

Class 09: Computing with Symbols and Numbers

Held: Tuesday, 5 February 2008

Summary: We explore some of Scheme's standard numeric functions.

Related Pages:

- EBoard.
- Lab: Numeric Computation.
- Reading: Numeric Values & Symbolic Values.

Notes:

- Are there questions on Assignment 3?
- Advance notice: Extra credit for attending Thursday's convo.
- There is only one readings for tomorrow, Representing Images as Lists of Spots
- The Mac version of DrFu is now available, but experimental. Send comments!

Overview:

- Types.
- Kinds of Numbers.
- Key Numeric Operations.

Types

- As you may have noted in your first experiments with Scheme, Scheme assigns *types* to variables.
- For example, a value might be a number, or a string, or an image identifier, or a procedure, or a drawing, or
- Computer scientists often think of types in two different ways:
 - *Data-driven*: A type is a set of values.
 - *Purpose-driven*: A type provides information on the valid operations that may be applied to a piece of data.
- We will alternate between the two definitions.
- Many languages (particularly the ones you've reported being familiar with) require you to assign a type to a variable when you declare that variable.
- Scheme does not require you to assign types to variables; it checks the type of each operand when it executes a procedure.
 - Scheme also provides procedures that let you determine the type of a value.
- As the semester progresses, you will learn new types.

Scheme's Numeric Types

- Instead of a general “numbers” type, Scheme provides a variety of kinds of numbers.
 - Integers are numbers without a fractional component.
 - Rational numbers can be expressed as the ratio of two integers.
 - Real numbers appear somewhere on the number line.
 - In mathematics, real numbers can be rational or irrational.
 - In Scheme, real numbers are all rational.
 - Complex numbers may include an *imaginary* component.
 - Our version of Scheme does not support complex numbers, but we mention them anyway.
 - You can (almost) always use an integer when a real is expected, but you cannot always use
 - Scheme also represents some numbers exactly and some numbers inexactly. (That is, it approximates some numbers.)
 - It certainly has to approximate irrational numbers.
 - But it also approximates many other numbers.
 - It may surprise you to see which numbers are represented inexactly. (We'll return to this issue later.)
 - Some important numeric predicates (procedures that return true or false): `number?`, `real?`, `integer?`, `exact?`, and `inexact?`.
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