

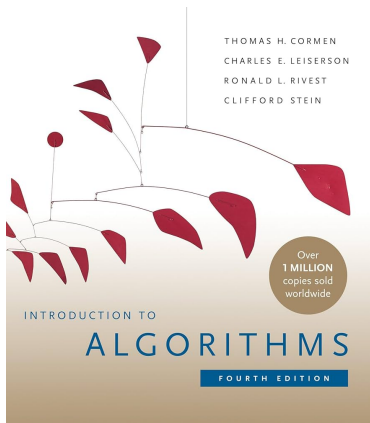
Introduction to Algorithms

Lecture 3: Divide and Conquer

Prof. Charles E. Leiserson and Prof. Erik Demaine
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

August 11, 2025

Introduction to Algorithms



Content has been extracted from *Introduction to Algorithms*, Fourth Edition, by Cormen, Leiserson, Rivest, and Stein. MIT Press. 2022.

Visit <https://mitpress.mit.edu/9780262046305/introduction-to-algorithms/>.

Original slides from *Introduction to Algorithms 6.046J/18.401J*, Fall 2005 Class by Prof. Charles Leiserson and Prof. Erik Demaine. MIT OpenCourseWare Initiative available at <https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/6-046j-introduction-to-algorithms-sma-5503-fall-2005/>.

The Divide & Conquer Design Paradigm

1. **Divide** the problem (instance) into subproblems.
2. **Conquer** the subproblems by solving them recursively.
3. **Combine** subproblems solutions.

Merge-sort

1. **Divide:** Trivial.
2. **Conquer:** Recursively sort 2 subarrays.
3. **Combine:** Linear-time merge.

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Subproblem size.

Work dividing and combining.

The diagram illustrates the recurrence relation for Merge Sort. A red arrow points from 'Number of subproblems.' to the coefficient '2'. A blue arrow points from 'Subproblem size.' to the fraction 'n/2'. An orange arrow points from 'Work dividing and combining.' to the 'Theta(n)' term.

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Master Theorem (reprise)

$$T(n) = aT\left(\frac{n}{b}\right) + f(n)$$

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Case 2

$$\begin{aligned} f(n) &= \Theta\left(n^{\log_b a} \lg^k n\right), \text{ constant } k \geq 0 \\ \implies T(n) &= \Theta(n^{\log_b a} \lg^{k+1} n). \end{aligned}$$

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Case 3

$$f(n) = \Omega\left(n^{\log_b(a) + \varepsilon}\right), \text{ constant } \varepsilon > 0, \text{ and regularity condition} \\ \implies T(n) = \Theta(f(n)).$$

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$$\begin{aligned} \text{MERGE-SORT: } a = 2, b = 2 &\implies n^{\log_b a} = n^{\log_2 2} = n \\ \implies \text{Case 2 } (k = 0) &\implies T(n) = \Theta(n \lg n). \end{aligned}$$

Plan

Binary Search

Powering a Number

Fibonacci Numbers

Matrix Multiplication

Strassen's Algorithm

VLSI Tree Layout

Binary Search

Find an element in a sorted array:

1. **Divide:** Check middle element.
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Find 9

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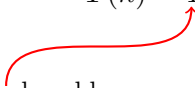
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$$\begin{aligned}\text{BINARY SEARCH: } a = 1, b = 2 &\implies n^{\log_b a} = n^{\log_2 1} = n^0 = 1 \\ &\implies \text{Case 2 } (k = 0) \implies T(n) = \Theta(\lg n).\end{aligned}$$

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Compute a^n , where $n \in \mathbb{N}$.

Naive algorithm:

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Recursive definition:

$$F_n = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } n = 0; \\ 1 & \text{if } n = 1; \\ F_{n-1} + F_{n-2} & \text{if } n \geq 2. \end{cases}$$

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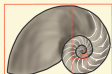
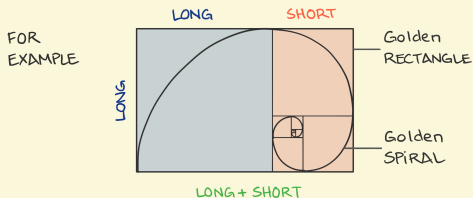
where $\phi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is the golden ratio.

The Golden Ratio (1.61803398875...)

THE GOLDEN RATIO

PLEASING PROPORTIONS FOUND IN NATURE

THE RATIO WHERE $\frac{\text{LONG}}{\text{SHORT}} = \frac{\text{LONG} + \text{SHORT}}{\text{LONG}} = 1.618...$



NATURE



ARCHITECTURE



ART

sketchplanations

sketchplanations.com/the-golden-ratio

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where $\phi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is the golden ratio.
(exponential time!)

