

ICPC Sessions OR How to Solve Problems

Sebastian Claici
sebastianclaici@gmail.com

November 29, 2012

What is the ACM ICPC?

What is the ACM ICPC?

- The ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest!

What is the ACM ICPC?

- The ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest!
- Team based (teams of 3)

What is the ACM ICPC?

- The ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest!
- Team based (teams of 3)
- The most prestigious global programming competition (since 1977)!

This is how it goes...

This is how it goes...

- Regionals and Finals

This is how it goes...

- Regionals and Finals
- We are part of the Northwestern European region

This is how it goes...

- Regionals and Finals
- We are part of the Northwestern European region
- Top 3 teams will qualify for the Finals in St. Petersburg

This is how it goes...

- Regionals and Finals
- We are part of the Northwestern European region
- Top 3 teams will qualify for the Finals in St. Petersburg
- This means we will make Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and others cry!

What is this about?

What is this about?

- Algorithms; more than you did in previous years (if any)!

What is this about?

- Algorithms; more than you did in previous years (if any)!
- Actually using algorithms to solve problems!

What is this about?

- Algorithms; more than you did in previous years (if any)!
- Actually using algorithms to solve problems!
- Beating Cambridge (and everyone else)!

Why study this?

Why study this?



Why study this?



facebook

Why study this?



facebook



How to Prepare

How to Prepare

- Beginners:

How to Prepare

- Beginners:
 - [USACO](#), [UVa](#), [Project Euler](#) (last one not recommended)

How to Prepare

- Beginners:
 - [USACO](#), [UVa](#), [Project Euler](#) (last one not recommended)
- Intermediate:

How to Prepare

- Beginners:
 - [USACO](#), [UVa](#), [Project Euler](#) (last one not recommended)
- Intermediate:
 - <http://poj.org>, <http://acm.tju.edu.cn>,
<http://acm.sgu.ru>, <http://acm.timus.ru>

How to Prepare

- Beginners:
 - [USACO](#), [UVa](#), [Project Euler](#) (last one not recommended)
- Intermediate:
 - <http://poj.org>, <http://acm.tju.edu.cn>,
<http://acm.sgu.ru>, <http://acm.timus.ru>
- Everyone:

How to Prepare

- Beginners:
 - [USACO](#), [UVa](#), [Project Euler](#) (last one not recommended)
- Intermediate:
 - <http://poj.org>, <http://acm.tju.edu.cn>,
<http://acm.sgu.ru>, <http://acm.timus.ru>
- Everyone:
 - [Topcoder](#) and [Codeforces](#) - make accounts on both

How to Prepare

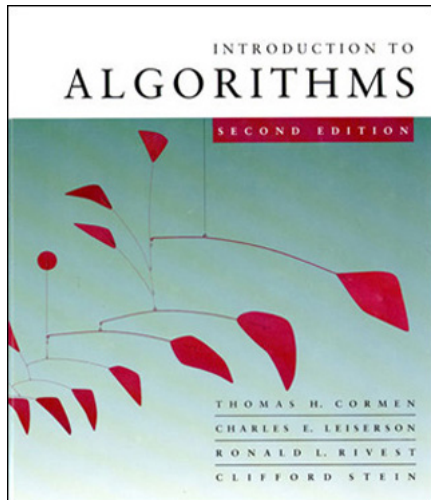
- Beginners:
 - [USACO](#), [UVa](#), [Project Euler](#) (last one not recommended)
- Intermediate:
 - <http://poj.org>, <http://acm.tju.edu.cn>,
<http://acm.sgu.ru>, <http://acm.timus.ru>
- Everyone:
 - [Topcoder](#) and [Codeforces](#) - make accounts on both
- Romanians:

How to Prepare

- Beginners:
 - [USACO](#), [UVa](#), [Project Euler](#) (last one not recommended)
- Intermediate:
 - <http://poj.org>, <http://acm.tju.edu.cn>,
<http://acm.sgu.ru>, <http://acm.timus.ru>
- Everyone:
 - [Topcoder](#) and [Codeforces](#) - make accounts on both
- Romanians:
 - [Infoarena](#)

Recommended Book(s)

- **Introduction to Algorithms**
 - Thomas Cormen, Charles Leiserson, Ronald Rivest, Clifford Stein
- **Algorithms in C/C++/Java/**
 - Robert Sedgewick



Challenge

Challenge

90% of programmers, given 2 hours, the high-level language of their choice (including pseudocode), and a description of binary search could not implement it correctly.

