**Exercise 2:- E-commerce Platform Search Function**

**Asymptotic Notation**

Asymptotic notation is a fundamental concept in computer science used to describe the **efficiency of algorithms**. Rather than providing exact runtime values (which can vary by hardware, compiler, or programming language), asymptotic notation focuses on how an algorithm **scales with input size (n)**.

By ignoring machine-level constants and focusing on growth trends, asymptotic analysis helps developers and engineers make **data-driven decisions** about algorithm selection, especially in large-scale systems like **e-commerce platforms**, where performance is crucial.

**What is Big O Notation?**

* **Big O (O)** notation represents the **upper bound** of an algorithm's growth rate.
* It describes the **worst-case performance** — the maximum number of operations the algorithm might take as the input size increases.
* It gives a **standardized way to compare** multiple algorithms regardless of hardware or language.

**Key Characteristics:**

* **Simplifies algorithm comparison** by removing irrelevant constants.
* Helps estimate algorithm **scalability**.
* Used to ensure **performance constraints** in high-demand environments like real-time search systems, recommendation engines, and transaction processors.

**Other Asymptotic Notations (for completeness)**

* **Big Ω (Omega)** – Represents the **best-case** time complexity.
* **Big Θ (Theta)** – Represents the **average or tight bound** (when best and worst are the same).
* However, Big O is the most **widely used** because real-world systems often need to plan for worst-case behaviour.

**Why is Big O Notation Important?**

In real-world applications, we often deal with **huge datasets** — think of e-commerce platforms like Amazon or Flipkart with millions of products. Developers and architects need to ensure that their algorithms **scale well** and **perform efficiently** regardless of input size.

Big O notation provides a **standardized framework** to:

* Compare the **efficiency** of different algorithms.
* Predict **performance bottlenecks** before deployment.
* Choose the most **suitable algorithm** for a given problem.

**How Big O Helps in Analyzing Algorithms :-**

**1. Abstracting Away Hardware and Implementation Details**

* Big O focuses on **order of growth**, ignoring constants and lower-order terms.
* This allows developers to evaluate algorithm efficiency regardless of the underlying hardware or compiler.

**2. Measuring Scalability**

* Big O helps assess how well an algorithm scales when input grows.
* You can predict how the program will behave with **10, 1000, or 1 million records**.
* Linear search is O(n), which may be fine for 100 products, but not for 1 million.

**3. Guiding Optimization**

* Big O helps identify **performance bottlenecks** by showing the most expensive operations.
* Developers can then focus optimization efforts on reducing the time or space complexity.
* If a sorting algorithm is O(n²), switching to O(n log n) can yield significant speedups.

**4. Choosing the Right Algorithm**

* Many problems have multiple solutions with different complexities.
* Big O makes it easy to **compare and select** the most efficient one based on input size.

Searching in an array can be done with:

* Linear Search: O(n)
* Binary Search: O(log n) (on sorted data)
* Choosing the wrong algorithm could lead to **slow, unresponsive** applications in production.

**5. Understanding Worst-case, Best-case, and Average-case**

* Big O typically describes the **worst-case scenario**, which is vital for ensuring stability and reliability in edge cases.

Even if an operation is usually fast, Big O shows how it behaves when things go wrong.

**2. Best, Average, and Worst Case Scenarios for Search Operations**

**Search Algorithms Overview**

Search operations are a core functionality in any data-driven system. In an e-commerce platform, users frequently search for product names, categories, brands, or even keywords. Hence, selecting the right search algorithm based on the **data size** and **search frequency** is essential.

Two common search strategies are:

* **Linear Search**: Simple, works on unsorted data.
* **Binary Search**: Faster, but requires pre-sorted data.

**Linear Search Analysis**

Linear Search checks each element in a list one by one.

* **Best Case**:
  + The target element is the **first** in the list.
  + Time Complexity: **O(1)**
  + Example: Searching for "Shoes" in ["Shoes", "Watch", "Phone"]
* **Average Case**:
  + On average, the item is found at the **middle** of the list.
  + Time Complexity: **O(n)**
  + Useful for small datasets or when sorting is not possible.
* **Worst Case**:
  + The item is at the **end of the list** or **not present** at all.
  + Time Complexity: **O(n)**
  + Becomes inefficient as data size grows.

