

Higher-Order Functions

The Heart and Soul of Functional
Programming



What is a “Higher Order” Function?

A function which takes another function as a parameter.

```
even :: Int -> Bool
even n = n `mod` 2 == 0
```

Examples

```
map even [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] = [False, True, False, True, False]
```

```
filter even [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] = [2, 4]
```

What is the Type of filter?

`filter even [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] = [2, 4]`

`even :: Int -> Bool`

`filter :: (Int -> Bool) -> [Int] -> [Int]`

A function type can be
the type of an argument.

`filter :: (a -> Bool) -> [a] -> [a]`

Quiz: What is the Type of map?

Example

`map even [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] = [False, True, False, True, False]`

map also has a polymorphic type -- can you write it down?

Quiz: What is the Type of map?

Example

map even [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] = [False, True, False, True, False]

map :: (a -> b) -> [a] -> [b]

List of results

Any function of one argument

Any list of arguments

Quiz: What is the Definition of map?

Example

map even [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] = [False, True, False, True, False]

map :: (a -> b) -> [a] -> [b]

map = ?

Quiz: What is the Definition of map?

Example

`map even [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] = [False, True, False, True, False]`

`map :: (a -> b) -> [a] -> [b]`

`map f [] = []`

`map f (x:xs) = f x : map f xs`

Is this “Just Another Feature”?

NO!!!

- Higher-order functions are the “heart and soul” of functional programming!
- A higher-order function can do *much more* than a “first order” one, because a part of its behaviour can be controlled by the caller.
- We can replace *many similar* functions by *one* higher-order function, parameterised on the differences.

Case Study: Summing a List

```
sum []      = 0
sum (x:xs) = x + sum xs
```

General Idea

Combine the elements of a list using an operator.

Specific to Summing

The operator is +, the base case returns 0.

Case Study: Summing a List

```
sum []      = 0
sum (x:xs) = x + sum xs
```

Replace 0 and + by parameters -- + by a *function*.

```
foldr op z []      = z
foldr op z (x:xs) = x `op` foldr op z xs
```

Case Study: Summing a List

New Definition of sum

```
sum xs = foldr plus 0 xs  
  where plus x y = x+y
```

or just...

```
sum xs = foldr (+) 0 xs
```

Just as `fun` lets a function be used as an operator,
so (op) lets an operator be used as a function.

