Bowtie 2

Fast and sensitive read alignment

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Version **2.0.4**

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Please cite: Langmead B, Salzberg S. Fast gapped-read alignment with Bowtie 2. *Nature Methods*. 2012, 9:357-359.

Related Tools

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Older versions of these indexes excluded the "_random" FASTA files containing unfinished or unplaced clones. The older versions are also available.

Related publications

Langmead B, Salzberg S. **Fast gapped-read alignment with Bowtie 2**. *Nature Methods*. 2012,

Introduction

What is Bowtie 2?

9:357-359.

Langmead B, Trapnell C, Pop M, Salzberg SL. **Ultrafast and memory-efficient alignment of short DNA sequences to the human genome**. *Genome Biology* **10**:R25.

Author

Ben Langmead

Other Documentation

Bio. of Genomes poster, 5/11 (.ppt, .pdf)

Links

Bowtie 2 sourceforge.net project
- Request a feature
- Report a bug

Papers citing Bowtie 2
Johns Hopkins University
JHU Computer Science
JHSPH Biostatistics
SEQanswers

Bowtie 2 is an ultrafast and memory-efficient tool for aligning sequencing reads to long reference sequences. It is particularly good at aligning reads of about 50 up to 100s or 1,000s of characters to relatively long (e.g. mammalian) genomes. Bowtie 2 indexes the genome with an FM Index (based on the Burrows-Wheeler Transform or BWT) to keep its memory footprint small: for the human genome, its memory footprint is typically around 3.2 gigabytes of RAM. Bowtie 2 supports gapped, local, and paired-end alignment modes. Multiple processors can be used simultaneously to achieve greater alignment speed. Bowtie 2 outputs alignments in SAM format, enabling interoperation with a large number of other tools (e.g. SAMtools, GATK) that use SAM. Bowtie 2 is distributed under the GPLv3 license, and it runs on the command line under Windows, Mac OS X and Linux.

Bowtie 2 is often the first step in pipelines for comparative genomics, including for variation calling, ChIP-seq, RNA-seq, BS-seq. Bowtie 2 and Bowtie (also called "Bowtie 1" here) are also tightly integrated into some tools, including TopHat: a fast splice junction mapper for RNA-seq reads, Cufflinks: a tool for transcriptome assembly and isoform quantitiation from RNA-seq reads, Crossbow: a cloud-enabled software tool for analyzing reseuqncing data, and Myrna: a cloud-enabled software tool for aligning RNA-seq reads and measuring differential gene expression.

If you use Bowtie 2 for your published research, please cite the Bowtie paper. Thank you!

How is Bowtie 2 different from Bowtie 1?

Bowtie 1 was released in 2009 and was geared toward aligning the relatively short sequencing reads (up to 25-50 nucleotides) prevalent at the time. Since then, technology has improved both sequencing throughput (more nucleotides produced per sequencer per day) and read length (more nucleotides per read).

The chief differences between Bowtie 1 and Bowtie 2 are:

1. For reads longer than about 50 bp Bowtie 2 is generally faster, more sensitive, and uses less memory than Bowtie 1. For relatively short reads (e.g. less than 50 bp) Bowtie 1 is sometimes faster and/or more sensitive.
2. Bowtie 2 supports gapped alignment with affine gap penalties. Number of gaps and gap lengths are not restricted, except by way of the configurable scoring

scheme. Bowtie 1 finds just ungapped alignments.

3. Bowtie 2 supports local alignment, which doesn't require reads to align end-to-end. Local alignments might be "trimmed" ("soft clipped") at one or both extremes in a way that optimizes alignment score. Bowtie 2 also supports end-to-end alignment which, like Bowtie 1, requires that the read align entirely.

4. There is no upper limit on read length in Bowtie 2. Bowtie 1 had an upper limit of around 1000 bp.

5. Bowtie 2 allows alignments to overlap ambiguous characters (e.g. Ns) in the reference. Bowtie 1 does not.

6. Bowtie 2 does away with Bowtie 1's notion of alignment "stratum", and its distinction between "Maq-like" and "end-to-end" modes. In Bowtie 2 all alignments lie along a continuous spectrum of alignment scores where the scoring scheme, similar to Needleman-Wunsch and Smith-Waterman.

7. Bowtie 2's paired-end alignment is more flexible. E.g. for pairs that do not align in a paired fashion, Bowtie 2 attempts to find unpaired alignments for each mate.

8. Bowtie 2 reports a spectrum of mapping qualities, in contrast fo Bowtie 1 which reports either 0 or high.

9. Bowtie 2 does not align colorspace reads.

Bowtie 2 is not a "drop-in" replacement for Bowtie 1. Bowtie 2's command-line arguments and genome index format are both different from Bowtie 1's.

What isn't Bowtie 2?

Bowtie 1 and Bowtie 2 are not general-purpose alignment tools like MUMmer, BLAST or Vmatch. Bowtie 2 works best when aligning to large genomes, though it supports arbitrarily small reference sequences (e.g. amplicons). It handles very long reads (i.e. upwards of 10s or 100s of kilobases), but it is optimized for the read lengths and error modes yielded by recent sequencers, such as the Illumina HiSeq 2000, Roche 454, and Ion Torrent instruments.

If your goal is to align two very large sequences (e.g. two genomes), consider using MUMmer. If your goal is very sensitive alignment to a relatively short reference sequence (e.g. a bacterial genome), this can be done with Bowtie 2 but you may want to consider using tools like NUCmer,

BLAT, or BLAST. These tools can be extremely slow when the reference genome is long, but are often adequate when the reference is short.

Bowtie 2 does not support alignment of colorspace reads. This might be supported in future versions.

What does it mean that some older Bowtie 2 versions are "beta"?

We said those Bowtie 2 versions were in "beta" to convey that it was not as polished as a tool that had been around for a while, and was still in flux. Since version 2.0.1, we declared Bowtie 2 was no longer "beta".

