

Binary Tree & Search

Saturday, 27 December 2025 12:10 pm

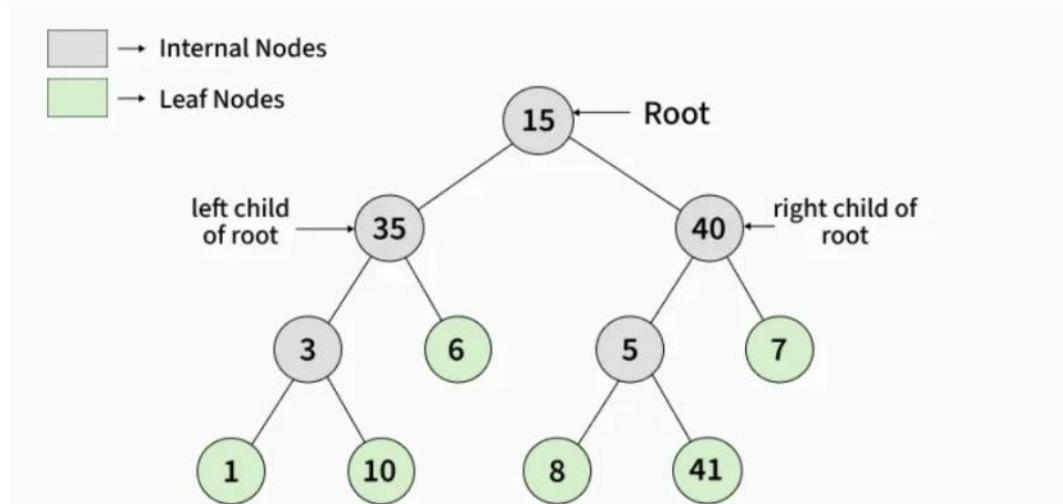
<https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/dsa/introduction-to-binary-tree/>

Introduction to Binary Tree

Last Updated : 09 Oct, 2025



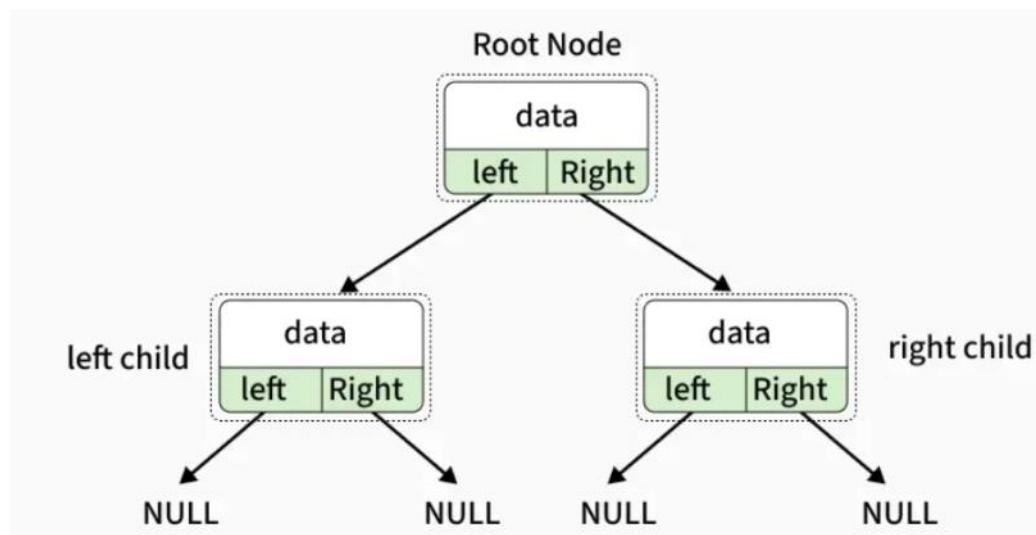
Binary Tree is a non-linear and hierarchical data structure where each node has **at most two children** referred to as the left child and the right child. The topmost node in a binary tree is called the root, and the bottom-most nodes(having no children) are called leaves.



Representation of Binary Tree

Each node in a Binary Tree has three parts:

- Data
- Pointer to the left child
- Pointer to the right child



Properties of Binary Tree

- The maximum number of nodes at level L of a binary tree is 2^L .
- The maximum number of nodes in a binary tree of height H is $2^{H+1} - 1$.
- Total number of leaf nodes in a binary tree =
total number of nodes with 2 children + 1.
- In a Binary Tree with N nodes, the minimum possible height or the minimum number of levels is $\lfloor \log_2 N \rfloor$.
- A Binary Tree with L leaves has at least $\lfloor \log_2 L \rfloor + 1$ levels.