Challenge

90% of programmers, given 2 hours, the high-level language of their choice (including pseudocode), and a description of binary search could not implement it correctly.

Can you?

Binary Search

```
1  int binary_search(int *array, int n, int x)
2  {
3      int lo = 0, hi = n - 1;
4      while (lo < hi) {
5          int mid = lo + (hi - lo) / 2;
6          if (array[mid] < x)
7              lo = mid + 1;
8          else hi = mid;
9      }
10
11     if (lo == hi && array[lo] == x)
12         return lo;
13     return -1;
14 }
```


Ad-hoc Problems

Characteristics

- Most of them are very easy; some of them are very very hard

Characteristics

- Most of them are very easy; some of them are very very hard
- Don't require any special knowledge of algorithms

- Most of them are very easy; some of them are very very hard
- Don't require any special knowledge of algorithms
- There is always at least one in competitions

Strategies to solve

Strategies to solve

- Most of these problems are straightforward.

Strategies to solve

- Most of these problems are straightforward.
- However, some ad-hoc problems require careful reading.

Strategies to solve

- Most of these problems are straightforward.
- However, some ad-hoc problems require careful reading.
- Carefully sequencing the instructions given in the problem is usually enough to solve them.

Strategies to solve

- Most of these problems are straightforward.
- However, some ad-hoc problems require careful reading.
- Carefully sequencing the instructions given in the problem is usually enough to solve them.
- Some require reasonable optimisations, and some degree of analysis to prune unnecessary steps.

Strategies to solve

- Most of these problems are straightforward.
- However, some ad-hoc problems require careful reading.
- Carefully sequencing the instructions given in the problem is usually enough to solve them.
- Some require reasonable optimisations, and some degree of analysis to prune unnecessary steps.
- If it's not obvious, then there's only one piece of advice I can give you:

Strategies to solve

- Most of these problems are straightforward.
- However, some ad-hoc problems require careful reading.
- Carefully sequencing the instructions given in the problem is usually enough to solve them.
- Some require reasonable optimisations, and some degree of analysis to prune unnecessary steps.
- If it's not obvious, then there's only one piece of advice I can give you:

Don't Panic!

Practice, practice, practice...

Practice, practice, practice...

- To get really good at this, you need practice. **A lot** of practice.

Practice, practice, practice...

- To get really good at this, you need practice. **A lot** of practice.
- So I've decided that every week I'll give you a set of **a lot** of problems so that you can practice.

Practice, practice, practice...

- To get really good at this, you need practice. **A lot** of practice.
- So I've decided that every week I'll give you a set of **a lot** of problems so that you can practice.
- Will usually be more than you can solve in a week, although I'd love to be proven wrong.

Practice, practice, practice...

- To get really good at this, you need practice. **A lot** of practice.
- So I've decided that every week I'll give you a set of **a lot** of problems so that you can practice.
- Will usually be more than you can solve in a week, although I'd love to be proven wrong.
- Solutions should be available one week after the problems were set.

Practice, practice, practice...

- To get really good at this, you need practice. **A lot** of practice.
- So I've decided that every week I'll give you a set of **a lot** of problems so that you can practice.
- Will usually be more than you can solve in a week, although I'd love to be proven wrong.
- Solutions should be available one week after the problems were set.

For this week, try your hand at these questions (all ad-hoc):

http://uva.onlinejudge.org/index.php?option=com_onlinejudge&Itemid=8&category=121

More Info

- You can email me about anything related to this. I'll usually respond within a day or two.

- You can email me about anything related to this. I'll usually respond within a day or two.
- All the slides, and everything we're going to do in these sessions, as well as solutions to weekly problems are on github:

github.com/sebastian-claici/acm_sessions.git

- You can email me about anything related to this. I'll usually respond within a day or two.
- All the slides, and everything we're going to do in these sessions, as well as solutions to weekly problems are on github:

github.com/sebastian-claici/acm_sessions.git

Thank You