Getting Started with micro:bit **Alien Encounter**

In this activity, you will write your first python programs to control the micro:bit **display** in different ways.
This activity has two parts:

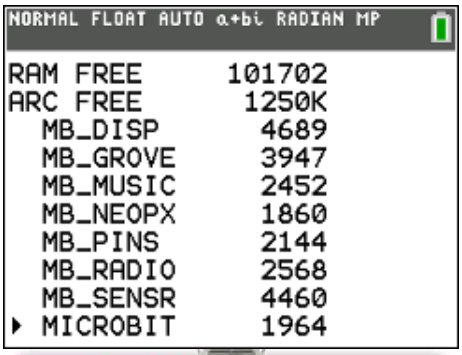
Part 1: Alien Encounter
Part 2: Displaying Images

1. Before you begin, be sure that:
   - You are using a **TI-84 Plus CE Python with OS 5.7**
   - You are comfortable programming in python.
   - Your **micro:bit** is connected to your calculator and lit.
   - You have followed the set-up directions in the micro:bit **Getting Started Guide**: https://education.ti.com/en/product-resources/microbit
     and thus have the TI runtime file on the micro:bit and the latest microbit modules in your calculator.

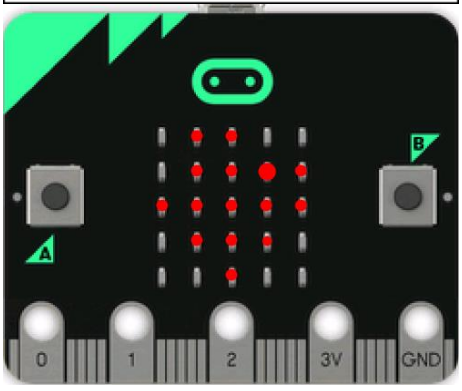
   This setup process should only have to be done once but keep informed periodically about updates/upgrades.

2. From the calculator home screen (Quit the Python App), you can check your calculator to be sure that the appropriate files are installed: press **[2nd] [+]** for **[mem],** select **Mem Management > AppVars** and scroll to the 'M' section to find MICROBIT and the MB_* support files shown.

   Note: there are more than those displayed in this image: a total of 11 (version 1) or 13 (version 2) micro:bit AppVars.



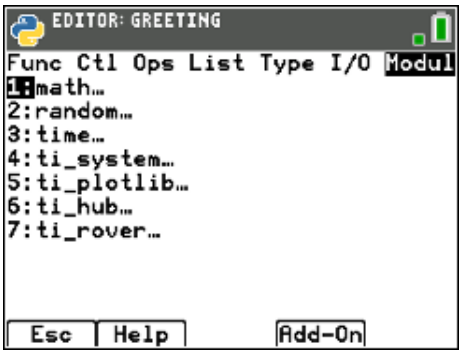
3. If all is good and the setup has been done correctly, your micro:bit should look like this when it has power from the calculator:
   The display on the **micro:bit** is showing the TI logo, an icon of the state of Texas with a bright spot near Dallas, the home of **Texas Instruments, Inc**.



4. **Part 1: Alien Encounter:** Of course, as with every other first programming experience, you will start with displaying a message on the micro:bit display. In the Python Manager start a **<New>** program (we named it GREETING).

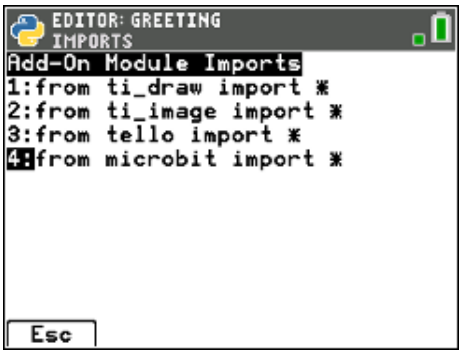
   In OS version 5.7, when selecting **<Fns…> Modul** within the Editor, a special soft key appears called **<Add-On>** which gives access to additional TI-developed modules. (if you don't see this on the screen as shown here, you need to update to OS 5.7)

   Tip: If the message 'micro:bit not connected' ever appears, just unplug the micro:bit and plug it in again (reset).



<Fns…> Modul screen

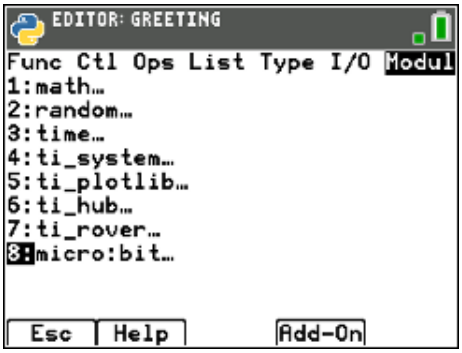
5. Select **<Add-On>** to see some additional modules that are available, some of them shown here. Your list may differ but should include **microbit**. Select **from microbit import *** to paste that code into your program.



