

# Chapter 3: Growth of Functions

## Introduction

When we look at input sizes large enough to make only the order of growth of the running time relevant, we are studying **asymptotic** efficiency of algorithms. That is, we are concerned with how the running time increases with the size of the input *in the limit*, as the size of the input increases without bound.

Usually, an algorithm that is asymptotically more efficient will be the best choice for all but very small inputs.

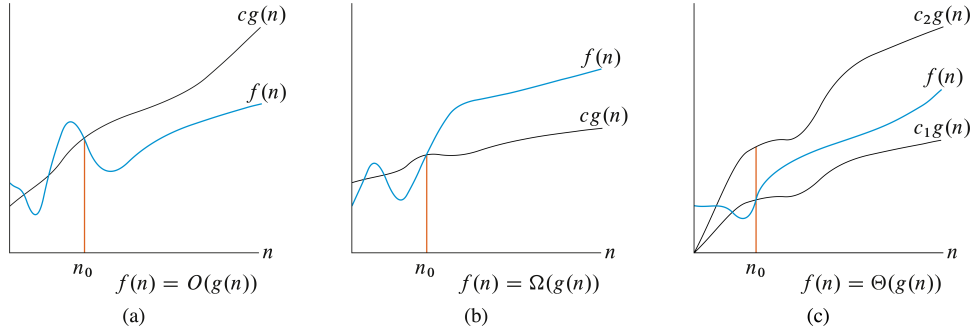
## Asymptotic Notation: informal introduction

- **$O$ -notation** (big-Oh): The  $O$ -notation characterizes an upper bound on the asymptotic behavior of a function. It says that a function grows no faster than a certain rate, based upon its highest order term. Example:  $7n^3 + 100n^2 - 20n + 6$  would be  $O(n^3)$ . It is also  $O(n^4)$ .
- **$\Omega$ -notation** (big-Omega) The  $\Omega$ -notation characterizes a lower bound on the asymptotic behavior of a function. It says that a function grows at least as fast as a certain rate, based (again) upon its highest order term. Example:  $7n^3 + 100n^2 - 20n + 6$  would be  $\Omega(n^3)$ . It is also  $\Omega(n^2)$ , and  $\Omega(n)$ .
- **$\Theta$ -notation** (big-Theta) The  $\Theta$ -notation characterizes a tight bound on the asymptotic behavior of a function. It says that a function grows precisely at a certain rate, based on its highest order term. Example:  $7n^3 + 100n^2 - 20n + 6$  would be  $\Theta(n^3)$ . However, it isn't  $\Theta(n^2)$  or  $\Theta(n^4)$ .

**Note:** If a function is both  $O(f(n))$  and  $\Omega(f(n))$  for some function  $f(n)$ , then we have shown that the function is  $\Theta(f(n))$ .

**Example:** Do an informal asymptotic analysis of insertion sort.

# Asymptotic Notation: formal definition



## • $O$ -notation: asymptotically upper bound

- *Definition*: For a given function  $g(n)$ , we denote by  $O(g(n))$  to be the *set of functions*:

$$O(g(n)) = \{f(n): \text{there exist positive constants } c, \text{ and } n_0 \text{ such that } 0 \leq f(n) \leq cg(n) \text{ for all } n \geq n_0\}$$

- *Alternative Definition*: for two given functions  $f(n)$  and  $g(n)$ :

$$f(n) = O(g(n)) \iff \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{g(n)}{f(n)} = c \text{ or } \infty$$

- We can use the alternative definition to show

$$\begin{aligned} f(n) = \frac{1}{2}n^2 - 4n + 100 &= O(n^2) \quad \text{since } \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{n^2}{\frac{1}{2}n^2 - 4n + 100} = 2 \\ &= O(n^3) \quad \text{since } \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{n^3}{\frac{1}{2}n^2 - 4n + 100} = \infty \\ &= O(\infty) \quad \text{since } \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{\infty}{\frac{1}{2}n^2 - 4n + 100} = \infty \end{aligned}$$

- Another example:

$$f(n) = 10 + \frac{1}{n} = O(1) \quad \text{since } \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} (10 + \frac{1}{n}) = 10 \quad (1)$$

(2)

## • $\Omega$ -notation: asymptotically lower bound

- *Definition*: For a given function  $g(n)$ , we denote by  $\Omega(g(n))$  to be the *set of functions*:

$$\Omega(g(n)) = \{f(n): \text{there exist positive constants } c, \text{ and } n_0 \text{ such that } 0 \leq cg(n) \leq f(n) \text{ for all } n \geq n_0\}$$

- *Alternative Definition*: for two given functions  $f(n)$  and  $g(n)$ :

$$f(n) = \Omega(g(n)) \iff \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{g(n)}{f(n)} = c \text{ or } 0$$

- We can use the definition to show

$$\begin{aligned}
f(n) = \frac{1}{2}n^2 - 4n + 100 &= \Omega(n^2) \quad \text{since } \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{n^2}{\frac{1}{2}n^2 - 4n + 100} = 2 \\
&= \Omega(n) \quad \text{since } \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{n}{\frac{1}{2}n^2 - 4n + 100} = 0 \\
&= \Omega(1) \quad \text{since } \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}n^2 - 4n + 100} = 0
\end{aligned}$$

– For example:

$$\begin{aligned}
\text{INSERTION-SORT}(n) &= \Omega(1) \\
&= \Omega(n) \\
&\neq \Omega(n^2), \text{ since best-case take time proportional to } n
\end{aligned}$$

