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Algorithms, Data Structures and Coding

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Algorithms, Data Structures and Coding

0. Introduction

a) Aim of this repository

The aim of this repository is to improve coding skills and enhance skills in algorithmic thinking and data structures.

b) Motivation for this repository

I am programming in different languages and environments for nearly my whole life:

- Starting in the 1980s / 1990s with [GW-Basic](#) and the integrated development environment (IDE) [Turbo Pascal](#).
- Then in the 2000s / 2010s I started with [C++](#), where I understood the **object oriented way of thinking**. I learnt a lot in C++ at my final years at university as well as during the first years at my first employer. Today my 8 cm thick "*C++ programming bible*" serves as an elevation for my second monitor, which I had to set up due to the Corona-related home office.
- I used [SQL](#) a lot and also got quite skilled in finding solutions with [Visual Basic \(VBA\)](#). VBA (applied in Excel or [Access](#)) is fun for me and served me a lot during my whole professional and private.
- In 2019 I learnt the advantages of the [Jupyter-Notebooks](#): beautiful, intuitive, easy to use and build. But there is something, I don't like in Jupyter-Notebooks, which I will explain below.
- And today I am a big fan of [Python](#): it's so much more fun to use Python instead of C++: I enjoyed not having these opening brackets `{` and closing brackets `}` and `;` at the end of a line! Such a relieve for my eyes.

I am glad, that lots is similar in all these decades: **the way of thinking as a programmer**. My motivation is to give you some basic hints, advises and guidance to improve your coding skills.

c) Structure of this repository

(i) First part: How to improve your coding skills: Certificates and Challenges

In the *first part* I will explain, how certificates and coding challenges can be useful for you to improve your coding skills.

(ii) Second part: Examples

In the *second part* I will work on some interesting examples.

I. How to improve your coding skills: Certificates and Challenges

1. Earn a certificate

A good way for improving your coding skills are by going through some online courses and trying to earn a certificate. There are a lot of other resources: maybe start getting an overview on [Coursera](#). These courses are nice because the teachers are usually highly skilled (from universities) and the technical infrastructure for the courses is rather advanced: there are videos with subtitles and transcript and you can easily navigate through these videos by reading across these transcripts and jumping to the positions in the video, which you want to listen to. You can monitor your learning curve and weekly progress. But the Coursera certificates usually cost some money.

If you want to find something cheaper, then I can recommend the ["Data Structures and Algorithms in Python"](#) from Jovian. When I worked for it in 02/2021 it was for free. It uses Jupyter-Notebooks and is definitely a lot of fun! You will learn in video tutorials and practise with well documented Jupyter-Notebooks how to work with python classes, binary trees, sorting algorithms and understand how to solve coding problems systematically.

There are various other resources for earning a certificate and listing up, what I found is not very helpful at the end for you: try to find **the certificate which YOU want to earn!** I promise: working for it is a lot of fun.

2. Get into coding challenges

Another advice I can give you is to get into coding challenges. When you accept a coding challenge, then a problem will be shown and would have to solve it in your preferred programming language (python, java, C++,...). I tried [LeetCode](#) and you will find a lot of other websites, which provide similar concepts. On the left is the problem, on the right some place to program a solution:

The screenshot shows the LeetCode website interface for the problem "K Closest Points to Origin". The problem is marked as "Medium" difficulty. The description states: "We have a list of points on the plane. Find the K closest points to the origin (0, 0). (Here, the distance between two points on a plane is the Euclidean distance.) You may return the answer in any order. The answer is guaranteed to be unique (except for the order that it is in)."

Example 1:
Input: points = [[1,3],[-2,2]], K = 1
Output: [[-2,2]]
Explanation:
The distance between (1, 3) and the origin is sqrt(10).
The distance between (-2, 2) and the origin is sqrt(8).
Since sqrt(8) < sqrt(10), (-2, 2) is closer to the origin.
We only want the closest K = 1 points from the origin, so the answer is just [[-2,2]].

Example 2:
Input: points = [[3,3],[5,-1],[-2,4]], K = 2
Output: [[3,3],[-2,4]]
(The answer [[-2,4],[3,3]] would also be accepted.)

