

# University of Massachusetts Lowell

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91.301: Organization of Programming Languages  
Spring 2004

## Problem Set 1 **Getting to Know Scheme**

Issued: Tuesday, 3 February 2004

Due: Tuesday, 10 February 2004

Reading: Text (SICP 2nd Edition by Abelson & Sussman): Section 1.1

### Overview

The purpose of the exercises below is to familiarize you with the basics of Scheme language and interpreter. Spending a little time on simple mechanics now will save you a great deal of time over the rest of the course.

This problem set heavily borrows from the “Simple Problem Set” available on the MIT Press web site as supporting material for the text. While minor corrections and some extensions have been made, most of the problems are, for the large part, unchanged.

This problem set introduces you to both DrScheme and MIT Scheme. The exercises are equivalent for both scheme types.

### 1. Before Turning on your Computer

Read Section 1.1. of the textbook. Then predict what the interpreter will print in response to evaluation of each of the following expressions. Assume that the sequence is evaluated in the order in which it is presented here.

```

(- 8 9)

(> 3.7 4.4)

(- (if (> 3 4) 7 10) (/ 16 10))

(define b 13)

13

b

>

(define square (lambda (x) (* x x)))

square

(square 13)

(square b)

(square (square (/ b 1.3)))

(define multiply-by-itself square)

(multiply-by-itself b)

(define a b)

(= a b)

(if (= (* b a) (square 13))
    (< a b)
    (- a b))

(cond ((>= a 2) b)
      ((< (square b) (multiply-by-itself a)) (/ 1 0))
      (else (abs (- (square a) b))))

```

## 2. Getting started with Scheme

Read Section 2A if you are planning to use MIT Scheme (recommended because of its debugger). Read Section 2B if you are planning to use DrScheme. Read both if you want to try out both versions of Scheme before making your decision.

### 2A. Getting started with the MIT Scheme interpreter

In the Scheme interpreter, you will use a text-editing system called Edwin, which is an editor closely resembling the widely used editor Emacs. Even if you are already familiar with Emacs, you should take some time *now* to run the Emacs/Edwin tutorial. This can be invoked by typing `C-h` followed by `t`. You will probably get bored before you finish the tutorial. (It's too long, anyway.) But at least skim all the topics so you know what's there. You'll need to gain reasonable facility with the editor in order to complete the exercises below.

To start MIT Scheme (version 7.7.1) in the lab (Olsen 308) on a Linux machine, type `scheme` at the command line of a terminal window. To start Scheme on a Windows machine (Olsen 310, but not Olsen 314), find MIT Scheme in the Start/Programs menu and select `scheme`. You can also download MIT Scheme for your own computer (Windows or Linux) from the web site linked on the course web page.

## Evaluating expressions

After you have learned something about Edwin, go to the Scheme buffer (i.e., the buffer named `*scheme*`).<sup>1</sup> As with any buffer, you can type Scheme expressions, or any other text into this buffer. What distinguishes the Scheme buffer from other buffers is the fact that underlying this buffer is a Scheme evaluator, which you can ask to evaluate expressions, as explained in the section of the tutorial entitled “Evaluating Scheme expressions.”

Type in and evaluate (one by one) the expressions from Section 1 of this assignment to see how well you predicted what the system would print. If the system gives a response that you do not understand, ask for help from a staff member or from the person sitting next to you.

Observe that some of the examples printed above in Section 1 are indented and displayed over several lines for readability. An expression may be typed on a single line or on several lines; the Scheme interpreter ignores redundant spaces and carriage returns. It is to your advantage to format your work so that you (and others) can read it easily. It is also helpful in detecting errors introduced by incorrectly placed parentheses. For example the two expressions

```
(* 5 (- 2 (/ 4 2) (/ 8 3)))
```

```
(* 5 (- 2 (/ 4 2)) (/ 8 3))
```

look deceptively similar but have different values. Properly indented, however, the difference is obvious.

```
(* 5
  (- 2
    (/ 4 2)
    (/ 8 3)))
```

```
(* 5
  (- 2
    (/ 4 2))
  (/ 8 3))
```

Edwin provides several commands that “pretty-print” your code, e.g., indents lines to reflect the inherent structure of the Scheme expressions.<sup>2</sup>

## Creating a file

Since the Scheme buffer will chronologically list all the expressions you evaluate, and since you will generally have to try more than one version of the same procedure as part of the coding and debugging process, it is usually better to keep your procedure definitions in a separate buffer, rather than to work only in the Scheme buffer. You can save this other buffer in a file on your disk so you can split your lab work over more than one session.

