Lists: An introduction

```
let lst = [1;2;3]
let empty = []

let longer = 5::lst
let another = 5::1::2::3::[]

let rec sum xs =
  match xs with
  | [] -> 0
  | h::t -> h + sum t

let six = sum lst
let zero = sum empty
```

Lists: An introduction

```
let lst = ["abc"; "def"; "ghi"]

let rec concat ss =
  match ss with
   | [] -> ""
   | s::ss' -> s ^ (concat ss')

let a_i = concat lst
```

Building lists

Syntax:

- `[]` is the empty list
- **`e1::e2`** prepends element **`e1`** to list **`e2`**
- **`[e1; e2; ...; en]`** is *syntactic sugar* for **`e1::e2::...::en::[]`**

`[]` is pronounced "nil"

`::` is pronounced "cons" (both from LISP)

Syntactic sugar: redundant kind of syntax that makes program "sweeter" or easier to write

Building lists

Evaluation:

- `[]` is a value
- To evaluate **`e1::e2`**, evaluate **`e1`** to a value **`v1`**, evaluate **`e2`** to a (list) value **`v2`**, and return **`v1::v2`**

Consequence of the above rules:

- To evaluate **`[e1; ...; en]`**, evaluate **`e1`** to a value **`v1`**, ..., evaluate **`en`** to a value **`vn`**, and return **`[v1; ...; vn]`**

Building lists

New types:

For any type `t`, the type `t list` describes lists where all elements have type `t`

- `[1;2;3] : int list`
- `[true] : bool list`
- `[[1+1;2-3];[3*7]] : int list list`

Nil:

`[] : 'a list`

i.e., empty list has type `t list` for any type `t`

Cons:

If `e1 : t` and `e2 : t list` then `e1::e2 : t list`

With parens for clarity:

If `e1 : t` and `e2 : (t list)` then `(e1::e2) : (t list)`

Accessing lists

A list can only be:

- nil, or
- the cons of an element onto another list

Use **pattern matching** to access list in one of those ways:

```
let empty lst =
  match lst with
  | []    -> true
  | h::t -> false
```

Your brain is probably exploding with AWESOME questions about pattern matching now...

Recursion!

Functions over lists are usually recursive: only way to "get to" all the elements

- What should the answer be for the empty list?
- What should the answer be for a non-empty list?
  - Typically in terms of the answer for the tail of the list

Example list functions

```
let rec sum xs =
  match xs with
  | [] -> 0
  | h::t -> h + sum t

let rec length xs =
  match xs with
  | [] -> 0
  | h::t -> 1 + length t

let rec append lst1 lst2 =
  match lst1 with
  | [] -> lst2
  | h::t -> h::(append t lst2)

(* append is available as operator @ *)
```

Lists are immutable

- No way to *mutate* an element of a list
- Instead, build up new lists out of old
  e.g., `::` and `@`

Match expressions

Syntax:

```
match e with
 | p1 -> e1
 | p2 -> e2
 | …
 | pn -> en
```

the **pi** are *patterns*
the first pipe is optional
line breaks are optional

e.g.,

```
let empty lst =
  match lst with [] -> true | h::t -> false
```

Patterns

Patterns have their own **syntax**

For now, a pattern can be any of these:

- a variable name (e.g., **`x`**)
- **`[]`**
- **`p1::p2`**
- an underscore **`_`**

As we learn more data structures, we'll learn more patterns

Patterns

Patterns **match** values

Intuition of matching is that pattern "looks like" the value, if variables in the pattern are replaced by pieces of the value

- `[]` looks like `[]`
- `h::t` looks like `2::3`
- `x` looks like `[1;2;3]`
- `_` looks like anything

...we'll make this precise later

Match expressions

```
match e with
  | p1 -> e1
  | p2 -> e2
  | …
  | pn -> en
```

Evaluation:

- Evaluate **`e`** to a value **`v`**
- If **`p1`** matches **`v`**, then evaluate **`e1`** to a value **`v1`** and return **`v1`**
- Else, if **`p2`** matches **`v`**, then evaluate **`e2`** to a value **`v2`** and return **`v2`**
- …
- Else, if **`pn`** matches **`v`**, then evaluate **`en`** to a value **`vn`** and return **`vn`**
- Else, if no patterns match, raise an exception

When evaluating branch expression **`ei`**, any pattern variables that matched are in scope

Type checker will warn you if you write an *inexhaustive pattern match*

…so you can prevent exceptions from being raised at runtime by fixing your code when compiler warns you

Match expressions

```
match e with
  | p1 -> e1
  | p2 -> e2
  | …
  | pn -> en
```

Type-checking:

If `e` and `p1...pn` have type `ta`
and `e1...en` have type `tb`
then entire match expression has type `tb`

Pattern matching

The pattern **[ ]** matches the value **[ ]** and nothing else

```
match [] with
| []    -> 0
| h::t -> 1   (* evaluates to 0 *)

match [] with
| h::t -> 0
| []    -> 1   (* evaluates to 1 *)
```

Pattern matching

The pattern **h::t** matches any list with at least one element, and binds that element to **h**, and any remaining list to **t**

```
match [1;2;3] with
| []    -> 0
| h::t -> h   (* evaluates to 1 *)
```

```
match [1;2;3] with
| []    -> 0
| h::t -> t   (* evaluates to [2;3] *)
```

A tricky pattern match

```
let rec drop_val v l =
  match l with
   | [] -> []
   | h::t -> let t' = drop_val v t in
             if h=v then t' else h::t'
```

Deep pattern matching

- Pattern `a::[]` matches all lists with exactly one element
- Pattern `a::b` matches all lists with at least one element
- Pattern `a::b::[]` matches all lists with exactly two elements
- Pattern `a::b::c::d` matches all lists with at least three elements

Accessing lists, with poor style

- Two library functions that return head and tail

  `List.hd, List.tl`

- **Not idiomatic** to apply directly to a list
  - Because they throw exceptions; you can easily write buggy code
  - Whereas pattern matching guarantees no exceptions when destructing list; it's hard to write buggy code!

Tail recursion

```
# length [0; 1; ...; 1_000_000];;
Stack overflow during evaluation
(looping recursion?).
```

Why?

```
let rec length xs =
  match xs with
  | [] -> 0
  | h::t -> 1 + length t
```

Tail recursion

Solution: When recursive call is the *only thing left to do* in computation, compiler reuses the stack frame. Reduces space from O(n) to O(1).

```
let rec length_plus_n n = function
| [] -> n
| h::t -> length_plus_n (n+1) t

let length_tr = length_plus_n 0
```

Lists (recap)

- **Syntax:** `[]  ::  [a; b; c]`
- **Semantics:** building with nil and cons, accessing with pattern matching
- **Idioms:** recursive functions with pattern for nil and for cons, **`function`** syntactic sugar, tail recursion
- **Library:** excellent higher-order functions in OCaml standard library (tomorrow)