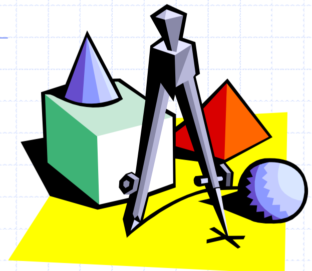
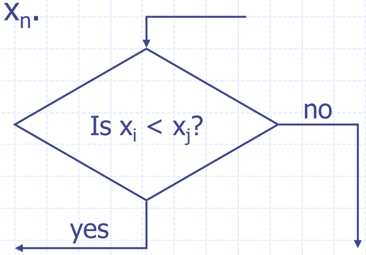
Sorting Lower Bound



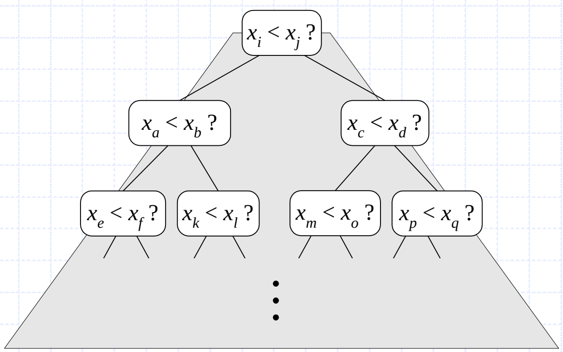
Comparison-Based Sorting

- Many sorting algorithms are comparison based.
  - They sort by making comparisons between pairs of objects
  - Examples: bubble-sort, selection-sort, insertion-sort, heap-sort, merge-sort, quick-sort, ...
- Let us therefore derive a lower bound on the running time of any algorithm that uses comparisons to sort n elements, $x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_n$.



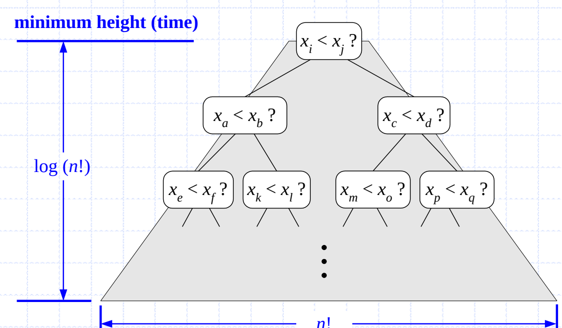
Counting Comparisons

- Let us just count comparisons then.
- Each possible run of the algorithm corresponds to a root-to-leaf path in a decision tree

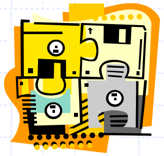


Decision Tree Height

- The height of the decision tree is a lower bound on the running time
- Every input permutation must lead to a separate leaf output
- If not, some input …4…5… would have same output ordering as …5…4…, which would be wrong
- Since there are n!=1·2 · … ·n leaves, the height is at least log (n!)



The Lower Bound



- Any comparison-based sorting algorithms takes at least log (n!) time
- Therefore, any such algorithm takes time at least

$$\log\,(n!) \geq \log \left(\frac{n}{2}\right)^{\frac{n}{2}} = (n/2)\log\,(n/2).$$

- That is, any comparison-based sorting algorithm must run in Ω(n log n) time.