

Mutation Coverage

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Lecture #16 out of 24
80 minutes

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Example, Part I: Code Coverage

Live Code:

```
1 int fibonacci(int n) {  
2     if (n <= 2) {  
3         return 1;  
4     }  
5     return fibonacci(n - 1)  
6         + fibonacci(n - 2);  
7 }
```

Test Code:

```
1 assert fibonacci(2) == 1;  
2 assert fibonacci(3) > 0;
```

$$C_{\text{Line}} = 7/7 = 100\%$$

$$C_{\text{Statement}} = 6/6 = 100\%$$

$$C_{\text{Branch}} = 2/2 = 100\%$$

$$C_{\text{Condition}} = 2/2 = 100\%$$

Example, Part II: Mutation Coverage

Live Code:

```
1 int fibonacci(int n) {  
2     if (n <= 2) {  
3         return 1;  
4     }  
5     return fibonacci(n - 1)  
6         + fibonacci(n - 2);  
7 }
```

Test Code:

```
1 assert fibonacci(2) == 1;  
2 assert fibonacci(3) > 0;
```

Mutant #1:

```
1 int fibonacci(int n) {  
2     if (n <= 2) {  
3         return 1;  
4     }  
5     return fibonacci(n - 2)  
6         + fibonacci(n - 2);  
7 }
```

Mutant #2:

```
1 int fibonacci(int n) {  
2     if (n <= 2) {  
3         return 1;  
4     }  
5     return fibonacci(n - 1)  
6         * fibonacci(n - 2);  
7 }
```

$$C_{\text{Mutants}} = 0/2 = 0\%$$

Some Mutation Operators

- Statement deletion
- Statement duplication or insertion
- Replacement of boolean subexpressions with TRUE and FALSE
- Replacement of some arithmetic operations, e.g. + to *, - to /
- Replacement of some boolean relations, e.g. > to >=, == to <=
- Replacement of variables with others from the same scope
- Remove method body



RICHARD G. HAMLET

“It is a truism that good software is easy to maintain.”

— Richard G. Hamlet. Testing Programs With the Aid of a Compiler. *IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering*, 1997. doi:[10.1109/tse.1977.231145](https://doi.org/10.1109/tse.1977.231145)



JEFFERSON A. OFFUTT AND
STEPHEN D. LEE

“Dr. Hamlet presented an early testing system that was embedded in a compiler and performed a version of instrumented weak mutation. Although the method differed significantly from later mutation systems, Hamlet’s system seems to be the first mutation-like testing system.”

— A. Jefferson Offutt and Stephen D. Lee. How Strong Is Weak Mutation? In *Proceedings of the Symposium on Testing, Analysis, and Verification*, 1991.
doi:[10.1145/120807.120826](https://doi.org/10.1145/120807.120826)



RICHARD J. LIPTON

“Our groups at Yale University and the Georgia Institute of Technology have constructed a system whereby we can determine the extent to which a given set of test data has adequately tested a Fortran program by direct measurement of the number and kinds of errors it is capable of uncovering.”

— Richard A. DeMillo, Richard J. Lipton, and Frederick G. Sayward. Hints on Test Data Selection: Help for the Practicing Programmer. *Computer*, 11(4): 34–41, 1978. doi:[10.1109/c-m.1978.218136](https://doi.org/10.1109/c-m.1978.218136)



“A test set is adequate if it can distinguish the subject program from a collection of similar programs, called mutants, obtained by making small syntactic modifications to the subject program.”

— Timothy A. Budd. Mutation Analysis: Ideas, Examples, Problems and Prospects. 1981



“In weak mutation testing method, tests are constructed which are guaranteed to force program statements which contain certain classes of errors to act incorrectly during the execution of the program over those tests.”