Operations On Binary Tree

Following is a list of common operations that can be performed on a binary tree:

1. Traversal: [Depth-First Search \(DFS\) Traversal](#) and [Breadth-First Search \(BFS\) Traversal](#)

2. Search: [Search a node in Binary Tree](#)

3. Insertion and Deletion: Prerequisite: [Level Order Traversal](#), [Insert in a Binary Tree](#) and [Delete from a Binary Tree](#)

Advantages of Binary Tree

- **Efficient Search:** [Binary Search Trees](#) (a variation of Binary Tree) are efficient when searching for a specific element, as each node has at most two child nodes when compared to linked list and arrays
- **Memory Efficient:** Binary trees require lesser memory as compared to other tree data structures, therefore memory-efficient.
- Binary trees are relatively easy to implement and understand as each node has at most two children, [left child](#) and right child.

Disadvantages of Binary Tree

- **Limited structure:** Binary trees are limited to two child nodes per node, which can limit their usefulness in certain applications. For example, if a tree requires more than two child nodes per node, a different tree structure may be more suitable.
- **Space inefficiency:** Binary trees can be space inefficient when compared to other data structures like arrays and linked list. This is because each node requires two child references or pointers, which can be a significant amount of memory overhead for large trees.

Applications of Binary Tree

- Binary Tree can be used to represent hierarchical data.
- Huffman Coding trees are used in data compression algorithms.
- Useful for indexing segmented at the database is useful in storing cache in the system,
- Binary trees can be used to implement decision trees, a type of machine learning algorithm used for classification and regression analysis.

<https://builtin.com/software-engineering-perspectives/tree-traversal>

What Is Tree Traversal?

Tree traversal, also known as tree search, is a process of visiting each node of a tree data structure. During tree traversal, you visit each node of a tree exactly once and perform an operation on the nodes like checking the node data (search) or updating the node.

Tree traversal algorithms can be classified broadly in the following two categories by the order in which the nodes are visited:

- **Depth-first search (DFS) algorithm:** It starts with the root node and first visits all nodes of one branch as deep as possible before backtracking. It visits all other branches in a similar fashion. There are three subtypes under this that we will cover in this article.
- **Breadth-first search (BFS) algorithm:** This also starts from the root node and visits all nodes of current depth before moving to the next depth in the tree. We will cover one algorithm of BFS type in the upcoming section.

Types of Tree Traversal Algorithms

To understand tree traversal in a practical way, I will use Java to explain the algorithms. But these algorithms can be coded in your preferred programming language the same way we will do in Java.

4 Types of Tree Traversal Algorithms

1. **Inorder traversal:** Visits all nodes inside the left subtree, then visits the current node before visiting any node within the right subtree.
2. **Preorder traversal:** Visits the current node before visiting any nodes inside left or right subtrees.
3. **Postorder traversal:** Visits the current node after visiting all the nodes of left and right subtrees.
4. **Level order traversal:** Visits nodes level-by-level and in left-to-right fashion at the same level.

<https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/dsa/shortest-path-algorithms-a-complete-guide/>

What are the Shortest Path Algorithms?

*The shortest path algorithms are the ones that focuses on calculating the minimum travelling cost from **source node** to **destination node** of a graph in optimal time and space complexities.*

Types of Shortest Path Algorithms:

As we know there are various types of graphs (weighted, unweighted, negative, cyclic, etc.) therefore having a single algorithm that handles all of them efficiently is not possible. In order to tackle different problems, we have different shortest-path algorithms, which can be categorised into two categories:

Breadth-First search

- This strategy operates by processing vertices in layers: The vertices closest to the start are evaluated first, and the most distant vertices are evaluated last.
- This is much the same as a level-order traversal for trees.
- This strategy for searching a graph is known as breadth-first search.

BFS – Basic Idea

Given a graph with N vertices and a selected vertex A:

for (i = 1; there are unvisited vertices ; i++)

 Visit all unvisited vertices at distance i

(i is the length of the shortest path between A and currently processed vertices)