**When to Use:**

* Small or infrequently accessed datasets
* Data that is dynamic or unsorted

**Binary Search Analysis**

Binary Search is a **divide-and-conquer** algorithm that works only on **sorted arrays**. It repeatedly divides the list in half until the target is found or the list is empty.

* **Best Case**:
  + The target element is exactly in the **middle**.
  + Time Complexity: **O(1)**
  + Example: Searching for "Mobile" in a sorted list of 7 items
* **Average Case**:
  + Each step cuts the list in half; you reach the element in **log₂(n)** steps.
  + Time Complexity: **O(log n)**
  + Highly efficient for large, static datasets
* **Worst Case**:
  + The element is **not present** and the algorithm must exhaust the entire divide process.
  + Time Complexity: **O(log n)**
  + Still much faster than linear search in large datasets

**When to Use:**

* Large datasets (e.g., thousands of products)
* Static or rarely updated lists (where sorting is feasible)
* High-frequency search operations (e.g., product lookup, inventory checks)

**Implementation :**

import java.util.\*;

class Product {

private int productId;

private String productName;

private String category;

public Product(int productId, String productName, String category) {

this.productId = productId;

this.productName = productName.toLowerCase(); // case-insensitive search

this.category = category.toLowerCase();

}

public int getProductId() {

return productId;

}

public String getProductName() {

return productName;

}

public String getCategory() {

return category;

}

@Override

public String toString() {

return "Product [ID=" + productId + ", Name=" + productName + ", Category=" + category + "]";

}

}

class ProductSearchEngine {

public static Product linearSearchByName(Product[] products, String targetName) {

for (Product product : products) {

if (product.getProductName().equalsIgnoreCase(targetName)) {

return product;

}

}

return null;

}

public static Product binarySearchByName(Product[] sortedProducts, String targetName) {

int left = 0;

int right = sortedProducts.length - 1;

targetName = targetName.toLowerCase();

while (left <= right) {

int mid = (left + right) / 2;

String midName = sortedProducts[mid].getProductName();

if (midName.equals(targetName)) {

return sortedProducts[mid];

} else if (midName.compareTo(targetName) < 0) {

left = mid + 1;

} else {

right = mid - 1;

}

}

return null;

}

public static void sortProductsByName(Product[] products) {

Arrays.sort(products, Comparator.comparing(Product::getProductName));

}

}

public class EcommerceSearchDemo {

private static Product[] createSampleProducts() {

return new Product[] {

new Product(101, "Wireless Mouse", "Electronics"),

new Product(102, "Bluetooth Headphones", "Electronics"),

new Product(103, "Notebook", "Stationery"),

new Product(104, "Water Bottle", "Kitchen"),

new Product(105, "Smart Watch", "Electronics"),

new Product(106, "Desk Lamp", "Furniture"),

new Product(107, "Yoga Mat", "Fitness")

};

}

public static void main(String[] args) {

Product[] productList = createSampleProducts();

String searchKey = "Notebook";

System.out.println("===== E-commerce Product Search =====");

System.out.println("Search Term: " + searchKey);

System.out.println("\n-- Linear Search --");

long startLinear = System.nanoTime();

Product foundLinear = ProductSearchEngine.linearSearchByName(productList, searchKey);

long endLinear = System.nanoTime();

if (foundLinear != null)

System.out.println("Product found: " + foundLinear);

else

System.out.println("Product not found.");

System.out.println("Time taken (ns): " + (endLinear - startLinear));

ProductSearchEngine.sortProductsByName(productList);

System.out.println("\n-- Binary Search (after sorting) --");

long startBinary = System.nanoTime();

Product foundBinary = ProductSearchEngine.binarySearchByName(productList, searchKey);

long endBinary = System.nanoTime();

if (foundBinary != null)