— William E. Howden. Weak Mutation Testing and Completeness of Test Sets. *IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering*, (4):371–379, 1982.
doi:[10.1109/tse.1982.235571](https://doi.org/10.1109/tse.1982.235571)

Weak vs. Strong Mutation Testing

Live Code:

```
1 int fibonacci(int n) {  
2     if (n <= 2) {  
3         return 1;  
4     }  
5     return fibonacci(n - 1)  
6         + fibonacci(n - 2);  
7 }
```

Mutant:

```
1 int fibonacci(int n) {  
2     if (n <= 1) {  
3         return 1;  
4     }  
5     return fibonacci(n - 1)  
6         + fibonacci(n - 2);  
7 }
```

Tests Suite:

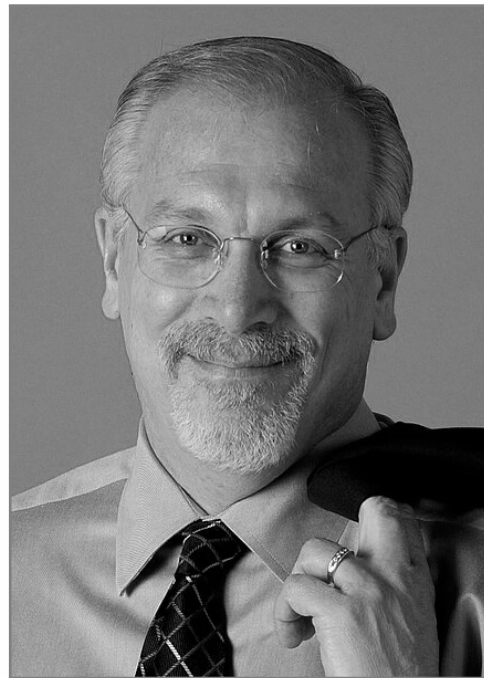
```
1 fibonacci(10) == 55;  
2 fibonacci(11) == 89;  
3 fibonacci(12) == 144;
```



JEFF OFFUTT

“Our results indicate that weak mutation can be applied in a manner that is almost as effective as mutation testing, and with significant computational savings.”

— A. Jefferson Offutt and Stephen D. Lee. An Empirical Evaluation of Weak Mutation. *IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering*, 20(5):337–344, 1994.
doi:[10.1109/32.286422](https://doi.org/10.1109/32.286422)



RICHARD DEMILLO

“A mutant operator mutates one syntactic entity of a program. Further, only one mutant operator is applied at a time to the program under test.”

— Hiralal Agrawal, Richard A. DeMillo, R. Hathaway, William Hsu, Wynne Hsu, Edward W. Krauser, Rhonda J. Martin, Aditya P. Mathur, and Eugene Spafford. Design of Mutant Operators for the C Programming Language, 1989

List of Mutant Operators for ANSI C

| Operator | Domain | Description | Page |
|----------|-----------|--|------|
| CGCR | Constants | Constant replacement using global constants | 63 |
| CLSR | Constants | Constant for scalar replacement using local constants | 63 |
| CGSR | Constants | Constant for scalar replacement using global constants | 63 |
| CRCR | Constants | Required constant replacement | 62 |
| CLCR | Constants | Constant replacement using local constants | 63 |
| OAAA | ‡ | arithmetic assignment mutation | 49 |
| OAAAN | ‡ | arithmetic operator mutation | 49 |
| OABA | † | arithmetic assignment by bitwise assignment | 50 |
| OABN | † | arithmetic operator by bitwise operator | 50 |
| OAEA | † | arithmetic assignment by plain assignment | 50 |
| OALN | † | arithmetic operator by logical operator | 50 |
| OARN | † | arithmetic operator by relational operator | 50 |
| OASA | † | arithmetic assignment by shift assignment | 50 |
| OASN | † | Arithmetic operator by shift operator | 50 |
| OBAA | † | Bitwise assignment by arithmetic assignment | 50 |
| OBAN | † | Bitwise operator by arithmetic assignment | 50 |
| OBBA | ‡ | Bitwise assignment mutation | 49 |
| OBBN | ‡ | Bitwise operator mutation | 49 |
| OBEA | † | Bitwise assignment by plain assignment | 50 |
| OBLN | † | Bitwise operator by logical operator | 50 |
| OBNG | † | Bitwise negation | 52 |
| OBRN | † | Bitwise operator by relational operator | 50 |
| OBSA | † | Bitwise assignment by shift assignment | 50 |
| OBSN | † | Bitwise operator by shift operator | 50 |
| OCOR | Casts | Cast operator by cast operator | 53 |
| OEAA | † | Plain assignment by arithmetic assignment | 50 |
| OEBA | † | Plain assignment by bitwise assignment | 50 |
| OESA | † | Plain assignment by shift assignment | 50 |

“Each mutant operator belongs to one of the following categories: 1) statement mutations, 2) operator mutations, 3) variable mutations, and 4) constant mutations. ”

Source: Hiralal Agrawal et al., *Design of Mutant Operators for the C Programming Language*, Technical Report SERC-TR-41-P, Software Engineering Research Center, Purdue University, 1989



PHYLLIS G. FRANKL

“Those mutants that compute precisely the same function are called equivalent mutants and the others are called inequivalent mutants.”