Computing Fibonacci Numbers

Bottom-up:

- ▶ Compute $F_0, F_1, F_2, \dots, F_n$ in order, forming each number by summing the two previous.
- ▶ Running time: $\Theta(n)$.

¹Computer Floating-Point Arithmetic and round-off errors, Kaluarachchi, 2022.

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$F_n = \frac{\phi^n}{\sqrt{5}}$ rounded to the nearest integer.

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- ▶ This method is unreliable, since floating-point arithmetic is prone to round-off errors¹.

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Recursive Squaring

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Theorem:

$$A^n = \begin{bmatrix} F_{n+1} & F_n \\ F_n & F_{n-1} \end{bmatrix}, A = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}, n \geq 1.$$

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Base case ($n = 1$):

$$A^1 = A = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} F_2 & F_1 \\ F_1 & F_0 \end{bmatrix}$$

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Inductive Step ($n = k + 1$):

$$A^{k+1} = \begin{bmatrix} F_{k+2} & F_{k+1} \\ F_{k+1} & F_k \end{bmatrix}$$

$$A^k \cdot A = \begin{bmatrix} F_{k+2} & F_{k+1} \\ F_{k+1} & F_k \end{bmatrix}$$

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Recursive Squaring

$$F_0, F_1, F_2, F_3, \dots, F_{k-2}, F_{k-1}, F_k, F_{k+1}, F_{k+2}, \dots$$

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$$(1, 1): F_{k+1} + F_k = F_{k+2}$$

$$(1, 2): F_{k+1} + 0 = F_{k+1}$$

$$(2, 1): F_k + F_{k-1} = F_{k+1}$$

$$(2, 2): F_k + 0 = F_k$$

■

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Matrix Multiplication

Input: $A = [a_{ij}], B = [b_{ij}].$ $\left. \vphantom{\begin{matrix} \text{Input:} \\ \text{Output:} \end{matrix}} \right\} i, j = 1, 2, \dots, n.$
Output: $C = [c_{ij}] = A \cdot B.$

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$$\begin{bmatrix} c_{11} & c_{12} & \cdots & c_{1n} \\ c_{21} & c_{22} & \cdots & c_{2n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ c_{n1} & c_{n2} & \cdots & c_{nn} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} a_{11} & a_{12} & \cdots & a_{1n} \\ a_{21} & a_{22} & \cdots & a_{2n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ a_{n1} & a_{n2} & \cdots & a_{nn} \end{bmatrix} \cdot \begin{bmatrix} b_{11} & b_{12} & \cdots & b_{1n} \\ b_{21} & b_{22} & \cdots & b_{2n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ b_{n1} & b_{n2} & \cdots & b_{nn} \end{bmatrix}$$

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$$c_{ij} = \sum_{k=1}^n a_{ik} \cdot b_{kj}$$

Standard Algorithm

```
for  $i \leftarrow 1$  to  $n$  do
  for  $j \leftarrow 1$  to  $n$  do
     $c_{ij} \leftarrow 0$ 
    for  $k \leftarrow 1$  to  $n$  do
       $c_{ij} \leftarrow c_{ij} + a_{ik} \cdot b_{kj}$ 
    end for
  end for
end for
```

Running time $= \Theta(n^3)$

Divide-and-Conquer Algorithm

IDEA:

$n \times n$ matrix = 2×2 matrix of $\left(\frac{n}{2}\right) \times \left(\frac{n}{2}\right)$ submatrices:

$$\begin{bmatrix} r & s \\ t & u \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} a & b \\ c & d \end{bmatrix} \cdot \begin{bmatrix} e & f \\ g & h \end{bmatrix}$$
$$C = A \cdot B$$

$$\left. \begin{array}{lcl} r & = & ae + bg \\ s & = & af + bh \\ t & = & ce + dg \\ u & = & cf + dh \end{array} \right\}$$

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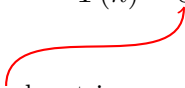
Analysis of D&C Algorithm

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Work adding submatrices.

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Number of submatrices. Submatrix size. Work adding submatrices.

$$n^{\log_b a} = n^{\log_2 8} = n^3 \implies \text{Case 1} \implies T(n) = \Theta(n^3).$$

Analysis of D&C Algorithm

$$T(n) = 8T\left(\frac{n}{2}\right) + \Theta(n^2)$$

Diagram illustrating the recurrence relation $T(n) = 8T\left(\frac{n}{2}\right) + \Theta(n^2)$ with annotations:

- Number of submatrices. (Red arrow pointing to the coefficient 8)
- Submatrix size. (Blue arrow pointing to the argument $\frac{n}{2}$)
- Work adding submatrices. (Orange arrow pointing to the $\Theta(n^2)$ term)

$$n^{\log_b a} = n^{\log_2 8} = n^3 \implies \text{Case 1} \implies T(n) = \Theta(n^3).$$

No better than the ordinary algorithm.

