Huffman Codes

- Widely used technique for data compression
- Assume the data to be a sequence of characters
- Looking for an effective way of storing the data
- ***Binary character code***
  - Uniquely represents a character by a binary string

Fixed-Length Codes

E.g.: Data file containing 100,000 characters

	a	b	c	d	e	f
Frequency (thousands)	45	13	12	16	9	5

- 3 bits needed
- a = 000, b = 001, c = 010, d = 011, e = 100, f = 101
- Requires: $100{,}000 \cdot 3 = 300{,}000$ bits

Huffman Codes

- Idea:
  - Use the frequencies of occurrence of characters to build a optimal way of representing each character

	a	b	c	d	e	f
Frequency (thousands)	45	13	12	16	9	5

Variable-Length Codes

E.g.: Data file containing 100,000 characters

	a	b	c	d	e	f
Frequency (thousands)	45	13	12	16	9	5

- Assign short codewords to frequent characters and long codewords to infrequent characters
- a = 0, b = 101, c = 100, d = 111, e = 1101, f = 1100
- $(45 \cdot 1 + 13 \cdot 3 + 12 \cdot 3 + 16 \cdot 3 + 9 \cdot 4 + 5 \cdot 4) \cdot 1{,}000$

  $= 224{,}000$ bits

Prefix Codes

- Prefix codes:
  - Codes for which no codeword is also a prefix of some other codeword
  - Better name would be “prefix-free codes”
- We can achieve optimal data compression using prefix codes
  - We will restrict our attention to prefix codes

Encoding with Binary Character Codes

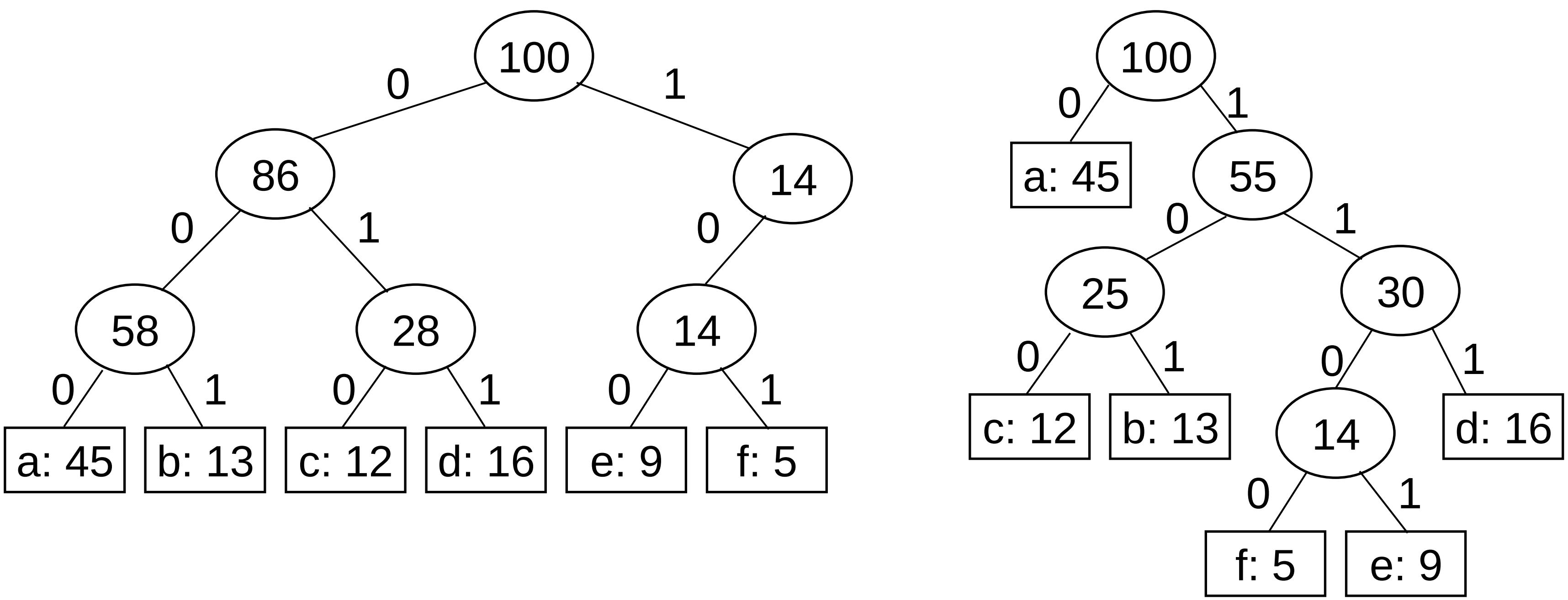
- Encoding
  - Concatenate the codewords representing each character in the file
- *E.g.*:
  - a = 0, b = 101, c = 100, d = 111, e = 1101, f = 1100
  - abc = 0 · 101 · 100 = 0101100

Decoding with Binary Character Codes

- Prefix codes simplify decoding
  - No codeword is a prefix of another $\Rightarrow$ the codeword that begins an encoded file is unambiguous
- Approach
  - Identify the initial codeword
  - Translate it back to the original character
  - Repeat the process on the remainder of the file
- *E.g.*:
  - a = 0, b = 101, c = 100, d = 111, e = 1101, f = 1100
  - 001011101 = 0 · 0 · 101 · 1101 = aabe

Prefix Code Representation

- Binary tree whose leaves are the given characters
- Binary codeword
  - the path from the root to the character, where 0 means “go to the left child” and 1 means “go to the right child”
- Length of the codeword
  - Length of the path from root to the character leaf (depth of node)



