

# C++ Data Structures and Algorithms Cheat Sheet

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## 1.0 Data Structures

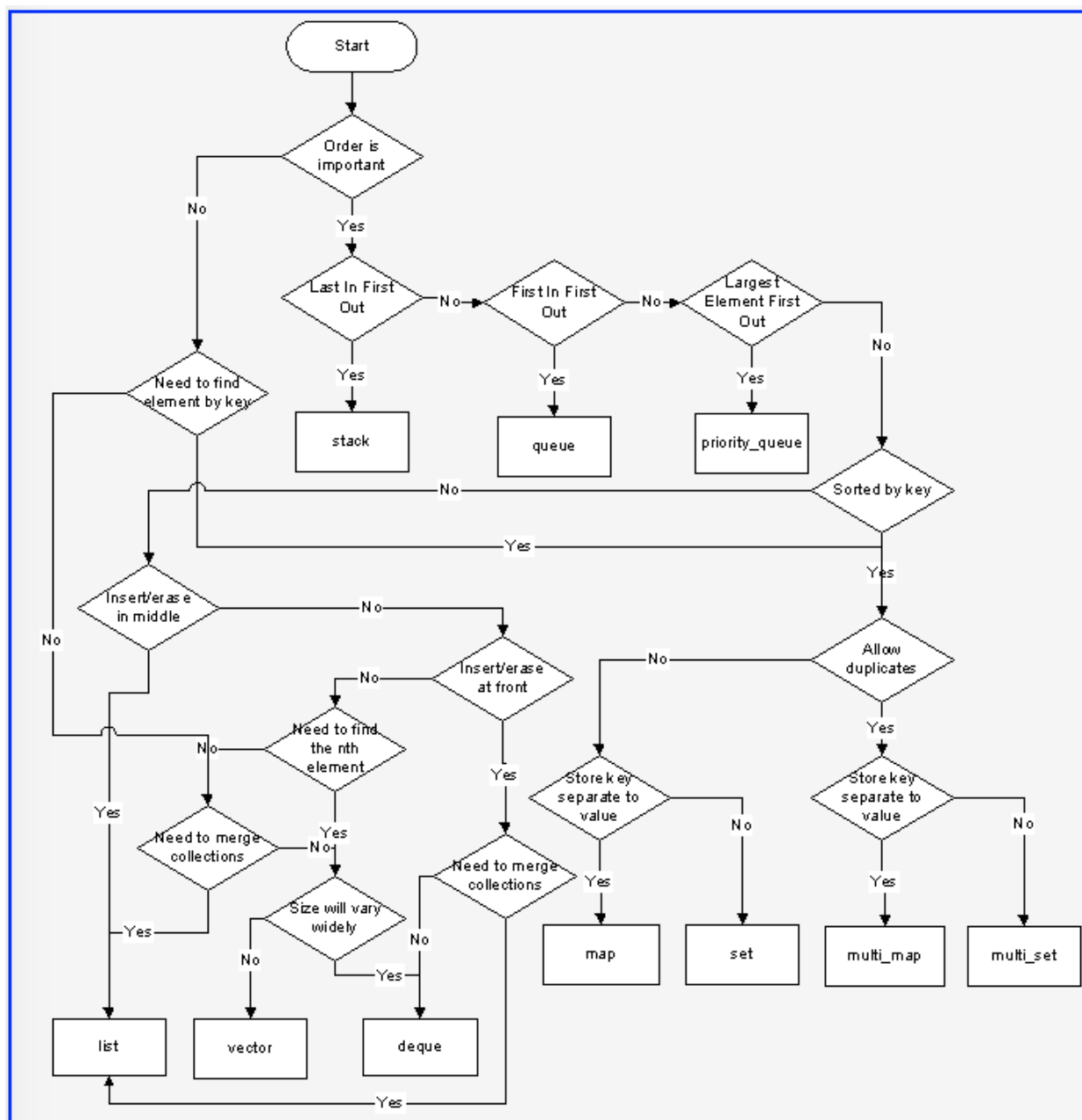
## 1.1 Overview



## Data Structures

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## 1.2 Vector `std::vector`

### Use for

- Simple storage
- Adding but not deleting
- Serialization
- Quick lookups by index
- Easy conversion to C-style arrays
- Efficient traversal (contiguous CPU caching)