Plan

Binary Search

Powering a Number

Fibonacci Numbers

Matrix Multiplication

Strassen's Algorithm

VLSI Tree Layout

Strassen's Idea

- Multiply 2 matrices with only 7 recursive multiplications.

$$P_1 = a \cdot (f - h)$$

$$P_2 = (a + b) \cdot h$$

$$P_3 = (c + d) \cdot e$$

$$P_4 = d \cdot (g - e)$$

$$P_5 = (a + d) \cdot (e + h)$$

$$P_6 = (b - d) \cdot (g + h)$$

$$P_7 = (a - c) \cdot (e + f)$$

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$$r = P_5 + P_4 - P_2 + P_6$$

$$s = P_1 + P_2$$

$$t = P_3 + P_4$$

$$u = P_5 + P_1 - P_3 - P_7$$

7 mults, 18 adds/subs.

NOTE:

No reliance on commutativity of multiplication!

Strassen's Idea

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$$r = P_5 + P_4 - P_2 + P_6$$

$$= (a + d)(e + h)$$

$$+ d(g - e) - (a + b)h$$

$$+ (b - d)(g + h)$$

$$= ae + ah + de + dh$$

$$+ dg - de - ah - bh$$

$$+ bg + bh - dg - dn$$

$$= ae + bg$$

Strassen's Algorithm

1. **Divide:** Partition A and B into $\frac{n}{2} \times \frac{n}{2}$ submatrices. Form terms to be multiplied using $+$ and $-$.
2. **Conquer:** Perform 7 multiplications of $\frac{n}{2} \times \frac{n}{2}$ submatrices recursively.
3. **Combine:** Form C using $+$ and $-$ on $\frac{n}{2} \times \frac{n}{2}$ submatrices.

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Note:

The number 2.81 may not seem much smaller than 3, but because the difference is in the exponent, the impact on running time is significant. In fact, Strassen's algorithm beats the ordinary algorithm on today's machines for $n \geq 32$ or so.

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Best to date (of theoretical interest only): $\Theta(n^{2.376\dots})$.

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VLSI Tree Layout

VLSI Layout

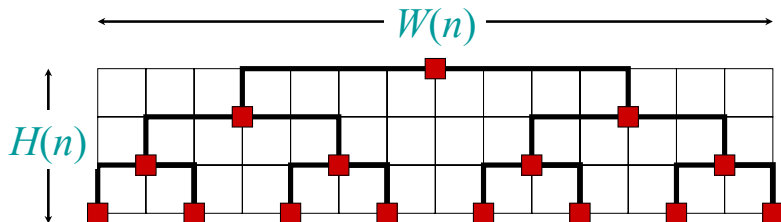
Problem:

Embed a complete binary tree with n leaves in a grid using minimal area.

VLSI Layout

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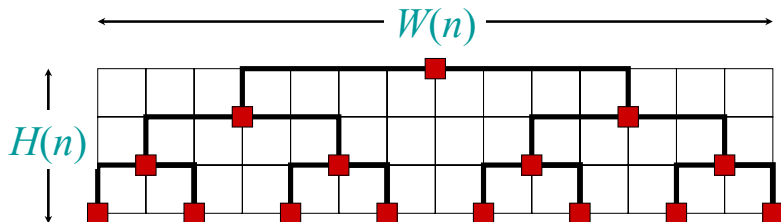
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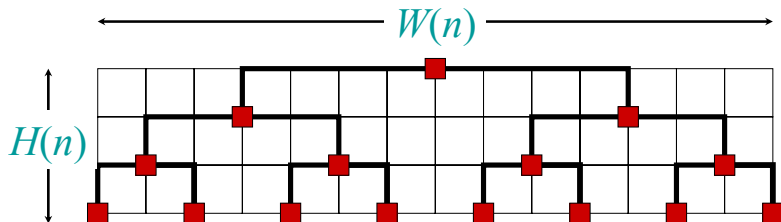


$$\begin{aligned} H(n) &= H\left(\frac{n}{2}\right) + \Theta(1) \\ &= \Theta(\lg n) \end{aligned}$$