The basic idea is to create another buffer, into which you can type your code, and later save that buffer in a disk file. You do this by typing `C-x C-f filename`. If you already have a buffer open for that file Edwin simply switches you into this buffer. Otherwise, Edwin will create a new buffer for the file. If you give the system a name that has not yet been used, with an extension of `.scm`, Edwin will automatically create a new buffer with that file name, in `scheme` mode. In a Scheme-mode buffer some editing commands treat text as code, for example, typing `C-j` at the end of a line will move you to the next line with appropriate indentation.

Once you are ready to transfer your procedures to Scheme, you can use any of several commands: `M-z` to evaluate the current definition, `C-x C-e` to evaluate the expression preceding the cursor, `M-o` to evaluate

<sup>1</sup>If you don’t know how to do this, go back and learn more about Edwin.

<sup>2</sup>Make a habit of typing `C-j` at the end of a line, instead of `enter`, when you enter Scheme expressions, so that the cursor will automatically indent to the right place.

the entire buffer, or using `M-x eval-region` to evaluate a “marked” region in the buffer. Each of these commands will cause the Scheme evaluator to evaluate the appropriate set of expressions (usually definitions). By returning to the `*scheme*` buffer, you can now use these expressions.

To practice these ideas, create a new buffer, called `ps1-ans.scm`. In this buffer, create a definition for a simple procedure, by typing in the following (verbatim):

```
(define square (lambda (x) (*x x)))
```

Now evaluate this definition by using either `M-z` or `M-o`. Go back to the Scheme buffer, and try evaluating `(square 4)`.

If you actually typed in the definition *exactly* as printed above, you should have hit an error at this point. The system will now be offering you a chance to enter the debugger. For now, type `Q` to quit the evaluation (we’ll see how to use the debugger below). Go back to the `ps1-ans.scm` buffer and edit the definition to insert a space between `*` and `x`. Re-evaluate the definition, and return to Scheme and try evaluating `(square 4)` again.

As a second method of evaluating expressions, try the following. Go to the `*scheme*` buffer, and again type in:

```
(define square (lambda (x) (*x x)))
```

Place the cursor at the end of the line, and type `C-x C-e` to evaluate this expression. Again try `(square 4)`. When it fails, again use `Q` to quit out of the debugger. This time, you should type `M-p` several times, until the definition of `square` that you typed in appears on the screen. Edit this definition to insert a space between `*` and `x`, evaluate the new expression, and use `M-p` to get back the expression `(square 4)`. Make a habit of using `M-p`, rather than going back and editing previous expressions in the Scheme buffer in place. That way, the buffer will contain an intact record of your work.

## The MIT Scheme Debugger

While you work, you will often need to debug programs. This section contains an exercise to acquaint you with some of the features of Scheme to aid in debugging. Learning to use the debugging features will save you much grief on later problem sets. Additional information about the debugger can be found by typing `?` in the debugger.

You can find the code for this problem set at

<http://www.cs.uml.edu/~holly/91.301/ps1.scm>

– save the code to your directory.

Once you’ve saved the file, load the code for this problem set using the Edwin `C-x C-f` command followed by the name of the file in your directory. Evaluate the code using `M-x eval-current-buffer`. This will load definitions of the following three procedures `p1`, `p2` and `p3`:

```
(define p1
  (lambda (x y)
    (+ (p2 x y)
       (p3 x y))))

(define p2
  (lambda (z w)
    (* z w)))

(define p3
  (lambda (a b)
    (+ (p2 a)
       (p2 b))))
```

In the Scheme buffer, evaluate the expression `(p1 1 2)`. This should signal an error, with the message:

```
;The procedure #[compound-procedure P2] has been called with 1 argument
;it requires exactly 2 arguments.
;Type D to debug error, Q to quit back to REP loop:
```

Don't panic. Beginners have a tendency, when they hit an error, to quickly type `Q`, often without even reading the error message. Then they stare at their code in the editor trying to see what the bug is. Indeed, the example here is simple enough so that you probably can find the bug by just reading the code. Instead, however, let's see how Scheme can be coaxed into producing some helpful information about the error.

