

Description

Solution

Discuss (999+)

Submissions

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Suppose we have such a linked list, with L-long line concatenating with a C-long cycle. And initially we have two pointers **a** and **b** pointing at the head of the linked list. **a**'s stride is 2 and **b**'s stride is 1. If there is a cycle, **a** will meet **b** again in the cycle since **a** will start to catch up with **b** when **b** enters the cycle (later than **a**) one step each time ($a's\ stride - b's\ stride = 1$).

And suppose **a** and **b** meet at point X and the entry of the cycle is E. By saying $|EX|=D$ (in forwarding direction), **b** has moved a distance of L+D while **a** has moved a distance of L+D+KC where K ($K>0$) is the times that **a** has been cycling.

Since **a**'s stride is the double of **b**'s, we have $L+D+KC = 2L+2D$ or $L+D=KC$. So $L = C-D + (K-1)C$.

Now $|XE|$ is what left for **b** to reach E (cycle's entry) again. Remember $|EX|=D$, so $|XE|=C-D$. Thus, if **b** moves a distance of L, which is $C-D + (K-1)C$, it will be at E. And if we have another pointer **c** move simultaneously with **b** but start at the head of linked list, **c** will walk through the line whose length is L and also reach the entry point E. So **b** and **c** will meet there, or their meeting point is the entry of the cycle.