6. In the Editor, the presence of this micro:bit import statement adds a new option to the bottom of both the **<Fns…> Modul** menu and the **[math]** menu: **micro:bit…**

   As you add features from micro:bit this menu will grow!

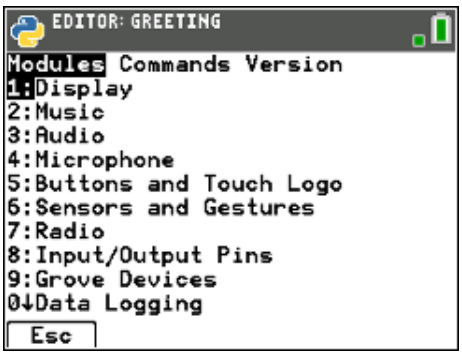
   Note: **[math]** *is a keypad shortcut for* **<Fns…> Modul** *but does not display the* **<Add-On>** *soft key*.



7. The **micro:bit…** sub-menu contains all the tools necessary for programming the micro:bit using separate sub-**modules**.

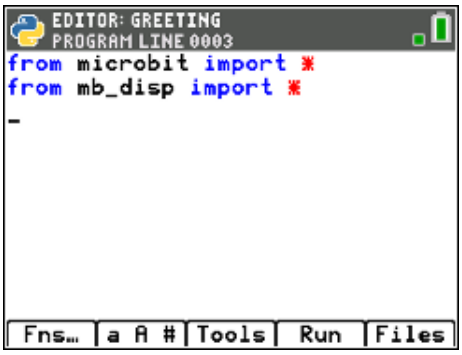
   Each of these menu items will paste its own **import** *statement since the tools are all in separate Python modules (AppVars). If you are using a micro:bit version 1 there are fewer items on this screen. The micro:bit commands are contained in separate modules to save memory.*

   Select the **Display** menu…



8. After selecting **Display**, you see a new import statement in your program:

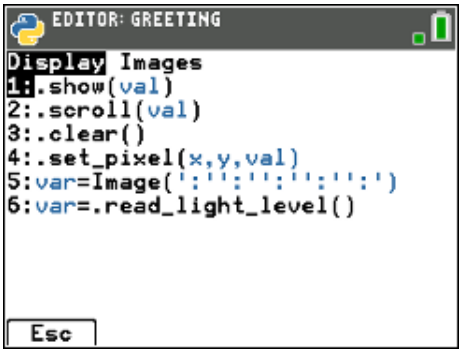
   from mb_disp import *



9. Look at the **[math]** menu again: There is now a **display…** menu item added to the bottom of the list. Select **display…**

10. The **display…** menu shown here contains the functions that control the display on the micro:bit, the 5x5 grid of red LEDs in the center of the board and more. Note that there is also an **Images** sub-menu that you will use in part 2 of this activity.

    Select **.show(val)**



11. Your cursor is blinking inside the function's arguments (actually on the right parenthesis). Type "greetings, earthlings" in the parentheses, including the quotes:

display.show("greetings earthlings")

Press **[2nd] [alpha]** to turn alpha lock on and press **[+]** for a quotation mark. All letters typed will be lowercase. For uppercase, press **[alpha]**.

Note: There are two optional arguments that you can add:

display.show(___**, delay = 400, wait =** **True**)

delay= *(time in milliseconds) controls the speed of the display.*
wait= *(***True** *or* **False***) tells the micro:bit/calculator to finish displaying before moving on to do something else.*
Each optional parameter can and should be edited to see their impact and each may be specified using their keyword. This is recommended, but not required.

<Run> the program and watch the display on the micro:bit.
You will see the letters of your message appear, one letter at a time, on the display. The lowercase letters 'e' do appear twice but you cannot distinguish two of them.

12. A better method for displaying long messages is:

display.scroll("greetings earthlings")

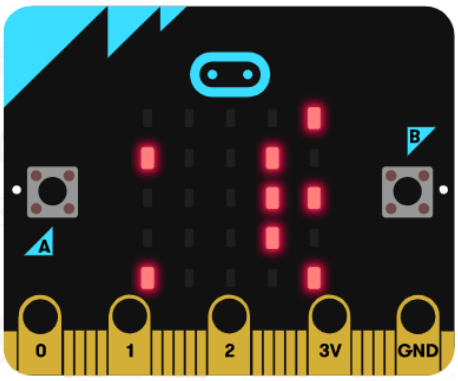
which is also found on the **[math] display…** menu.