Note:
1. 1 <= K <= points.length <= 10000
2. -10000 < points[i][0] < 10000
3. -10000 < points[i][1] < 10000

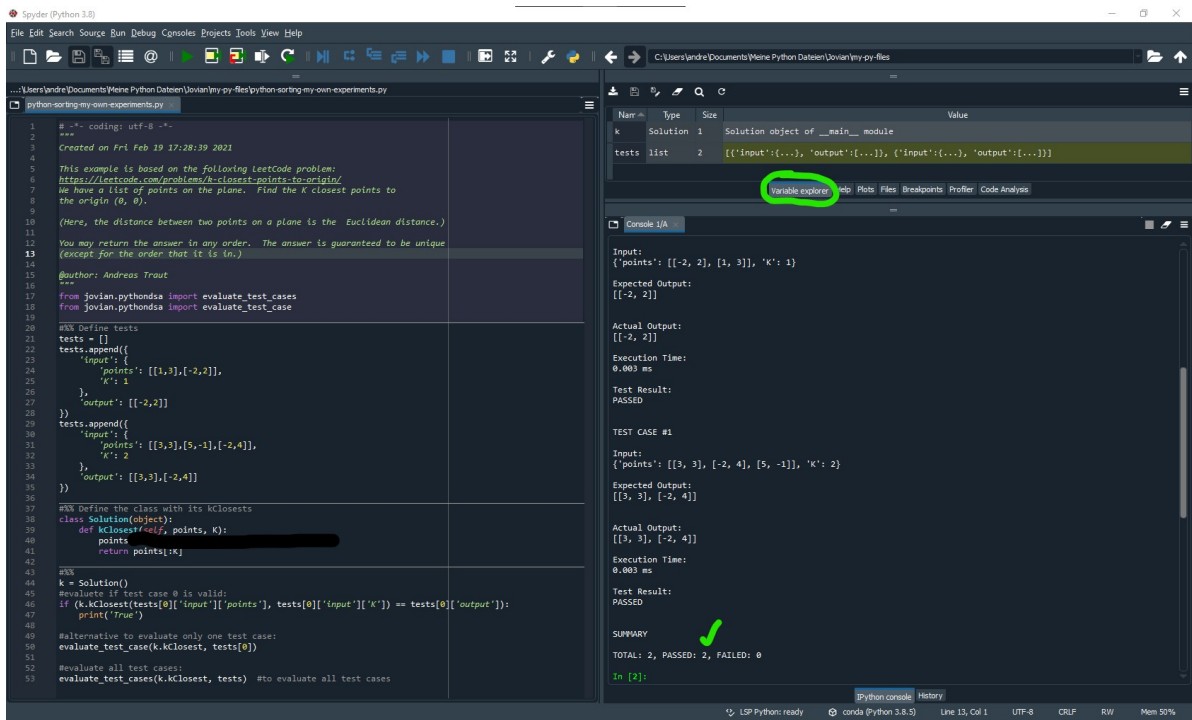
Accepted 421,006 | Submissions 651,819

Can this question be a real interview question? Yes No

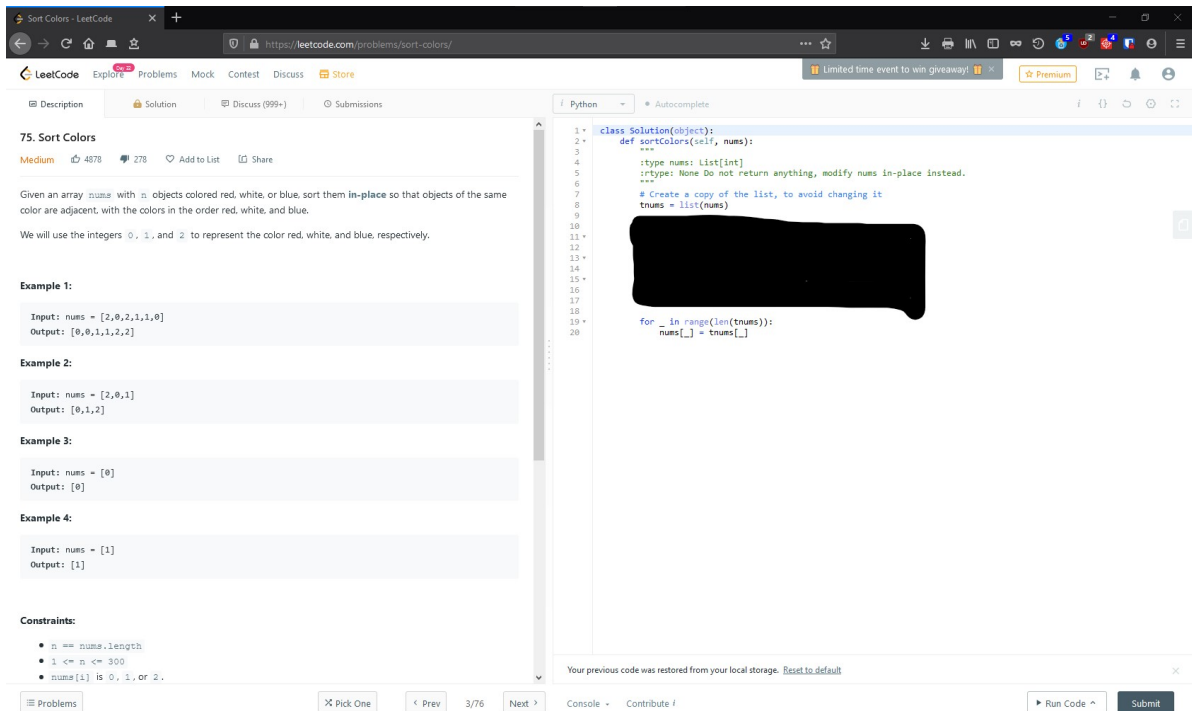
Python code editor (blacked out):
1 class Solution(object):
2 def kClosest(self, points, K):
3 point =
4 return

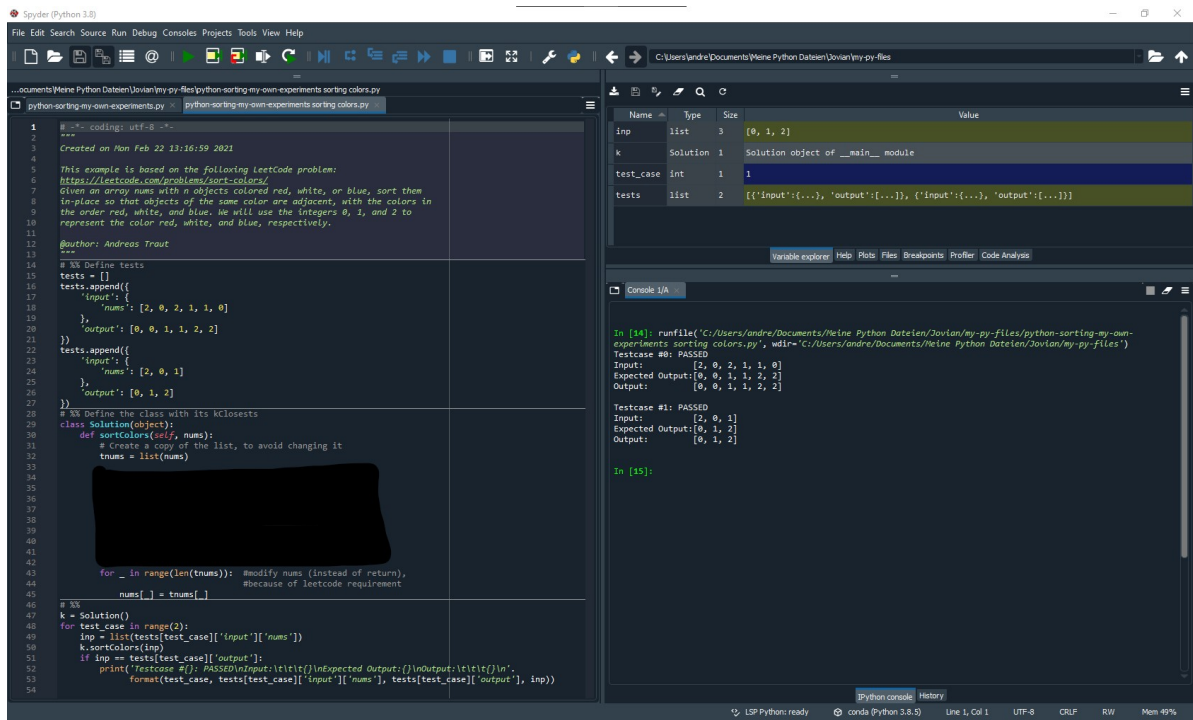
As I am not allowed to publish solutions for these LeetCode problems I had to black out my solutions. Some of these problems were quite interesting for me so I wanted to have them in my integrated development environment (IDE) [Spyder-IDE](#) in order to debug through the code and extend the examples a bit. I recommend to do use an integrated development environment (IDE) as often as you can, instead of always going through Jupyter Notebooks. In my opinion Jupyter Notebooks are **not** always the best environment for learning to code! I agree, that Jupyter Notebooks are nice for doing documentation of python code. It really looks beautiful. But I prefer debugging in an IDE instead of a Jupyter Notebook: having the possibility to set a breakpoint can be a pleasure for my nerves, specially if you have longer programmes. Some of my longer Jupyter Notebooks feel from the hundrets line of code onwards more like pain than like anything helpful. And I also prefer having a "help window" or a "variable explorer", which is smoothly integrated into the IDE user interface. And there are a lot more advantages why getting familiar with an IDE is a big advantage compared to the very popular Jupyter Notebooks! I am very surprised, that everyone is talking about Jupyter Notebooks but IDEs are only mentionned very seldomly. But maybe my preferences are also a bit different, because I grew up in a [MS-DOS](#) environment. :-)

