Testing

UW CSE 160
Spring 2018
Testing

• Programming to analyze data is powerful
• It’s useless (or worse!) if the results are not correct

• Correctness is far more important than speed
Famous examples

• Ariane 5 rocket
• Therac-25 radiation therapy machine
Testing does not prove correctness

“Program testing can be used to show the presence of bugs, but never to show their absence!”

- Edsger Dijkstra

• Testing can only increase our confidence in program correctness.
• Exhaustive testing (e.g. testing all possible inputs) is generally not possible
• Instead we have to be smart about testing
Testing your program

• How do you know your program is right?
  – Compare its output to a correct output

• How do you know a correct output?
  – Real data is big
  – You wrote a computer program because it is not convenient to compute it by hand

• Use small inputs so you can compute the expected output by hand
  – We did this in HW2 and HW3 with small data sets
Testing parts of your program

• Often called “unit testing”
• Testing that the output of individual functions is correct.
Testing ≠ debugging

• **Testing**: determining whether your program is correct
  – Doesn’t say *where* or *how* your program is incorrect

• **Debugging**: locating the specific defect in your program, and fixing it
  2 key ideas:
  – divide and conquer
  – the scientific method
What is a test?

• A test consists of:
  – an input (sometimes called “test data”)
  – expected output
• Example test for `sum`:
  – input: `[1, 2, 3]`
  – expected output: result is 6
  – write the test as: `sum([1, 2, 3]) == 6`
• Example test for `sqrt`:
  – input: 3.14
  – expected output: result is within 0.00001 of 1.772
  – ways to write the test:
    • `sqrt(3.14) - 1.772 < 0.00001` and `sqrt(3.14) - 1.772 > -0.00001`
    • `-0.00001 < sqrt(3.14) - 1.772 < 0.00001`
    • `math.abs(sqrt(3.14) - 1.772) < 0.00001`
Test results

• The test **passes** if the boolean expression evaluates to **True**
• The test **fails** if the boolean expression evaluates to **False**
• Use the **assert** statement:
  ```python
  assert sum([1, 2, 3]) == 6
  assert math.abs(sqrt(3.14) - 1.772) < 0.00001
  ```
• **assert True** does nothing
• **assert False** crashes the program
  – and prints a message
Where to write test cases

- **At the top level:** is run every time you load your program
  
  ```python
  def hypotenuse(a, b):
      ... body of hypotenuse ...
  assert hypotenuse(3, 4) == 5  
  assert hypotenuse(5, 12) == 13
  ```

  (As in HW 4)

- **In a test function:** is run when you invoke the function
  
  ```python
  def test_hypotenuse():
      assert hypotenuse(3, 4) == 5  
      assert hypotenuse(5, 12) == 13
  ```

  (As in HW 3 and HW5)
Assertions are not just for test cases

• Use assertions throughout your code
• Documents what you think is true about your algorithm
• Lets you know immediately when something goes wrong
  – The longer between a code mistake and the programmer noticing, the harder it is to debug
Assertions make debugging easier

• Common, but unfortunate, course of events:
  – Code contains a mistake (incorrect assumption or algorithm)
  – Intermediate value (e.g., in local variable, or result of a function call) is incorrect
  – That value is used in other computations, or copied into other variables
  – Eventually, the user notices that the overall program produces a wrong result
  – Where is the mistake in the program? It could be anywhere.

• Suppose you had 10 assertions evenly distributed in your code
  – When one fails, you can localize the mistake to 1/10 of your code (the part between the last assertion that passes and the first one that fails)
Where to write assertions

• **Function entry:** are arguments of expected type/size/value/shape?
  – Place blame on the caller before the function fails

• **Function exit:** is result correct?

• Places with tricky or interesting code

• Assertions are ordinary statements; e.g., can appear within a loop:
  ```python
  for n in myNumbers:
      assert type(n) == int or type(n) == float
  ```
Where *not* to write assertions

- Don’t clutter the code
  - (Same rule as for comments)
- Don’t write assertions that are certain to succeed
  - The existence of an assertion tells a programmer that it might possibly fail
    ```python
    a = 5
    assert a == 5  # Not needed!
    ```
- Don’t need to write an assertion if the following code would fail informatively:
  ```python
  assert type(name) == str
  print "Hello, " + name
  ```
- Write assertions where they may be useful for debugging
What to write assertions about

• Results of computations
• Correctly-formed data structures

assert 0 <= index < len(mylist)
assert len(list1) == len(list2)
When to write tests

- Two possibilities:
  - Write code first, then write tests
  - Write tests first, then write code
- It’s best to write tests first

- If you write the code first, you remember the implementation while writing the tests
  - You are likely to make the same mistakes that you made in the implementation (e.g. assuming that negative values would never be present in a list of numbers)
- If you write the tests first, you will think more about the functionality than about a particular implementation
  - You might notice some aspect of behavior that you would have made a mistake about, some special case of input that you would have forgotten to handle
Write the whole test

• A common mistake:
  1. Write the function
  2. Make up test inputs
  3. Run the function
  4. Use the result as the expected output – BAD!!

• You didn’t write a full test: only half of a test!
  – Created the tests inputs, but not the expected output

• The test does not determine whether the function is correct
  – Only determines that it continues to be as correct (or incorrect) as it was before
Coming up with good test cases

- Think about and test “corner cases”
  - \texttt{abs(val)}
  - \texttt{find\_max(lst)}
Coming up with good test cases

• Think about and test “corner cases”
  – Numbers:
    • int vs. float values (remember not to test for equality with floats)
    • Zero
    • Negative values
  – Lists:
    • Empty list
    • Lists containing duplicate values (including all the same value)
    • Lists in ascending order/descending order
    • Mix of types in list (if specification does not rule out)
Tests outside of function body are for behavior described in the specification

def roots(a, b, c):
    """Returns a list of the two roots of ax**2 + bx + c."""

What is wrong with this test?
assert roots(1, 0, -1) == [-1, 1]

• Does the **specification** imply that this should be the **order** these two roots are returned?
• Assertions **inside** a routine can be used for implementation-specific behavior
Tests prevent you from introducing errors when you modify a function body

- **Abstraction**: the implementation details do not matter
- As long as the specification of the function remains the same, tests of the external behavior of the function should still apply.

- Preventing introducing errors when you make a change is called “regression testing”
Testing Approaches

• **Black box testing** - Choose test data *without* looking at implementation, just test behavior mentioned in the specification

• **Glass box (white box, clear box) testing** - Choose test data *with* knowledge of implementation. Test that all paths through your code are exercised and correct. Examples:
  – If statement with several elifs, make sure your test cases will execute all branches
  – For loop, test if it is executed never, once, >1, max times
Tests might not reveal an error

```python
def mean(numbers):
    """Returns the average of the argument list.
    The argument must be a non-empty list of numbers.""
    return sum(numbers)/len(numbers)

# Tests
assert mean([1, 2, 3, 4, 5]) == 3
assert mean([1, 2.1, 3.2]) == 2.1

This implementation is elegant, but wrong!

mean([1, 2, 3, 4])
```
def mean(numbers):
    """Returns the average of the argument list.
    The argument must be a non-empty list of numbers.""
    return sum(numbers)/len(numbers)

Unnecessary tests. Don’t write these:
mean([1, 2, "hello"])
mean("hello")
mean([])