

Gas Station

For this problem we need to find a starting gas station index where we can travel the full circuit once clockwise, or return -1 if impossible.

Key Observations:

1. If total gas < total cost \rightarrow impossible.
 - If $\text{sum}(\text{gas}) < \text{sum}(\text{cost})$, no solution exists.
2. Greedy strategy:
 - Traverse stations, track current fuel balance.
 - If balance becomes negative, reset starting point to next station and reset balance to 0.
 - This works because if you cannot reach station $i+1$ from start, any earlier station also fails.

Algorithm:

1. Compute total gas difference: $\text{total} += \text{gas}[i] - \text{cost}[i]$
2. Track tank for current path.
3. When tank < 0:
 - Set $\text{start} = i+1$
 - Reset tank = 0
4. After loop:
 - If $\text{total} \geq 0$, return start
 - Else return -1.

Complexity:

- Time: $O(n)$ (single pass)
- Space: $O(1)$