Here is how the problem from above looks like in the Spyder-IDE:



Another example from LeetCode: the [Sort-Colors](https://leetcode.com/problems/sort-colors/) problem:





II. Examples

In the *second part* I will work on some interesting examples, which will be available as `.py` Python-Files or will be Tools like Excel/VBA or Access.

1. Python-Examples

I already provided a lot of Jupyter-Notebooks in Python but will provide further `.py` Python-Files here in short time.

2. Excel Example

During my career I implemented a lot of Excel/VBA solutions: one was a Excel/VBA project management tool, which organized and structured a complex project flow of a team of 7 people. My Excel/VBA solution is used on a daily basis and is running for already 2 years now.

I won't be able to mention all the other Excel/VBA which I built or worked on and I also won't be able to share my Excel/VBA tools here, which I implemented at different companies due to copy-right restrictions. But I will provide an example of an Excel/VBA solution, which solves the following order tracking problem: assume, that you are responsible for different clients, which order different items from you. Each time they do, you would have to send requests to your suppliers (see "1" in the screenshot below) . After having received the items from your supplier you will do an internal quality check (see "2" in the screenshot below) and then send the items to your client (see "3" in the screenshot below). You and your team colleagues may want to track all the different items and also the cases, when something went wrong (item not yet received, item did not pass the quality check,...).

The first step is to define the three steps ("1. Basket Items", "2. Quality Check", "3. Delivery") and assure in the tab "configuration" that the predefined dropdown cells and color codes, are always **clear**. Like this your will get **consistency in your processes and data**. Changing the color codes or status description here will automatically update the whole Excel/VBA solution and therefore you will always have consistency.

																			today: 08.03.2021
																			enter number of days shown in the past: 10
responsible		color code	color	priority	color code	Basket items		Quality Check		Delivery									
Andreas		0	white	high	4	status	color code	status	color code	status	color code								
Tom		1	light green	medium	2	todo	4	ok, to be delivered	1	packing in progress	5								
Jerry		2	yellow	low	5	request sent	5	item nok	4	package ready for shipment	2								
Mickey Mouse		3	orange			confirmed	0	item nok - reclamation sent	3	shipped	1								
Donald Duck		4	red			ok, received	1	further investigation needed	2	todo	4								
Tic		5	light yellow																
Tac																			
Toe																			
																			date
																			26.02.2021
																			27.02.2021
																			28.02.2021
																			29.02.2021
																			01.03.2021
																			02.03.2021
																			03.03.2021
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																			27.03.2021

