

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.

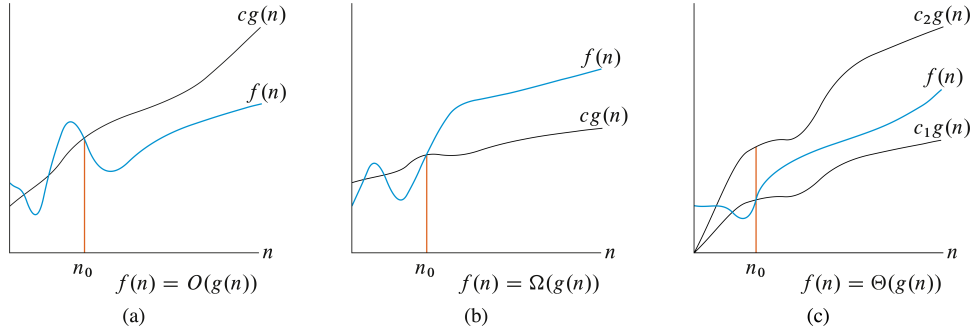
Asymptotic Notation: informal introduction

- **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 $O(n^4)$.
- **Ω -notation** (big-Omega) The Ω -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 $\Omega(n)$.
- **Θ -notation** (big-Theta) The Θ -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)

• Ω -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:

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

• **Θ -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 Θ -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 Θ -notation (but they often mean to use Θ) However, Θ -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

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| growth rate | slowest | \rightarrow | \rightarrow | \rightarrow | fastest |
| run time | fastest | \leftarrow | \leftarrow | \leftarrow | slowest |
| categories | constant | logarithms | polynomials | exponentials | super exponentials |
| examples | 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 ∞ .
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.
- **Summations:** Arithmetic series and Geometric series sums are commonly found during analysis of algorithms.

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>