A pair of glasses with a dark frame and light-colored lenses is resting on a piece of white paper. The background is a soft, out-of-focus yellow and orange gradient.

# Data Structures

## Chapter 1

### 1. Recursion

- Recursion
- Mergesort

### 2. Performance Analysis

### 3. Asymptotic Analysis

# Recursion

- See Recursion

TOP DEFINITION

**recursion**

See recursion.

by [Anonymous](#) December 05, 2002

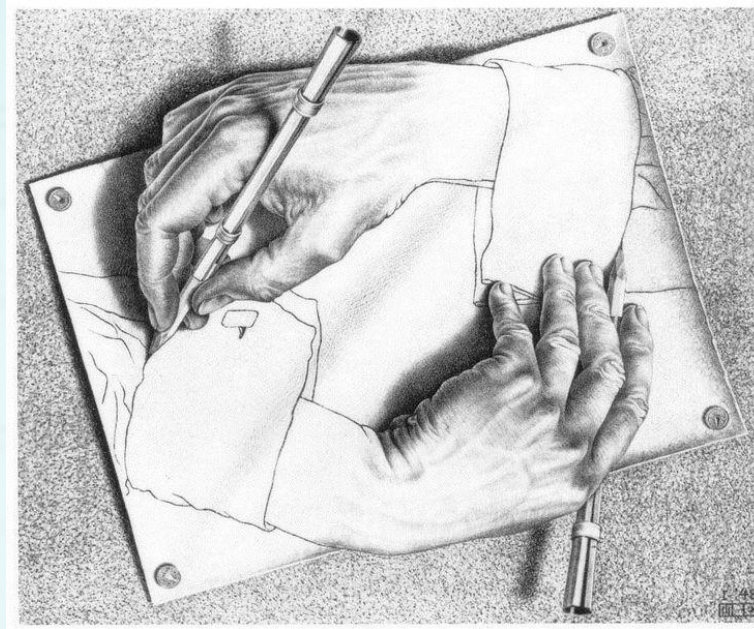
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Very descriptive definition

# Recursion

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- See Recursion
- Recursion is when a function calls itself
- Recursion simplifies program structure at a cost of function calls
- Recursion vs. Leap of faith



*recursion is  
when a function calls itself*

# Example 1: BunnyEars

- What is the output of the function `bunnyEars()`?
- What is the output of the function `main()`?
- How many times does two returns execute, respectively?

```
int bunnyEars(int n) {  
    cout << n << endl;  
    if (n > 0)  
        return bunnyEars(n - 1) + 2;  
    return 0;  
}
```

```
int main() {  
    cout << bunnyEars(4) << endl;  
}
```

1	bunnyEars(4)	
2	cout << 4	
3	bunnyEars(3)	
4	cout << 3	
5	bunnyEars(2)	
6	cout << 2	
7	bunnyEars(1)	
8	cout << 1	
9	bunnyEars(0)	
10	cout << 0	return 0

# Example 1: BunnyEars

- What is the output of the function `bunnyEars()`?
- What is the output of the function `main()`?
- How many times does two returns execute, respectively?

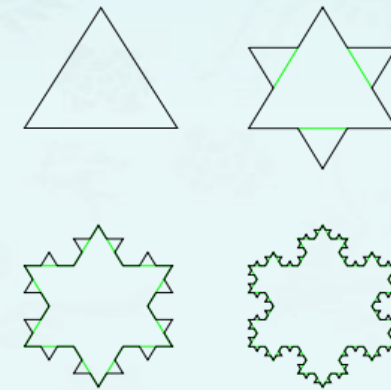
```
int bunnyEars(int n) {  
    cout << n << endl;  
    if (n > 0)  
        return bunnyEars(n - 1) + 2;  
    return 0;  
}
```

```
int main() {  
    cout << bunnyEars(4) << endl;  
}
```

1	bunnyEars(4)	
2	cout << 4	return f(3) + 2
3	bunnyEars(3)	
4	cout << 3	return f(2) + 2
5	bunnyEars(2)	
6	cout << 2	return f(1) + 2
7	bunnyEars(1)	
8	cout << 1	return f(0) + 2
9	bunnyEars(0)	
10	cout << 0	

# Recursion

- **Recursion** is a method where the solution to a problem depends on solutions to **smaller** instances of the same problem (as opposed to iteration).
- **Recursive algorithm** is expressed in terms of
  1. **base case(s)** for which the solution can be stated **non-recursively**,
  2. **recursive case(s)** for which the solution can be expressed in terms of a **smaller version of itself**.