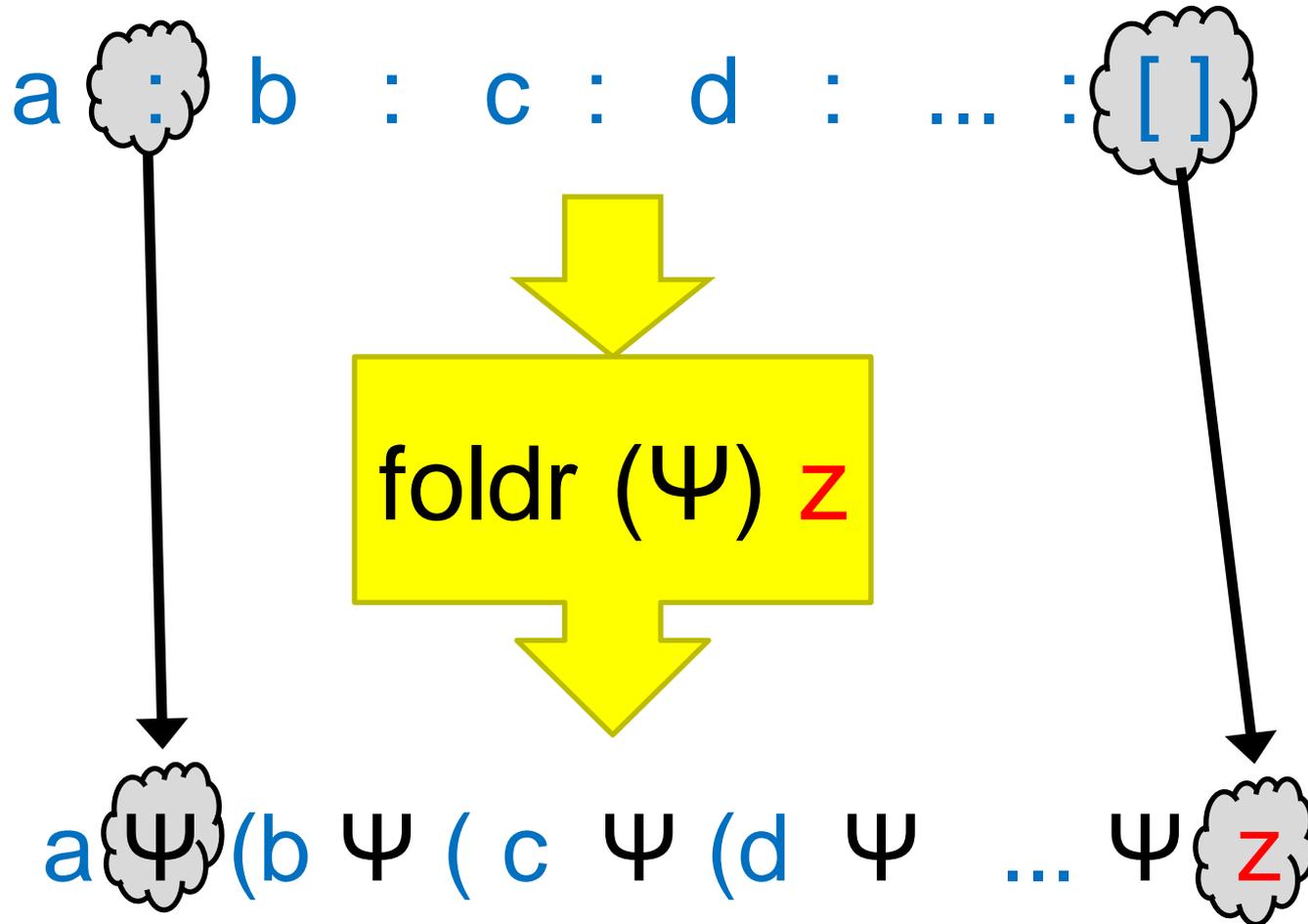
Applications

Combining the elements of a list is a *common* operation.

Now, instead of writing a recursive function, we can just use `foldr`!

```
product xs      = foldr (*) 1 xs
and xs          = foldr (&&) True xs
concat xs       = foldr (++) [] xs
maximum (x:xs) = foldr max x xs
```

An Intuition About foldr



The operator “:” is replaced by Ψ and $[]$ is replaced by z .

An Intuition About foldr

```
foldr op z [] = z
foldr op z (x:xs) = x `op` foldr op z xs
```

Example

```
foldr op z (a:(b:(c:[]))) = a `op` foldr op z (b:(c:[]))
                             = a `op` (b `op` foldr op z (c:[]))
                             = a `op` (b `op` (c `op` foldr op z []))
                             = a `op` (b `op` (c `op` z))
```

The operator “:” is replaced by `op`, [] is replaced by z.

Quiz

What is

`foldr (:) [] xs`

Quiz

What is

`foldr (:) [] xs`

Replaces “:” by “:”, and [] by [] -- *no change!*

The result is equal to `xs`.

Quiz

What is

`foldr (:) ys xs`

Quiz

What is

`foldr (:) ys xs`

`foldr (:) ys (a:(b:(c:[])))`
`= a:(b:(c:ys))`

The result is `xs++ys`!

`xs++ys = foldr (:) ys xs`

Quiz

What is

`foldr snoc [] xs`

where `snoc y ys = ys++[y]`

Quiz

What is

`foldr snoc [] xs`

where `snoc y ys = ys++[y]`

`foldr snoc [] (a:(b:(c:[])))`

`= a `snoc` (b `snoc` (c `snoc` []))`

`= (([] ++ [c]) ++ [b] ++ [a])`

The result is reverse xs!