1

2

3

Order from client:				Request to suppliers:				Quality Check:				Delivery / Shipping:				
please fill in an order identifier, client name, priority and deadline				please fill in the basket items, status, date, responsible and (if needed) comments				please fill in the status, date, responsible and (if needed) comments for the internal quality check of the items				please fill in here the status, date and responsible and (if needed) comments for the shipping of the items to the client				
Press <Ctrl+Alt+F5> to refresh all tabs.																
Orders				Basket Items				Quality Check				Delivery				
identifier	client name	priority	deadline	basket item description	status	date	responsible	comment	status	date	responsible	comment	status	date	responsible	comment
order001	Clientusmaximus	medium	05.04.2021	paper, A4, 100 pieces	request sent	17.03.2021	Andreas									
order001	Clientusmaximus	medium	05.04.2021	paper A3, 50 pieces	request sent											
order001	Clientusmaximus	medium	05.04.2021	nails, 5mm, 50 pieces	confirmed											
order002	Clientusmaximus	medium	05.04.2021	nails, 4mm, 70 pieces	ok, received				ok, to be delivered							
order002	Clientusmaximus	medium	05.04.2021	wires, 15m lengths	ok, received				item nok				Donald Duck			
order002	Clientusmaximus	medium	05.04.2021	plates, 5m x 5m, 100 pieces	ok, received				item nok - reclamation sent				Donald Duck			
order002	Clientusmaximus	medium	05.04.2021	bricks, 100 pieces	confirmed											
order003	Clientusmaximus	medium	05.04.2021	grids, 10cm x 10cm	todo		Andreas									
order003	Clientusmaximus	medium	05.04.2021	fittings, 60 pieces	ok, received		Andreas									
order003	Clientusmaximus	medium	05.04.2021	seals, 3 pieces	confirmed											
order004	Clientusdominus Ltd	high	07.04.2021	nails, 4mm, 70 pieces	request sent											
order004	Clientusdominus Ltd	high	07.04.2021	wires, 15m lengths	request sent											
order004	Clientusdominus Ltd	high	07.04.2021	plates, 5m x 5m, 100 pieces	ok, received				item nok	08.03.2021	Donald Duck					
order005	Clientadri	low	31.03.2021	paper, A4, 100 pieces	ok, received	08.03.2021	Andreas		ok, to be delivered	08.03.2021	Andreas		packing in progress	09.03.2021	Andreas	
order006	Engine Client	medium	01.04.2021	grids, 10cm x 10cm	ok, received	08.03.2021	Tom		ok, to be delivered							
order006	Engine Client	medium	01.04.2021	plates, 5m x 5m, 100 pieces	ok, received	08.03.2021	Tom		item nok							

Orders

OrderStatistics

OrderBasketItems-ToDo

QualityCheck-Items NOK

Delivery-ToDo

Additionally you may want to inform your client about the intermediate status of their orders by automatically generated Outlook-Emails. I implemented this in Excel/VBA and pressing one button will create an Outlook-Email, where email-address, subject and email-text is filled automatically by my VBA code as follows:

Order number: order004 - Nachricht (HTML)

Datei

Nachricht

Einfügen

Optionen

Text formatieren

Überprüfen

Hilfe

Was möchten Sie tun?

Verdana

11

F

K

U

Von

andreas.traut@outlook.com

An

dominik@mailyou.com

Cc

Betreff

Order number: order004

Dear Dominik,

I would like to inform you about the current status of the order number order004:

1 out of 3 items have already been delivered by our suppliers and are ready for our internal quality check
0 out of 3 items have successfully passed our internal quality check and are ready for being shipped.

Please don't hesitate to contact me in case of any questions.

Kind regards
Andreas

Furthermore some statistics should help you to see, where you have issues in your order process (like failed quality checks,...):

Order Statistics:

This overview shows the statistics for the orders and status. These values are also shown in the Email (see "Generate Email" Button)

Press <Ctrl>+<Alt>+<F5> to refresh all tabs.