Four stages in the construction of a **Koch snowflake**. The stages are obtained via a recursive definition.



## Example 3: Factorial

$$\text{fact}(n) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n = 0 \\ n \cdot \text{fact}(n - 1) & \text{if } n > 0 \end{cases}$$

factorial(n)

**function** factorial

**input:** integer  $n$  such that  $n \geq 0$

**output:**  $[n \times (n-1) \times (n-2) \times \dots \times 1]$

1. if  $n$  is 0, **return** 1

2. otherwise, **return**  $[n \times \text{factorial}(n-1)]$

**end** factorial

factorial ( $n = 4$ )

$$\begin{aligned} f_4 &= 4 * f_3 \\ &= 4 * (3 * f_2) \\ &= 4 * (3 * (2 * f_1)) \\ &= 4 * (3 * (2 * (1 * f_0))) \\ &= 4 * (3 * (2 * (1 * 1))) \\ &= 4 * (3 * (2 * 1)) \\ &= 4 * (3 * 2) \\ &= 4 * 6 \\ &= 24 \end{aligned}$$

## Example 3: Factorial

$$\text{fact}(n) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n = 0 \\ n \cdot \text{fact}(n - 1) & \text{if } n > 0 \end{cases}$$

factorial(n)

**function** factorial

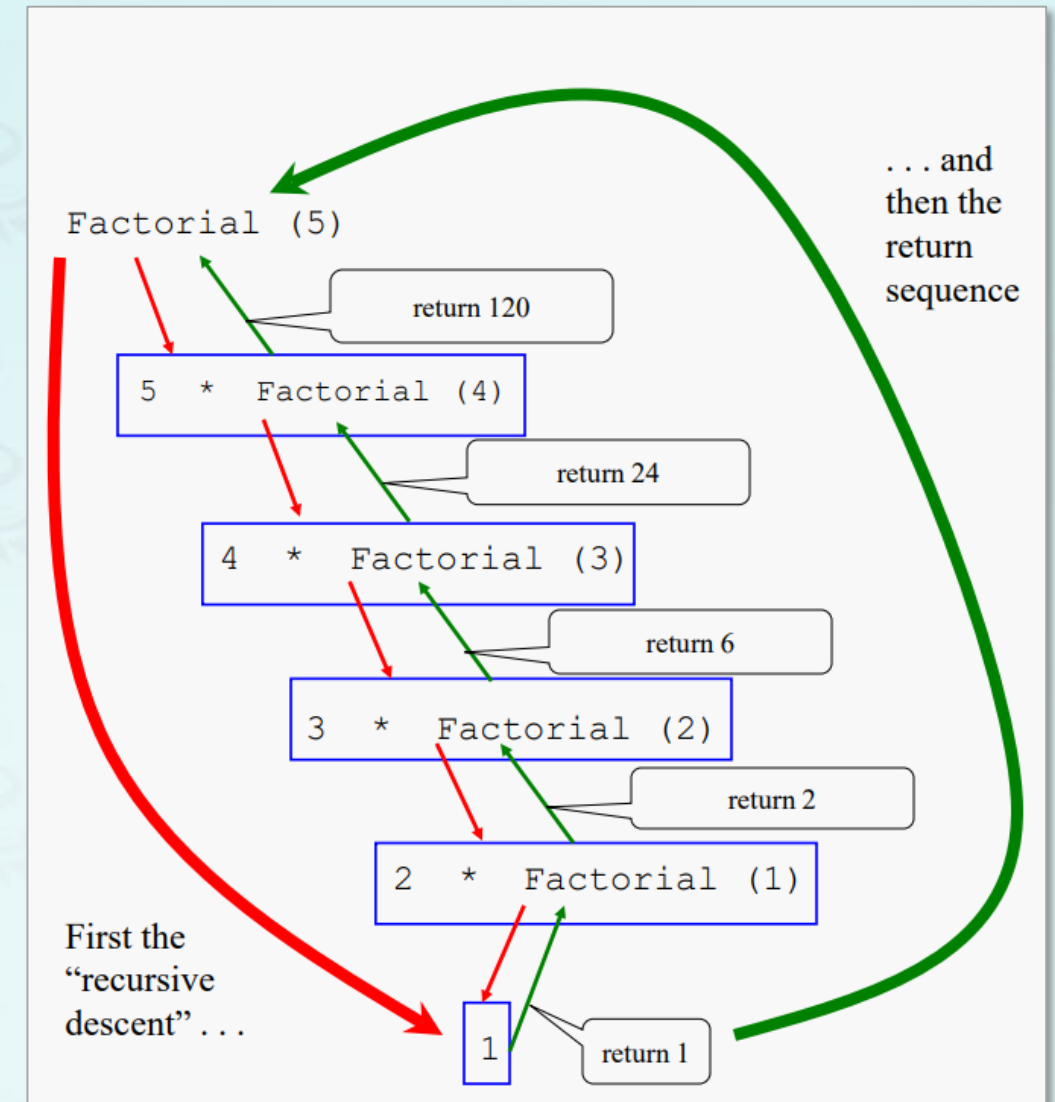
**input:** integer  $n$  such that  $n \geq 0$