First of all, there is the error message itself. It tells you that the error was caused by a procedure being called with one argument, which is the wrong number of arguments for that procedure. Unfortunately, the error message alone doesn't say where in the code the error occurred. In order to find out more, you need to use the debugger. To do this type `D` to start the debugger.

### Using the debugger

The debugger allows you to grovel around examining pieces of the execution in progress, in order to learn more about what may have caused the error. When you start the debugger, it will create a new window. The buffer should look like this.

```
COMMANDS:  ? - Help   q - Quit Debugger   e - Environment browser
This is a debugger buffer:
Lines identify stack frames, most recent first.
  Sx means frame is in subproblem number x
  Ry means frame is reduction number y
The buffer below describes the current subproblem or reduction.
-----
The *ERROR* that started the debugger is:
  The procedure #[compound-procedure 119 p2] has been called with 1 argument;
  it requires exactly 2 arguments.

>S0 ([compound-procedure 119 p2] 2)
  R0 (p2 b)
S1 (+ (p2 a) #(p2 b)#)
  R0 (+ (p2 a) (p2 b))
  R1 (p3 x y)
S2 (+ (p2 x y) #(p3 x y)#)
  R0 (+ (p2 x y) (p3 x y))
  R1 (p1 1 2)
--more--
```

You can select a “frame” by clicking on its line with the mouse or by using the ordinary cursor line-motion commands to move from line to line. Press `C-n` and `C-p` a few times. The window is split and a second buffer is shown. Notice that the bottom, information, buffer changes as the selected line changes.

The frames in the list in the top buffer represent the steps in the evaluation of the expression. There are two kinds of steps—subproblems and reductions. For now, you should think of a reduction step as transforming an expression into “more elementary” form, and think of a subproblem as picking out a piece of a compound expression to work on.

So, starting at the bottom of the list and working upwards, we see `(p1 1 2)`, which is the expression we tried to evaluate. The next line up indicates that `(p1 1 2)` reduces to `(+ (p2 x y) (p3 x y))`. Above

that, we see that in order to evaluate this expression the interpreter chose to work on the subproblem (p3 x y), and so on, moving upwards until we reach the error: the call to (p2 b) from within the procedure p3 has only one argument, and p2 requires two arguments.<sup>3</sup>

Take a moment to examine the other debugger information (which will come in handy as your programs become more complex). Specifically, in the top buffer, select the line

```
> R0 (+ (p2 x y) (p3 x y))
```

The bottom buffer should now look like this:

```

                                SUBPROBLEM LEVEL: 2
Expression (from stack):
  Subproblem being executed highlighted.
    (+ (p2 x y) (p3 x y))
-----
ENVIRONMENT named: (user)
  p1 = #[compound-procedure 31 p1]
  p3 = #[compound-procedure 32 p3]
  p2 = #[compound-procedure 27 p2]
==> ENVIRONMENT created by the procedure: P1
    x = 1
    y = 2
-----
;EVALUATION may occur below in the environment of the selected frame.
```

The information here is in three parts. The first shows the expression again, with the subproblem being worked on. The next major part of the display shows information about the *environments*. We'll have a lot more to say about environments later in the course, but, for now, notice the line

```
==> ENVIRONMENT created by the procedure: P1
```

This indicates that the evaluation of the current expression is within procedure p1. Also we find the environment has two *bindings* that specify the particular values of x and y referred to in the expression, namely x = 1 and y = 2. At the bottom of the description buffer is an area where you can evaluate expressions in this environment (which is often useful in debugging).

Before quitting the debugger try one final experiment (you may have already done this). Continue to scroll down through the stack past the line: R1 (p1 1 2) (you can also click the mouse on the line `--more--` to show the next subproblem). You will then see additional frames that contain various complicated expressions. What you are looking at is some of the guts of the Scheme system—the part shown here is a piece of the interpreter's read-eval-print program. In general, backing up from any error will eventually land you in the guts of the system. (Yes: almost all of the system is itself a Scheme program.)

You can type q to return to the Scheme top level interpreter.