Queue-based implementation

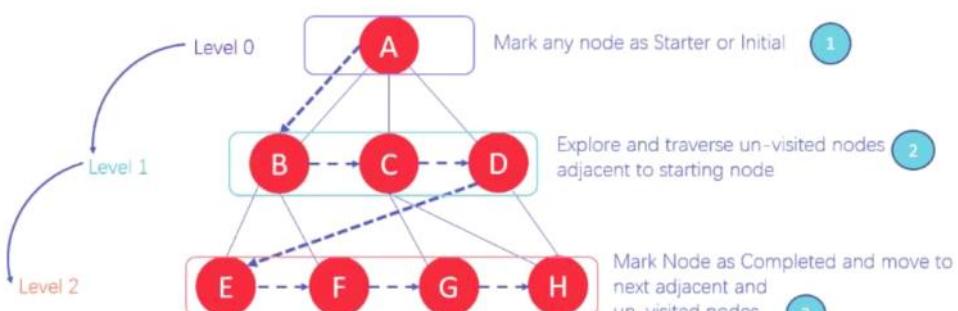
BFS – Algorithm

BFS algorithm

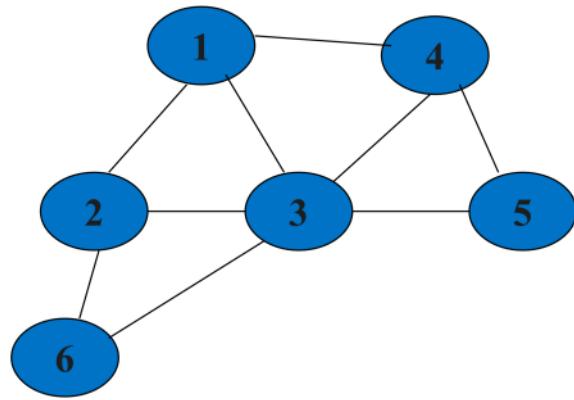
1. Store source vertex **S** in a **queue** and mark as processed
2. **while** queue is not empty
 - Read vertex **v** from the queue
 - for** all neighbors **w**:
 - If **w** is not processed
 - Mark as processed
 - Append in the queue

BFS

CONCEPT DIAGRAM



BFS – Example

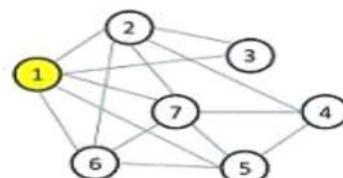


BFS

Example: BFS Algorithm Tracing

Solution:

➤ Starting vertex : 1



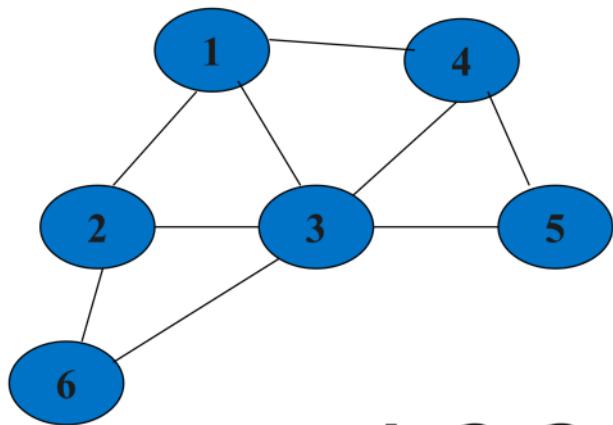
Queue : [1 | | | | |]
Visited: { 1 }



Queue : [2 | 3 | 7 | 5 | 6 |]
Visited: { 1, 2, 3, 7, 5, 6 }

13

BFS – Example



1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 5

Example

Adjacency lists

1: 2, 3, 4

2: 1, 3, 6

3: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6

4: 1, 3, 5

5: 3, 4

6: 2, 3

Breadth-first traversal: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 5

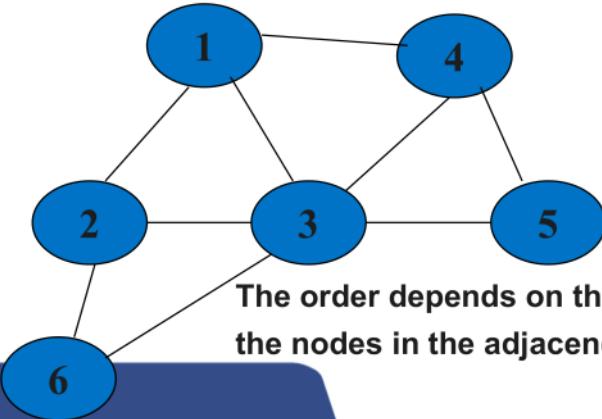
1: starting node

2, 3, 4 : adjacent to 1

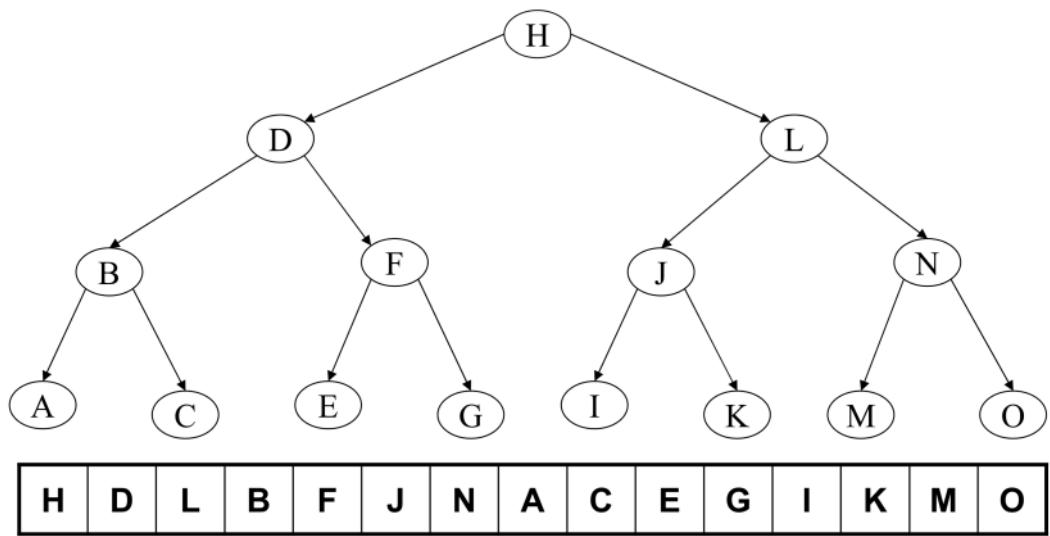
(at distance 1 from node 1)

6 : unvisited adjacent to node 2.