**output:**  $[n \times (n-1) \times (n-2) \times \dots \times 1]$

1. if  $n$  is 0, **return** 1

2. otherwise, **return**  $[n \times \text{factorial}(n-1)]$

**end** factorial





## Example 4: GCD

- Compute **GCD** recursively with  $\text{gcd}(x=259, y=111) = ?$

$$\text{gcd}(x, y) = \begin{cases} x & \text{if } y = 0 \\ \text{gcd}(y, \text{remainder}(x, y)) & \text{if } y > 0 \end{cases}$$

$\text{gcd}(x, y)$

**function** gcd

**input:** integer x, y such that  $x \geq y, y > 0$

**output:** gcd of x and y

1. if y is 0, **return** x

2. otherwise, **return** [ gcd (y,  $x \% y$ ) ]

**end** gcd

$\text{gcd}(x=259, y=111)$

**gcd(259, 111)**

= gcd(111,  $259 \% 111$ )

= **gcd(111, 37)**

= gcd(37,  $111 \% 37$ )

= **gcd(37, 0)**

= 37

- Exercise: gcd(91, 52)

# Reminder

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- **Recursion** is a method where the solution to a problem depends on solutions to **smaller** instances of the same problem (as opposed to iteration).

## Example 5: Recursive binary search

- Binary search is an efficient algorithm for finding an item from **a sorted list** of items.
  - It works by repeatedly **dividing in half the portion of the list** that could contain the item,
  - until you've **narrowed down the possible locations to just one.**

key=23

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	5	8	9	16	23	31	56	62	71

## Example 5: Recursive binary search

- For instance, we want to search "23" from the array. If we find it, we return its array index; otherwise, -1 or something else.

