Meeting the interpreter

The Python interpreter processes text-based program code, and also has an interactive mode where you can test snippets of code and is useful for debugging code. Python’s interactive mode can be entered in a number of ways:

- From a regular Command Prompt – simply enter the command `python` to produce the Python primary prompt `>>>` where you can interact with the interpreter.

- From the Start Menu – choose “Python” (command line) to open a window containing the Python `>>>` primary prompt.

- From the Start Menu – choose “IDLE” (Python GUI) to launch a Python Shell window containing the Python `>>>` primary prompt.
Irrespective of the method used to enter interactive mode, the Python interpreter will respond in the same way to commands entered at its `>>>` primary prompt. In its simplest form, the interpreter can be used as a calculator.

1. Enter Python interactive mode, using any method outlined opposite, then type a simple addition and hit Return to see the interpreter print out the sum total

```
>>> 8 + 4
12
```

The Python interpreter also understands expressions, so parentheses can be used to give higher precedence – the part of the expression enclosed within parentheses will be calculated first.

2. Next, at the Python prompt enter an expression with three components without specifying any precedence order

```
>>> 3 * 8 + 4
28
```

3. Now, at the Python prompt enter the same expression but add parentheses to specify precedence order

```
>>> 3 * (8 + 4)
36
```