System.out.println("Product found: " + foundBinary);

else

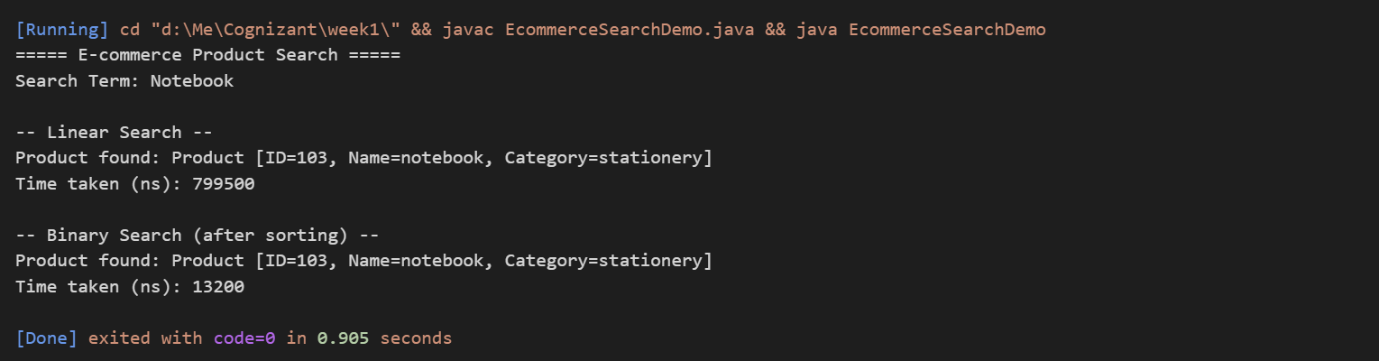
System.out.println("Product not found.");

System.out.println("Time taken (ns): " + (endBinary - startBinary));

}

}

**Output :-**

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**Time Complexity Comparison of Search Algorithms**

In large-scale e-commerce platforms, where millions of products may be searched at once, the efficiency of the search algorithm directly impacts user experience. Below is a detailed comparison between **Linear Search** and **Binary Search** based on key computational criteria:

| **Criteria** | **Linear Search** | **Binary Search** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Best Case** | **O(1)** — The item is at the very beginning of the list. | **O(1)** — The item is exactly at the middle of the sorted list. |
| **Average Case** | **O(n)** — On average, half the elements are traversed. | **O(log n)** — The list is halved at each step, improving performance. |
| **Worst Case** | **O(n)** — Item is at the end or not present at all. | **O(log n)** — Maximum steps needed still follow a logarithmic pattern. |
| **Data Requirement** | Can operate on **unsorted data**. | Requires **sorted data** for correct operation. |
| **Ease\_of Implementation** | Very **simple** to implement; great for beginners. | Slightly more **complex**, especially recursive versions. |
| **Space Complexity** | **O(1)** — No additional memory required. | **O(1)** for iterative; **O(log n)** for recursive due to stack usage. |
| **Suitability for ECommerce** | Better for small or dynamic datasets. | Ideal for large, static, pre-sorted datasets like product catalogs. |

**Suitability in E-commerce Platform**

**Linear Search**

**Use Case**: Suitable for smaller datasets or temporary, filtered product arrays (e.g., result of applying a specific filter like “Items under ₹500 with 5-star rating”).

**Advantages**:

* Can search unsorted product lists.
* Straightforward to implement.
* Works well when the number of items is small or for one-time lookups.

**Drawbacks**:

* **Performance degrades linearly** as product list size increases.
* Not optimal for large or frequently searched datasets (e.g., full product catalog).

**Binary Search**

**Use Case**: Ideal for performing fast lookups on **large, sorted** collections, such as when product lists are indexed or sorted by productId, price, or alphabetically by productName.

**Advantages**:

* **Significantly faster** for large datasets (logarithmic time).
* Very efficient for repeated searches.
* Scales well as the number of products grows into the thousands or millions.

**Drawbacks**:

* Requires data to be **pre-sorted**, which may add overhead during insertion or updates.
* Slightly more complex to implement compared to linear search.

**Recommendation for E-commerce Platform**

Given the **nature of your platform**, where performance and scalability are top priorities, **Binary Search** emerges as the preferred choice for the core product search engine.

For example, when a user types a product name in the search bar, the system can leverage a **binary search over a sorted array of product names** or a **search index**, resulting in instant lookup times.

However, **Linear Search** should not be dismissed. It has practical applications in scenarios such as:

* Filtering within **already narrowed-down results**.
* Searching in **unsorted subarrays**, such as recently viewed products, wishlist, or cart items.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, **Binary Search offers superior performance** for large, sorted datasets and is highly recommended for core search functionality in your e-commerce system. **Linear Search**, while less efficient, remains valuable in limited contexts where simplicity and unsorted data access are prioritized.

A hybrid approach, where both are applied **contextually based on the data size and structure**, will ensure optimal responsiveness and efficiency across the platform.