### Do not use for

- Insertion/deletion in the middle of the list
- Dynamically changing storage

- Non-integer indexing

## Time Complexity

Operation	Time Complexity
Insert Head	$O(n)$
Insert Index	$O(n)$
Insert Tail	$O(1)$
Remove Head	$O(n)$
Remove Index	$O(n)$
Remove Tail	$O(1)$
Find Index	$O(1)$
Find Object	$O(n)$

## Example Code

```
std::vector<int> v;

//-----
// General Operations
//-----

// Insert head, index, tail
v.insert(v.begin(), value);           // head
v.insert(v.begin() + index, value);   // index
v.push_back(value);                   // tail

// Access head, index, tail
int head = v.front();                 // head
int value = v.at(index);              // index
int tail = v.back();                  // tail

// Size
unsigned int size = v.size();

// Iterate
for(std::vector<int>::iterator it = v.begin(); it != v.end(); it++) {
    std::cout << *it << std::endl;
}

// Remove head, index, tail
v.erase(v.begin());                  // head
v.erase(v.begin() + index);          // index
v.pop_back();                         // tail
```

```
// Clear
v.clear();
```

## 1.3 Deque `std::deque`

### Use for

- Similar purpose of `std::vector`
- Basically `std::vector` with efficient `push_front` and `pop_front`

### Do not use for

- C-style contiguous storage (not guaranteed)

### Notes

- Pronounced 'deck'
- Stands for **D**ouble **E**nded **Q**ueue

### Example Code

```
std::deque<int> d;

//-----
// General Operations
//-----

// Insert head, index, tail
d.push_front(value);           // head
d.insert(d.begin() + index, value); // index
d.push_back(value);           // tail

// Access head, index, tail
int head = d.front();         // head
int value = d.at(index);      // index
int tail = d.back();          // tail

// Size
unsigned int size = d.size();

// Iterate
for(std::deque<int>::iterator it = d.begin(); it != d.end(); it++) {
    std::cout << *it << std::endl;
}

// Remove head, index, tail
d.pop_front();                // head
d.erase(d.begin() + index);   // index
d.pop_back();                 // tail
```

```
// Clear  
d.clear();
```

## 1.4 List `std::list` and `std::forward_list`

### Use for

- Insertion into the middle/beginning of the list
- Efficient sorting (pointer swap vs. copying)

### Do not use for

- Direct access

### Time Complexity

Operation	Time Complexity
Insert Head	$O(1)$
Insert Index	$O(n)$
Insert Tail	$O(1)$
Remove Head	$O(1)$
Remove Index	$O(n)$
Remove Tail	$O(1)$
Find Index	$O(n)$
Find Object	$O(n)$

### Example Code

```
std::list<int> l;  
  
//-----  
// General Operations  
//-----  
  
// Insert head, index, tail  
l.push_front(value);           // head  
l.insert(l.begin() + index, value); // index  
l.push_back(value);            // tail  
  
// Access head, index, tail
```

```

int head = l.front(); // head
int value = std::next(l.begin(), index); // index
int tail = l.back(); // tail

// Size
unsigned int size = l.size();

// Iterate
for(std::list<int>::iterator it = l.begin(); it != l.end(); it++) {
    std::cout << *it << std::endl;
}

// Remove head, index, tail
l.pop_front(); // head
l.erase(l.begin() + index); // index
l.pop_back(); // tail

// Clear
l.clear();

//-----
// Container-Specific Operations
//-----

// Splice: Transfer elements from list to list
// splice(iterator pos, list &x)
// splice(iterator pos, list &x, iterator i)
// splice(iterator pos, list &x, iterator first, iterator last)
l.splice(l.begin() + index, list2);

// Remove: Remove an element by value
l.remove(value);

// Unique: Remove duplicates
l.unique();

// Merge: Merge two sorted lists
l.merge(list2);

// Sort: Sort the list
l.sort();

// Reverse: Reverse the list order
l.reverse();

