

# System: Files

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**CPSC 217: Introduction to Computer Science for Multidisciplinary  
Studies I**  
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# Files

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- User input comes in various ways:
  - **Hard-code:** `x = 10`
  - **User keyboard input:** `info = input("Please enter the info")`
  - **Command-line arguments:** `>python programName arg1 ...`
  - **File Input**
- An input may be a path to a file (or to a directory where the file is located) that your program can process by:
  - Opening the file, reading from the file, overwriting or appending to the file, and closing the file.

# Files

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- There are two main file types:
  1. Text files
    - Encoded using ASCII or Unicode
    - Can be viewed with editors such as Emacs and Notepad
    - Examples: Python source files, web pages, ...
  2. Binary files
    - Contain arbitrary sequences of bits which do not conform to ASCII or Unicode characters
    - Examples: Most images, word processor files, ...

# Paths

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# Files - File Path

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- For a program to be able to access a file, you must tell it exactly where to find it by providing the **path** to the file.
- Example:

This is an **Absolute Path**, a path that starts from the root directory of your machine to a target file or directory.

**Command-line:**

```
C:\Users\kzaamout\Desktop>python test.py C:\Users\kzaamout\Desktop\input.csv
```

- Examples of Absolute Paths:
  - **Windows:** C:/users/Zaamout/Desktop/inputFile.csv
  - **Mac:** /users/Hudson/Desktop/inputFile.csv
  - **Linux (CPSC machines):** /home/grads/kzaamout/inputFile.csv

# Files - Check if File Exists?

- You can check if a given file exists in Python using *path.exists()* function from the *os* library:
- The function returns a boolean.

## Command-line:

```
C:\...\Desktop>python test.py test.py
exists? True

C:\...\Desktop>python test.py NOPE.txt
exists? False
```

## test.py

```
import os
import sys

print("exist?", os.path.exists(sys.argv[1]))
```

- Notice that the files above did not have an absolute path. Why?

# Files - File Path

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- If the input file resides in the same location **from where you executed a module**, you can omit the path and only provide the input file name.
- Python searches for the file in the current working directory (this is where you executed the file).

## Command-line:

```
C:\...\Desktop>python test.py test.py  
exists? True
```

```
C:\...\kzaamout>python test.py test.py  
exists? False
```

test.py is under Desktop directory, not kzaamout

HOW CAN YOU FIX THIS?

## test.py

```
import os  
import sys  
  
print("exist?", os.path.exists(sys.argv[1]))
```

# Open a File

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# Files - Opening a File

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- Call Python's built-in **open()** function:

```
fileHandler = open(filePath, mode)
```

- **mode** can be: **'r'** for reading, **'w'** for writing (truncates the file first), **'a'** for appending (write to the end of the file), the default is **'r'**.

```
import sys
if len(sys.argv) != 2:
    print('missing file path`)
else:
    filename = sys.argv[1]
    inputFileHandler = open(filename, "r")
```

# Reading from a File

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# Files - Reading From a File

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- Various ways to read files (in text mode):
  - `data = inputFile.read()` → Reads the entire file as one big string.
  - `data = inputFile.read(128)` → Reads 128 characters from the file.
  - `data = inputFile.readline()` → Reading one line from a file.
  - `data = inputFile.readlines()` → Read all lines from a file. The lines will be stored in a list and each line of the file is a list item.

# Files - Reading From a File - For Loop Example

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- This will print every line in the file named *inputFile.txt*:

```
filePath = 'C:/.../inputFile.txt'
```

```
fileHandler = open(filePath)
```

```
for line in fileHandler:
```

```
    print(line.rstrip())
```

# Files - Reading From a File - For Loop Example

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- This will print every line in the file named *inputFile.txt*:
- Alternatively, you can do the following:

```
filePath = 'C:/.../inputFile.txt'

lines = open(filePath).readlines()
for line in lines:
    print(line.rstrip())
```

# Files - Reading From a File - While Loop Example

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- This will also print every line in the file named *inputFile.txt*:

```
filePath = 'C:/.../inputFile.txt'
```

```
fileHandler = open(filePath)
```

```
line = fileHandler.readline()
```

```
while line != "":
```

```
    print(line.rstrip())
```

```
    line = fileHandler.readline()
```

# Files - Reading From a File - File Pointer

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- When `open()` is called, a file handler that contains a pointer is returned to the caller.

```
fileHandler = open(filePath)
```

- This pointer, initially, “points” at the beginning of the opened file.

```
print('Current position: %d' % fileHandler.tell()) →
```

# Files - Reading From a File - File Pointer

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- When `open()` is called, a file handler that contains a pointer is returned to the caller.

```
fileHandler = open(filePath)
```

- As the program makes calls to various read functions, the pointer's position increments by the number of characters that have been read.

```
print('read: %s' % fileHandler.read(1)) → char
```

```
print('Current position: %d' % fileHandler.tell()) → 1
```



# Files - Reading From a File - File Pointer

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- You can use the `seek(offset, whence)` function to reposition the file pointer anywhere in the file:
  - **Offset** is the position to move to
  - **Whence** is an optional parameter that can be:
    - 0: the offset is an absolute position starting from the beginning of file.
    - 1: the offset is a relative position to the current pointer position
    - 2: the offset is from the end of the file.

```
fileHandler.seek(0, 0)
```

`print('read: %s' % fileHandler.read(1))` → prints the first character in the file.

