Classes in Python

Python contains a class creation mechanism that's fairly similar to what's found in C++ or Java. There are significant differences though:

- All class members are public.
- Instance fields aren't declared. Rather, you just create fields as needed by assignment (often in constructors).
- There are class fields (shared by all class instances), but there are no class methods. That is, all methods are instance methods.

- All instance methods (including constructors) must explicitly provide an initial parameter that represents the object instance. This parameter is typically called self. It's roughly the equivalent of this in C++ or Java.

Defining Classes

You define a class by executing a class definition of the form

```python
class name:
    statement(s)
```

A class definition creates a class object from which class instances may be created (just like in Java). The statements within a class definition may be data members (to be shared among all class instances) as well as function definitions (prefixed by a def command). Each function must take (at least) an initial parameter that represents the class instance within which the function (instance method) will operate. For example,
We get the `AttributeError` message regarding `n` because we haven’t defined `n` yet! One way to do this is to just assign to it, using the usual field notation:

```python
>>> e.n=1
>>> e.msg()
Boo!
```

We can also call an instance method by making the class object an explicit parameter:

```python
>>> e.n=2;Example.cnt=2
>>> e.msg()
Booo!!
```

It’s nice to have data members initialized when an object is created. This is usually done with a constructor, and Python allows this too.

You can also define the equivalent of Java’s `toString` method by defining a member function named `__str__(self)`. For example, if we add

```python
def __str__(self):
    return "<%d>"%self.n
to Example,
```

then we can include `Example` objects in `print` statements:

```python
>>> e=Example(2)
>>> print e
<2>
```

A special method named `__init__` is called whenever an object is created. This method takes `self` as its first parameter; other parameters (possibly made optional) are allowed.

We can therefore extend our `Example` class with a constructor:

```python
class Example:
    cnt=1
    def __init__(self,nval=1):
        self.n=nval
    def msg(self):
        print "Bo"+"o"*Example.cnt+"!"*self.n
```

```python
>>> e=Example()
>>> e.n
1
>>> f=Example(2)
>>> f.n
2
```

### Inheritance

Like any language that supports classes, Python allows inheritance from a parent (or base) class. In fact, Python allows `multiple inheritance` in which a class inherits definitions from more than one parent.

When defining a class you specify parents classes as follows:

```python
class name(parent classes):
    statement(s)
```

The subclass has access to its own definitions as well as those available to its parents. All methods are virtual, so the most recent definition of a method is always used.
class C:
    def DoIt(self):
        self.PrintIt()
    def PrintIt(self):
        print "C rules!"

class D(C):
    def PrintIt(self):
        print "D rules!"
    def TestIt(self):
        self.DoIt()

dvar = D()
dvar.TestIt()

D rules!

Operator Overloading
You can overload definitions of all of Python's operators to apply to newly defined classes. Each operator has a corresponding method name assigned to it. For example, + uses __add__, - uses __sub__, etc.

Given
class Triple:
    def __init__(self,A=0,B=0,C=0):
        self.a=A
        self.b=B
        self.c=C
    def __str__(self):
        return "(%d,%d,%d)"%(self.a,self.b,self.c)
    def __add__(self,other):
        return Triple(self.a+other.a,
                      self.b+other.b,
                      self.c+other.c)
    t1=Triple(1,2,3)
t2=Triple(4,5,6)
print t1+t2
produces
(5,7,9)
Exceptions

Python provides an exception mechanism that's quite similar to the one used by Java. You “throw” an exception by using a `raise` statement:

```python
raise exceptionValue
```

There are numerous predefined exceptions, including `OverflowError` (arithmetic overflow), `EOFError` (when end-of-file is hit), `NameError` (when an undeclared identifier is referenced), etc.

You may define your own exceptions as subclasses of the predefined class `Exception`:

```python
class badValue(Exception):
    def __init__(self, val):
        self.value = val
```

You catch exceptions in Python’s version of a `try` statement:

```python
try:
    statement(s)
except exceptionName1, id1:
    statement(s)
... except exceptionName_n, id_n:
    statement(s)
```

As was the case in Java, an exception raised within the `try` body is handled by an `except` clause if the raised exception matches the class named in the `except` clause. If the raised exception is not matched by any `except` clause, the next enclosing `try` is considered, or the exception is reraised at the point of call.