Obtaining Bowtie 2

Download Bowtie 2 sources and binaries from the Download section of the Sourceforge site. Binaries are available for Intel architectures (`i386` and `x86_64`) running Linux, and Mac OS X. A 32-bit version is available for Windows. If you plan to compile Bowtie 2 yourself, make sure to get the source package, i.e., the filename that ends in "-source.zip".

Building from source

Building Bowtie 2 from source requires a GNU-like environment with GCC, GNU Make and other basics. It should be possible to build Bowtie 2 on most vanilla Linux installations or on a Mac installation with Xcode installed. Bowtie 2 can also be built on Windows using Cygwin or MinGW (MinGW recommended). If building with MinGW, first install MinGW and MSYS, the zlib library, and the pthreads library. You may also need the GnuWin32 core and other utilities to drive the build process.

First, download the source package from the sourceforge site. Make sure you're getting the source package; the file downloaded should end in `-source.zip`. Unzip the file, change to the unzipped directory, and build the Bowtie 2 tools by running GNU `make` (usually with the command `make`, but sometimes with `gmake`) with no arguments. If building with MinGW, run `make` from the MSYS environment.

To support the `-p` (multithreading) option, Bowtie 2 needs the `pthreads` library. To compile Bowtie 2 without `pthreads` (which disables `-p`), use `make BOWTIE_PTHREADS=0`.

Adding to PATH

By adding your new Bowtie 2 directory to your PATH environment variable, you ensure that whenever you run `bowtie2`, `bowtie2-build` or `bowtie2-inspect` from the command line, you will get the version you just installed without having to specify the entire path. This is recommended for most users. To do this, follow your operating system's instructions for adding the directory to your PATH.

If you would like to install Bowtie 2 by copying the Bowtie 2 executable files to an existing directory in your PATH, make sure that you copy all the executables, including `bowtie2`, `bowtie2-align`, `bowtie2-build` and `bowtie2-inspect`.

The `bowtie2` aligner

`bowtie2` takes a Bowtie 2 index and a set of sequencing read files and outputs a set of alignments in SAM format.

"Alignment" is the process by which we discover how and where the read sequences are similar to the reference sequence. An "alignment" is a result from this process, specifically: an alignment is a way of "lining up" some or all of the characters in the read with some characters from the reference in a way that reveals how they're similar. For example:

```
Read:      GACTGGGCGATCTCGACTTCG
           |||||  |||||||||| |||
Reference: GACTG--CGATCTCGACATCG
```

Where dash symbols represent gaps and vertical bars show where aligned characters match.

We use alignment to make an educated guess as to where a read originated with respect to the reference genome. It's not always possible to determine this with certainty. For instance, if the reference genome contains several long stretches of As (AAAAAAAAA etc) and the read sequence is a short stretch of As (AAAAAAA), we cannot know for certain exactly where in the sea of As the read originated.

End-to-end alignment versus local alignment

By default, Bowtie 2 performs end-to-end read alignment. That is, it searches for alignments involving all of the read characters. This is also called an "untrimmed" or "unclipped" alignment.

When the `--local` option is specified, Bowtie 2 performs local

read alignment. In this mode, Bowtie 2 might "trim" or "clip" some read characters from one or both ends of the alignment if doing so maximizes the alignment score.

End-to-end alignment example

The following is an "end-to-end" alignment because it involves all the characters in the read. Such an alignment can be produced by Bowtie 2 in either end-to-end mode or in local mode.

```
Read:      GACTGGGCGATCTCGACTTCG
Reference: GACTGCGATCTCGACATCG

Alignment:
  Read:      GACTGGGCGATCTCGACTTCG
             |||||  |||||||||| |||
  Reference: GACTG--CGATCTCGACATCG
```

Local alignment example

The following is a "local" alignment because some of the characters at the ends of the read do not participate. In this case, 4 characters are omitted (or "soft trimmed" or "soft clipped") from the beginning and 3 characters are omitted from the end. This sort of alignment can be produced by Bowtie 2 only in local mode.

```
Read:      ACGGTTGCGTTAATCCGCCACG
Reference: TAACTTGCGTTAAATCCGCCTGG

Alignment:
  Read:      ACGGTTGCGTTAA-TCCGCCACG
                 |||||||| ||||||
  Reference: TAACTTGCGTTAAATCCGCCTGG
```

Scores: higher = more similar

An alignment score quantifies how similar the read sequence is to the reference sequence aligned to. The higher the score, the more similar they are. A score is calculated by subtracting penalties for each difference (mismatch, gap, etc) and, in local alignment mode, adding bonuses for each match.

The scores can be configured with the `--ma` (match bonus), `--mp` (mismatch penalty), `--np` (penalty for having an N in either the read or the reference), `--rdg` (affine read gap

penalty) and `--rfg` (affine reference gap penalty) options.

End-to-end alignment score example

A mismatched base at a high-quality position in the read receives a penalty of -6 by default. A length-2 read gap receives a penalty of -11 by default (-5 for the gap open, -3 for the first extension, -3 for the second extension). Thus, in end-to-end alignment mode, if the read is 50 bp long and it matches the reference exactly except for one mismatch at a high-quality position and one length-2 read gap, then the overall score is `-(6 + 11) = -17`.

The best possible alignment score in end-to-end mode is 0, which happens when there are no differences between the read and the reference.

Local alignment score example

A mismatched base at a high-quality position in the read receives a penalty of -6 by default. A length-2 read gap receives a penalty of -11 by default (-5 for the gap open, -3 for the first extension, -3 for the second extension). A base that matches receives a bonus of +2 be default. Thus, in local alignment mode, if the read is 50 bp long and it matches the reference exactly except for one mismatch at a high-quality position and one length-2 read gap, then the overall score equals the total bonus, `2 * 49`, minus the total penalty, `6 + 11, = 81`.