key=23	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	2	5	8	9	16	23	31	56	62	71

key > mi 23 > 16	lo=0	1	2	3	mi=4	5	6	7	8	hi=9
	2	5	8	9	16	23	31	56	62	71

key < mi 23 < 56	0	1	2	3	4	lo=5	6	mi=7	8	hi=9
	2	5	8	9	16	23	31	56	62	71

key = mi 23 = 23	0	1	2	3	4	mi=5 lo=5	hi=6	7	8	9
	2	5	8	9	16	23	31	56	62	71

## Example 5: Recursive binary search

- For instance, we want to search "23" from the array. If we find it, we return its array index; otherwise, -1 or something else.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	5	8	9	16	23	31	56	62	71

lo=0	1	2	3	mi=4	5	6	7	8	hi=9
2	5	8	9	16	23	31	56	62	71

0	1	2	3	4	lo=5	6	mi=7	8	hi=9
2	5	8	9	16	23	31	56	62	71

0	1	2	3	4	mi=5 lo=5	hi=6	7	8	9
2	5	8	9	16	23	31	56	62	71

```
int binarySearch(int list[], int key,
                 int lo, int hi) {
    if (lo > hi) return -1;

    mi = (lo + hi)/2;
    if (key == list[mi]) return mi;
    if (key < list[mi])
        return binarySearch(list, key, lo, mi - 1);
    else
        return binarySearch(list, key, mi + 1, hi);
}
```

## Example 5: Recursive binary search

- How many times is the `binarySearch()` called in terms of  $n$ ?
- In one call to `binarySearch()`, we eliminate at least half the elements from consideration. Hence, it takes  $\log_2 n$  (the base 2 logarithm of  $n$ ) `binarySearch()` calls to compare down the possibilities to one. Therefore `binarySearch` takes time proportional to  $\log_2 n$ .

```
int binarySearch(int list[], int key, int lo, int hi) {  
    if (lo > hi) return -1;  
  
    mi = (lo + hi)/2;  
    if (key == list[mi]) return mi;           // base case  
    if (key < list[mi])                       // recursive case  
        return binarySearch(list, key, lo, mi - 1);  
    else  
        return binarySearch(list, key, mi + 1, hi);  
}
```



## Example 6: Recursive binary search 100

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- Given the numbers 1 to 100, what is the minimum number of guesses needed to find a specific number if you are given the hint 'higher' or 'lower' for each guess you make?
  - Since the numbers are sequential (or sorted), we can use **binary search**.
  - Look at the middle element: if it's after than the number we're looking for, search the first half. If it's before the number we're looking for, look at the second half.
  - Each check cuts the size of the list numbers in half; how many times can we do this?
  - If we think backwards, in terms of doubling the list, we'll need  $n$  doublings to generate a list of length  $2^n = 100$ . What is the value of  $n$ ?
  - Since  $2^6 = 64$  and  $2^7 = 128$  (or  $\log_2 64 = 6$ ,  $\log_2 128 = 7$ ),  $n = 6.x$   
Therefore  $n = 7$  guesses will be enough.

## Example 6: Recursive binary search 1000

---

- Given the numbers 1 to 1000, what is the minimum number of guesses needed to find a specific number if you are given the hint 'higher' or 'lower' for each guess you make?
  - For an array whose length is 1000, the closest lower power of 2 is 512, which is  $2^9$ .
  - We can thus estimate that  $\log_2 1000$  is a number greater than 9 and less than 10, or use a calculator to see that its about 9.97. Adding one to that yields about 10.97.
  - In the case of a decimal number, we round down to find the actual number of guesses.
  - Therefore, for a 1000-element array, binary search would require at most **10 guesses**.

Reference: <https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/complexity-analysis-of-binary-search/>

## Example 5: Recursive binary search

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	5	8	9	16	23	31	56	62	71

lo=0	1	2	3	mi=4	5	6	7	8	hi=9
2	5	8	9	16	23	31	56	62	71

0	1	2	3	4	lo=5	6	mi=7	8	hi=9
2	5	8	9	16	23	31	56	62	71

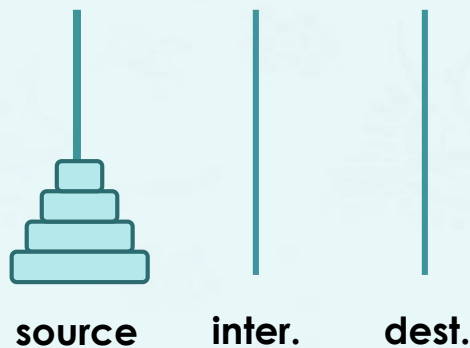
0	1	2	3	4	mi=5	lo=5	hi=6	7	8	9
2	5	8	9	16	23	31	56	62	71	

