



Problem: Given are two lists 11 and 12. You want to perform either of the following: 1. Boolean Comparison: Compare the lists elements, and otherwise False.2. Difference of elements in the first list but not in the second. Example: You start with two lists. 11 = [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] 12 = [1, 2, 3] # 1. Boolean Comparison result = False # 2. Difference result = False # 2. Di Pythonic way to check if two ordered lists 11 and 12 are identical, is to use the lists element-wise and return True if and 12. You want to perform Boolean Comparison: Compare the lists element-wise and return True if your comparison metric returns True for all pairs of elements, and otherwise False. Examples: 11 = [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] 12 = [1, 2, 3, 4,quick interactive code overview: Exercise: Glance over all methods and run the code. What questions come to mind? Do you understand each method in detail! Method 1: Simple Comparison Not always is the simplest method the best one. But for this particular problem, it is! The equality operator == compares a list element-wise—many Python coders don't know this! # 1. Simple Comparison def method 1(11, 12): return 11 == 12 11 = [1, 2, 3] print(method 1(11, 12)) # False So, if you just want to learn about the most Pythonic way to solve this problem, look no further. But if you want to dive into the wonderful world of Python, learning about different interesting and powerful Python functions, read on! Method 2: Simple For Loop The following method is what you'd see from a coder coming from another programming language or from a beginner who doesn't know about the equality operator on lists (see Method 1). # 2. Simple For Loop def method 2(11, 12): for i in range(min(len(11), len(l2)): if l1[i] != l2[i]: return False return len(l1) == len(l2) l1 = [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] l2 = [1, 2, 3] print(method 2(l1, l2)) # False In the code, you iterate over all indices from 0 to the last position of the smallest list as determined by the part min(len(l1), len(l2)). You then check if both elements at the same position are different. If they are different, i.e., 11[i] = 12[i], you can immediately return False because the lists are also different. If you went through the whole loop without returning len(1) == len(12), you ensure to only return True if (1) all elements are equal and (2) the lists have the same length. A lot of code to accomplish such a simple thing! Let's see how a better coder would leverage the zip() function to reduce the complexity of the code. Method 3: zip() + For Loop The zip function takes a number of iterables and aggregates them to a single one by combining the i-th values of each iterable into a tuple for every i. Let's see how you can use the function to make the previous code more concise: # 3. Zip + For Loop def method 3(1, 12): for x, y in zip(11, 12): if x != y: return False return len(11) == len(12) 11 = [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] 12 = [1, 2, 3] print(method 3(11, 12)) # False Instead of iterating over indices, you now iterate over pairs of elements (the ones zipped together). If the lists have different sizes, the remaining elements from the longer list will be skipped. This way, element-wise comparison becomes simpler and no elaborate indexing schemes are required. Avoiding indices by means of the zip() + len() But true Python coders will often avoid a for loop and use a generator expression instead. You first create an iterable of Boolean values using the generator expression x == y for x, y in zip(11, 12). Then, you sum up over the Boolean values (another trick of pro coders) to find the number of elements that are the same and store it in variable num\_equal. Finally, you compare this with the length of both lists. If all three values are the same, both lists have the same elements and their length is the same, too. They are equal! # 4. Sum + Zip + Len def method 4(11, 12): num equal == len(11) == len(12) l1 = [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] l2 = [1, 2, 3] print(method 4(11, 12)) # False print(method 4(11, 12)) # True From the methods except the first one using the == operator, this is the most Pythonic way due to the use of efficient Python helper functions like zip(), len(), and sum() and generator expressions to make the code more concise and more readable. You could also write this in a single line of code! sum(x == y for x, y in zip(11, 12)) == len(12) If you love Python one-liners, check out my new book Python One-Liners with internationally renowned publisher NoStarch press. (Amazon Link) Method 5: map() + reduce() + len() from functools import reduce def method 5(l1, l2): equal = map(lambda x, y: x) = y, 11, 12 result = reduce(lambda x, y: x and y, equal) return result and len(11) == len(12) 11 = [1, 2, 3], 4, 5] 12 = [1, 2, 3] print(method 5(11, 12)) # False print(method 5(11, 12)) performing an and operation. Sure, you can also use the more concise variant using the all() function: Method 6(11, 12): result = all(map(lambda x, y: x == y, 11, 12)) and operation. # 6. map() + all() def method 6(11, 12): result = all(map(lambda x, y: x == y, 11, 12)) and operation. 