The best possible score in local mode equals the match bonus times the length of the read. This happens when there are no differences between the read and the reference.

Valid alignments meet or exceed the minimum score threshold

For an alignment to be considered "valid" (i.e. "good enough") by Bowtie 2, it must have an alignment score no less than the minimum score threshold. The threshold is configurable and is expressed as a function of the read length. In end-to-end alignment mode, the default minimum score threhsold is `-0.6 + -0.6 * L`, where `L` is the read length. In local alignment mdoe, the default minimum score threshold is `20 + 8.0 * ln(L)`, where `L` is the read length. This can be configured with the `--score-min` option. For details on how to set options like `--score-min` that correpond to functions, see the section on setting function options.

Mapping quality: higher = more unique

The aligner cannot always assign a read to its point of origin with high confidence. For instance, a read that originated inside a repeat element might align equally well to many occurrences of the element throughout the genome, leaving the aligner with no basis for preferring one over the others.

Aligners characterize their degree of confidence in the point of origin by reporting a mapping quality: a non-negative integer Q = -10 log10 p, where p is an estimate of the probability that the alignment does not correspond to the read's true point of origin. Mapping quality is sometimes abbreviated MAPQ, and is recorded in the SAM `MAPQ` field.

Mapping quality is related to "uniqueness." We say an alignment is unique if it has a much higher alignment score than all the other possible alignments. The bigger the gap between the best alignment's score and the second-best alignment's score, the more unique the best alignment, and the higher its mapping quality should be.

Accurate mapping qualities are useful for downstream tools like variant callers. For instance, a variant caller might choose to ignore evidence from alignments with mapping quality less than, say, 10. A mapping quality of 10 or less indicates that there is at least a 1 in 10 chance that the read truly originated elsewhere.

Aligning pairs

A "paired-end" or "mate-pair" read consists of pair of mates, called mate 1 and mate 2. Pairs come with a prior expectation about (a) the relative orientation of the mates, and (b) the distance separating them on the original DNA molecule. Exactly what expectations hold for a given dataset depends on the lab procedures used to generate the data. For example, a common lab procedure for producing pairs is Illumina's Paired-end Sequencing Assay, which yields pairs with a relative orientation of FR ("forward, reverse") meaning that if mate 1 came from the Watson strand, mate 2 very likely came from the Crick strand and vice versa. Also, this protocol yields pairs where the expected genomic distance from end to end is about 200-500 base pairs.

For simplicity, this manual uses the term "paired-end" to refer to any pair of reads with some expected relative orientation and distance. Depending on the protocol, these might actually be referred to as "paired-end" or "mate-paired." Also, we always refer to the individual sequences

making up the pair as "mates."

Paired inputs

Pairs are often stored in a pair of files, one file containing the mate 1s and the other containing the mates 2s. The first mate in the file for mate 1 forms a pair with the first mate in the file for mate 2, the second with the second, and so on. When aligning pairs with Bowtie 2, specify the file with the mate 1s mates using the `-1` argument and the file with the mate 2s using the `-2` argument. This causes Bowtie 2 to take the paired nature of the reads into account when aligning them.

Paired SAM output

When Bowtie 2 prints a SAM alignment for a pair, it prints two records (i.e. two lines of output), one for each mate. The first record describes the alignment for mate 1 and the second record describes the alignment for mate 2. In both records, some of the fields of the SAM record describe various properties of the alignment; for instance, the 7th and 8th fields (`RNEXT` and `PNEXT` respectively) indicate the reference name and position where the other mate aligned, and the 9th field indicates the inferred length of the DNA fragment from which the two mates were sequenced. See the SAM specification for more details regarding these fields.

Concordant pairs match pair expectations, discordant pairs don't

A pair that aligns with the expected relative mate orientation and with the expected range of distances between mates is said to align "concordantly". If both mates have unique alignments, but the alignments do not match paired-end expectations (i.e. the mates aren't in the expcted relative orientation, or aren't within the expected disatance range, or both), the pair is said to align "discordantly". Discordant alignments may be of particular interest, for instance, when seeking structural variants.

The expected relative orientation of the mates is set using the `--ff`, `--fr`, or `--rf` options. The expected range of inter-mates distances (as measured from the furthest extremes of the mates; also called "outer distance") is set with the `-I` and `-X` options.

To declare that a pair aligns discordantly, Bowtie 2 requires that both mates align uniquely. This is a conservative threshold, but this is often desirable when seeking structural

variants.

By default, Bowtie 2 searches for both concordant and discordant alignments, though searching for discordant alignments can be disabled with the `--no-discordant` option.

Mixed mode: paired where possible, unpaired otherwise

If Bowtie 2 cannot find a paired-end alignment for a pair, by default it will go on to look for unpaired alignments for the constituent mates. This is called "mixed mode." To disable mixed mode, set the `--no-mixed` option.

Bowtie 2 runs a little faster in `--no-mixed` mode, but will only consider alignment status of pairs per se, not individual mates.

Some SAM FLAGS describe paired-end properties

The SAM FLAGS field, the second field in a SAM record, has multiple bits that describe the paired-end nature of the read and alignment. The first (least significant) bit (1 in decimal, 0x1 in hexidecimal) is set if the read is part of a pair. The second bit (2 in decimal, 0x2 in hexidecimal) is set if the read is part of a pair that aligned in a paired-end fashion. The fourth bit (8 in decimal, 0x8 in hexidecimal) is set if the read is part of a pair and the other mate in the pair had at least one valid alignment. The sixth bit (32 in decimal, 0x20 in hexidecimal) is set if the read is part of a pair and the other mate in the pair aligned to the Crick strand (or, equivalently, if the reverse complement of the other mate aligned to the Watson strand). The seventh bit (64 in decimal, 0x40 in hexidecimal) is set if the read is mate 1 in a pair. The eighth bit (128 in decimal, 0x80 in hexidecimal) is set if the read is mate 2 in a pair. See the SAM specification for a more detailed description of the FLAGS field.

