-testing algorithms have been developed.

- Examples: *Miller-Rabin* test:
  - This is a *randomized* algorithm – a step in the algorithm performed by rolling dice.
  - The algorithm is not always correct! A composite number may be classified a prime, with small and tune-able error probability.