CSC 211: Computer Programming
Recursion

Michael Conti

Department of Computer Science and Statistics
University of Rhode Island

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THINK BIG ⊙ WE DO™

Administrative Announcements

‣ MC05 - Tonight

‣ A03 - July 7

‣ Exam#02 ~ Wednesday, July 10th
  ✓ Same time / place as lecture
  ✓ One 11x8 notes sheet
  ✓ No calculator

Recursion

Recursion

‣ Problem solving technique in which we solve a task by reducing it to smaller tasks (of the same kind)
  ✓ then use same approach to solve the smaller tasks

‣ Technically, a recursive function is one that **calls itself**

‣ General form:
  ✓ **base case**
    - solution for a **trivial case**
    - it can be used to stop the recursion (prevents "*stack overflow*")
    - every recursive algorithm needs at least one base case
  ✓ **recursive call(s)**
    - divide problem into **smaller instance(s)** of the **same structure**

General form

```
function() {

    if (this is the base case) {

        calculate trivial solution

    } else {

        break task into subtasks
        solve each task recursively
        combine solutions if necessary

    }
}
```

Why recursion?

- Can we live without it?
  - ✓ yes, you can write "any program" with arrays, loops, and conditionals

- However …
  - ✓ some formulas are explicitly recursive
  - ✓ some problems exhibit a natural recursive solution
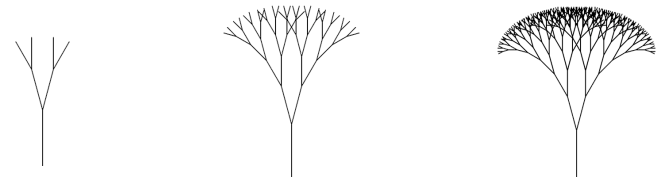
The Stefaneschi Altarpiece is a triptych by the Italian medieval painter Giotto, commissioned by Cardinal Giacomo Stefaneschi to serve as an altarpiece for one of the altars of Old St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. It is now at the Pinacoteca Vaticana, Rome. Circa 1320.

Example: factorial

$$n! = 1 \cdot 2 \cdot \ldots \cdot n = \prod_{k=1}^{n} k$$

Piecewise function

$$n! = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n = 0 \\ (n-1)! \cdot n & \text{if } n > 0 \end{cases}$$

Recurrence Relation

Example: factorial

- Apply the recursive definition of factorial to calculate:

- 3 !

$$n! = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n = 0 \\ (n-1)! \cdot n & \text{if } n > 0 \end{cases}$$

Recurrence Relation

General form

```
function() {

    if (this is the base case) {

        calculate trivial solution

    } else {

        break task into subtasks
        solve each task recursively
        combine solutions if necessary

    }
}
```

Example: factorial

```
int fact(int n) {

    // base case
    if (n == 0) {
        return 1;
    }

    // recursive call
    return fact(n-1) * n;
}
```

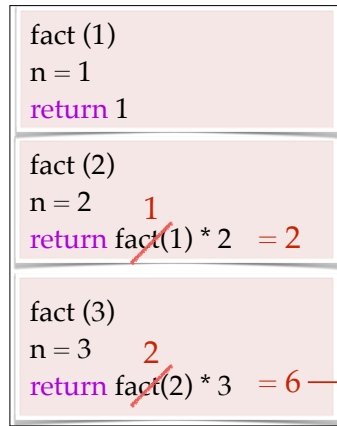# Example: factorial

```
int fact(int n) {

    // base case
    if (n < 2) {
        return 1;
    }

    // recursive call
    return fact(n-1) * n;
}
```
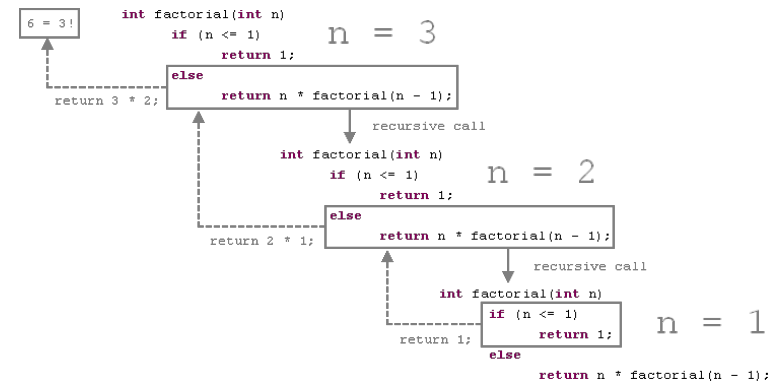
Recursion call stack

`fact(3) == 6`

```
int fact(int n) {
    if (n < 2) {
        return 1;
    }
    return fact(n-1) * n;
}
```

```
fact (1)
n = 1
return 1

fact (2)
n = 2
return fact(1) * 2   = 2     1

fact (3)
n = 3
return fact(2) * 3   = 6 ⟶ 6     2
```