Make the previous **.show()** statement a #comment. Place the cursor at the beginning of that line and press **[2nd] [3]** to insert a '#' and then run the program again.

Yes, you can also simply change .**show** *to* .**scroll** *by typing or you can leave both statements active to see them being processed.*
Note: **.scroll( )** *also supports the optional* **delay=** *and* **wait=** *arguments.*

13. The **display.scroll( )** function causes the message to scroll smoothly from right to left like a banner. **delay** controls the speed of the scrolling. **wait** tells the calculator and micro:bit to wait until the scroll is done before moving on to another instruction. Try other **delay** values to see the effect on the scrolling.

display.scroll(___ , delay = 100, wait = True)

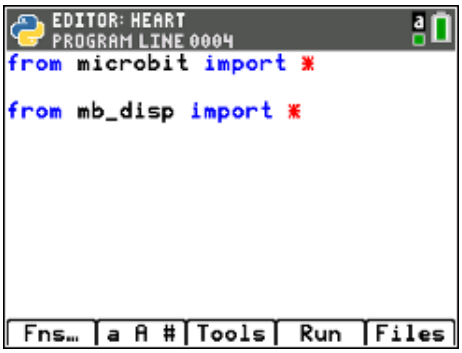


14. **Part 2: Displaying images**
Be.Still.My.Beating.Heart

This section shows you how to display images on the micro:bit.
Select **<Files>** and make a new program called HEART.
In the Editor, add the two import statements as before:

from microbit import *
from mb_disp import *

First, get the microbit module from **<Fns…> <Add-On>**
Then press **[math] micro:bit**… *for* **display…**



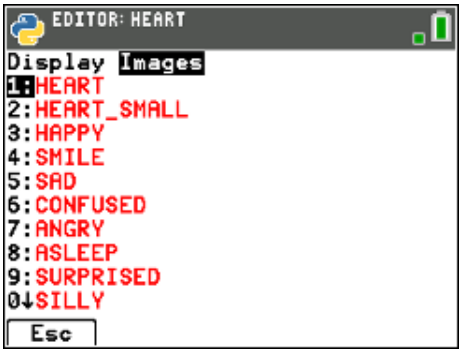
15. To display the HEART image on the micro:bit display use the statement:

display.show(…)

Again, this statement is found on:
[math] display…
Immediately, with your cursor still inside the parentheses, select:

HEART

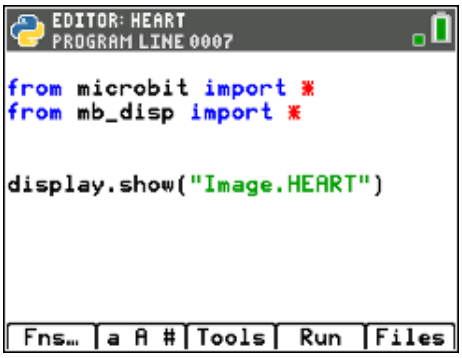
from the **[math] display… Images** *sub-menu.*



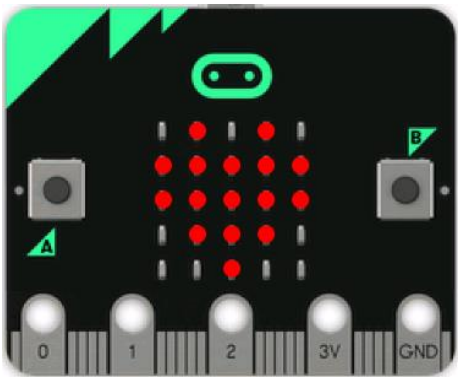
Note: there are 36 Images to choose from and you can design your own using **var=Image(…)** *found on the Display sub-menu. See micro:bit documentation online for information on this feature.*

In case you have not noticed…to cut down on keypresses, the menu system allows for up-arrow and left-arrow 'wraparound', so, for example:
Select **[math]** *then up-arrow to* **display…**

16. The string **"Image.Heart"** is inserted into your code as shown in this screen.



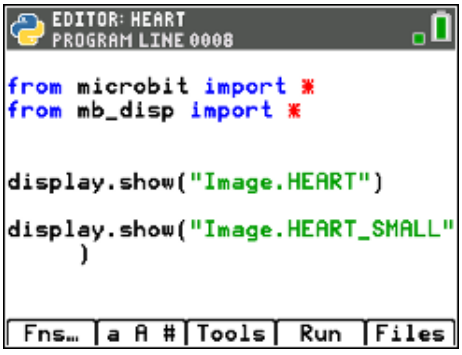
17. **<Run>** the program. Do you see the heart ♥? This display remains on the micro:bit until something takes its place, even after the program is done. To restore the original TI icon, reset the micro:bit. There is a 'reset' button on the back of the micro:bit or you can unplug and re-plug from the calculator. Or just leave it alone.