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<sup>3</sup>Notice that the call that produced the error was (p2 b), and that (p2 a) would have also given an error. This indicates that in this case Scheme was evaluating the arguments to + in right-to-left order, which is something you may not have expected. You should never write code that depends for its correct execution on the order of evaluation of the arguments in a combination. The Scheme system does not guarantee that any particular order will be followed, nor even that this order will be the same each time a combination is evaluated.

## 2B. Getting started with the DrScheme interpreter

In the Scheme interpreter, you will use a development environment called DrScheme. The DrScheme main window has two panes. In the top pane you edit your answer file (or whatever Scheme code you happen to be working on). The lower pane is for interaction with the Scheme interpreter. Use the “Execute” button or the F5 key to load all the definitions from the top pane into the Scheme interpreter. Use the interpreter pane for typing in tests, for finding the values of expressions, and for any text I/O (resulting from evaluating read, write, or display expressions).

DrScheme uses key bindings for editing commands similar to those used by the Emacs editor (just different enough to be annoying). You can also perform many editing tasks using the mouse and the menus.

To start DrScheme (version 204) in the lab (Olsen 308) on a Linux machine, type `drscheme` at the command line of a terminal window. DrScheme is also installed on the Windows machines in Olsen 310 (Start/Programs/PLT Scheme/DR SCHEME). You can download DrScheme for your own computer (Windows, Mac, or Unix) from the web site linked on the course web page. If you’ll want to bring your programs to print in the lab, download the older version (204) of DrScheme for home. If you are using the current version, your files won’t open on the lab computers.

### Evaluating expressions

After you have learned something about editing in DrScheme, go to the Scheme buffer (the lower pane in the DrScheme window) You can type Scheme expressions, and they should be evaluated and the result printed out.

Type in and evaluate (one by one) the expressions from Section 1 of this assignment to see how well you predicted what the system would print. If the system gives a response that you do not understand, ask for help from a staff member or from the person sitting next to you.

Observe that some of the examples printed above in Section 1 are indented and displayed over several lines for readability. An expression may be typed on a single line or on several lines; the Scheme interpreter ignores redundant spaces and carriage returns. It is to your advantage to format your work so that you (and others) can read it easily. It is also helpful in detecting errors introduced by incorrectly placed parentheses. For example the two expressions

```
(* 5 (- 2 (/ 4 2) (/ 8 3)))
```

```
(* 5 (- 2 (/ 4 2)) (/ 8 3))
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look deceptively similar but have different values. Properly indented, however, the difference is obvious.

```
(* 5
  (- 2
    (/ 4 2)
    (/ 8 3)))
```

```
(* 5
  (- 2
    (/ 4 2))
  (/ 8 3))
```

When you type Enter at the end of a line, DrScheme will automatically indent the next line as needed.

### Creating a file

Do any lab work that you want to submit (or any other work that needs to be preserved) in the upper pane. If modifying an existing file, use the “Open” dialog from the File menu. If starting a new file, just type a few characters and then press the Save button. A dialog should pop up requesting the file name to save into.

To practice these ideas, create a new file, called `ps1-ans.scm`. In this file, create a definition for a simple procedure, by typing in the following (verbatim):

```
(define square (lambda (x) (*x x)))
```

Now evaluate this definition by using either F5 or the “Evaluate” button. Go back to the Scheme buffer, and try evaluating `(square 4)`.

If you actually typed in the definition *exactly* as printed above, you should have hit an error at this point. The system will now be offering you a chance to dtrace back the error (by clicking on the bug icon in the Scheme buffer). Go back to the `ps1-ans.scm` buffer and edit the definition to insert a space between `*` and `x`. Re-evaluate the definition, and return to Scheme and try evaluating `(square 4)` again.

As a second method of evaluating expressions, try the following. Go to the `*scheme*` buffer, and again type in:

