

The quicksort algorithm has a worst-case running time of $\Theta(n^2)$ on an input array of n numbers. Despite this slow worst-case running time, quicksort is often the best practical choice for sorting because it is remarkably efficient on the average: its expected running time is $\Theta(n \lg n)$, and the constant factors hidden in the $\Theta(n \lg n)$ notation are quite small. It also has the advantage of sorting in place (see page 17), and it works well even in virtual-memory environments.

Section 7.1 describes the algorithm and an important subroutine used by quicksort for partitioning. Because the behavior of quicksort is complex, we start with an intuitive discussion of its performance in Section 7.2 and postpone its precise analysis to the end of the chapter. Section 7.3 presents a version of quicksort that uses random sampling. This algorithm has a good expected running time, and no particular input elicits its worst-case behavior. Section 7.4 analyzes the randomized algorithm, showing that it runs in $\Theta(n^2)$ time in the worst case and, assuming distinct elements, in expected $O(n \lg n)$ time.

7.1 Description of quicksort

Quicksort, like merge sort, applies the divide-and-conquer paradigm introduced in Section 2.3.1. Here is the three-step divide-and-conquer process for sorting a typical subarray $A[p \dots r]$:

Divide: Partition (rearrange) the array $A[p \dots r]$ into two (possibly empty) subarrays $A[p \dots q - 1]$ and $A[q + 1 \dots r]$ such that each element of $A[p \dots q - 1]$ is less than or equal to $A[q]$, which is, in turn, less than or equal to each element of $A[q + 1 \dots r]$. Compute the index q as part of this partitioning procedure.

Conquer: Sort the two subarrays $A[p \dots q - 1]$ and $A[q + 1 \dots r]$ by recursive calls to quicksort.

Combine: Because the subarrays are already sorted, no work is needed to combine them: the entire array $A[p \dots r]$ is now sorted.

The following procedure implements quicksort:

```

QUICKSORT( $A, p, r$ )
1  if  $p < r$ 
2       $q = \text{PARTITION}(A, p, r)$ 
3      QUICKSORT( $A, p, q - 1$ )
4      QUICKSORT( $A, q + 1, r$ )

```

To sort an entire array A , the initial call is $\text{QUICKSORT}(A, 1, A.length)$.

Partitioning the array

The key to the algorithm is the **PARTITION** procedure, which rearranges the subarray $A[p \dots r]$ in place.

```

PARTITION( $A, p, r$ )
1   $x = A[r]$ 
2   $i = p - 1$ 
3  for  $j = p$  to  $r - 1$ 
4      if  $A[j] \leq x$ 
5           $i = i + 1$ 
6          exchange  $A[i]$  with  $A[j]$ 
7  exchange  $A[i + 1]$  with  $A[r]$ 
8  return  $i + 1$ 

```

Figure 7.1 shows how **PARTITION** works on an 8-element array. **PARTITION** always selects an element $x = A[r]$ as a *pivot* element around which to partition the subarray $A[p \dots r]$. As the procedure runs, it partitions the array into four (possibly empty) regions. At the start of each iteration of the **for** loop in lines 3–6, the regions satisfy certain properties, shown in Figure 7.2. We state these properties as a loop invariant:

At the beginning of each iteration of the loop of lines 3–6, for any array index k ,

1. If $p \leq k \leq i$, then $A[k] \leq x$.
2. If $i + 1 \leq k \leq j - 1$, then $A[k] > x$.
3. If $k = r$, then $A[k] = x$.