•  **$\Theta$ -notation: asymptotically tight bound**

– *Definition:* For a given function  $g(n)$ , we denote by  $\Theta(g(n))$  to be the *set of functions*:

$$\Theta(g(n)) = \{f(n) : \text{there exist positive constants } c_1, c_2, \text{ and } n_0 \text{ such that } 0 \leq c_1 g(n) \leq f(n) \leq c_2 g(n) \text{ for all } n \geq n_0\}$$

– *Alternative Definition:* For two given functions  $f(n)$  and  $g(n)$ :

$$f(n) = \Theta(g(n)) \iff \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{g(n)}{f(n)} = c$$

– We can use the definition to show  $f(n) = \frac{1}{2}n^2 - 4n + 100 = \Theta(n^2)$ , since

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{n^2}{\frac{1}{2}n^2 - 4n + 100} = 2$$

– Without using definition, we can determine the  $\Theta$ -notation (as well as other notations) of a function  $f(n)$  by throwing away lower-order terms and ignores the leading coefficient of the highest-order term.

For example,

$$f(n) = \frac{1}{2}n^2 - 4n + 100 = \Theta(n^2)$$

– People often use big-O notation to describe the running time of an algorithm rather than using  $\Theta$ -notation (but they often mean to use  $\Theta$ ) However,  $\Theta$ -notation tells people more exact running time of an algorithm. For example:

$$\begin{aligned}
\text{INSERTION-SORT}(A) &= O(n^2) \text{ for all input } n \\
\text{INSERTION-SORT}(A) &\neq \Theta(n^2) \\
&\neq \Theta(n)
\end{aligned}$$

The worst case of  $\text{INSERTION-SORT}(A) = \Theta(n^2)$

– *Theorem:* for any two functions  $f(n)$  and  $g(n)$ ,  
 $f(n) = \Theta(g(n)) \implies f(n) = O(g(n))$  and  $f(n) = \Omega(g(n))$

- **Properties of asymptotics**

- **Transitivity**

$f(n) = \Theta(g(n))$  and  $g(n) = \Theta(h(n))$  imply  $f(n) = \Theta(h(n))$

$f(n) = O(g(n))$  and  $g(n) = O(h(n))$  imply  $f(n) = O(h(n))$

$f(n) = \Omega(g(n))$  and  $g(n) = \Omega(h(n))$  imply  $f(n) = \Omega(h(n))$

- **Reflexivity**

$f(n) = \Theta(f(n))$

$f(n) = O(f(n))$

$f(n) = \Omega(f(n))$

- **Symmetry**

$f(n) = \Theta(g(n))$  if and only if  $g(n) = \Theta(f(n))$

- **Transpose Symmetry**

$f(n) = O(g(n))$  if and only if  $g(n) = \Omega(f(n))$

- **Trichotomy:** For any two numbers  $a$  and  $b$ , exactly one of the following must hold:  $a < b, a = b, a > b$ . Not all functions are asymptotically comparable. For example:  $n$  and  $n^{1+\sin n}$  cannot be asymptotically compared.

- Based on the above properties, we can draw an analogy to comparing two numbers  $a$  and  $b$ :

$f(n) = O(g(n))$  is similar to  $a \leq b$

$f(n) = \Omega(g(n))$  is similar to  $a \geq b$

$f(n) = \Theta(g(n))$  is similar to  $a = b$

- **Asymptotic notations in equations**

–  $2n^2 + 3n + 1 = 2n^2 + \Theta(n) \implies 2n^2 + 3n + 1 = 2n^2 + f(n)$ , where  $f(n) = \Theta(n)$ . In this case,  $f(n) = 3n + 1$

–  $T(n) = O(n) + \Theta(n) + \Omega(n) \implies T(n) = \Omega(n)$

## Categories of functions

<b>growth rate</b>	slowest	$\rightarrow$	$\rightarrow$	$\rightarrow$	fastest
<b>run time</b>	fastest	$\leftarrow$	$\leftarrow$	$\leftarrow$	slowest
<b>categories</b>	constant	logarithms	polynomials	exponentials	super exponentials
<b>examples</b>	5 1 10000	$\log_2 n$ $\log_{10} n$ $100 \log_e n$	$n^2$ $n^3$ $n^{0.1}$	$2^{n/2}$ $2^n$ $3^n$	$(\log n)^n$ $n!$ $n^n$

- For logarithm functions, the base does not matter.  $\log_{10} n = \Theta(\log_2 n)$  or  $\log_e n = \Theta(\log_2 n)$
- For exponential functions, the base matters.  $2^{n/2} = \sqrt{2^n} = O(2^n)$ , but  $2^{n/2} \neq \Theta(2^n)$
- Comparison between polynomials and exponentials:  $n^a$  and  $b^n$   
 No matter how big the  $a$  is and how small the  $b > 1$  is, the exponential  $b^n$  will always out-grow the polynomial  $n^a$  if  $n$  approaches  $\infty$ .  
 For example,  $1.000001^n$  will out-grow  $n^{1,000,000}$  when  $n \rightarrow \infty$
- **Review Section 3.3 from the textbook:** Discrete mathematics that is useful for analysis. Floors and ceilings, Modular arithmetic, Polynomials, Exponentials, Logarithms, Factorials (pay attention to Stirling's Approximation), and Fibonacci numbers.
- **Review Calculus:** The derivative rule and *L'Hôpital's rule* are useful for obtaining limits of more complex functions.

## Practice Problems

- Exercise 3.2-2.
- Exercise 3.2-3.
- Problem 3-2.

## Math review

- Derivative rules: <https://www.mathsisfun.com/calculus/derivatives-rules.html>
- *L'Hôpital's rule*: <https://www.mathsisfun.com/calculus/l-hopitals-rule.html>