5 : unvisited, adjacent to node 3

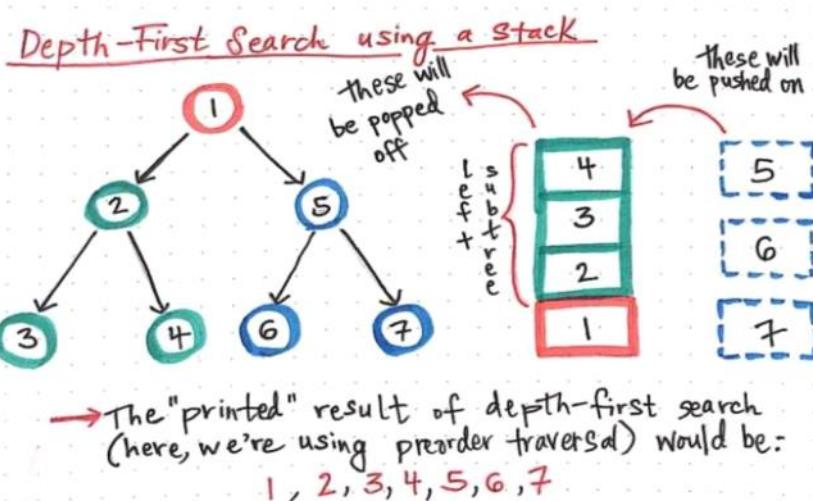


BFS in Tree – Example

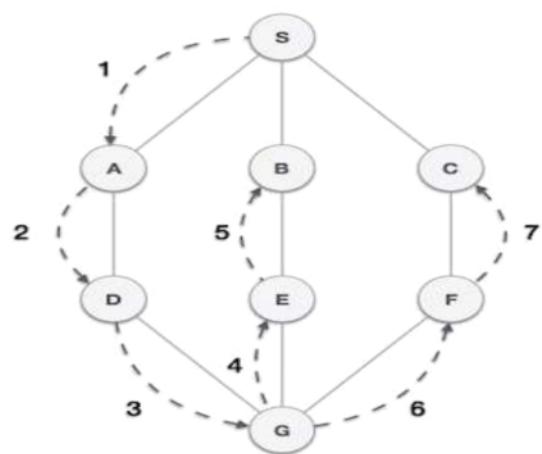


Depth-First Search

- Starting at some vertex, v , we process v and then recursively traverse all vertices adjacent to v .
- Depth-first search is a generalization of preorder traversal.
- Recursive in nature.



DFS



DFS – Algorithm

mark all vertices in the graph as not reached
invoke **dfs** on source node s

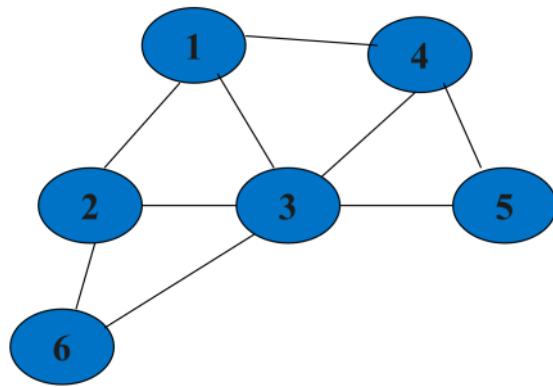
Procedure dfs (s)

```
mark and visit s
for each neighbor w of s
    if the neighbor is not reached
        invoke dfs(w)
```

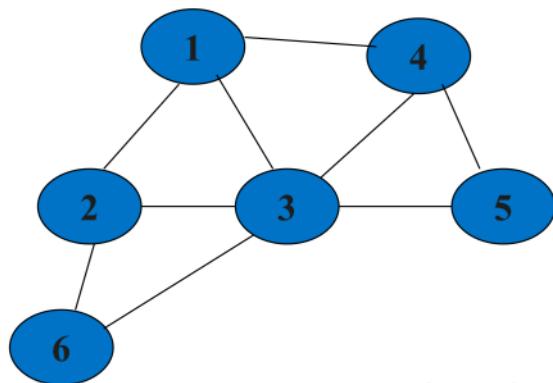
DFS – Algorithm

```
void dfs( Vertex v )
{
    v.visited = true;
    for each Vertex w adjacent to v
        if( !w.visited )
            dfs( w );
}
```