Some SAM optional fields describe more paired-end properties

The last severeal fields of each SAM record usually contain SAM optional fields, which are simply tab-separated strings conveying additional information about the reads and alignments. A SAM optional field is formatted like this: "XP:i:1" where "XP" is the TAG, "i" is the TYPE ("integer" in this case), and "1" is the VALUE. See the SAM specification for details regarding SAM optional fields.

Mates can overlap, contain, or dovetail each other

The fragment and read lengths might be such that alignments for the two mates from a pair overlap each other. Consider this example:

(For these examples, assume we expect mate 1 to align to the left of mate 2.)

```
Mate 1:     GCAGATTATATGAGTCAGCTACGATATTGTT
Mate 2:
TGTTTGGGGTGACACATTACGCGTCTTTGAC
Reference:
GCAGATTATATGAGTCAGCTACGATATTGTTTGGGGTGACACATTACGCGTCTTTGAC
```

It's also possible, though unusual, for one mate alignment to contain the other, as in these examples:

```
Mate 1:
GCAGATTATATGAGTCAGCTACGATATTGTTTGGGGTGACACATTACGC
Mate 2:
TGTTTGGGGTGACACATTACGC
Reference:
GCAGATTATATGAGTCAGCTACGATATTGTTTGGGGTGACACATTACGCGTCTTTGAC
```

```
Mate 1:
CAGCTACGATATTGTTTGGGGTGACACATTACGC
Mate 2:
CTACGATATTGTTTGGGGTGAC
Reference:
GCAGATTATATGAGTCAGCTACGATATTGTTTGGGGTGACACATTACGCGTCTTTGAC
```

And it's also possible, though unusual, for the mates to "dovetail", with the mates seemingly extending "past" each other as in this example:

```
Mate 1:
GTCAGCTACGATATTGTTTGGGGTGACACATTACGC
Mate 2:
TATGAGTCAGCTACGATATTGTTTGGGGTGACACAT
Reference:
GCAGATTATATGAGTCAGCTACGATATTGTTTGGGGTGACACATTACGCGTCTTTGAC
```

In some situations, it's desirable for the aligner to consider all these cases as "concordant" as long as other paired-end constraints are not violated. Bowtie 2's default behavior is to consider overlapping and containing as being consistent with concordant alignment. By default, dovetailing is considered

inconsistent with concordant alignment.

These defaults can be overridden. Setting `--no-overlap` causes Bowtie 2 to consider overlapping mates as non-concordant. Setting `--no-contain` causes Bowtie 2 to consider cases where one mate alignment contains the other as non-concordant. Setting `--dovetail` causes Bowtie 2 to consider cases where the mate alignments dovetail as concordant.

Reporting

The reporting mode governs how many alignments Bowtie 2 looks for, and how to report them. Bowtie 2 has three distinct reporting modes. The default reporting mode is similar to the default reporting mode of many other read alignment tools, including BWA. It is also similar to Bowtie 1's `-M` alignment mode.

In general, when we say that a read has an alignment, we mean that it has a valid alignment. When we say that a read has multiple alignments, we mean that it has multiple alignments that are valid and distinct from one another.

Distinct alignments map a read to different places

Two alignments for the same individual read are "distinct" if they map the same read to different places. Specifically, we say that two alignments are distinct if there are no alignment positions where a particular read offset is aligned opposite a particular reference offset in both alignments with the same orientation. E.g. if the first alignment is in the forward orientation and aligns the read character at read offset 10 to the reference character at chromosome 3, offset 3,445,245, and the second alignment is also in the forward orientation and also aligns the read character at read offset 10 to the reference character at chromosome 3, offset 3,445,245, they are not distinct alignments.

Two alignments for the same pair are distinct if either the mate 1s in the two paired-end alignments are distinct or the mate 2s in the two alignments are distinct or both.

Default mode: search for multiple alignments, report the best one

By default, Bowtie 2 searches for distinct, valid alignments for each read. When it finds a valid alignment, it generally will continue to look for alignments that are nearly as good or better. It will eventually stop looking, either because it

exceeded a limit placed on search effort (see `-D` and `-R`) or because it already knows all it needs to know to report an alignment. Information from the best alignments are used to estimate mapping quality (the `MAPQ` SAM field) and to set SAM optional fields, such as `AS:i` and `XS:i`. Bowtie 2 does not gaurantee that the alignment reported is the best possible in terms of alignment score.

See also: `-D`, which puts an upper limit on the number of dynamic programming problems (i.e. seed extensions) that can "fail" in a row before Bowtie 2 stops searching. Increasing `-D` makes Bowtie 2 slower, but increases the likelihood that it will report the correct alignment for a read that aligns many places.

See also: `-R`, which sets the maximum number of times Bowtie 2 will "re-seed" when attempting to align a read with repetitive seeds. Increasing `-R` makes Bowtie 2 slower, but increases the likelihood that it will report the correct alignment for a read that aligns many places.

-k mode: search for one or more alignments, report each

In `-k` mode, Bowtie 2 searches for up to N distinct, valid alignments for each read, where N equals the integer specified with the `-k` parameter. That is, if `-k 2` is specified, Bowtie 2 will search for at most 2 distinct alignments. It reports all alignments found, in descending order by alignment score. The alignment score for a paired-end alignment equals the sum of the alignment scores of the individual mates. Each reported read or pair alignment beyond the first has the SAM 'secondary' bit (which equals 256) set in its FLAGS field. See the SAM specification for details.

Bowtie 2 does not "find" alignments in any specific order, so for reads that have more than N distinct, valid alignments, Bowtie 2 does not gaurantee that the N alignments reported are the best possible in terms of alignment score. Still, this mode can be effective and fast in situations where the user cares more about whether a read aligns (or aligns a certain number of times) than where exactly it originated.