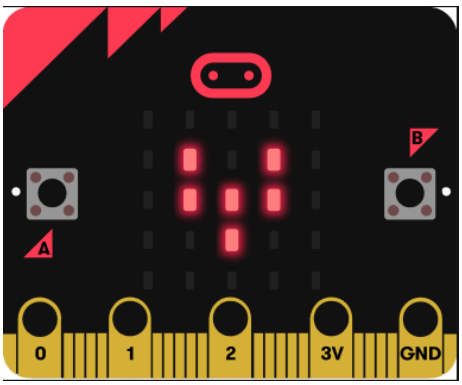
18. Go back to the Editor and add another **display.show( )** statement to show the small heart:

    display.show("Image.HEART_SMALL", …)

    Be sure to get the **display.show( )** statement first, then paste the **"Image.HEART_SMALL"** string. You can find this 'small heart' string on the same **Image** sub-menu right below HEART.



19. **<Run>** the program again. It quickly displays the large heart and then displays the small heart that looks like this.



20. **Make a loop**: To get the two hearts to blink repeatedly ('beat'), embed the two display statements in a loop. *Before* the two display statements insert the statement:

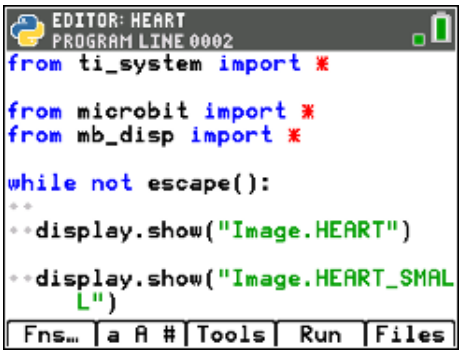
    while not escape( ):

    ♦♦

    found on **[math] ti_system…**
    and *indent* the two display statements so that they form the loop body.

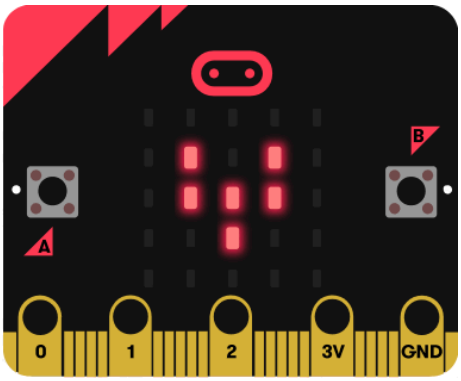
    You must also import **ti_system** in order to use this special **while** statement. Place that **import** statement at the top of your code.

    Important Tip: new to Python? **Indentation** *is critical in Python programs. This is how python interprets loop blocks and if blocks. If the two display statements are not indented the same number of spaces then you will see a syntax error. Use the* **[space]** key (**[alpha] [0]**) *or select* **<Tools> Indent►** *to indent both lines the same amount. Indentation spaces are indicated in this Editor as light gray diamond symbols (♦♦) to help with proper indentation.*



21. **<Run>** your program again and watch the Beating Heart! Press the **[clear]** key to end the program.

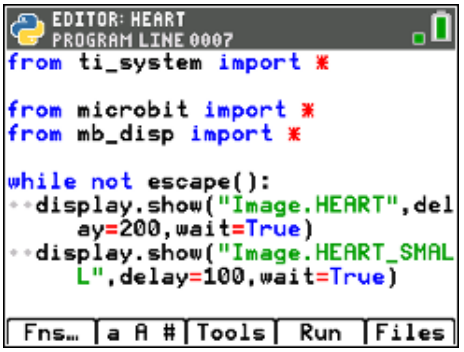
    Tip: if you ever think your program is stuck in an infinite loop, press and hold the **[on]** key *on your calculator to 'break' the program. This could happen if you use* **while True:**. *These lessons avoid that type of structure by using the* **while not escape():** *loop.*



22. To control the beating heartrate, add the **delay=** and, optionally **wait=,** argument and adjust the values in these two display commands as shown here. Remember that the delay value is in milliseconds.

    Note: some blank lines have been removed from the program in this screen to show the entire program.

    Change both **wait=** *parameters to* **False** *to see how fast the heart blinks.* **False** *is found on* **<a A #>.** *wait =* **True** *tells the micro:bit to complete the task before going to the next task (like 'pause' or 'sleep'). When* **False** *it goes immediately to the next task and ignores the delay= value.*



23. **Optional:** Try '**Making Faces**'. Use a similar program structure as '**Beating Heart**' but use the 'face' images instead