`reverse xs = foldr snoc [] xs`
where `snoc y ys = ys++[y]`

λ -expressions

```
reverse xs = foldr snoc [] xs  
  where snoc y ys = ys++[y]
```

It's a nuisance to need to define `snoc`, which we only use once! A λ -expression lets us define it where it is used.

```
reverse xs = foldr ( $\lambda$ y ys -> ys++[y]) [] xs
```

On the keyboard:

```
reverse xs = foldr (\y ys -> ys++[y]) [] xs
```

Defining unlines

```
unlines ["abc", "def", "ghi"] = "abc\ndef\nghi\n"
```

```
unlines [xs,ys,zs] = xs ++ "\n" ++ (ys ++ "\n" ++ (zs ++ "\n" ++ []))
```

```
unlines xss = foldr (\xs ys -> xs ++ "\n" ++ ys) [] xss
```

Just the same as

```
unlines xss = foldr join [ ] xss
```

where join xs ys = xs ++ "\n" ++ ys

Further Standard Higher-Order Functions

Another Useful Pattern

Example: `takeLine "abc\ndef" = "abc"`

used to define lines.

```
takeLine []          = []
takeLine (x:xs)
  | x /= '\n'        = x:takeLine xs
  | otherwise        = []
```

General Idea

Take elements from a list while a condition is satisfied.

Specific to `takeLine`

The condition is that the element is not `'\n'`.

Generalising takeLine

```
takeLine []          = []
takeLine (x:xs)
  | x /= '\n'        = x : takeLine xs
  | otherwise        = []
```

```
takeWhile p []      = []
takeWhile p (x:xs)
  | p x              = x : takeWhile p xs
  | otherwise        = []
```

New Definition

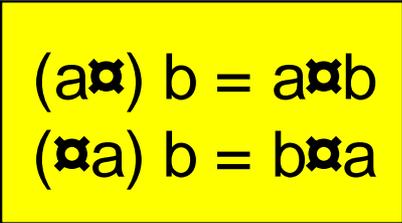
$\text{takeLine } xs = \text{takeWhile } (\lambda x \rightarrow x \neq '\n') \text{ } xs$

or $\text{takeLine } xs = \text{takeWhile } (\neq '\n') \text{ } xs$

Notation: Sections

As a shorthand, an operator with *one* argument stands for a function of the other...

- `map (+1) [1,2,3] = [2,3,4]`
- `filter (<0) [1,-2,3] = [-2]`
- `takeWhile (0<) [1,-2,3] = [1]`



`(a op) b = a op b`
`(op a) b = b op a`

Note that expressions like `(*2+1)` are not allowed.

Write `λx -> x*2+1` instead.

Defining lines

We use

- `takeWhile p xs` -- returns the longest *prefix* of `xs`
-- whose elements satisfy `p`.
- `dropWhile p xs` -- returns the rest of the list.

```
lines [] = []  
lines xs = takeWhile (/= '\n') xs :  
           lines (tail (dropWhile (/= '\n') xs))
```

General idea

Break a list into segments whose elements share some property.

Specific to lines

The property is: “are not newlines”.

Quiz: Properties of takeWhile and dropWhile

`takeWhile, dropWhile :: (a -> Bool) -> [a] -> [a]`

Can you think of a property that connects `takeWhile` and `dropWhile`?

Hint: Think of a property that connects `take` and `drop`

Use **import**
`Text.Show.Functions`

```
prop_TakeWhile_DropWhile p xs =  
  takeWhile p xs ++ dropWhile p xs == (xs :: [Int])
```

Generalising lines

```
segments p [] = []  
segments p xs = takeWhile p xs :  
                  segments p (drop 1 (dropWhile p xs))
```

Example

```
segments (>=0) [1,2,3,-1,4,-2,-3,5]  
= [[1,2,3], [4], [], [5]]
```

segments is
not a standard
function.

```
lines xs = segments (/= '\n') xs
```

Quiz: Comma-Separated Lists

Many Windows programs store data in files as “comma separated lists”, for example

1,2,hello,4

Define `commaSep :: String -> [String]`

so that

`commaSep "1,2,hello,4" == ["1", "2", "hello", "4"]`

Quiz: Comma-Separated Lists

Many Windows programs store data in files as “comma separated lists”, for example

1,2,hello,4

Define `commaSep :: String -> [String]`

so that

`commaSep “1,2,hello,4” == [“1”, “2”, “hello”, “4”]`

`commaSep xs = segments (/= ',') xs`

Defining words

We can *almost* define words using segments -- but
segments (not `.isSpace`) "a b" = ["a", "", "b"]