12)) return result and len(11) == len(12) 11 = [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] 12 = [1, 2, 3] print(method\_5(11, 12)) # False print(method\_5([1, 2, 3])) # True If you want to learn something new every day, join my free Python email series for continuous improvement in Python and computer science. Original article: The Most Pythonic Way to Check if Two Ordered Lists Are Identical Difference Short answer: The most Pythonic way to compute the difference between two lists 11 and 12 is the list comprehension statement [x for x in 11 if x not in set(12)]. This works even if you have duplicate list entries, it maintains the original list ordering, and it's efficient due to the constant runtime complexity of the set membership operation. What's the best way to compute the difference between two lists in Python? a = [5, 4, 3, 2, 1] # b - a == [6, 7] Let's have an overview in the following interactive code shell: Exercise: Run the code and think about your preferred way! Let's dive into each of the methods to find the most Pythonic one for your particular scenario. Method 1: Set Difference The naive approach to solve this problem is to convert both lists into sets and use the set minus (or set difference) operation. # Method 1: Set Difference print(set(a) - set(b)) # {1, 2, 3} print(set(b) - set(a)) # {6, 7} This approach is elegant because it's readable, efficient, and concise. However, there are some unique properties to this method which you should be aware of: The result is a set and not a list. You can convert it back to a list by using the list(...) constructor. All duplicated list entries are removed in the process because sets do not maintain the ordering of the elements. If all three properties are acceptable to you, this is by far the most efficient approach as evaluated later in this article! However, how can you maintain the order of the original list elements while also allow duplicates? Let's dive into the list comprehension alternative! Method 2: List Comprehension List comprehension is a compact way of creating lists. The simple formula is [expression + context]. Expression: What to do with each list elements to select? The context consists of an arbitrary number of for and if statements. You can use list comprehension to go over all elements in the first list but ignore them if they are in the second list: # Method 2: List Comprehension print([x for x in a if x not in set(b)]) # [3, 2, 1] We used a small but effective optimization of converting the second list b to a set first. The reason is that checking membership x in b is much faster for sets than for lists. However, semantically, both variants are identical. Here are the distinctive properties of this approach: The result of the list comprehension statement is a list. The order of the original list is maintained. Duplicate elements are maintained. If you rely on these more powerful guarantees, use the list comprehension approach because it's the most Pythonic one. Method 3: Simple For Loop Surprisingly, some online tutorials recommend using a nested for loop (e.g., those guys): # Method 3: Nested For Loop d = [] for x in a: if x not in b: d.append(x) print(d) # [3, 2, 1] In my opinion, this approach would only be used by absolute beginners or coders who come from other programming languages such as C++ or Java and don't know essential Python features like list comprehension. You can optimize this method by converting the list b to a set first to accelerate the check if x not in b by a significant margin. Original Article: List Difference | The Most Pythonic Way Where to Go From Here? Enough theory. Let's get some practice! Coders get paid six figures and more because they can solve problems more effectively using machine intelligence and automation. To become more successful in coding, solve more real problems for real people. That's how you polish the skills you really need in practice. After all, what's the use of learning with toy projects and focus on practical code projects that earn you money and solve real problems for people? If your answer is YES!, consider becoming a Python skills—even if you are a complete beginner. If you just want to learn about the freelancing opportunity, feel free to watch my free webinar "How to Build Your High-Income Skill Python" and learn how I grew my coding business online and how you can, too—from the comfort of your own home. Join the free webinar now! While working as a researcher in distributed systems, Dr. Christian Mayer found his love for teaching computer science students. To help students reach higher levels of Python success, he founded the programming education website Finxter.com. He's author of the popular programming book Python series of self-published books, computer science enthusiast, freelancer, and owner of one of the top 10 largest Python blogs worldwide. His passions are writing, reading, and coding. But his greatest passion is to serve aspiring coders through Finxter and help them to boost their skills. You can join his free email academy here.

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