DFS – Example



DFS – Example



1, 2, 6, 3, 5, 4

Example

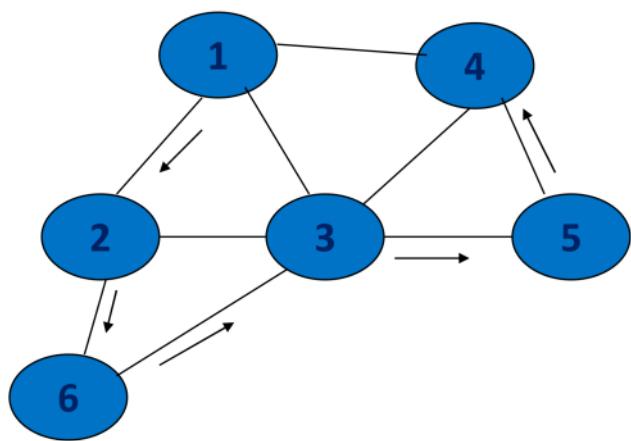
Depth first traversal: 1, 2, 6, 3, 5, 4

the particular order is dependent on the order of nodes in the adjacency lists

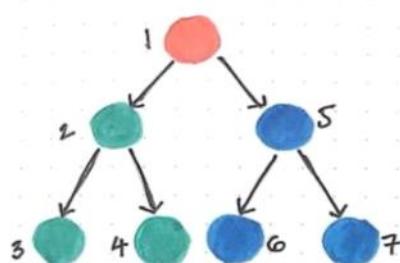
Adjacency lists

```

1: 2, 3, 4
2: 6, 3, 1
3: 1, 2, 6, 5, 4
4: 1, 3, 5
5: 3, 4
6: 2, 3
    
```

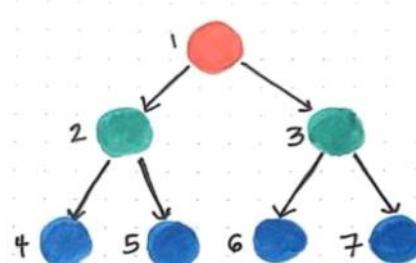


DFS & BFS



Depth-first search

- Traverse through left subtree(s) first, then traverse through the right subtree(s).



Breadth-first search

- Traverse through one level of children nodes, then traverse through the level of grandchildren nodes (and so on...).

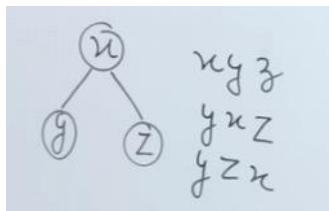
BFS & DFS Complexity

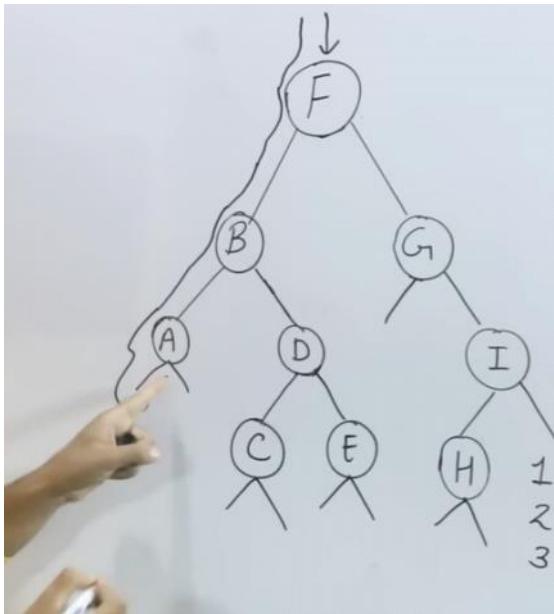
- The Time complexity of both BFS and DFS will be $O(V + E)$ where V is the number of vertices, and E is the number of Edges
- Memory requirement for BFS is higher than DFS

Preorder - Root Left Right

Inorder - Left Root Right

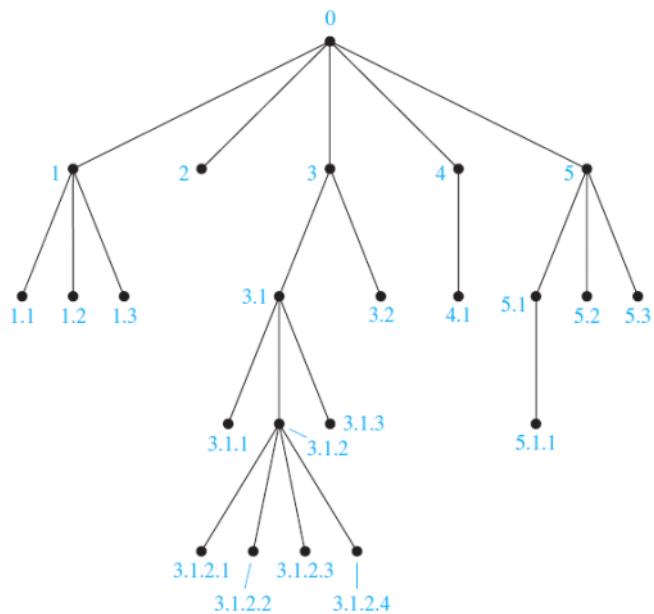
Post order - Left Right Root





Tree Traversal

Ordered rooted trees are often used to store information. We need procedures for visiting each vertex of an ordered rooted tree to access data. We will describe several important algorithms for visiting all the vertices of an ordered rooted tree. Ordered rooted trees can also be used to represent various types of expressions, such as arithmetic expressions involving numbers, variables, and operations. The different listings of the vertices of ordered rooted trees used to represent expressions are useful in the evaluation of these expressions.



