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## Definition and history

The well-known Fibonacci numbers are defined recursively in the box to the right. The sequence of Fibonacci starts off like this:

**Fibonacci numbers**

F(0) = 0. F(1) = 1.

For n > 1, F(n) = F(n-1) + F(n-2)

0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, …

This discussion of the Fibonacci numbers provides an interesting look at the development of algorithms and data structures, with interesting historical tidbits. Moreover, Fibonacci numbers are connected with numbers called the golden ratio and golden angle, they have connections with architecture, and they appear in various ways in nature. Another pdf file in this JavaHyperText treats discusses these topics.

Some of this material is taken from en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fibonaccinumber. Also, there is so much interest in Fibonacci numbers that there is a journal devoted to it. *The Fibonacci Quarterly*, started in 1963, is an official publication of the Fibonacci Association. All but the past 5 volumes are free. Here is its website: www.fq.math.ca/list-of-issues.html.

Many people think that Fibonacci numbers first appeared in Fibonacci’s historic book on arithmetic, *Liber Abaci* (*The Book of Calculation*), in 1202. Actually, Fibonacci was not his real name! That name was given to him by a writer well after his death. When he was living, he was known as Leonardo of Pisa. Moreover, the Fibonacci numbers were used and discussed in ancient Sanskrit texts in India as early as 450BC–200BC. A paper by Parmanand Singh, written in 1985, on the early introduction of Fibonacci numbers in Sanskrit texts can be found in the JavaHyperText entry for Fibonacci.

## A Fibonacci poem

A Fibonacci poem has 1 syllable in the first line, 1 in the second, 2 in the third, 3 in the fourth, 5 in the fifth, etc. The numbers of syllables in succeeding lines form the Fibonacci sequence. Below is a Fibonacci poem, which is attributed to Brian Bilston:

I  
 wrote  
 a poem  
 on a page  
 but then each line grew  
 to the work sum of the previous two  
 until I began to worry about all those words coming with such frequency  
 because as you can see it can be easy to run out of space when a poem gets all Fibonacci frequency

## A naïve implementation of Fibonacci numbers

**/\*\*** = F(n).

\* Precondition: n ≥ 0. \*/

public static int fib(int n) {

if (n <= 1) return n;

return fib(n-1) + fib(n-2);

}

Function fib to the right is the obvious translation of the definition of function F into Java. It is also the worst way to compute it. Consider computing fib(15), as shown in the tree to the right. That call requires calling fib(13) and fib(14). These two calls then require calling fib(13), fib(12) twice, and fib(11). You can imagine the next level. In total,

fib(13) is called 2 times,  
fib(12) is called 3 times,  
fib(11) is called 5 times,  
fib(10) is called 8 times

fib(15)

fib(14)

fib(13)

fib(13)

fib(12)

fib(12)

fib(11)

Hey, the number of times each is called forms the Fibonacci sequence!

## Time complexity of fib(n)

We prove that the time complexity of fib(n) is in O(2n). We first write a (recursive) function f that gives an upper bound on the number of basic steps taken in computing fib(n). Constant c is an upper bound on the number of basic steps in the case n ≤ 1 and the basic steps needed besides the recursive calls in the case n ≥ 2.

Theorem. fib(n) ∈ O(2n).

Proof. We prove that f(n) ≤ c 2n for n ≥ 0, where c is given in the definition of f(n) to the left. The proof is by induction on n. We have:

f(0) = c ≤ c 20 (since 20 = 1).

f(1) = c ≤ c 21 (since 21 = 2).

Assume that n ≥ 2. Assuming f(k) ≤ c 2k for k < n, we prove f(n) ≤ c 2n. We start with the definition of f(n):

c + f(n-1) + f(n-2)

= <inductive hypotheses>

c + a2n-1 + a2 n-2

= <arithmetic>

c (2n-1 +1 + 2 n-2)

≤ <for n ≥ 2, 1+2 n-2 ≤ 2 n-1>

c (2n-1 + 2 n-1)

= <arithmetic>

c 2n

f(0) = c

f(1) = c

For n ≥ 2, f(n) = c + f(n–1) + f(n–2)

To the left is a proof by mathematical induction that this function is in O(2n).