```

## 1.5 Map `std::map` and `std::unordered_map`

Use for

- Key-value pairs
- Constant lookups by key



- Searching if key/value exists
- Removing duplicates
- `std::map`
  - Ordered map
- `std::unordered_map`
  - Hash table

### Do not use for

- Sorting

### Notes

- Typically ordered maps ( `std::map` ) are slower than unordered maps ( `std::unordered_map` )
- Maps are typically implemented as *binary search trees*

### Time Complexity

#### `std::map`

Operation	Time Complexity
Insert	$O(\log(n))$
Access by Key	$O(\log(n))$
Remove by Key	$O(\log(n))$
Find/Remove Value	$O(\log(n))$

#### `std::unordered_map`

Operation	Time Complexity
Insert	$O(1)$
Access by Key	$O(1)$
Remove by Key	$O(1)$
Find/Remove Value	--

### Example Code

```
std::map<std::string, std::string> m;

//-----
// General Operations
```

```
//-----

// Insert
m.insert(std::pair<std::string, std::string>("key", "value"));

// Access by key
std::string value = m.at("key");

// Size
unsigned int size = m.size();

// Iterate
for(std::map<std::string, std::string>::iterator it = m.begin(); it != m.end(); i
    std::cout << *it << std::endl;
}

// Remove by key
m.erase("key");

// Clear
m.clear();

//-----
// Container-Specific Operations
//-----

// Find if an element exists by key
bool exists = (m.find("key") != m.end());

// Count the number of elements with a certain key
unsigned int count = m.count("key");
```

## 1.6 Set `std::set`

### Use for

- Removing duplicates
- Ordered dynamic storage

### Do not use for

- Simple storage
- Direct access by index

### Notes

- Sets are often implemented with binary search trees

### Time Complexity

Operation	Time Complexity
Insert	$O(\log(n))$
Remove	$O(\log(n))$
Find	$O(\log(n))$

## Example Code

```
std::set<int> s;

//-----
// General Operations
//-----

// Insert
s.insert(20);

// Size
unsigned int size = s.size();

// Iterate
for(std::set<int>::iterator it = s.begin(); it != s.end(); it++) {
    std::cout << *it << std::endl;
}

// Remove
s.erase(20);

// Clear
s.clear();

//-----
// Container-Specific Operations
//-----

// Find if an element exists
bool exists = (s.find(20) != s.end());

// Count the number of elements with a certain value
unsigned int count = s.count(20);
```

## 1.7 Stack `std::stack`

### Use for

- First-In Last-Out operations
- Reversal of elements

## Time Complexity

Operation	Time Complexity
Push	$O(1)$
Pop	$O(1)$
Top	$O(1)$

## Example Code

```
std::stack<int> s;

//-----
// Container-Specific Operations
//-----

// Push
s.push(20);

// Size
unsigned int size = s.size();

// Pop
s.pop();

// Top
int top = s.top();
```

## 1.8 Queue `std::queue`

### Use for

- First-In First-Out operations
- Ex: Simple online ordering system (first come first served)
- Ex: Semaphore queue handling
- Ex: CPU scheduling (FCFS)

### Notes

- Often implemented as a `std::deque`

## Example Code

```
std::queue<int> q;
```

```
//-----
// General Operations
//-----

// Insert
q.push(value);

// Access head, tail
int head = q.front();    // head
int tail = q.back();     // tail

// Size
unsigned int size = q.size();

// Remove
q.pop();
```

## 1.9 Priority Queue `std::priority_queue`

### Use for

- First-In First-Out operations where **priority** overrides arrival time
- Ex: CPU scheduling (smallest job first, system/user priority)
- Ex: Medical emergencies (gunshot wound vs. broken arm)