-a mode: search for and report all alignments

`-a` mode is similar to `-k` mode except that there is no upper limit on the number of alignments Bowtie 2 should report. Alignments are reported in descending order by alignment score. The alignment score for a paired-end alignment equals the sum of the alignment scores of the individual

mates. Each reported read or pair alignment beyond the first has the SAM 'secondary' bit (which equals 256) set in its FLAGS field. See the SAM specification for details.

Some tools are designed with this reporting mode in mind. Bowtie 2 is not! For very large genomes, this mode is very slow.

Randomness in Bowtie 2

Bowtie 2's search for alignments for a given read is "randomized." That is, when Bowtie 2 encouters a set of equally-good choices, it uses a pseudo-random number to choose. For example, if Bowtie 2 discovers a set of 3 equally-good alignments and wants to decide which to report, it picks a pseudo-random integer 0, 1 or 2 and reports the corresponding alignment. Abitrary choices can crop up at various points during alignment.

The pseudo-random number generator is re-initialized for every read, and the seed used to initialize it is a function of the read name, nucleotide string, quality string, and the value specified with `--seed`. If you run the same version of Bowtie 2 on two reads with identical names, nucleotide strings, and quality strings, and if `--seed` is set the same for both runs, Bowtie 2 will produce the same output; i.e., it will align the read to the same place, even if there are multiple equally good alignments. This is intuitive and desirable in most cases. Most users expect Bowtie to produce the same output when run twice on the same input.

However, when the user specifies the `--non-deterministic` option, Bowtie 2 will use the current time to re-intiailize the pseud-random number generator. When this is specified, Bowtie 2 might report different alignments for identical reads. This is counter-intuitive for some users, but might be more appropriate in situations where the input consists of many identical reads.

Multiseed heuristic

To rapidly narrow the number of possible alignments that must be considered, Bowtie 2 begins by extracting substrings ("seeds") from the read and its reverse complement and aligning them in an ungapped fashion with the help of the FM Index. This is "multiseed alignment" and it is similar to what Bowtie 1 does, except Bowtie 1 attempts to align the entire read this way.

This initial step makes Bowtie 2 much faster than it would be without such a filter, but at the expense of missing some

valid alignments. For instance, it is possible for a read to have a valid overall alignment but to have no valid seed alignments because each potential seed alignment is interruped by too many mismatches or gaps.

The tradeoff between speed and sensitivity/accuracy can be adjusted by setting the seed length (`-L`), the interval between extracted seeds (`-i`), and the number of mismatches permitted per seed (`-N`). For more sensitive alignment, set these parameters to (a) make the seeds closer together, (b) make the seeds shorter, and/or (c) allow more mismatches. You can adjust these options one-by-one, though Bowtie 2 comes with some useful combinations of options pre-packaged as "preset options."

`-D` and `-R` are also options that adjust the tradeoff between speed and sensitivity/accuracy.

FM Index memory footprint

Bowtie 2 uses the FM Index to find ungapped alignments for seeds. This step accounts for the bulk of Bowtie 2's memory footprint, as the FM Index itself is typically the largest data structure used. For instance, the memory footprint of the FM Index for the human genome is about 3.2 gigabytes of RAM.

Ambiguous characters

Non-whitespace characters besides A, C, G or T are considered "ambiguous." N is a common ambiguous character that appears in reference sequences. Bowtie 2 considers all ambiguous characters in the reference (including IUPAC nucleotide codes) to be Ns.

Bowtie 2 allows alignments to overlap ambiguous characters in the reference. An alignment position that contains an ambiguous character in the read, reference, or both, is penalized according to `--np`. `--n-ceil` sets an upper limit on the number of positions that may contain ambiguous reference characters in a valid alignment. The optional field `XN:i` reports the number of ambiguous reference characters overlapped by an alignment.

Note that the multiseed heuristic cannot find *seed* alignments that overlap ambiguous reference characters. For an alignment overlapping an ambiguous reference character to be found, it must have one or more seed alignments that do not overlap ambiguous reference characters.

Presets: setting many settings at once

Bowtie 2 comes with some useful combinations of parameters packaged into shorter "preset" parameters. For example, running Bowtie 2 with the `--very-sensitive` option is the same as running with options: `-D 20 -R 3 -N 0 -L 20 -i S,1,0.50`. The preset options that come with Bowtie 2 are designed to cover a wide area of the speed/sensitivity/accuracy tradeoff space, with the presets ending in `fast` generally being faster but less sensitive and less accurate, and the presets ending in `sensitive` generally being slower but more sensitive and more accurate. See the documentation for the preset options for details.

Filtering

Some reads are skipped or "filtered out" by Bowtie 2. For example, reads may be filtered out because they are extremely short or have a high proportion of ambiguous nucleotides. Bowtie 2 will still print a SAM record for such a read, but no alignment will be reported and and the `YF:i` SAM optional field will be set to indicate the reason the read was filtered.

`YF:Z:LN`: the read was filtered becuase it had length less than or equal to the number of seed mismatches set with the `-N` option.
`YF:Z:NS`: the read was filtered because it contains a number of ambiguous characters (usually `N` or `.`) greater than the ceiling specified with `--n-ceil`.
`YF:Z:SC`: the read was filtered because the read length and the match bonus (set with `--ma`) are such that the read can't possibly earn an alignment score greater than or equal to the threshold set with `--score-min`
`YF:Z:QC`: the read was filtered because it was marked as failing quality control and the user specified the `--qc-filter` option. This only happens when the input is in Illumina's QSEQ format (i.e. when `--qseq` is specified) and the last (11th) field of the read's QSEQ record contains `1`.
If a read could be filtered for more than one reason, the value `YF:Z` flag will reflect only one of those reasons.