```
(define square (lambda (x) (*x x)))
```

Place the cursor at the end of the line, and press Enter evaluate the definition. Again try `(square 4)`. This time, you should type `M-p` several times, until the definition of `square` that you typed in appears on the screen. Edit this definition to insert a space between `*` and `x`, evaluate the new expression, and use `M-p` to get back the expression `(square 4)`. Make a habit of using `M-p`, rather than going back and editing previous expressions in the Scheme buffer in place. That way, the buffer will contain an intact record of your work.

## The DrScheme Debugger

While you work, you will often need to debug programs. Unfortunately, DrScheme does not have as much debugging capability as some other Scheme and Lisp systems (such as MIT Scheme). It *does* have the ability to show you the sequence of evaluations that were performed before the bug occurred.

You can find the code for this problem set at

<http://www.cs.uml.edu/~holly/91.301/ps1.scm>

– save the code to your directory.

Once you’ve saved the file, load the code for this problem set. This will load definitions of the following three procedures `p1`, `p2` and `p3`:

```
(define p1
  (lambda (x y)
    (+ (p2 x y)
       (p3 x y))))

(define p2
  (lambda (z w)
    (* z w)))

(define p3
  (lambda (a b)
    (+ (p2 a)
       (p2 b))))
```

In the Scheme buffer, evaluate the expression `(p1 1 2)`. This should signal an error.

Don’t panic. Beginners have a tendency, when they hit an error, to immediately try to change their code, often without even reading the error message. Then they stare at their code in the editor trying to see what the bug is. Indeed, the example here is simple enough so that you probably can find the bug by just reading

the code. Instead, however, let's see how Scheme can be coaxed into producing some helpful information about the error.

First of all, there is the error message itself. It tells you that the error was caused by a procedure being called with one argument, which is the wrong number of arguments for that procedure. Unfortunately, the error message alone doesn't say where in the code the error occurred. In order to find out more, you need to look at the backtrace. Click on the bug icon in the Scheme buffer to bring up a backtrace window.

### 3. Exploring the system

The following exercises are meant to help you practice editing and debugging.

**Exercise 1: More debugging** The code you loaded for Problem Set 1 also defined three other procedures, called `fold`, `spindle`, and `mutilate`. One of these procedures contains an error. Evaluate the expression `(fold 1 2)`. What is the error? How should the procedure be defined?

For MIT Scheme users: Notice that you can examine the code for a procedure by using the `pp` ("pretty print") command. For example, evaluating the expression `(pp fold)` will print the definition of `fold`.

**Exercise 2: Computing factorials** Type the following code into your buffer and evaluate it. You'll need this for Exercise 3.

```
(define fact
  (lambda (n)
    (if (= n 0)
        1
        (* n (fact (- n 1))))))
```

**Exercise 3: Defining a simple procedure** The number of combinations of  $n$  things taken  $k$  at a time,  $\binom{n}{k}$ , is given by  $n!/k!(n-k)!$ . Define a procedure `(comb n k)` that computes the number of combinations, and find the number of combinations of 243 things taken 90 at a time. Include your procedure definition and your answer in `ps1-ans.scm`.

**Exercise 4:** Write a procedure that takes one argument and returns its cube. Call this procedure `cube` (you'll use it below).

**Exercise 5:** Write a procedure that takes two arguments and returns the sum of their cubes. You should use `cube` that you wrote for Exercise 4.

**Exercise 6:** Write a procedure that takes three arguments and returns the smallest number. Call it `smallest-of-three`.

**Exercise 7:** Write a procedure that takes three arguments and returns the cube of the smallest number. You should use the procedures that you wrote for Exercise 4 and 6.

**Exercise 8:** Write a procedure that evaluates arbitrary 3rd degree polynomials. Your procedure should be called `f` and should take five arguments. The first argument, `x` should be the point at which to evaluate the polynomial. The second, third, fourth, and fifth arguments, `a0`, `a1`, `a2`, and `a3`, should be the four coefficients for the third-degree polynomial. Your function `f` will evaluate the following expression:

$$f(x, a_0, a_1, a_2, a_3) = a_0 + a_1x + a_2x^2 + a_3x^3$$

Check your function by verifying that it returns 3.25 for  $x = 0.5$ ,  $a_0 = 1$ ,  $a_1 = 2$ ,  $a_2 = 3$ , and  $a_3 = 4$ . You should use `cube` written for the exercise above, and the `square` function from earlier in the problem set.

This approach is, strictly speaking, not the most efficient way to evaluate polynomials. For extra credit, discuss at least one way which might be more efficient. If the code for your approach is simple, then write it out; if not, just write a sentence or two.