

0.1 Python preliminaries

This section discusses some of the basics of setting up and running Python, and takes you through your first Python session.

0.1.1 Choosing a Python distribution and installing it

The following sections discuss some of your installation options. One of the options is recommended. Unless you really know what you're doing, you should do that.

Choosing a Python distribution (recommended option)

There are numerous excellent distributions of Python available for free on the web, including the standard distribution at [Python.org](https://python.org). The one I recommend for this course is the **Enthought Python Distribution**, which comes with a lot of bells and whistles not available in the standard Python, including a number of modules we'll be using in assignments. The first thing you need to do before downloading anything is to get an academic license (which is free, but you have to be a member of the faculty, student body, or staff of an academic institution).

[Academic license page](#)

If you don't do this, the only free version of Enthought you can use is EPD Free, which is *missing* many of the bells and whistles we need for the course. After you get the license, you should be able to log in and see the directions for downloading the right distribution. If that doesn't happen, login to the website and revisit the page above: You should see a notice that tells you that you already have an academic license, and points to a download page. Be sure to note down and remember the email address and password used to verify the license; you may need them later.

Whatever the sequence, be sure to download the version appropriate for your platform (Windows, Mac, Unix).

Note: Enthought will require proof that you are a student or faculty member of an academic institution before granting you an academic license. The easiest way to supply this proof is to make your request with an email address that establishes that fact. For example, San Diego State students are eligible for email address on rohan (your-name@rohan.sdsu.edu), which can be obtained by clicking the email link here and following the instructions there.