Alignment summmary

When Bowtie 2 finishes running, it prints messages summarizing what happened. These messages are printed to the "standard error" ("stderr") filehandle. For datasets consisting of unpaired reads, the summary might look like this:

```
20000 reads; of these:
  20000 (100.00%) were unpaired; of these:
    1247 (6.24%) aligned 0 times
    18739 (93.69%) aligned exactly 1 time
    14 (0.07%) aligned >1 times
93.77% overall alignment rate
```

For datasets consisting of pairs, the summary might look like this:

```
10000 reads; of these:
  10000 (100.00%) were paired; of these:
    650 (6.50%) aligned concordantly 0 times
    8823 (88.23%) aligned concordantly exactly 1
time
    527 (5.27%) aligned concordantly >1 times
    ----
    650 pairs aligned concordantly 0 times; of
these:
      34 (5.23%) aligned discordantly 1 time
    ----
    616 pairs aligned 0 times concordantly or
discordantly; of these:
      1232 mates make up the pairs; of these:
        660 (53.57%) aligned 0 times
        571 (46.35%) aligned exactly 1 time
        1 (0.08%) aligned >1 times
96.70% overall alignment rate
```

The indentation indicates how subtotals relate to totals.

Wrapper

The `bowtie2` executable is actually a Perl wrapper script that calls the compiled `bowtie2-align` binary. It is recommended that you always run the `bowtie2` wrapper and not run `bowtie2-align` directly.

Performance tuning

1. Use 64-bit version if possible

   The 64-bit version of Bowtie 2 is faster than the 32-bit version, owing to its use of 64-bit arithmetic. If possible, download the 64-bit binaries for Bowtie 2 and run on a 64-bit computer. If you are building Bowtie 2 from sources, you may need to pass the -

`m64` option to `g++` to compile the 64-bit version; you can do this by including `BITS=64` in the arguments to the `make` command; e.g.: `make BITS=64 bowtie2`. To determine whether your version of bowtie is 64-bit or 32-bit, run `bowtie2 --version`.

2. If your computer has multiple processors/cores, use `-p`

   The `-p` option causes Bowtie 2 to launch a specified number of parallel search threads. Each thread runs on a different processor/core and all threads find alignments in parallel, increasing alignment throughput by approximately a multiple of the number of threads (though in practice, speedup is somewhat worse than linear).

Command Line

Setting function options

Some Bowtie 2 options specify a function rather than an individual number or setting. In these cases the user specifies three parameters: (a) a function type `F`, (b) a constant term `B`, and (c) a coefficient `A`. The available function types are constant (`C`), linear (`L`), square-root (`S`), and natural log (`G`). The parameters are specified as `F,B,A` - that is, the function type, the constant term, and the coefficient are separated by commas with no whitespace. The constant term and coefficient may be negative and/or floating-point numbers.

For example, if the function specification is `L,-0.4,-0.6`, then the function defined is:

```
f(x) = -0.4 + -0.6 * x
```

If the function specification is `G,1,5.4`, then the function defined is:

```
f(x) = 1.0 + 5.4 * ln(x)
```

See the documentation for the option in question to learn what the parameter `x` is for. For example, in the case if the `--score-min` option, the function `f(x)` sets the minimum alignment score necessary for an alignment to be considered valid, and `x` is the read length.

Usage

```
bowtie2 [options]* -x <bt2-idx> {-1 <m1> -2 <m2> |
```

```
-U <r>} -S [<hit>]
```

Main arguments

`-x <bt2-idx>` The basename of the index for the reference genome. The basename is the name of any of the index files up to but not including the final `.1.bt2` / `.rev.1.bt2` / etc. `bowtie2` looks for the specified index first in the current directory, then in the directory specified in the `BOWTIE2_INDEXES` environment variable.

`-1 <m1>` Comma-separated list of files containing mate 1s (filename usually includes `_1`), e.g. `-1 flyA_1.fq,flyB_1.fq`. Sequences specified with this option must correspond file-for-file and read-for-read with those specified in `<m2>`. Reads may be a mix of different lengths. If `-` is specified, `bowtie2` will read the mate 1s from the "standard in" or "stdin" filehandle.

`-2 <m2>` Comma-separated list of files containing mate 2s (filename usually includes `_2`), e.g. `-2 flyA_2.fq,flyB_2.fq`. Sequences specified with this option must correspond file-for-file and read-for-read with those specified in `<m1>`. Reads may be a mix of different lengths. If `-` is specified, `bowtie2` will read the mate 2s from the "standard in" or "stdin" filehandle.

`-U <r>` Comma-separated list of files containing unpaired reads to be aligned, e.g. `lane1.fq,lane2.fq,lane3.fq,lane4.fq`. Reads may be a mix of different lengths. If `-` is specified, `bowtie2` gets the reads from the "standard in" or "stdin" filehandle.

`-S <hit>` File to write SAM alignments to. By default, alignments are written to the "standard out" or "stdout" filehandle (i.e. the console).

Options

Input options

`-q` Reads (specified with `<m1>`, `<m2>`, `<s>`) are FASTQ files. FASTQ files usually have extension `.fq` or `.fastq`. FASTQ is the default format. See also: `--solexa-quals`