### Notes

- Often implemented as a `std::vector`

### Example Code

```
std::priority_queue<int> p;

//-----
// General Operations
//-----

// Insert
p.push(value);

// Access
int top = p.top();  // 'Top' element

// Size
unsigned int size = p.size();

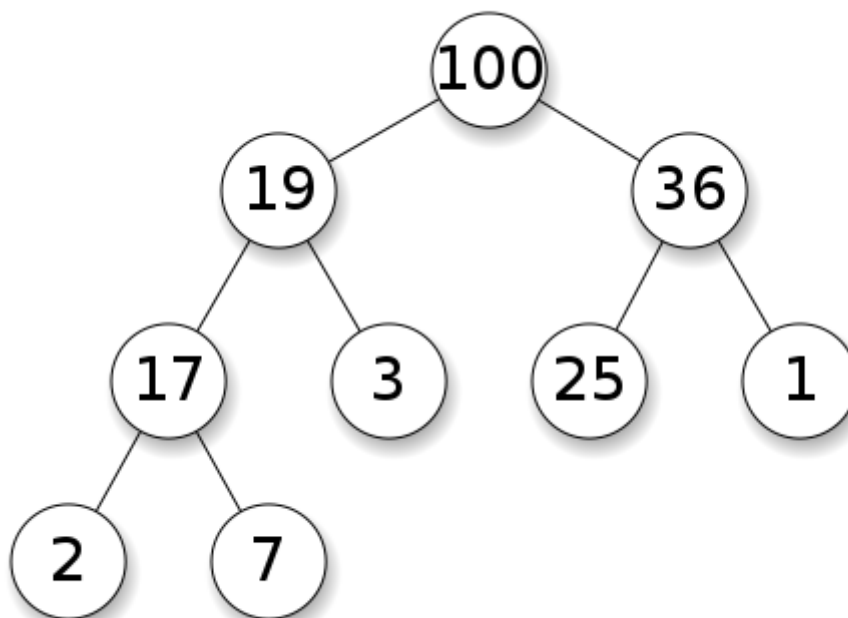
// Remove
p.pop();
```

## 1.10 Heap `std::priority_queue`

### Notes

- A heap is essentially an instance of a priority queue
- A **min** heap is structured with the root node as the smallest and each child subsequently larger than its parent
- A **max** heap is structured with the root node as the largest and each child subsequently smaller than its parent
- A min heap could be used for *Smallest Job First* CPU Scheduling
- A max heap could be used for *Priority* CPU Scheduling

### Max Heap Example (using a binary tree)



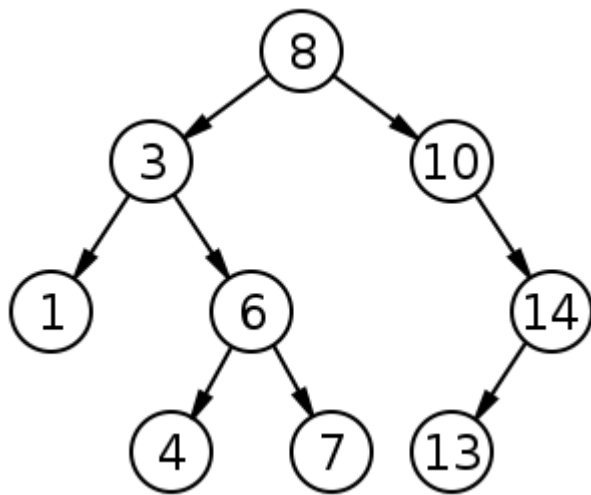
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## 2.0 Trees

### 2.1 Binary Tree

- A binary tree is a tree with at most two (2) child nodes per parent
- Binary trees are commonly used for implementing  $O(\log(n))$  operations for ordered maps, sets, heaps, and binary search trees
- Binary trees are **sorted** in that nodes with values greater than their parents are inserted to the **right**, while nodes with values less than their parents are inserted to the **left**

## Binary Search Tree



## 2.2 Balanced Trees

- Balanced trees are a special type of tree which maintains its balance to ensure  $O(\log(n))$  operations
- When trees are not balanced the benefit of  $\log(n)$  operations is lost due to the highly vertical structure
- Examples of balanced trees:
  - AVL Trees
  - Red-Black Trees

## 2.3 Binary Search

Idea:

