



Learn Data Structures & Algorithms with AI

Step-by-Step Logic

- Sorting:** First, we sort the input array `nums` in ascending order.
- Fixing a Element:** We fix one element in the array and use two pointers, `left` and `right`, to find the other two elements that sum up to the negation of the fixed element.
- Moving Pointers:** We move the `left` pointer to the right to find a smaller element, and the `right` pointer to the left to find a larger element.
- Checking Sum:** We check if the sum of the three elements is equal to zero. If it is, we add the triplet to the result list.

Dry Run

Suppose we have the following input array: `[-1, 0, 1, 2, -1, -4]`. We can use the Two Pointers technique to find all unique triplets that sum up to zero.

MARKDOWN

```
nums = [-1, 0, 1, 2, -1, -4]

# Sorting the array
nums.sort() # [-4, -1, -1, 0, 1, 2]
```

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- Use the `while` loop to iterate through the array and find all unique triplets that sum up to zero.

Step 5: Python Solution

PYTHON

```
def three_sum(nums):
    """
    Finds all unique triplets in the input array that sum up to zero.

    Args:
        nums (list): A list of integers.

    Returns:
        list: A list of unique triplets that sum up to zero.
    """
    nums.sort() # Sorting the array
    triplets = [] # Initializing result list

    for i in range(len(nums) - 2): # Fixing a element
        if i > 0 and nums[i] == nums[i - 1]:
            continue # Skipping duplicates
```

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Step 6: Code Explanation

- We first sort the input array `nums` in ascending order using the `sort()` method.
- We then initialize an empty list `triplets` to store the unique triplets that sum up to zero.
- We iterate through the array using a `for` loop, fixing one element at a time.
- We use two pointers, `left` and `right`, to find the other two elements that sum up to the negation of the fixed element.
- We move the `left` pointer to the right to find a smaller element, and the `right` pointer to the left to find a larger element.
- We check if the sum of the three elements is equal to zero. If it is, we add the triplet to the `triplets` list.
- We skip duplicates by checking if the current element is equal to the previous element.

Step 7: Complexity Analysis

- **Time Complexity:** $O(n^2)$, where n is the length of the input array.

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