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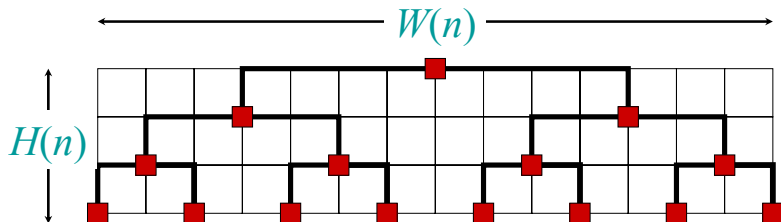
$$\begin{aligned} H(n) &= H\left(\frac{n}{2}\right) + \Theta(1) \\ &= \Theta(\lg n) \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} W(n) &= 2W\left(\frac{n}{2}\right) + \Theta(1) \\ &= \Theta(n) \end{aligned}$$

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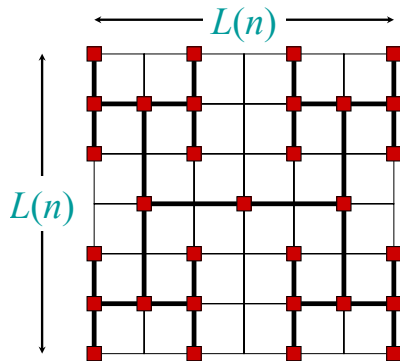


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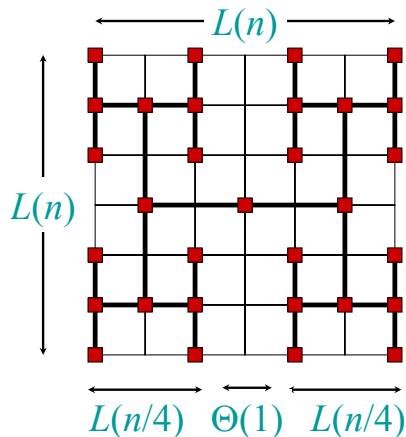
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$$\mathbf{Area:} = \Theta(n \ln n)$$

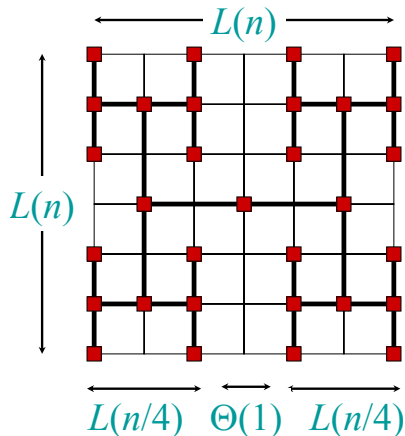
H-tree Embedding



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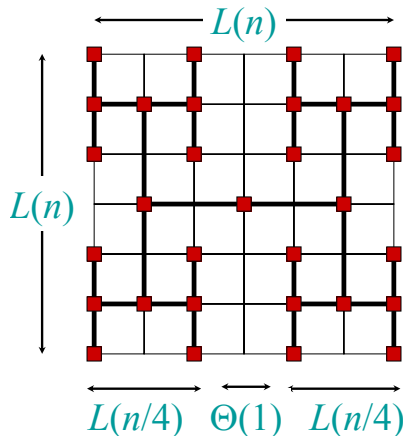


H-tree Embedding



$$\begin{aligned} L(n) &= 2L\left(\frac{n}{4}\right) + \Theta(1) \\ &= \Theta(\sqrt{n}) \end{aligned}$$

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$$\text{Area} = \Theta(n)$$

Conclusions

- ▶ Divide and conquer is just one of several powerful techniques for algorithm design.
- ▶ Divide-and-conquer algorithms can be analyzed using recurrences and the master method (so practice this math).
- ▶ The divide-and-conquer strategy often leads to efficient algorithms.

End of Lecture 3.



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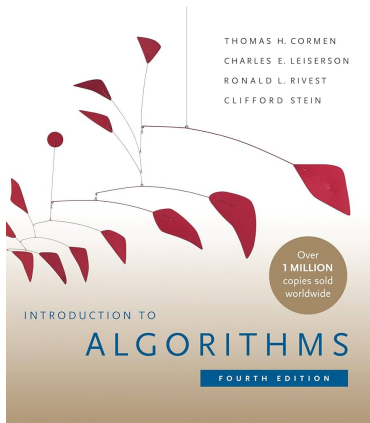
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Introduction to Algorithms



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Original slides from *Introduction to Algorithms 6.046J/18.401J*, Fall 2005 Class by Prof. Charles Leiserson and Prof. Erik Demaine. MIT OpenCourseWare Initiative available at <https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/6-046j-introduction-to-algorithms-sma-5503-fall-2005/>.