1. If current element, return
2. If less than current element, look left
3. If more than current element, look right
4. Repeat

Data Structures:

- Tree
- Sorted array

Space:

- $O(1)$

Best Case:

- $O(1)$

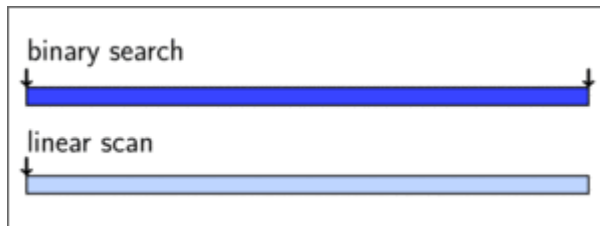
**Worst Case:**

- $O(\log n)$

**Average:**

- $O(\log n)$

**Visualization:**



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## 2.4 Depth-First Search

**Idea:**

1. Start at root node
2. Recursively search all adjacent nodes and mark them as searched
3. Repeat

**Data Structures:**

- Tree
- Graph

**Space:**

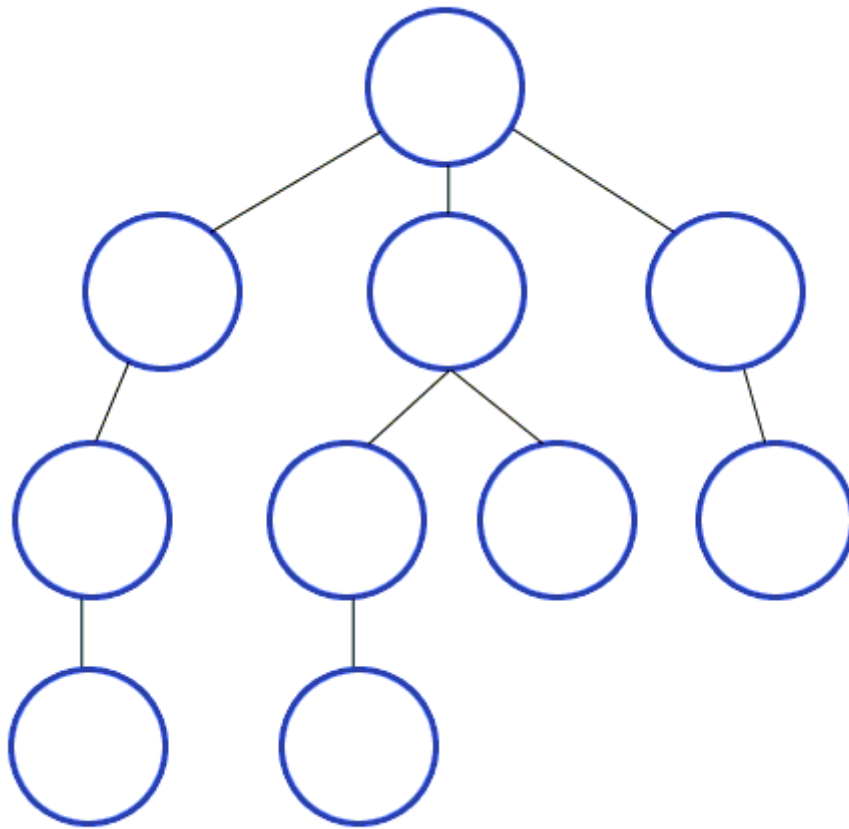
- $O(V)$ ,  $V$  = number of vertices

**Performance:**

- $O(E)$ ,  $E$  = number of edges

**Visualization:**





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## 2.5 Breadth-First Search

Idea:

1. Start at root node
2. Search neighboring nodes first before moving on to next level

Data Structures:

