

The Setup:

You are given an infinite amount of N different types of balls - call them $\{a_1, a_2, a_3, \dots, a_N\}$. You are also given a set of S trash cans each having a capacity of $(w+x)$ where w and x are natural numbers.

There are two random independent functions - f_1 and f_2 which determine where each ball goes. That is, f_i is a function from $\{a_1, a_2, \dots, a_N\} \rightarrow \{1, 2, \dots, S\}$. When a ball a_i is thrown into the set of trash cans, the following occurs:

1] If a ball of type a_i is currently in the set of trash cans, nothing happens and the newly thrown ball disappears (i.e. the set of trash cans will never have ≥ 2 balls of the same type), if it isn't there:

2] $f_1(a_i)$ is computed and $f_2(a_i)$ is computed

3] The Remaining capacity of trash cans $f_1(a_i)$ and $f_2(a_i)$ are compared, the remaining capacity of a trash can is defined as $(w+x) - (\text{no. of balls currently in the trash can})$

4] There are now a few cases

4.a] Case 1 : $f_1(a_i) \neq f_2(a_i)$: In this case, the ball goes into the trash can having larger remaining capacity.

4.b] Case 2 : $f_1(a_i) = f_2(a_i) \neq 0$: In this case, the ball goes into either $f_1(a_i)$ or $f_2(a_i)$ randomly.

4.c] Case 3 : $f_1(a_i) = f_2(a_i) = 0$: The system crashes and the game is over

5] Now, if on throwing this ball, the net number of balls in the entire set of trash cans exceeds $S*w$, then a random ball is chosen from any trash can and is removed (i.e. the total number of balls in the set of all trash cans can never exceed $S*w$)

f_1 and f_2 remain constant throughout the system's lifetime.

Assume $w = 16$, $x = 12$ and N is of the order of 2^{34} , S can be assumed to always be a power of 2 and around 16384

It is given that $0 < x < w$ always

Part A:

An attacker interacts with the system with intention of crashing it and ending the game.

However he does not have access to f_1 or f_2 , nor does he have access to the set of S trash cans. He can also reset the system to having 0 balls. The only way he can interact with the system is by throwing balls, the system gives him the following information:

1] Whether the ball he threw was in the system or not

2] Whether his ball throw caused the system to crash

There is an $O(S^{2*(w+x)})$ algorithm to guarantee this, using the pigeonhole principle, it works by creating an initial set of $(w+x)*S^2 + 1$ balls, and then checking all $(2*(w+x) + 1)$ - tuples of the initial set. For the given values of w and x , this method is far slower than simply throwing random balls and hoping probability helps you. Either prove that the attacker cannot do better than probabilistically throwing balls OR find a better algorithm/method.

Part B:

The attacker has found a way to undermine step 5 of what happens when a ball is thrown! Now when the total number of balls in the entire set of trash cans exceeds $S*w$, the system will prompt the attacker and ask him which ball should be removed. Note the attacker still doesn't know $f_1(a_i)$ or $f_2(a_i)$ for any a_i , the system simply gives him the list of $S*w + 1$ balls in the set of trash cans and asks him to choose one to remove. Can the attacker now do better? If so, how?