

4 Sum

You're solving the classic 4 Sum problem, which is a natural extension of 2 Sum and 3 Sum. The key idea is to:

- Fix the first two numbers in nested loops
- Use two pointers to find the remaining two numbers
- Avoid duplicates carefully at every level.

Strategy: 1st + 2nd Pointers + Duplicate Skipping:

1. Sort nums to help skip duplicates and use two pointers efficiently.
2. Loop with index i from 0 to $n-4$: Skip duplicate for i .
3. Loop with index j from $i+1$ to $n-3$: Skip duplicate for j .
4. Use two pointers $left = j+1$, $right = n-1$.
 - Calculate the sum.
 - If it matches the target \rightarrow store it and move both pointers, skipping duplicates.
 - If less than target \rightarrow move $left++$
 - If greater than target \rightarrow move $right--$

Time Complexity: Outer loops: $O(n^2)$
• Two pointers inside: $O(n)$
• Total: $O(n^3)$
• Efficient for $n \leq 100$

Edge Cases: Return only unique quadruplets.
• Handle input like $[2, 2, 2, 2]$ carefully.
• Don't access out-of-bounds in the loops.