- Tree
- Graph

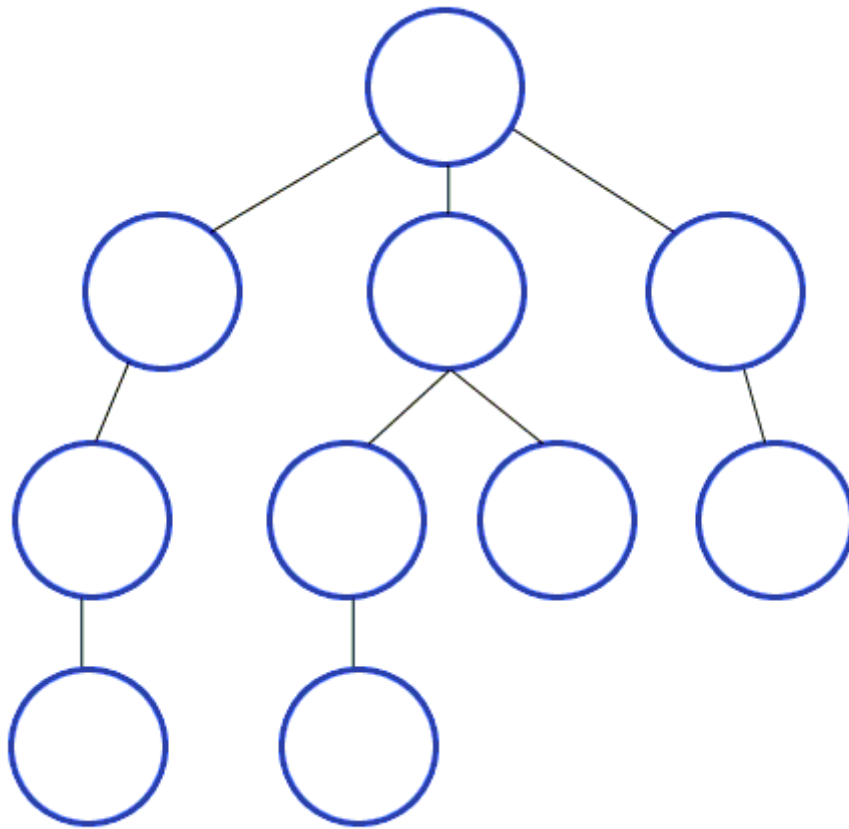
Space:

- $O(V)$  ,  $V$  = number of vertices

Performance:

- $O(E)$  ,  $E$  = number of edges

Visualization:



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## 3.0 NP Complete Problems

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### 3.1 NP Complete

- **NP Complete** means that a problem is unable to be solved in **polynomial time**
- NP Complete problems can be *verified* in polynomial time, but not *solved*

### 3.2 Traveling Salesman Problem

### 3.3 Knapsack Problem

[Implementation](#)

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## 4.0 Algorithms

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### 4.1 Insertion Sort

## Idea

1. Iterate over all elements
2. For each element:
  - Check if element is larger than largest value in sorted array
3. If larger: Move on
4. If smaller: Move item to correct position in sorted array

## Details

- **Data structure:** Array
- **Space:**  $O(1)$
- **Best Case:** Already sorted,  $O(n)$
- **Worst Case:** Reverse sorted,  $O(n^2)$
- **Average:**  $O(n^2)$

## Advantages

- Easy to code
- Intuitive
- Better than selection sort and bubble sort for small data sets
- Can sort in-place

## Disadvantages

- Very inefficient for large datasets

## Visualization

6 5 3 1 8 7 2 4

---

## 4.2 Selection Sort

### Idea

1. Iterate over all elements
2. For each element:

- If smallest element of unsorted sublist, swap with left-most unsorted element

## Details

- **Data structure:** Array
- **Space:**  $O(1)$
- **Best Case:** Already sorted,  $O(n^2)$
- **Worst Case:** Reverse sorted,  $O(n^2)$
- **Average:**  $O(n^2)$