$$0 < 1 < 1.1 < 1.2 < 1.3 < 2 < 3 < 3.1 < 3.1.1 < 3.1.2 < 3.1.2.1 < 3.1.2.2 \\ < 3.1.2.3 < 3.1.2.4 < 3.1.3 < 3.2 < 4 < 4.1 < 5 < 5.1 < 5.2 < 5.3$$



Traversal Algorithms

Procedures for systematically visiting every vertex of an ordered rooted tree are called **traversal algorithms**. We will describe three of the most commonly used such algorithms, **preorder traversal**, **inorder traversal**, and **postorder traversal**. Each of these algorithms can be defined recursively. We first define preorder traversal.

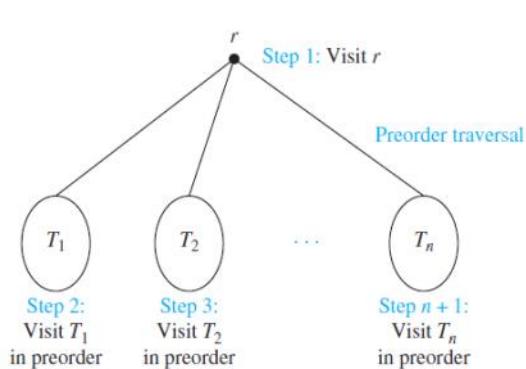


FIGURE 2 Preorder Traversal.

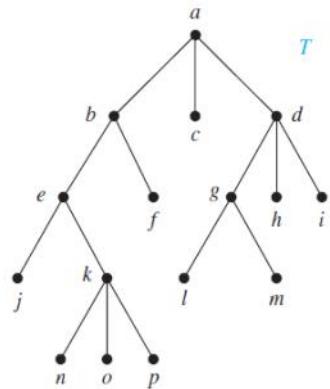
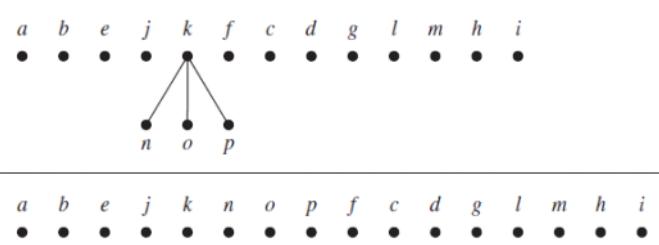
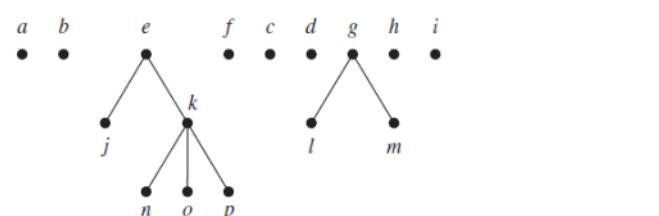
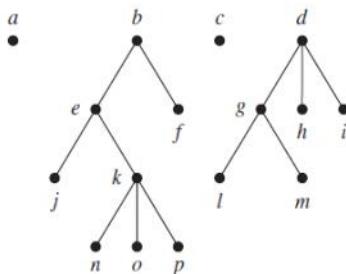
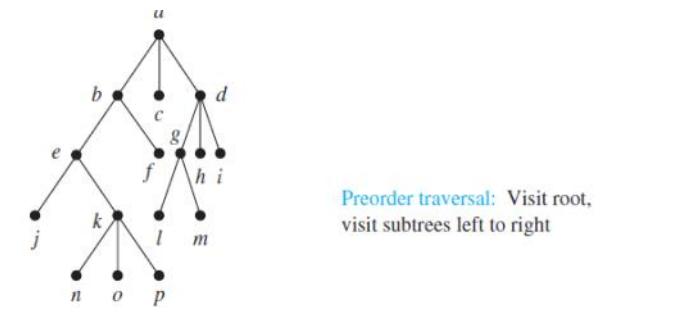
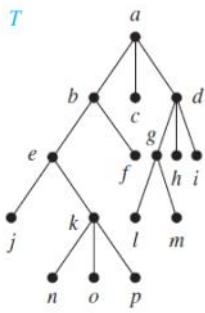
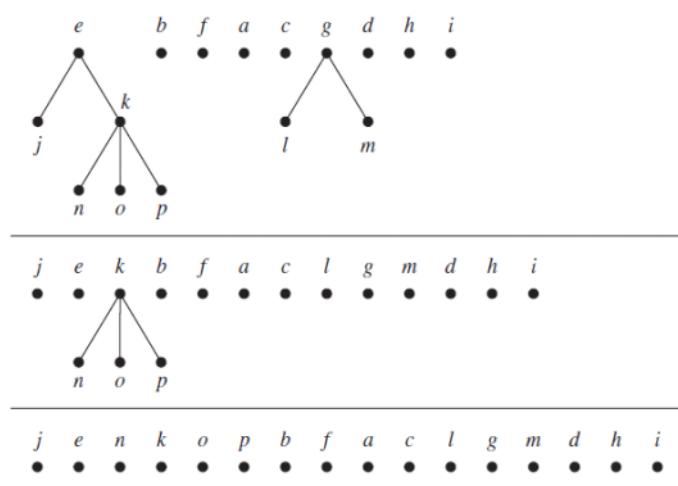
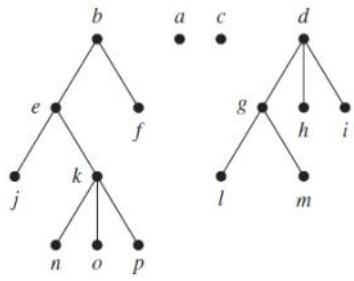