— Phyllis G. Frankl, Stewart N. Weiss, and Cang Hu. All-Uses Vs Mutation Testing: An Experimental Comparison of Effectiveness. *Journal of Systems and Software*, 38(3):235–253, 1997. doi:[10.1016/s0164-1212\(96\)00154-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0164-1212(96)00154-9)

Equivalent Mutants, Example

Live Code:

```

1 int fibonacci(int n) {
2     if (n <= 2) {
3         return 1;
4     }
5     return fibonacci(n - 1)
6         + fibonacci(n - 2);
7 }

```

Tests:

```

1 fibonacci(2) == 1;
2 fibonacci(14) == 377;

```

Inequivalent Mutant:

```

1 int fibonacci(int n) {
2     if (n <= 2) {
3         return 1;
4     }
5     return fibonacci(n + 1)
6         + fibonacci(n - 2);
7 }

```

Equivalent Mutant:

```

1 int fibonacci(int n) {
2     if (n <= 2) {
3         return 1;
4     }
5     return fibonacci(n - 2)
6         + fibonacci(n - 1);
7 }

```

↑ You **can't kill** this one!

| subject | LOC | mutants | duas | inequiv mutants | exec duas | failure rate |
|--------------|-----|---------|------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| determinant | 60 | 4489 | 298 | 4123 | 103 | 0.0008 |
| find1 | 33 | 932 | 114 | 836 | 93 | 0.066 |
| find2 | 33 | 932 | 114 | 859 | 93 | 0.018 |
| matinv1 | 60 | 4303 | 298 | 3971 | 106 | 0.012 |
| matinv2 | 28 | 1267 | 81 | 1145 | 62 | 0.014 |
| strmatch1 | 22 | 398 | 49 | 356 | 49 | 0.032 |
| strmatch2 | 23 | 402 | 56 | 361 | 54 | 0.062 |
| textformat.0 | 26 | 976 | 50 | 905 | 42 | 0.066 |
| textformat.r | 26 | 976 | 50 | 976 | 42 | 0.066 |
| transpose | 78 | 5358 | 97 | 4595 | 88 | 0.023 |

Source: Phyllis G. Frankl, Stewart N. Weiss, and Cang Hu. All-Uses Vs Mutation Testing: An Experimental Comparison of Effectiveness. *Journal of Systems and Software*, 38(3):235–253, 1997.
doi:[10.1016/s0164-1212\(96\)00154-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0164-1212(96)00154-9)

“Mutation coverage is more effective than dua coverage for five subjects, dua coverage — for two others, and there is no significant difference for the remaining two.

A definition-use association (dua is a triple d, u, v , such that d is a node in the program’s flow graph in which variable v is defined, u is a node or edge in which v is used, and there is a definition-clear path with respect to v from d to u .”



JAMES H. ANDREWS, LIONEL
C. BRIAND AND YVAN
LABICHE

“Our analysis suggests that mutants, when using carefully selected mutation operators and after removing equivalent mutants, can provide a good indication of the fault detection ability of a test suite.”

— James H. Andrews, Lionel C. Briand, and Y. Labiche. Is Mutation an Appropriate Tool for Testing Experiments? In *Proceedings of the 27th International Conference on Software Engineering (ICSE)*, 2005.
[doi:10.1145/1062455.1062530](https://doi.org/10.1145/1062455.1062530)

Table 3. Matched Pairs t -test Results – test suite size = 100

| Subject Programs | Matched Pairs Results | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|
| | Mean $Af(S) - Am(S)$ | t -ratio | p -value |
| Space | 0.014 | 16.87 | < 0.0001 |
| Replace | -0.266 | -233.96 | 0.0000 |
| Printtokens | -0.344 | -158.2 | 0.0000 |
| Printtokens2 | -0.061 | -59.39 | 0.0000 |
| Schedule | -0.298 | -161.33 | 0.0000 |
| Schedule2 | -0.327 | -152.19 | 0.0000 |
| Tcas | -0.1128 | -57.56 | 0.0000 |
| Totinfo | -0.1037 | -145.78 | 0.0000 |

“Average differences range from 6% to 34%, with an average of 22%.

