

PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES COMPARED (FOR NUMERICAL AND APPLIED MATH COURSES)

ED BUELER

MATLAB (“matrix laboratory”; see [mathworks.com](https://www.mathworks.com)) was created in the late 1970s by Cleve Moler for teaching numerical linear algebra without requiring FORTRAN programming. It has since become a powerful programming language and engineering tool. A large fraction of upper-division and graduate students at UAF are already familiar with it, and it is available through UAF. The “Matlab student” version, at www.mathworks.com/academia/student-version.html, works fine for the numerical mathematics classes I teach. It works well, looks good, and I like it.

MATLAB is recommended if you have no existing preference, but I prefer free and open source software. Among the alternatives are three which work very well for numerical courses:

1. OCTAVE is a MATLAB clone. Download it at www.gnu.org/software/octave. The “.m” examples on the next page, and throughout this course, work in an identical way in MATLAB and in OCTAVE. I will mostly use OCTAVE myself during the course, but I’ll also make sure examples work the same way in MATLAB.
2. The general-purpose language PYTHON (python.org) works very well if you learn to use the NUMPY (numpy.org), SCIPY (scipy.org), and MATPLOTLIB (matplotlib.org) libraries. Using the IPYTHON interactive shell (ipython.org) gives the most MATLAB-like experience.
3. The Julia language (julialang.org) is a modern redesign of MATLAB, but it is not a compatible clone like OCTAVE. It easy to learn. Equivalent codes run much faster than in MATLAB or OCTAVE.

On the next page are two algorithms in MATLAB/OCTAVE (left column) and PYTHON (right column). Download these examples in a zip archive:

bueler.github.io/compareMOP.zip

Next are some brief “how-to” comments.

Program `gaussint.m` is a *script*. A script is run by starting MATLAB/OCTAVE, usually in the directory containing the script you want to run. Then type the name of the script at the prompt, without the `.m`:

```
>> gaussint
```

Typing `help gaussint` at the MATLAB/OCTAVE prompt shows the first block of comments.

`bis.m` is a *function* which needs inputs. At the prompt enter, for example,

```
>> f = @(x) cos(x) - x
>> bis(0,1,f)
```

Note we have given `bis.m` three arguments; the last is itself a function.

For the PYTHON codes: You can do `python gaussint.py` directly from a shell. Alternatively, from the PYTHON or IPYTHON prompt, type `run gaussint`. For the function `bis.py`, first do: `from bis import bis`. Then run the example as shown in the docstring; in IPYTHON you can type `bis?` to print the docstring.

Julia examples `bis.jl` and `gaussint.jl` are also in the `.zip`, but usage is up to you.

`gaussint.m`

```
% plot the integrand and approximate
% the integral
% / 1
% | exp(-x^2/pi) dx
% / 0
% by left-hand, right-hand, and
% trapezoid rules

N = 1000;
dx = (1 - 0) / N;
x = linspace(0,1,N+1);
y = exp(- x.^2 / pi);

plot(x,y)
axis([0 1 0 1]), grid

format long
lhand = dx * sum(y(1:end-1))
rhand = dx * sum(y(2:end))
trap = (dx/2) * sum(y(1:end-1)+y(2:end))
exact = (pi/2) * erf(1/sqrt(pi))
```

`gaussint.py`

```
'''plot the integrand and approximate
the integral
 / 1
 | exp(-x^2/pi) dx
 / 0
by left-hand, right-hand, and
trapezoid rules'''

import numpy as np
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
from scipy.special import erf

N = 1000
dx = (1.0 - 0.0) / N
x = np.linspace(0.0,1.0,N+1)
y = np.exp(- x**2 / np.pi)

plt.plot(x,y)
plt.axis([0.0,1.0,0.0,1.0])
plt.grid(True)

lhand = dx * sum(y[:-1])
print("lhand = %.15f" % lhand)
rhand = dx * sum(y[1:])
print("rhand = %.15f" % rhand)
trap = (dx/2) * sum(y[:-1]+y[1:])
print("trap = %.15f" % trap)
exact = (np.pi/2) * erf(1/np.sqrt(np.pi))
print("exact = %.15f" % exact)
plt.show()
```

`bis.m`

```
function c = bis(a,b,f)
% BIS Apply the bisection method to solve
% f(x) = 0
% with initial bracket [a,b]. Example:
% >> f = @(x) cos(x) - x % define fcn
% >> r = bis(0,1,f) % find root
% >> f(r) % confirm

if (feval(f,a)) * (feval(f,b)) > 0
    error('not a bracket!'), end
for k = 1:100
    c = (a+b)/2;
    r = feval(f,c);
    if abs(r) < 1e-12
        return % we are done
    elseif feval(f,a) * r >= 0.0
        a = c;
    else
        b = c;
    end
end
error('no convergence')
```

`bis.py`

```
def bis(a,b,f):
    '''BIS Apply the bisection method to solve
    f(x) = 0
    with initial bracket [a,b]. Example:

    from bis import bis
    def f(x):
        from math import cos
        return cos(x) - x
    r = bis(0.0,1.0,f)
    print([r,f(r)])'''

    if f(a) * f(b) > 0.0:
        print("not a bracket!")
        return
    for k in range(100):
        c = (a + b)/2
        r = f(c)
        if abs(r) < 1e-12:
            return c # we are done
        elif f(a) * r >= 0.0:
            a = c
        else:
            b = c
    print("no convergence")
    return
```