	and `--int-quals`.
`--qseq`	Reads (specified with `<m1>`, `<m2>`, `<s>`) are QSEQ files. QSEQ files usually end in `_qseq.txt`. See also: `--solexa-quals` and `--int-quals`.
`-f`	Reads (specified with `<m1>`, `<m2>`, `<s>`) are FASTA files. FASTA files usually have extension `.fa`, `.fasta`, `.mfa`, `.fna` or similar. FASTA files do not have a way of specifying quality values, so when `-f` is set, the result is as if `--ignore-quals` is also set.
`-r`	Reads (specified with `<m1>`, `<m2>`, `<s>`) are files with one input sequence per line, without any other information (no read names, no qualities). When `-r` is set, the result is as if `--ignore-quals` is also set.
`-c`	The read sequences are given on command line. I.e. `<m1>`, `<m2>` and `<singles>` are comma-separated lists of reads rather than lists of read files. There is no way to specify read names or qualities, so `-c` also implies `--ignore-quals`.
`-s/--skip <int>`	Skip (i.e. do not align) the first `<int>` reads or pairs in the input.
`-u/--qupto <int>`	Align the first `<int>` reads or read pairs from the input (after the `-s/--skip` reads or pairs have been skipped), then stop. Default: no limit.
`-5/--trim5 <int>`	Trim `<int>` bases from 5' (left) end of each read before alignment (default: 0).
`-3/--trim3 <int>`	Trim `<int>` bases from 3' (right) end of each read before alignment (default: 0).
`--phred33`	Input qualities are ASCII chars equal to the Phred quality plus 33. This is also called the "Phred+33" encoding, which is used by the very latest Illumina pipelines.
`--phred64`	Input qualities are ASCII chars equal to the Phred quality plus 64. This is also called the

	"Phred+64" encoding.
`--solexa-quals`	Convert input qualities from Solexa (which can be negative) to Phred (which can't). This scheme was used in older Illumina GA Pipeline versions (prior to 1.3). Default: off.
`--int-quals`	Quality values are represented in the read input file as space-separated ASCII integers, e.g., `40 40 30 40...`, rather than ASCII characters, e.g., `II?I....` Integers are treated as being on the Phred quality scale unless `--solexa-quals` is also specified. Default: off.

Preset options in `--end-to-end` mode

`--very-fast`	Same as: `-D 5 -R 1 -N 0 -L 22 -i S,0,2.50`
`--fast`	Same as: `-D 10 -R 2 -N 0 -L 22 -i S,0,2.50`
`--sensitive`	Same as: `-D 15 -R 2 -L 22 -i S,1,1.15` (default in `--end-to-end` mode)
`--very-sensitive`	Same as: `-D 20 -R 3 -N 0 -L 20 -i S,1,0.50`

Preset options in `--local` mode

`--very-fast-local`	Same as: `-D 5 -R 1 -N 0 -L 25 -i S,1,2.00`
`--fast-local`	Same as: `-D 10 -R 2 -N 0 -L 22 -i S,1,1.75`
`--sensitive-local`	Same as: `-D 15 -R 2 -N 0 -L 20 -i S,1,0.75` (default in `--local` mode)
`--very-sensitive-local`	Same as: `-D 20 -R 3 -N 0 -L 20 -i S,1,0.50`

Alignment options

`-N`	Sets the number of mismatches to allowed in

`<int>` a seed alignment during multiseed alignment. Can be set to 0 or 1. Setting this higher makes alignment slower (often much slower) but increases sensitivity. Default: 0.

`-L <int>` Sets the length of the seed substrings to align during multiseed alignment. Smaller values make alignment slower but more senstive. Default: the `--sensitive` preset is used by default, which sets `-L` to 20 both in `--end-to-end` mode and in `--local` mode.

`-i <func>` Sets a function governing the interval between seed substrings to use during multiseed alignment. For instance, if the read has 30 characers, and seed length is 10, and the seed interval is 6, the seeds extracted will be:

```
Read:
TAGCTACGCTCTACGCTATCATGCATAAAC
Seed 1 fw: TAGCTACGCT
Seed 1 rc: AGCGTAGCTA
Seed 2 fw:       CGCTCTACGC
Seed 2 rc:       GCGTAGAGCG
Seed 3 fw:             ACGCTATCAT
Seed 3 rc:             ATGATAGCGT
Seed 4 fw:
TCATGCATAA
Seed 4 rc:
TTATGCATGA
```

Since it's best to use longer intervals for longer reads, this parameter sets the interval as a function of the read length, rather than a single one-size-fits-all number. For instance, specifying `-i S,1,2.5` sets the interval function `f` to `f(x) = 1 + 2.5 * sqrt(x)`, where `x` is the read length. See also: setting function options. If the function returns a result less than 1, it is rounded up to 1. Default: the `--sensitive` preset is used by default, which sets `-i` to `S,1,1.15` in `--end-to-end` mode to `-i S,1,0.75` in `--local` mode.

`--n-ceil <func>` Sets a function governing the maximum number of ambiguous characters (usually `N`s and/or `.`s) allowed in a read as a function of

	read length. For instance, specifying `-L,0,0.15` sets the N-ceiling function `f` to `f(x) = 0 + 0.15 * x`, where `x` is the read length. See also: setting function options. Reads exceeding this ceiling are filtered out. Default: `L,0,0.15`.
`--dpad <int>`	"Pads" dynamic programming problems by `<int>` columns on either side to allow gaps. Default: `15`.
`--gbar <int>`	Disallow gaps within `<int>` positions of the beginning or end of the read. Default: `4`.
`--ignore-quals`	When calculating a mismatch penalty, always consider the quality value at the mismatched position to be the highest possible, regardless of the actual value. I.e. input is treated as though all quality values are high. This is also the default behavior when the input doesn't specify quality values (e.g. in `-f`, `-r`, or `-c` modes).
`--nofw/--norc`	If `--nofw` is specified, `bowtie2` will not attempt to align unpaired reads to the forward (Watson) reference strand. If `--norc` is specified, `bowtie2` will not attempt to align unpaired reads against the reverse-complement (Crick) reference strand. In paired-end mode, `--nofw` and `--norc` pertain to the fragments; i.e. specifying `--nofw` causes `bowtie2` to explore only those paired-end configurations corresponding to fragments from the reverse-complement (Crick) strand. Default: both strands enabled.
`--end-to-end`	In this mode, Bowtie 2 requires that the entire read align from one end to the other, without any trimming (or "soft clipping") of characters from either end. The match bonus `--ma` always equals 0 in this mode, so all alignment scores are less than or equal to 0, and the greatest possible alignment score is 0. This is mutually exclusive with `--local`. `--end-to-end` is the default mode.
`--local`	In this mode, Bowtie 2 does not require that the entire read align from one end to the other. Rather, some characters may be omitted ("soft clipped") from the ends in

order to achieve the greatest possible alignment score. The match bonus `--ma` is used in this mode, and the best possible alignment score is equal to the match bonus (`--ma`) times the length of the read. Specifying `--local` and one of the presets (e.g. `--local --very-fast`) is equivalent to specifying the local version of the preset (`--very-fast-local`). This is mutually exclusive with `--end-to-end`. `--end-to-end` is the default mode.