Stack

Example

· Factorial


```
6 = 3!        int factorial(int n)
                  if (n <= 1)          n = 3
                      return 1;
              else
  return 3 * 2;        return n * factorial(n - 1);
                                   recursive call

                      int factorial(int n)
                          if (n <= 1)      n = 2
                              return 1;
                      else
     return 2 * 1;         return n * factorial(n - 1);
                                       recursive call

                          int factorial(int n)
                              if (n <= 1)
                                  return 1;      n = 1
             return 1;          else
                                  return n * factorial(n - 1);
```

Question

· Given $f(n) = f(n - 1) + 2n - 1$, what is the value of $f(3)$?

```
Must have base case and make
progress towards base case
```
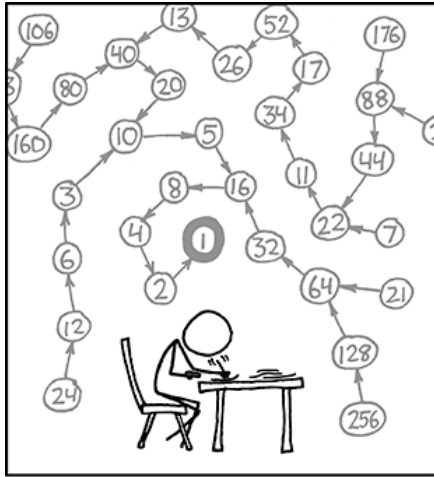
Rules of the game

· Your code must have **at least one base case** for a trivial solution

  ✓ that is, for a non-recursive solution

· Recursive calls should **make progress** towards the base case

· Your code must break a larger problem into smaller problems

  ✓ each smaller problem should be of the same '**nature**' as the larger problem

Slide 17

THE COLLATZ CONJECTURE STATES THAT IF YOU PICK A NUMBER, AND IF IT'S EVEN DIVIDE IT BY TWO AND IF IT'S ODD MULTIPLY IT BY THREE AND ADD ONE, AND YOU REPEAT THIS PROCEDURE LONG ENOUGH, EVENTUALLY YOUR FRIENDS WILL STOP CALLING TO SEE IF YOU WANT TO HANG OUT.

No one knows whether or not this function terminates for all values of N

Example: power of a number

$$b^n = \underbrace{b \cdot b \cdot \ldots \cdot b}_{n \text{ times}}$$

base case?
recursive case?

Recursion call stack

power(2, 4)

```
double power(double b, int n) {
    if (n == 0) {
        return 1;
    }
    return b * power(b, n-1);
}
```

power(2, 0)
b = 2, n = 0
return 1 → return 1

power(2, 1)
b = 2, n = 1
return b * power(2, 0) → return b * power(2, 0) == return 2 * 1 == return 2

power(2, 2)
b = 2, n = 2
return b * power(2, 1) → return b * power(2, 1) == return 2 * 2 == return 4

power(2, 3)
b = 2, n = 3
return b * power(2, 2) → return b * power(2, 2) == return 2 * 4 == return 8

power(2, 4)
b = 2, n = 4
return b * power(2, 3) → return b * power(2, 3) == return 2 * 8 == return 16

Stack

Recursion call tree (tracing recursion)

```
double power(double b, int n) {
    if (n == 0) {
        return 1;
    }
    return b * power(b, n-1);
}
```

What is the output of `foo(1234)`?

```cpp
int foo(int n) {
    if (n < 10) {
        return n;
    }
    int b = n % 10;
    return b + foo(n/10);
}
```

What is the output of `mystery(7)`?

```cpp
void mystery(unsigned int n) {
    if (n < 2) {
        std::cout << n;
    } else {
        mystery(n/2);
        std::cout << n % 2;
    }
}
```

Indirect Recursion

```cpp
void f2(int n);

void f1(int n) {
    if (n > 1) {
        std::cout << "1";
        f2(n - 1);
    }
}

void f2(int n) {
    std::cout << "0";
    f1(n - 1);
}
```

f1(1)	?
f1(2)	?
f1(4)	?
f1(7)	?
f1(10)	?

Some considerations and summary

- Recursion is a powerful technique that solves problems by breaking them down into smaller subproblems of the same form, and applying the same strategy to solve the subproblems

- One can always write an iterative solution to a problem solved recursively
  - ✓ recursive code is often simpler to read, write, and maintain

- Not always an efficient solution (iterative counterparts are faster)
  - ✓ why not?
  - ✓ overhead

  Overhead is any combination of excess or indirect computation time, memory, bandwidth, or other resources that are required to perform a specific task.

Lets Try It - Fibonacci sequence

$$F_0 = 0$$

$$F_1 = 1$$

$$F_n = F_{n-1} + F_{n-2}$$

0 1 1 2 3 5 8 13 21 34 ...

The **Fibonacci sequence** first appears in the book **Liber Abaci** (1202) by Fibonacci, using it to calculate the growth of rabbit populations. The sequence had been described by Indian mathematicians as early as the **sixth century**.

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Fib we've seen before

· Write a program to print the first 50 terms of the Fibonacci sequence (pick your favorite loop)

$F_0 = 0$
$F_1 = 1$
$F_n = F_{n-1} + F_{n-2}$

```cpp
int num = 50;
int x = 0, y = 1, z = 0;
for (int i = 0; i < num; i++) {
    std::cout << x << " ";
    z = x + y;
    x = y;
    y = z;
}
```

0 1 1 2 3 5 8 13 21 34 ...

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