	Stack	Stack	Heap
search()	lo=5 hi=6 mi=5	key=23 list[.]	
search()	lo=5 hi=9 mi=7	key=23 list[.]	
search()	lo=0 hi=9 mi=4	key=23 list[.]	
search()	key=23	list[.]	[2 5 8 9 16 23 31 56 62 71]
main()		args[.]	args[]

Most operating systems give a program enough stack space for a few thousand stack frames. If you use a recursive procedure to walk through a million-node list, the program will try to create a million stack frames, and **the stack will run out of space**. The result is a run-time error.

## Example 6: Tower of Hanoi

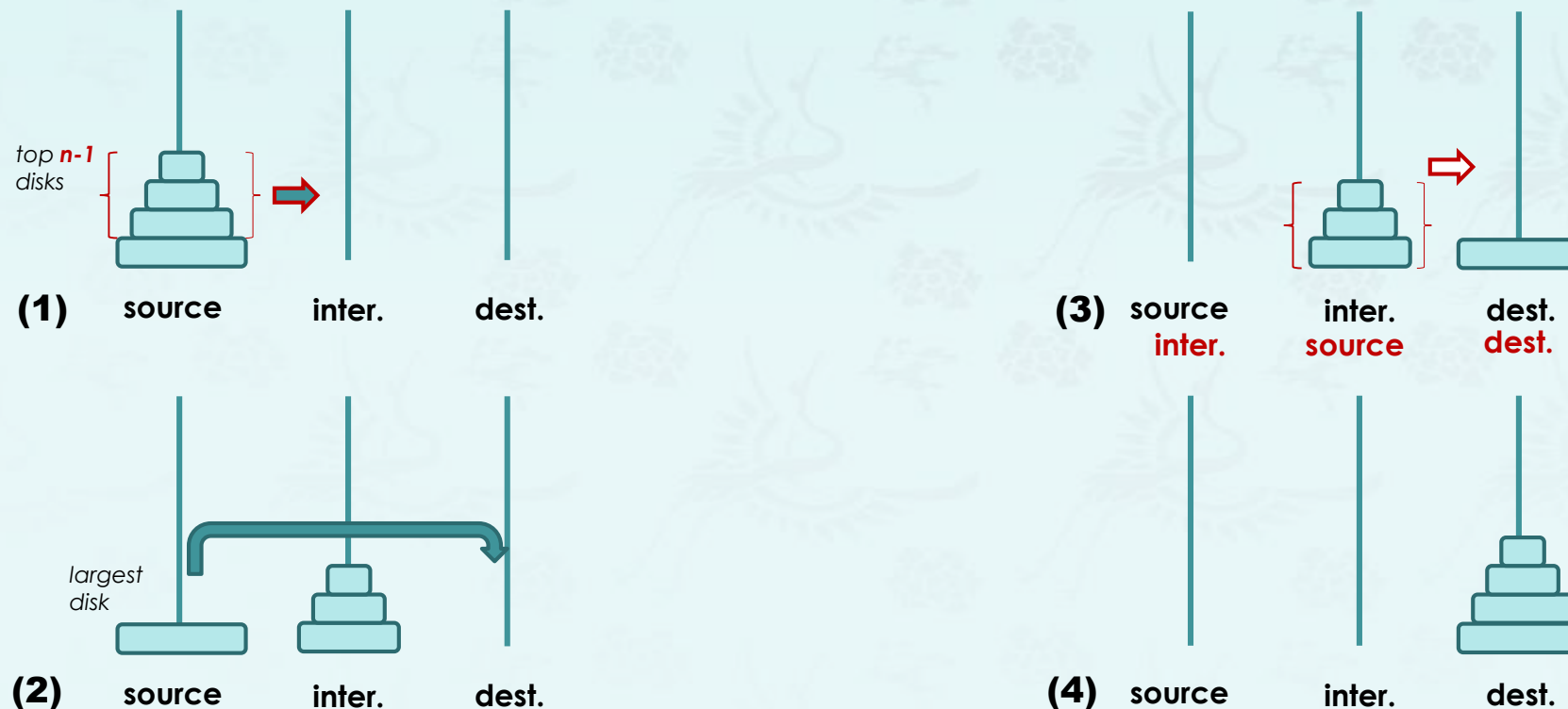
- Given three pegs, one with a set of  $N$  disks of increasing size, determine the minimum (optimal) number of steps it takes to move all the disks from their initial position to a single stack on another peg *without placing a larger disk on top of a smaller one*. Only one disk can be moved at any time.
- **Recursive algorithm:**
  - (1) Move the top  **$n-1$**  disks from **source** to **intermediate**.
  - (2) Move the remaining (**largest**) disk from **source** to **destination**.
  - (3) Move the  **$n-1$**  disks from **intermediate** to **destination**.