For example, using our `badValue` exception class,

```python
def sqrt(val):
    if val < 0.0:
        raise badValue(val)
    else:
        return cmath.sqrt(val)
```

```python
try:
    print "Ans =", sqrt(-123.0)
except badValue, b:
    print "Can’t take sqrt of ", b.value
```

When executed, we get

```
Ans = Can’t take sqrt of -123.0
```

Modules

Python contains a module feature that allows you to access Python code stored in files or libraries. If you have a source file `mydefs.py` the command

```python
import mydefs
```

will read in all the definitions stored in the file. What's read in can be seen by executing

```python
dir(mydefs)
```

To access an imported definition, you qualify it with the name of the module. For example,

```python
mydefs.fct
```

accesses `fct` which is defined in module `mydefs`.
To avoid explicit qualification you can use the command
from modulename import id₁, id₂, ...
This makes id₁, id₂, ... available without qualification. For example,
>>> from test import sqrt
>>> sqrt(123)
(11.0905365064+0j)
You can use the command
from modulename import *
to import (without qualification) all the definitions in modulename.

The Python Library

One of the great strengths of Python is that it contains a vast number of modules (at least several hundred) known collectively as the Python Library. What makes Python really useful is the range of prewritten modules you can access. Included are network access modules, multimedia utilities, data base access, and much more. See
www.python.org/doc/lib
for an up-to-date listing of what's available.

Java 1.5/1.6 (Tiger Java)

Java has been extended to include a variety of improvements, many drawn from functional languages. Added features include:
• Parametric polymorphism.
   Classes and interfaces may be parameterized using a type parameter.
   class List<T> {
      T head;
      List<T> tail;
   }
   Interfaces may also be parameterized.
• Enhanced loop iterators.
   for (v : myArray) {
      // each element of myArray
      // appears as a value of v
   }
• Automatic boxing and unboxing of wrapper classes.
   Conversion from int to Integer or Integer to int is now automatic.
• Typesafe enumerations.
   public enum Color {RED, BLUE, GREEN};
• Static imports.
   You may import all static members of a class and use them without qualification. Thus you may now write out.println rather than System.out.println.
• Variable argument methods.
• Formatted output using printf:
   out.printf("Ans = %3d",a+b);
C# Improves Upon Some Java Features

- Operators as well as methods can be overloaded:
  ```csharp
class Point {
    int x, y;
    static Point operator + (Point p1, Point p2) {
      return new Point(p1.x+p2.x, p1.y+p2.y);
    }
  }
```
- Switch statements may be indexed by string literals.
- In a switch, fall-throughs to the next case are disallowed (if non-empty).
- Goto's are allowed.
- Virtual methods must be marked.
Persistent objects (that may be stored across executions) are available.

C# Adds Useful Features

- **Events and delegates** are included to handle asynchronous actions (like keyboard or mouse actions).
- **Properties** allow user-defined read and write actions for fields. You can add `get` and `set` methods to the definition of a field. For example,
  ```csharp
class Customer {
    private string name;
    public string Name {
      get { return name; }
    }
    }
    Customer c; ...
    string s = c.Name;
  }
```

- **Indexers** allow objects other than arrays to be indexed. The `[ ]` operator is over-loadable. This allows you to define the meaning of `obj[123]` or `obj["abc"]` within any class definition.
  ```csharp
  public class Customer {
    private string name;
    public string Name {
      get { return name; }
    }
    }
  }
  Customer c; ...
  string s = c.Name;
  ```

- Collection classes may be directly enumerated:
  ```csharp
  foreach (int i in array) ...
  ```

- Fields, methods and constructors may be defined within a **struct** as well as a class. Structs are allocated within the stack instead of the heap, and are passed by value. For example:
  ```csharp
  struct Point {
    int x,y;
    void reset () {
      x=0; y=0; }
  }
  ```

- When an object is needed, a primitive (int, char, etc.) or a **struct** will be automatically **boxed** or **unboxed** without explicit use of a wrapper class (like integer or Character). Thus if method `List.add` expects an object, you may write
  ```csharp
  List.add(123);
  ```
  and 123 will be boxed into an Integer object automatically.

- **Enumerations** are provided:
  ```csharp
  enum Color {Red, Blue, Green};
  ```

- Rectangular arrays are provided:
  ```csharp
  int [,] multi = new int[5,5];
  ```

- Reference, out and variable-length parameter lists are allowed.

- Pointers may be used in methods marked **unsafe**.