If one has used mutants to assess a test technique, it will likely look more effective at detecting faults than if one has used the seeded faults.”

Source: James H. Andrews, Lionel C. Briand and Yvan Labiche, *Is Mutation an Appropriate Tool for Testing Experiments?*, Proceedings of the 27th International Conference on Software Engineering (ICSE), 2005



YU-SEUNG MA, JEFF OFFUTT,
AND YONG-RAE KWON

“Comparing with previous mutation systems for procedural programs, MuJava is very fast. However, it is relatively slow when it generates and runs lots of mutants.”

— Yu-Seung Ma, Jeff Offutt, and Yong-Rae Kwon. MuJava: A Mutation System for Java. In *Proceedings of the 28th International Conference on Software Engineering (ICSE)*, 2006. doi:[10.1145/1134285.1134425](https://doi.org/10.1145/1134285.1134425)

| Operator | Description |
|----------|--|
| IHD | Hiding variable deletion |
| IHI | Hiding variable insertion |
| IOD | Overriding method deletion |
| IOP | Overridden method calling position change |
| IOR | Overridden method rename |
| ISI | <i>super</i> keyword insertion |
| ISD | <i>super</i> keyword deletion |
| IPC | Explicit call of a parent's constructor deletion |
| PNC | <i>new</i> method call with child class type |
| PMD | Instance variable declaration with parent class type |
| PPD | Parameter variable declaration with child class type |
| PCI | Type cast operator insertion |
| PCC | Cast type change |
| PCD | Type cast operator insertion |
| PRV | Reference assignment with other compatible type |
| OMR | Overloading method contents change |
| OMD | Overloading method deletion |
| OAC | Argument order change |
| JTI | <i>this</i> keyword insertion |
| JTD | <i>this</i> keyword deletion |
| JSI | <i>static</i> modifier insertion |
| JSD | <i>static</i> modifier deletion |
| JID | Member variable initialization deletion |
| JDC | Java-supported default constructor create |
| EOA | Reference and content assignment replacement |
| EOC | Reference and content assignment replacement |
| EAM | Accessor method change |
| EMM | Modifier method change |

Table 2: Class-level Mutation Operators for Java

“Method-level mutation operators handle primitive features of programming languages. They modify expressions by replacing, deleting, and inserting primitive operators. Class-level mutation operators handle object-oriented specific features such as inheritance, polymorphism and dynamic binding.”

Source: Yu-Seung Ma, Jeff Offutt, and Yong-Rae Kwon, *MuJava: A Mutation System for Java*, Proceedings of the 28th International Conference on Software Engineering (ICSE), 2006



PAUL AMMANN AND JEFF
OFFUTT

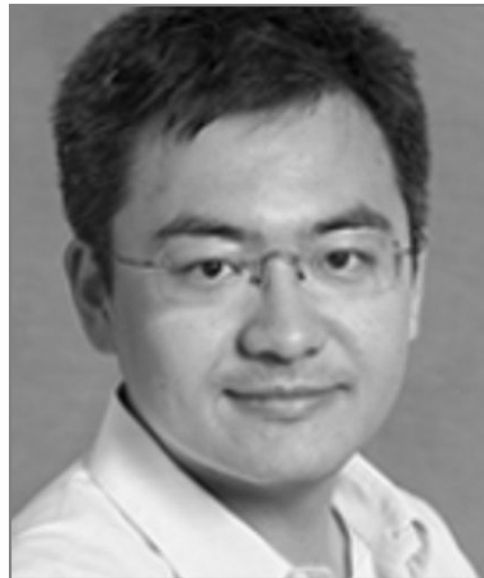
“Three conditions must be present for a failure to be observed: 1) The location in the program that contains the fault must be reached (**R**eachability). 2) After executing the location, the state of the program must be incorrect (**I**nfection). 3) The infected state must propagate to cause some output of the program to be incorrect (**P**ropagation).”