Function composition

$$(f . g) x = f (g x)$$

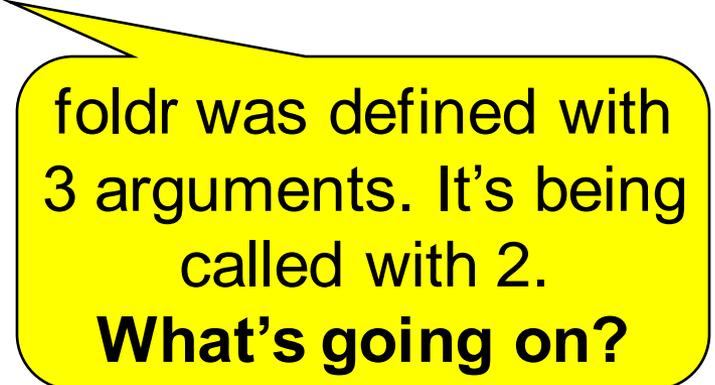
which is not what we want -- there should be no empty words.

```
words xs = filter (/="") (segments (not . isSpace) xs)
```

Partial Applications

Haskell has a trick which lets us write down many functions easily. Consider this valid definition:

```
sum = foldr (+) 0
```



foldr was defined with 3 arguments. It's being called with 2.
What's going on?

Partial Applications

```
sum = foldr (+) 0
```

Evaluate `sum [1,2,3]`

= {replacing `sum` by its definition}

`foldr (+) 0 [1,2,3]`

= {by the behaviour of `foldr`}

`1 + (2 + (3 + 0))`

= `6`

Now `foldr` has the *right* number of arguments!

Partial Applications

Any function may be called with fewer arguments than it was defined with.

The result is a *function* of the remaining arguments.

```
If      f :: Int -> Bool -> Int -> Bool
```

```
then    f 42 :: Bool -> Int -> Bool
```

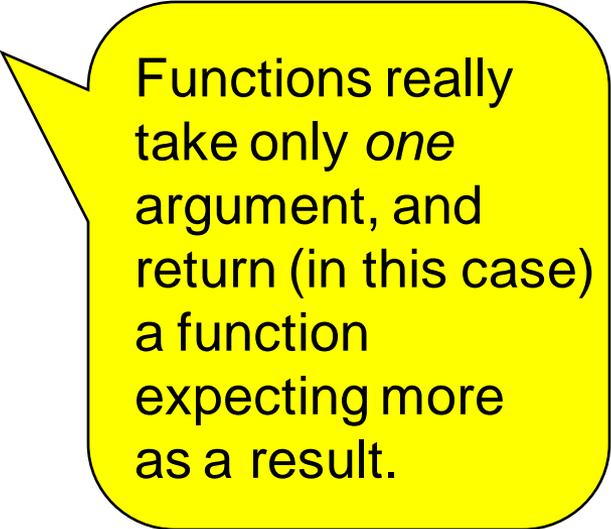
```
        f 42 True :: Int -> Bool
```

```
        f 42 True 42 :: Bool
```

Bracketing Function Calls and Types

We say function application “brackets to the left”
 function types “bracket to the right”

If $f :: \text{Int} \rightarrow (\text{Bool} \rightarrow (\text{Int} \rightarrow \text{Bool}))$
then $f\ 3 :: \text{Bool} \rightarrow (\text{Int} \rightarrow \text{Bool})$
 $(f\ 3)\ \text{True} :: \text{Int} \rightarrow \text{Bool}$
 $((f\ 3)\ \text{True})\ 4 :: \text{Bool}$



Functions really take only *one* argument, and return (in this case) a function expecting more as a result.

Designing with Higher-Order Functions

- Break the problem down into a series of small steps, each of which can be programmed using an existing higher-order function.
- Gradually “massage” the input closer to the desired output.
- Compose together all the massaging functions to get the result.

Example: Counting Words

Input

A string representing a text containing many words. For example

“hello clouds hello sky”

Output

A string listing the words in order, along with how many times each word occurred.