# Example 6: Tower of Hanoi

- **Recursive algorithm:**

- (1) Move the top  **$n-1$**  disks from **source** to **intermediate**.
- (2) Move the remaining (**largest**) disk from **source** to **destination**.
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## Example 6: Tower of Hanoi

- **Recursive algorithm:**

- (1) Move the top ***n-1*** disks from **source** to **intermediate**.
- (2) Move the remaining (**largest**) disk from **source** to **destination**.
- (3) Move the ***n-1*** disks from **intermediate** to **destination**.

- **How do you program this to have the output as shown below?**

- (1) Disk 1 from A to C
- (2) Disk 2 from A to B
- (3) Disk 1 from C to B
- (4) Disk 3 from A to C
- (5) Disk 1 from B to A
- (6) Disk 2 from B to C
- (7) Disk 1 from A to C

```
void hanoi(int n, char source, char inter, char destin) {  
    if (n == 1)  
        printf ("Disk 1 from %c to %c\n", source, destin);  
    else {  
        hanoi(n - 1, source, destin, inter);  
        printf("Disk %d from %c to %c\n", n, source, destin);  
        hanoi(n - 1, inter, source, destin);  
    }  
}
```



## Example 6: Tower of Hanoi

$$\text{hanoi}(n) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n = 1 \\ 2 \cdot \text{hanoi}(n - 1) + 1 & \text{if } n > 1 \end{cases}$$

**Exercise:** How many years will take to move 64 disks?

(1)  $\text{hanoi}(2) = 3$

(2)  $\text{hanoi}(4) = 15$

(3)  $\text{hanoi}(32) = 4,294,967,295$

$\text{hanoi}(64) = 18,446,744,073,709,600,000$

$\text{hanoi}(n = 4)$

$\text{hanoi}(4)$

$= 2 \cdot \text{hanoi}(3) + 1$

$= 2 \cdot (2 \cdot \text{hanoi}(2) + 1) + 1$

$= 2 \cdot (2 \cdot (2 \cdot \text{hanoi}(1) + 1) + 1) + 1$

$= 2 \cdot (2 \cdot (2 \cdot 1 + 1) + 1) + 1$

$= 2 \cdot (2 \cdot (3) + 1) + 1$

$= 2 \cdot (7) + 1 = 15$

# Recursion

---

**Q:** Is the recursive version usually **faster**?

A: No -- it's usually slower (due to the overhead of maintaining the stack)

**Q:** Does the recursive version usually use **less memory**?

A: No -- it usually uses **more** memory (for the stack).

Q: *Then why* use recursion?

A: Sometimes it is much simpler to write the recursive version.