Anzahl von status	Spaltenbeschriftung	confirmed	request sent	todo (Leer)	ok, received esamtergebnis
order001	1		2		3
order002	1				4
order003	1		2		3
(Leer)					
order004	2			1	3
order005				1	1
order006				1	1
order007			1		1
Gesamtergebnis	3	4	3	6	16

Anzahl von status2	Spaltenbeschriftungen	Item nok	Item nok - reclamation sent (Leer)	ok, to be delivered	Gesamtergebnis
order001					
order002		1		1	3
order003					
(Leer)					
order004		1			1
order005				1	1
order006		1			2
order007					
Gesamtergebnis	3	1		3	7

Let's have a short look into the VBA code:

```

'opens the form "Email-Generator" and fills the boxes "Emailaddress", "Betreff"
Sub ButtonEmailGenerator_Click()
    Dim selectedClient As String
    selectedClient = getSelectedClient(globalSelectedOrderIdentifier)
    txtProjectstatus = getProjectstatus(globalSelectedOrderIdentifier)

    With frmEmailGenerator
        .StartUpPosition = 0
        .Left = Application.Left + (0.5 * Application.Width) - (0.5 * .Width)
        .Top = Application.Top + (0.5 * Application.Height) - (0.5 * .Height)
        .Show vbModeless
        txtBoxEmailadresse = getEmailadresse(selectedClient)
        txtBoxBetreff = "Order number: " & globalSelectedOrderIdentifier
        txtBoxEmailtext = getSalutation(selectedClient) & Chr$(10) & Chr$(10) &
            "I would like to inform you about the current status of" &
            Chr$(10) & Chr$(10) &
            txtProjectstatus & Chr$(10) &
            "Please don't hesitate to contact me in case of any que" &
            "Kind regards " & Chr$(10) & "Andreas "
    End With

    'reads the unique order identifiers from the tab "Orders"
    Public Function GetUniqueValues(ByVal values As Variant) As Collection
        Dim result As Collection
        Dim cellValue As Variant
        Dim cellValueTrimmed As String
        Set result = New Collection
        Set GetUniqueValues = result
        On Error Resume Next
        For Each cellValue In values
            cellValueTrimmed = Trim(cellValue)
            If cellValueTrimmed <> "" Then GoTo NextValue
        Next
    End Function

' Saves the selected value of the ComboBox "OrderIdentifier"
Private Sub ComboBoxOrderIdentifierList_Change()
    mdlModule.globalSelectedOrderIdentifier = ComboBoxOrderIdentifierList.Value
    ActiveWorkbook.RefreshAll
End Sub

'Refreshes the item list (=possible values) of the ComboBox "OrderIdentifier"
Private Sub subRefreshComboBoxOrderIdentifierListItems()
    Dim col As Collection
    Dim source As Range
    Set source = ActiveSheet.Range("A5:A1000")
    ComboBoxOrderIdentifierList.Clear
    For Each c In mdlModule.GetUniqueValues(source.Value)
        ComboBoxOrderIdentifierList.AddItem c
    Next c
    ActiveWorkbook.RefreshAll
End Sub

'Updates the delivery status to "todo" in case, that the quality check has been
Private Sub subUpdateDeliveryStatus()
    Dim i As Integer
    For i = 5 To 1000
        If StrComp(Worksheets("Orders").Cells(i, 13).Value, 1, vbTextCompare) =
            If StrComp(Worksheets("Orders").Cells(i, 17).Value, "", vbTextCompare) =
                Worksheets("Orders").Cells(i, 17).Value = "todo"
    End If
    Next i
End Sub

Private Sub ComboBoxOrderIdentifierList_Click()
    mdlModule.globalSelectedOrderIdentifier = ComboBoxOrderIdentifierList.Value
End Sub

Private Sub Worksheet_Activate()
    subRefreshComboBoxOrderIdentifierListItems
End Sub

```

You can download this example from my repository:

[https://github.com/AndreasTraut/Algorithms-Data-Structures-and-Coding/tree/main/Excel Example](https://github.com/AndreasTraut/Algorithms-Data-Structures-and-Coding/tree/main/Excel%20Example)

3. Access-Example

During my career I also worked with Access solutions. One was for a team of 20 people who were working simultaneously with their Access-frontends on one Access-backend. The aim was to assure a structured data-entry of the whole team into the Access backend database by using Access-Forms. At the end of the project the filled database tables had been joined with SQL queries to further databases in order to aggregate a very specific result table.

I also worked on other Access solutions and will provide an example of an Access solution in short time here.

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