

Graphs – Breadth First Search (BFS)

1. Introduction

Breadth First Search (BFS) is a **graph traversal algorithm** used to visit all vertices of a graph **level by level**.

It explores all neighboring vertices first before moving deeper into the graph.

BFS is especially useful when we want to find the **shortest path** or explore nodes in **layers**.

2. What is BFS?

BFS starts from a **given source vertex** and:

- Visits all its immediate neighbors
- Then visits neighbors of neighbors
- Continues level by level until all reachable vertices are visited

It uses a **queue** data structure to maintain traversal order.

3. Key Characteristics of BFS

- Traverses graph **breadth-wise**
 - Uses **queue (FIFO)**
 - Visits nodes **level by level**
 - Guarantees shortest path in **unweighted graphs**
 - Can be applied to **graphs and trees**
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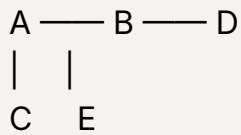
4. BFS Working Principle (Concept)

1. Start from a source node

2. Mark it as visited
 3. Add it to a queue
 4. While queue is not empty:
 - Remove front node
 - Visit all unvisited adjacent nodes
 - Mark them visited and add to queue
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5. BFS Example

Graph:



Start BFS from **A**

Traversal order:

A → B → C → D → E

Explanation:

- Visit A
 - Visit neighbors B and C
 - Visit neighbors of B (D, E)
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6. Visualization of BFS Traversal

Level 0: A
Level 1: B, C
Level 2: D, E

BFS processes one level completely before moving to the next.

7. BFS Using Queue (Conceptual)

Queue state during traversal:

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Start: [A]
After A: [B, C]
After B: [C, D, E]
After C: [D, E]
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8. BFS Algorithm (Plain English)

1. Create a queue
 2. Mark all vertices as unvisited
 3. Enqueue the starting vertex
 4. While queue is not empty:
 - Dequeue a vertex
 - Process it
 - Enqueue all its unvisited neighbors
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9. Time and Space Complexity

Aspect	Complexity
Time Complexity	$O(V + E)$
Space Complexity	$O(V)$

Where:

- V = number of vertices
 - E = number of edges
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10. BFS vs DFS

Feature	BFS	DFS
Data Structure	Queue	Stack / Recursion
Traversal	Level-wise	Depth-wise
Shortest Path	Yes (unweighted)	No
Memory Usage	More	Less

11. Applications of BFS

- Shortest path in unweighted graphs
 - Social networking (friend suggestions)
 - Web crawling
 - Network broadcasting
 - Level order traversal in trees
 - Finding connected components
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12. Advantages of BFS

- Finds shortest path
 - Simple logic
 - Level-based exploration
 - Useful in many real-world problems
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13. Limitations of BFS

- Uses more memory
 - Not efficient for deep graphs
 - Queue size can grow large
 - Slower than DFS in some cases
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14. BFS in Trees vs Graphs

- In trees, BFS is called **Level Order Traversal**
 - In graphs, BFS needs a **visited array** to avoid cycles
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15. Summary

- BFS explores graph level by level
 - Uses queue data structure
 - Guarantees shortest path in unweighted graphs
 - Time complexity is $O(V + E)$
 - Widely used traversal algorithm
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