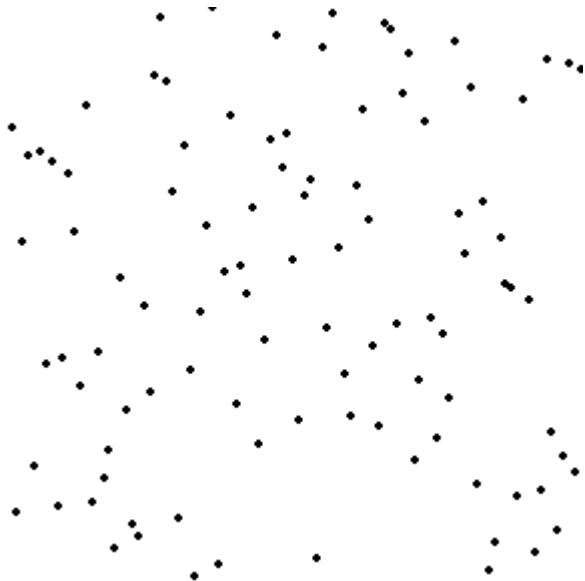
## Advantages

- Simple
- Can sort in-place
- Low memory usage for small datasets

## Disadvantages

- Very inefficient for large datasets

## Visualization



	8
	5
	2
	6
	9
	3
	1
	4
	0
	7

---

## 4.3 Bubble Sort

### Idea

1. Iterate over all elements
2. For each element:
  - Swap with next element if out of order
3. Repeat until no swaps needed

### Details

- **Data structure:** Array
- **Space:**  $O(1)$
- **Best Case:** Already sorted  $O(n)$
- **Worst Case:** Reverse sorted,  $O(n^2)$
- **Average:**  $O(n^2)$

### Advantages

- Easy to detect if list is sorted

### Disadvantages

- Very inefficient for large datasets
- Much worse than even insertion sort

### Visualization

6 5 3 1 8 7 2 4

---

## 4.4 Merge Sort

### Idea

1. Divide list into smallest unit (1 element)
2. Compare each element with the adjacent list
3. Merge the two adjacent lists
4. Repeat

### Details

- **Data structure:** Array
- **Space:**  $O(n)$  auxiliary
- **Best Case:**  $O(n \log(n))$
- **Worst Case:** Reverse sorted,  $O(n \log(n))$
- **Average:**  $O(n \log(n))$

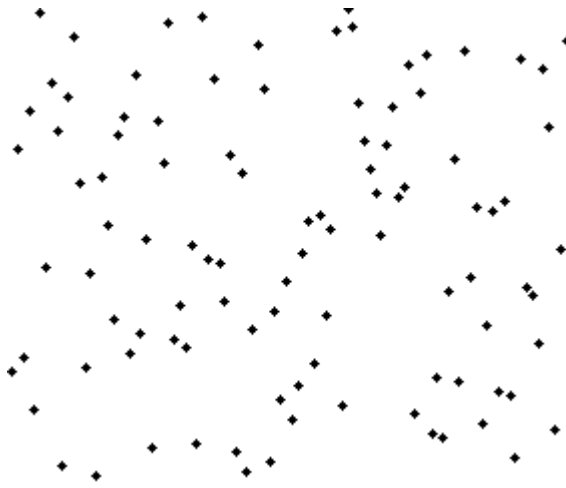
### Advantages

- High efficiency on large datasets
- Nearly always  $O(n \log(n))$
- Can be parallelized
- Better space complexity than standard Quicksort

### Disadvantages

- Still requires  $O(n)$  extra space
- Slightly worse than Quicksort in some instances

### Visualization



6 5 3 1 8 7 2 4

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## 4.5 Quicksort

### Idea

1. Choose a **pivot** from the array
2. Partition: Reorder the array so that all elements with values *less* than the pivot come before the pivot, and all values *greater* than the pivot come after
3. Recursively apply the above steps to the sub-arrays

### Details

- **Data structure:** Array
- **Space:**  $O(n)$
- **Best Case:**  $O(n \log(n))$
- **Worst Case:** All elements equal,  $O(n^2)$
- **Average:**  $O(n \log(n))$

### Advantages

- Can be modified to use  $O(\log(n))$  space
- Very quick and efficient with large datasets
- Can be parallelized
- Divide and conquer algorithm

## Disadvantages

- Not stable (could swap equal elements)
- Worst case is worse than Merge Sort

## Optimizations

- Choice of pivot:
  - Choose median of the first, middle, and last elements as pivot
  - Counters worst-case complexity for already-sorted and reverse-sorted

## Visualization