“clouds: 1\nhello: 2\nsky: 1”

```
clouds: 1
hello: 2
sky: 1
```

Step 1: Breaking Input into Words

“hello clouds\nhello sky”



words

[“hello”, “clouds”, “hello”, “sky”]

Step 2: Sorting the Words

["hello", "clouds", "hello", "sky"]



["clouds", "hello", "hello", "sky"]

Digression: The groupBy Function

`groupBy :: (a -> a -> Bool) -> [a] -> [[a]]`

`groupBy p xs`

breaks `xs` into segments
`[x1,x2...]`, such that `p x1 xi` is
True for each `xi` in the segment.

`groupBy (<) [3,2,4,3,1,5] = [[3], [2,4,3], [1,5]]`

`groupBy (==) "hello" = ["h", "e", "l", "o"]`

Step 3: Grouping Equal Words

["clouds", "hello", "hello", "sky"]



groupBy (==)

[["clouds"], ["hello", "hello"], ["sky"]]

Step 4: Counting Each Group

[[“clouds”], [“hello”, “hello”], [“sky”]]

map (λ ws -> (head ws, length ws))

[(“clouds”, 1), (“hello”, 2), (“sky”, 1)]

Step 5: Formatting Each Group

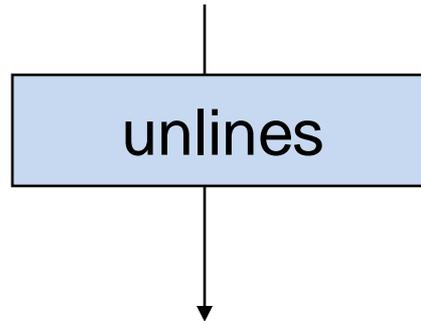
[("clouds",1), ("hello", 2), ("sky",1)]

map ($\lambda(w,n) \rightarrow w ++ " " ++ show n$)

["clouds: 1", "hello: 2", "sky: 1"]

Step 6: Combining the Lines

["clouds: 1", "hello: 2", "sky: 1"]



"clouds: 1\nhello: 2\nsky: 1\n"

```
clouds: 1
hello: 2
sky: 1
```

The Complete Definition

```
countWords :: String -> String
```

```
countWords = unlines
```

- `map (\(w,n) -> w++": "+show n)`
- `map (\ws -> (head ws, length ws))`
- `groupBy (==)`
- `sort`
- `words`

Quiz: A property of Map

`map :: (a -> b) -> [a] -> [b]`

Can you think of a property that merges
two consecutive uses of map?

```
prop_MapMap :: (Int -> Int) -> (Int -> Int) -> [Int] -> Bool
prop_MapMap f g xs =
  map f (map g xs) == map (f . g) xs
```

The Optimized Definition

```
countWords :: String -> String
```

```
countWords
```

```
  = unlines
```

- `map (\ws -> head ws ++ ":" ++ show(length ws))`
- `groupBy (==)`
- `sort`
- `words`

Where Do Higher-Order Functions Come From?

- Generalise a repeated pattern: define a function to avoid repeating it.
- Higher-order functions let us abstract patterns that are *not exactly the same*, e.g. Use + in one place and * in another.
- **Basic idea:** name common code patterns, so we can use them without repeating them.

Must I Learn All the Standard Functions?

Yes and No...

- **No**, because they are just defined in Haskell. You can reinvent any you find you need.
- **Yes**, because they capture very frequent patterns; learning them lets you solve many problems with great ease.

”Stand on the shoulders of giants!”

Lessons

- Higher-order functions take functions as parameters, making them *flexible* and useful in very many situations.
- By writing higher-order functions to capture common patterns, we can reduce the work of programming dramatically.
- λ -expressions, partial applications, function composition and sections help us create functions to pass as parameters, without a separate definition.
- Haskell provides many useful higher-order functions; break problems into small parts, each of which can be solved by an existing function.

Reading

- Chapter 9 covers higher-order functions on lists, in a little more detail than this lecture.
- Sections 10.1 to 10.4 cover function composition, partial application, and λ -expressions.
- Sections 10.5, 10.6, and 10.7 cover examples not in the lecture -- useful to read, but not essential.
- Section 10.8 covers a larger example in the same style as `countOccurrences`.
- Section 10.9 is outside the scope of this course.