*Because the recursive version causes an **activation record** to be pushed onto the system stack for every call, it is also more limited than the iterative version (it will fail, with a "stack overflow" error), for large values of N.*

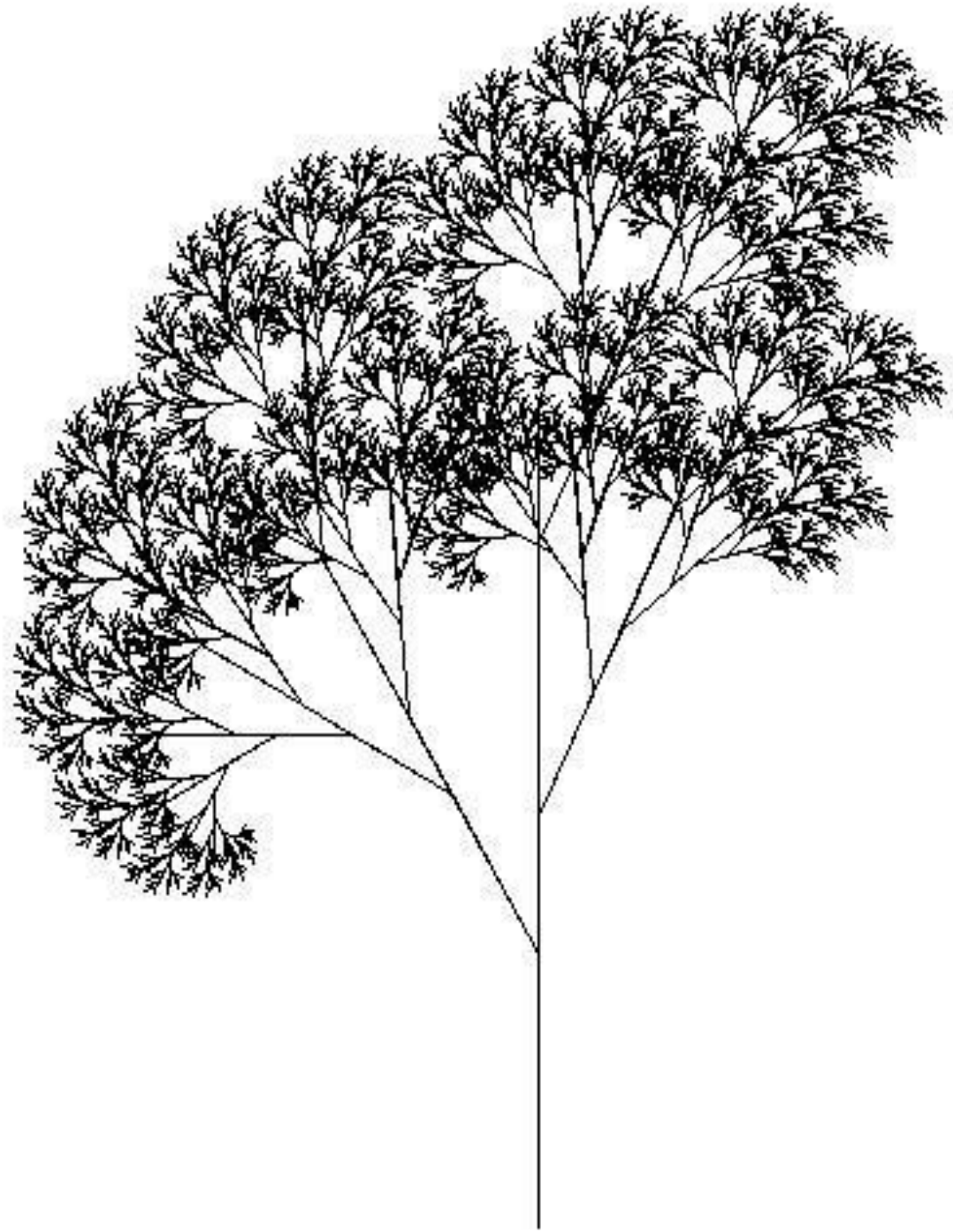



**Sierpinski Triangle:**  
a confined recursion of triangles to  
form a geometric lattice

# Recursion

---

**Recursion**    *see Recursion*



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