Scoring options

`--ma <int>`
: Sets the match bonus. In `--local` mode `<int>` is added to the alignment score for each position where a read character aligns to a reference character and the characters match. Not used in `--end-to-end` mode. Default: 2.

`--mp MX,MN`
: Sets the maximum (`MX`) and minimum (`MN`) mismatch penalties, both integers. A number less than or equal to `MX` and greater than or equal to `MN` is subtracted from the alignment score for each position where a read character aligns to a reference character, the characters do not match, and neither is an `N`. If `--ignore-quals` is specified, the number subtracted quals `MX`. Otherwise, the number subtracted is `MN + floor( (MX-MN)(MIN(Q, 40.0)/40.0) )` where Q is the Phred quality value. Default: `MX = 6`, `MN = 2`.

`--np <int>`
: Sets penalty for positions where the read, reference, or both, contain an ambiguous character such as `N`. Default: 1.

`--rdg <int1>,<int2>`
: Sets the read gap open (`<int1>`) and extend (`<int2>`) penalties. A read gap of length N gets a penalty of `<int1> + N * <int2>`. Default: 5, 3.

`--rfg <int1>,<int2>`
: Sets the reference gap open (`<int1>`) and extend (`<int2>`) penalties. A

reference gap of length N gets a penalty of `<int1> + N * <int2>`. Default: 5, 3.

`--score-min <func>` Sets a function governing the minimum alignment score needed for an alignment to be considered "valid" (i.e. good enough to report). This is a function of read length. For instance, specifying `L,0,-0.6` sets the minimum-score function `f` to `f(x) = 0 + -0.6 * x`, where `x` is the read length. See also: setting function options. The default in `--end-to-end` mode is `L,-0.6,-0.6` and the default in `--local` mode is `G,20,8`.

Reporting options

`-k <int>` By default, bowtie2 searches for distinct, valid alignments for each read. When it finds a valid alignment, it continues looking for alignments that are nearly as good or better. The best alignment found is reported (randomly selected from among best if tied). Information about the best alignments is used to estimate mapping quality and to set SAM optional fields, such as `AS:i` and `XS:i`.

When `-k` is specified, however, bowtie2 behaves differently. Instead, it searches for at most `<int>` distinct, valid alignments for each read. The search terminates when it can't find more distinct valid alignments, or when it finds `<int>`, whichever happens first. All alignments found are reported in descending order by alignment score. The alignment score for a paired-end alignment equals the sum of the alignment scores of the individual mates. Each reported read or pair alignment beyond the first has the SAM 'secondary' bit (which equals 256) set in its FLAGS field. For reads that have more than `<int>` distinct, valid alignments, bowtie2 does not gaurantee that the `<int>` alignments reported are the best possible in terms of alignment score. `-k` is mutually exclusive with `-a`.

Note: Bowtie 2 is not designed with large

values for `-k` in mind, and when aligning reads to long, repetitive genomes large `-k` can be very, very slow.

`-a` Like `-k` but with no upper limit on number of alignments to search for. `-a` is mutually exclusive with `-k`.

Note: Bowtie 2 is not designed with `-a` mode in mind, and when aligning reads to long, repetitive genomes this mode can be very, very slow.

Effort options

`-D <int>` Up to `<int>` consecutive seed extension attempts can "fail" before Bowtie 2 moves on, using the alignments found so far. A seed extension "fails" if it does not yield a new best or a new second-best alignment. This limit is automatically adjusted up when `-k` or `-a` are specified. Default: 15.

`-R <int>` `<int>` is the maximum number of times Bowtie 2 will "re-seed" reads with repetitive seeds. When "re-seeding," Bowtie 2 simply chooses a new set of reads (same length, same number of mismatches allowed) at different offsets and searches for more alignments. A read is considered to have repetitive seeds if the total number of seed hits divided by the number of seeds that aligned at least once is greater than 300. Default: 2.

Paired-end options

`-I/--minins <int>` The minimum fragment length for valid paired-end alignments. E.g. if `-I 60` is specified and a paired-end alignment consists of two 20-bp alignments in the appropriate orientation with a 20-bp gap between them, that alignment is considered valid (as long as `-X` is also satisfied). A 19-bp gap would not be valid in that case. If trimming options `-3` or `-5` are also used, the `-I` constraint is applied with respect to the untrimmed mates. Default: 0.

`-X/--maxins` The maximum fragment length for valid paired-end alignments. E.g. if `-X 100` is

`<int>`	specified and a paired-end alignment consists of two 20-bp alignments in the proper orientation with a 60-bp gap between them, that alignment is considered valid (as long as `-I` is also satisfied). A 61-bp gap would not be valid in that case. If trimming options `-3` or `-5` are also used, the `-X` constraint is applied with respect to the untrimmed mates, not the trimmed mates. Default: 500.
`--fr/--rf/--ff`	The upstream/downstream mate orientations for a valid paired-end alignment against the forward reference strand. E.g., if `--fr` is specified and there is a candidate paired-end alignment where mate 1 appears upstream of the reverse complement of mate 2 and the fragment length constraints (`-I` and `-X`) are met, that alignment is valid. Also, if mate 2 appears upstream of the reverse complement of mate 1 and all other co