— Paul Ammann and Jeff Offutt. *Introduction to Software Testing*. Cambridge University Press, 2008. doi:[10.5555/1355340](https://doi.org/10.5555/1355340)

YUE JIA AND MARK HARMAN

“Traditional mutation testing considers only first order mutants, created by the injection of a single fault. Often these first order mutants denote trivial faults that are easily killed. Higher order mutants are created by the insertion of two or more faults.”

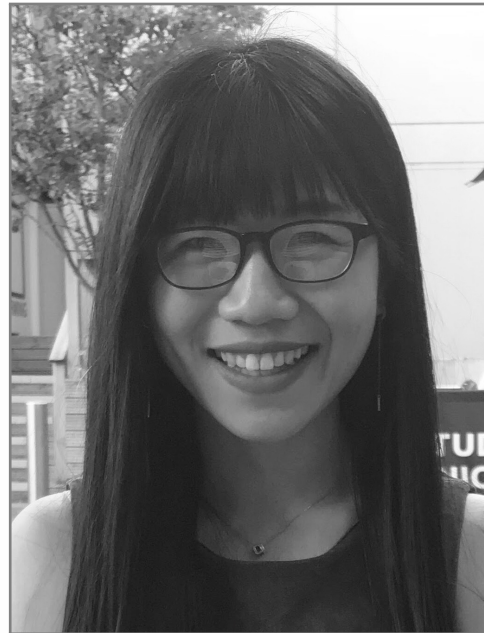
— Yue Jia and Mark Harman. Higher Order Mutation Testing. *Information and Software Technology*, 2009. doi:[10.1016/j.infsof.2009.04.016](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infsof.2009.04.016)



YUE JIA AND MARK HARMAN

“One problem that prevents mutation testing from becoming a practical testing technique is the high computational cost of executing the enormous number of mutants against a test set.”

— Yue Jia and Mark Harman. An Analysis and Survey of the Development of Mutation Testing. *IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering*, 2010.
[doi:10.1109/tse.2010.62](https://doi.org/10.1109/tse.2010.62)



JIE ZHANG, ZIYI WANG,
LINGMING ZHANG, DAN HAO,
LEI ZANG, SHIYANG CHENG,
AND LU ZHANG

“PMT applies ML to build a predictive model by collecting a series of easy-to-access features (e.g., coverage and mutation operator) on already executed mutants of earlier versions of the project. Based on this model, PMT predicts the mutation testing results (i.e., whether each mutant is killed or not) of a new version of project without executing its mutants at all.”

— Jie Zhang, Ziyi Wang, Lingming Zhang, Dan Hao, Lei Zang, Shiyang Cheng, and Lu Zhang. Predictive Mutation Testing. In *Proceedings of the 25th International Symposium on Software Testing and Analysis*, 2016.
[doi:10.1145/2931037.2931038](https://doi.org/10.1145/2931037.2931038)

Mutation Coverage can be calculated by a few tools:

- PIT for Java
- StrykerJS for JavaScript
- Mutate++ for C++
- mutatest for Python
- mutant for Ruby

References

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Paul Ammann and Jeff Offutt. *Introduction to Software Testing*. Cambridge University Press, 2008. doi:[10.5555/1355340](https://doi.org/10.5555/1355340).

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doi:[10.1109/c-m.1978.218136](https://doi.org/10.1109/c-m.1978.218136).

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Richard G. Hamlet. Testing Programs With the Aid of a Compiler. *IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering*, 1997. doi:[10.1109/tse.1977.231145](https://doi.org/10.1109/tse.1977.231145).

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Yue Jia and Mark Harman. An Analysis and Survey of the Development of Mutation Testing. *IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering*, 2010. doi:[10.1109/tse.2010.62](https://doi.org/10.1109/tse.2010.62).

Yu-Seung Ma, Jeff Offutt, and Yong-Rae Kwon.

MuJava: A Mutation System for Java. In *Proceedings of the 28th International Conference on Software Engineering (ICSE)*, 2006. doi:[10.1145/1134285.1134425](https://doi.org/10.1145/1134285.1134425).

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Jie Zhang, Ziyi Wang, Lingming Zhang, Dan Hao, Lei Zang, Shiyang Cheng, and Lu Zhang. Predictive Mutation Testing. In *Proceedings of the 25th International Symposium on Software Testing and Analysis*, 2016. doi:[10.1145/2931037.2931038](https://doi.org/10.1145/2931037.2931038).