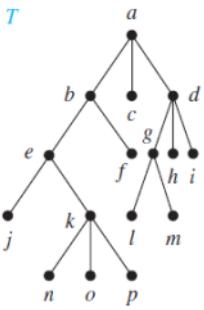
FIGURE 3 The Ordered Rooted Tree T .





Inorder traversal: Visit leftmost subtree, visit root, visit other subtrees left to right





Postorder traversal: Visit subtrees left to right; visit root

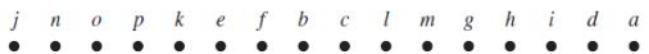
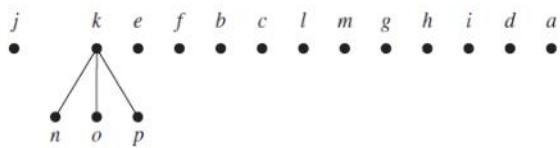
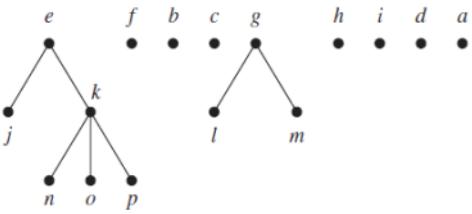
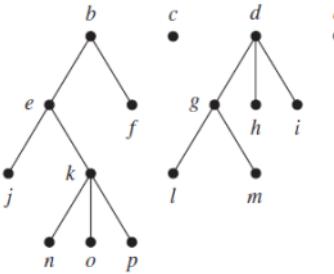


FIGURE 8 The Postorder Traversal of T .

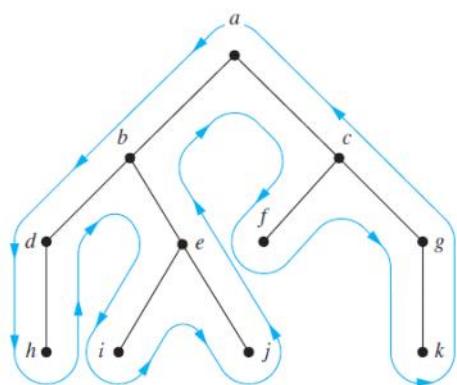


FIGURE 9 A Shortcut for Traversing an Ordered Rooted Tree in Preorder, Inorder, and Postorder.

Click to enlarge

Tree Traversal Techniques

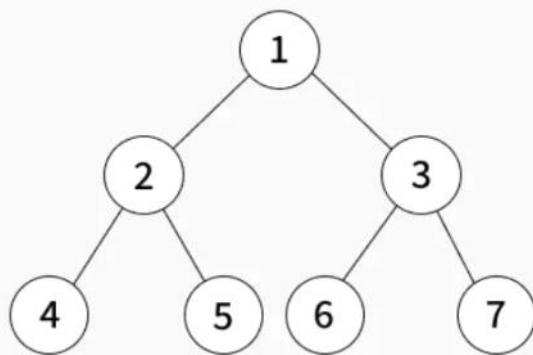
Depth First Traversal (DFS)

Breadth First Traversal (Level Order Traversal or BFS)

Inorder Traversal

Preorder Traversal

Postorder Traversal



Inorder Traversal

4	2	5	1	6	3	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Preorder Traversal

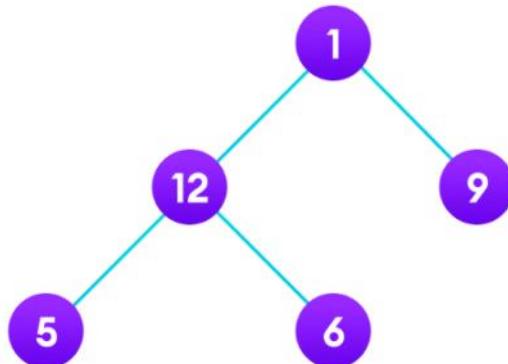
1	2	4	5	3	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Postorder Traversal