# Files - Reading From a File - File Pointer - Example

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- Consider the file “inputFile.txt”. Each row consists of a 2 character long student ID, and a 4-character long student name.
- Retrieve the ID and name of the third student.
- One solution is to use loops.

inputFile.txt
ID NAME
01 Jack
02 Mack
03 Pham
...

# Files - Reading From a File - File Pointer - Example

**Program.py**

```
filePath = 'C:/.../inputFile.txt'
fileHandler = open(filePath)

while counter <= 2:#skip the first three lines
    fileHandler.readline()#skip
    counter+=1

s_id = fileHandler.read(2)
fileHandler.read(1) #skip space
s_name = fileHandler.read(4)
print("Student ID: %s, Name: %s." % (s_id, s_name))
```

**inputFile.txt**

```
ID NAME
01 Jack
02 Mack
03 Pham
...
```

**Console output:**

```
Student ID: 03, Name: Pham.
```

# Files - Reading From a File - File Pointer - Example

- Another solution is to use the file pointer directly.
- We know each row contains 7 characters:
  - 2 for ID
  - 1 space
  - 4 for Name
  - 1-2 newline characters (depending on operating system and the way you opened the file). In windows, I will have 2 newline characters at the end of each file.
  - $2+1+4+2=9$  per row.
- We also know, we want the 3<sup>rd</sup> student; since we have a header row that makes him in the 4<sup>th</sup> row.

```
inputFile.txt
ID NAME
01 Jack
02 Mack
03 Pham
...
```

# Files - Reading From a File - File Pointer - Example

**Program.py**

```
filePath = 'C:/.../inputFile.txt'
fileHandler = open(filePath)

fileHandler.seek(9*3) #skip the first 3 rows
s_id = fileHandler.read(2)
fileHandler.read(1) #skip space
s_name = fileHandler.read(4)

print("Student ID: %s, Name: %s." % (s_id, s_name))
```

**inputFile.txt**

```
ID NAME
01 Jack
02 Mack
03 Pham
...
```

**Console output:**

```
Student ID: 03, Name: Pham.
```

# Writing to a File

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# Files - Writing to a File

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- Use `write(str)` function, to write strings to file.
  - The file must be opened for writing ('w') or appending ('a').
  - 'w' truncates the file first
  - 'a' not truncating, places file pointer at the end of the file.

```
outputFile = open(filePath, "w")  
outputFile.write("Hello World!\n")  
outputFile.close()
```

Opening file for writing, can use 'a' for append

When writing to the file, you must add in the new lines

Closing the file

# Closing a File

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# Files - Closing a File

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- The previous example uses `close()` to close a file. Why close a file?
- Once a file is opened by a program, Python maintains connection to the file that generally prevents other programs from modifying, deleting, or moving the file.
- **If you are reading from a file** you don't want it to change because of some other program.
- When your program exit the file handle will be released automatically; but it is good practice to explicitly release file once you are done reading, while your program runs to let others get access to it.

# Files - Closing a File

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- **If you are writing to a file:** it is important to know that writing does not occur instantly. Python maintains a buffer where it stores the strings that are ought to be written to the file. Python and the OS coordinate the best time to **flush** this data and push it into the actual file area in memory.
- If your program crashes or terminates without closing a file, the **flush** action may not have occurred; Python 3 will close and flush buffers when terminating normally, but a programmer should not depend on this.

# Files - Closing a File

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- Also, opening files, reading from them and writing to them consume memory. Having unnecessarily-opened files means some memory is being used when it can be freed.
- CLOSE YOUR FILES!!!

# Standard Input/Output/Error

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# Files - Standard Input, Output and Error

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- We have been using files since the first program that we wrote.
- When you run a Python program, the interpreter opens up three streams, standard output, input, and error. When a program ends, it closes these streams.
- These streams are used for display output, and accepting inputs from/to Python programs.

# Files - Standard Input, Output and Error

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- **stdout**: is the file handler for the **Standard Output** file.
  - It is opened and closed automatically when the program starts and ends.
  - Any values written to it are displayed on the screen.
  - The file handler is accessible via the sys package: **sys.stdout**
  - You can write to *stdout* using the write method, just like any other file.
    - You have been writing to it using the print function:

```
print("Hello World!")  
is the same as  
sys.stdout.write("Hello World!\n")
```

# Files - Standard Input, Output and Error

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- **stdin**: is the file handler for the **Standard Input** file.
  - It is opened and closed automatically when the program starts and ends.
  - Values can be written to it when `input()` or similar function is called. Python's interpreter passes these values to the caller.
  - The file handler is accessible via the `sys` package: **`sys.stdin`**
  - The `input()` function is equivalent to calling:

```
sys.stdin.readline().rstrip()
```

# Files - Standard Input, Output and Error

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- **stderr**: is the file handler for the **Standard Error** file.
  - It is opened and closed automatically when the program starts and ends.
  - Any values written to it are displayed on the screen.
  - Intended for displaying error messages instead of program output
  - Allows us to redirect program output separately from error messages
  - Useful for debugging
  - The file handler is accessible via the sys package: **sys.stderr**
  - You can write to *stderr* using the write method, just like any other file.

- You can also use the print function:

```
print("ERROR!", file=sys.stderr)
```

is the same as

```
sys.stderr.write("ERROR!\n")
```



# Onward to ... exceptions.

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