Optimal Codes

- An optimal code is always represented by a **full binary tree**
  - Every non-leaf has two children
  - Fixed-length code is not optimal, variable-length is
- How many bits are required to encode a file?
  - Let C be the alphabet of characters
  - Let $f(c)$ be the frequency of character c
  - Let $d_T(c)$ be the depth of c's leaf in the tree T corresponding to a prefix code

$$B(T) = \sum_{c \in C} f(c) d_T(c)$$ the cost of tree T

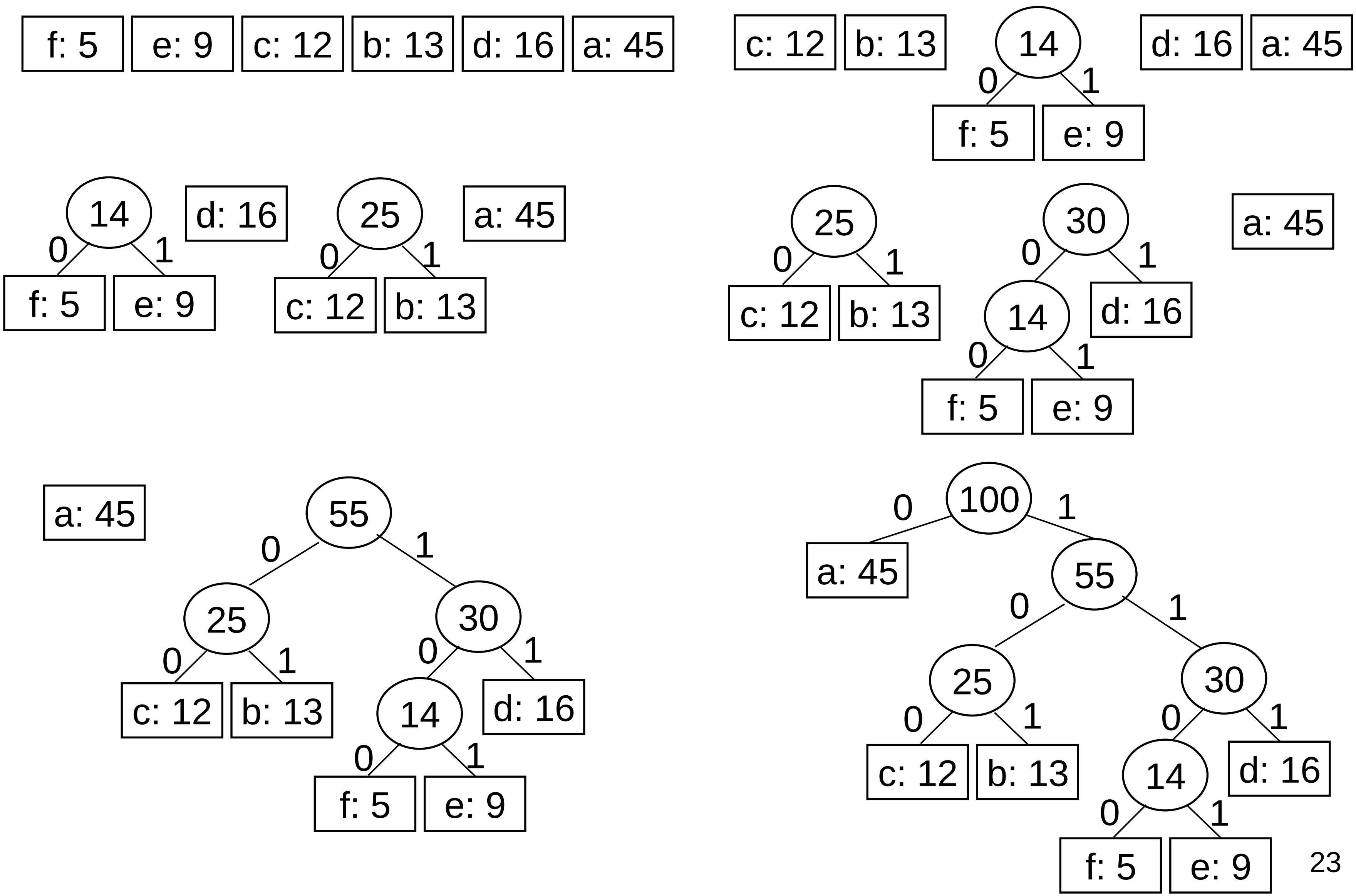
Constructing a Huffman Code

- A greedy algorithm that constructs an optimal prefix code called a **Huffman code**
- Assume that:
  - C is a set of n characters
  - Each character has a frequency $f(c)$
  - The tree T is built in a bottom up manner
- Idea:

f: 5	e: 9	c: 12	b: 13	d: 16	a: 45

  - Start with a set of $|C|$ leaves
  - At each step, merge the two least frequent objects: the frequency of the new node = sum of two frequencies
  - Use a min-priority queue Q, keyed on f to identify the two least frequent objects

Example



Building a Huffman Code

Alg.: HUFFMAN(C) Running time: $O(n\lg n)$

$n \leftarrow |C|$

$Q \leftarrow C$ $\longleftarrow$ $O(n)$

for $i \leftarrow 1$ **to** $n - 1$

  do allocate a new node z

    $left[z] \leftarrow x \leftarrow$ EXTRACT-MIN(Q)

    $right[z] \leftarrow y \leftarrow$ EXTRACT-MIN(Q)

    $f[z] \leftarrow f[x] + f[y]$

    INSERT (Q, z)

$O(n\lg n)$

return EXTRACT-MIN(Q)