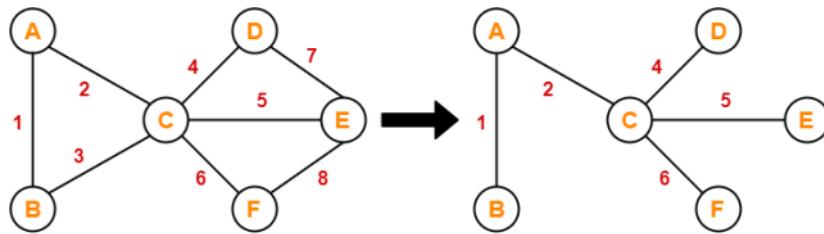
4	5	2	6	7	3	1
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Level order Traversal

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

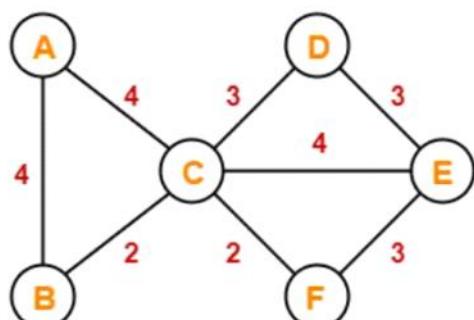
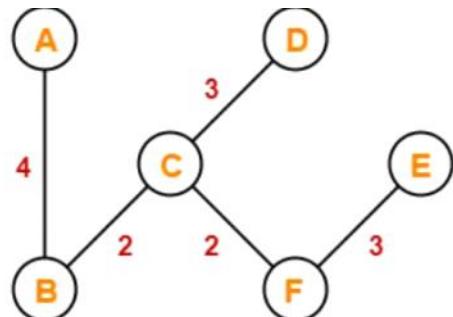


Tree traversal



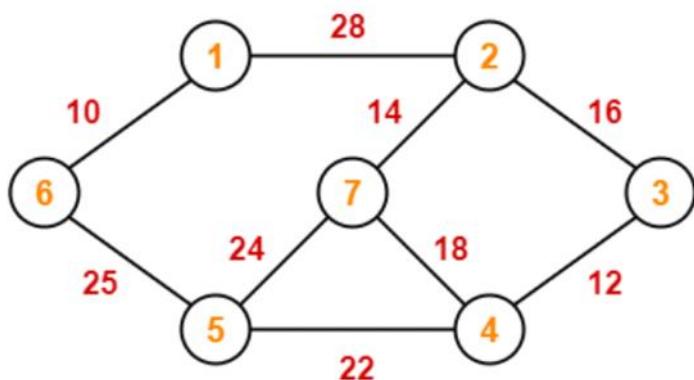
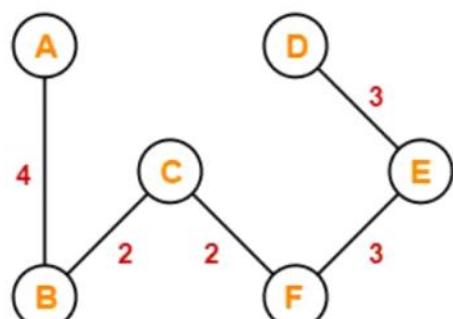
Given Graph

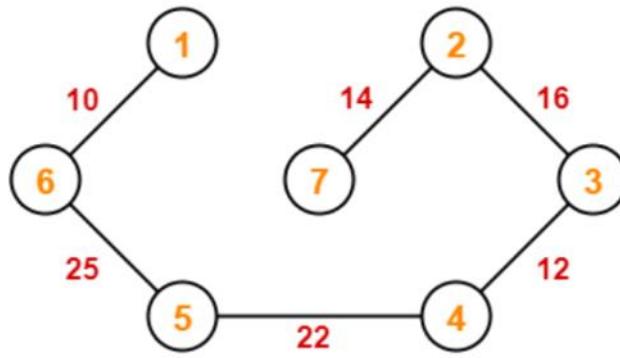
Minimum Spanning Tree (MST)
(Cost = 18 units)



Given Graph

Result from Prim's Algorithm
(Cost = 14 units)





Since all the vertices have been connected / included in the MST, so we stop.

Weight of the MST

= Sum of all edge weights

$$= 10 + 25 + 22 + 12 + 16 + 14$$

$$= 99 \text{ units}$$

Difference between Prim's Algorithm and Kruskal's Algorithm-

Prim's Algorithm	Kruskal's Algorithm
The tree that we are making or growing always remains connected.	The tree that we are making or growing usually remains disconnected.
Prim's Algorithm grows a solution from a random vertex by adding the next cheapest vertex to the existing tree.	Kruskal's Algorithm grows a solution from the cheapest edge by adding the next cheapest edge to the existing tree / forest.
Prim's Algorithm is faster for dense graphs.	Kruskal's Algorithm is faster for sparse graphs.

Using Prim's Algorithm, find the cost of minimum spanning tree (MST) of the given graph-