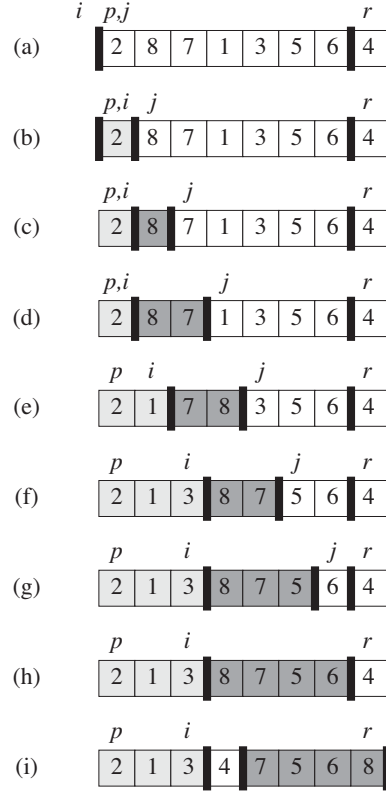


Figure 7.1 The operation of PARTITION on a sample array. Array entry $A[r]$ becomes the pivot element x . Lightly shaded array elements are all in the first partition with values no greater than x . Heavily shaded elements are in the second partition with values greater than x . The unshaded elements have not yet been put in one of the first two partitions, and the final white element is the pivot x . (a) The initial array and variable settings. None of the elements have been placed in either of the first two partitions. (b) The value 2 is “swapped with itself” and put in the partition of smaller values. (c)–(d) The values 8 and 7 are added to the partition of larger values. (e) The values 1 and 8 are swapped, and the smaller partition grows. (f) The values 3 and 7 are swapped, and the smaller partition grows. (g)–(h) The larger partition grows to include 5 and 6, and the loop terminates. (i) In lines 7–8, the pivot element is swapped so that it lies between the two partitions.

The indices between j and $r - 1$ are not covered by any of the three cases, and the values in these entries have no particular relationship to the pivot x .

We need to show that this loop invariant is true prior to the first iteration, that each iteration of the loop maintains the invariant, and that the invariant provides a useful property to show correctness when the loop terminates.

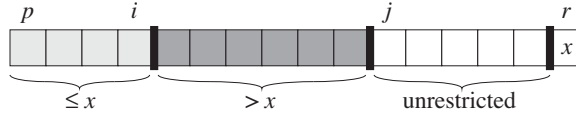


Figure 7.2 The four regions maintained by the procedure PARTITION on a subarray $A[p..r]$. The values in $A[p..i]$ are all less than or equal to x , the values in $A[i+1..j-1]$ are all greater than x , and $A[r] = x$. The subarray $A[j..r-1]$ can take on any values.

Initialization: Prior to the first iteration of the loop, $i = p - 1$ and $j = p$. Because no values lie between p and i and no values lie between $i + 1$ and $j - 1$, the first two conditions of the loop invariant are trivially satisfied. The assignment in line 1 satisfies the third condition.

Maintenance: As Figure 7.3 shows, we consider two cases, depending on the outcome of the test in line 4. Figure 7.3(a) shows what happens when $A[j] > x$; the only action in the loop is to increment j . After j is incremented, condition 2 holds for $A[j - 1]$ and all other entries remain unchanged. Figure 7.3(b) shows what happens when $A[j] \leq x$; the loop increments i , swaps $A[i]$ and $A[j]$, and then increments j . Because of the swap, we now have that $A[i] \leq x$, and condition 1 is satisfied. Similarly, we also have that $A[j - 1] > x$, since the item that was swapped into $A[j - 1]$ is, by the loop invariant, greater than x .

Termination: At termination, $j = r$. Therefore, every entry in the array is in one of the three sets described by the invariant, and we have partitioned the values in the array into three sets: those less than or equal to x , those greater than x , and a singleton set containing x .

The final two lines of PARTITION finish up by swapping the pivot element with the leftmost element greater than x , thereby moving the pivot into its correct place in the partitioned array, and then returning the pivot's new index. The output of PARTITION now satisfies the specifications given for the divide step. In fact, it satisfies a slightly stronger condition: after line 2 of QUICKSORT, $A[q]$ is strictly less than every element of $A[q + 1..r]$.

The running time of PARTITION on the subarray $A[p..r]$ is $\Theta(n)$, where $n = r - p + 1$ (see Exercise 7.1-3).

Exercises

7.1-1

Using Figure 7.1 as a model, illustrate the operation of PARTITION on the array $A = \langle 13, 19, 9, 5, 12, 8, 7, 4, 21, 2, 6, 11 \rangle$.