Actually, O(2n) is not the tightest bound for recursive function fib. The tightest bound is O(ϕn), where ϕ is the golden ratio:

ϕ = (1 + √5)/2 = 1.6180339887…

Fibonacci numbers and the golden ratio are intricately connected, and you will hear more about them later.

## Caching

A *cache* is a collection of items stored away in some oft-hidden place. It’s a stockpile, a store. One hears, for example, of an *arms cache*. Caches are used in many places in computing. In hardware, for example, a computer may have a *memory cache*, a small place close to the CPU for oft-used words of memory, to make it quicker to retrieve them. Your browser uses a cache of lately used web pages, so they don’t have to be retrieved so often.

We can modify function fib to save computed values in a cache. This cache is implemented as a static ArrayList, shown to the right.

/\*\* For 0 ≤ n < cache.size, F(n) is cache[n]. If fibCached(k)

\* has been called, its result in in cache[k] \*/

public static ArrayList<Integer> cache= new ArrayList<>();

The modified method fibCached appears to the right. The first if-statement returns the value F(n) if it has been computed before. Note that after the value of F(n-2) + F(n-1) is calculated and stored in ans, it is placed in the cache.

/\*\* = F(n). Pre: n >= 0. Use the cache. \*/

public static int fibCached(int n) {

if (n < cache.size()) return cache.get(n);

if (n == 0) { cache.add(0); return 0; }

if (n == 1) { cache.add(1); return 1; }

int ans= fibCached(n-2) + fibCached(n-1);

cache.add(ans);

return ans;

}

At worst, fibCached(n) takes time linear in n, but future calls with the same n take constant time. However, the space requirement is O(n) where n is the largest value for which fibCached (n) was called, and this space stays there as long as the program is running.

## Computing Fibonacci in linear time

/\*\* = F(n), for n >= 0. \*/

public static int fibit(int n) {

if (n <= 1) return n;

int k= 2; int p= 0; int c= 1;

// invariant: p = F(k-2) and c = F(k-1)

while (k < n) {

int Fk= p + c; p= c; c= Fk;

k= k+1;

}

return p + c;

}

There’s no need to use recursion to calculate F(n)! Instead, write a simple loop as in method fibit, which appears to the right. At each iteration, p = F(k-2) and c = F(k-1), so F(k) can be calculated as their sum.

## Computing Fibonacci in log time

The first equation to the right shows how to calculate F(2) by multiplying the vector containing F(0) and F(1) by the 2 x 2 matrix. The second equation to the right above shows how to calculate F(n) and F(n+1) by first raising the matrix to the power n. Since F(0) = 0 and F(1) = 1, we can use the equation to the right to calculate F(n) and F(n+1).

0 1

1 1

0

1

F(n)

F(n+1)

=

n

0 1

1 1

F(0)

F(1)

F(n)

F(n+1)

=

n

0 1

1 1

F(0)

F(1)

F(1)

F(2)

=

You know a logarithmic algorithm to compute something to the power n! Look it up in JavaHyperText under entry *Power* or *Exponentiation*. Therefore, we can use this technique to calculate F(n) in logarithmic time. Neat! It gets better and better! This computation was shown by David Gries and Gary Levin in a 2-page paper in 1980.

Another logarithmic algorithm to compute Fibonacci numbers depends on the golden ratio ϕ and its conjugate Φ, sometimes called the silver ratio:

ϕ = (1 + √5)/2 = 1.6180339887…. Φ = (1 – √5)/2 = –.6180339887…

They are the roots of the polynomial x2 – x – 1. They satisfy this equation: F(n) = (ϕn – Φn)/√5. This equation yields another logarithmic-time algorithm to calculate F(n), since ϕn and Φn can each be calculated in logarithmic time.

## Calculating F(n) from F(n-1) in constant time

Interestingly enough, limn­–>∞ F(n+1)/F(n) = ϕ, although the convergence is very slow. Therefore, if F(n) is known, F(n+1) may be calculated in constant time.