

$\log n$ - Space, $n^{3/2}$ Time Quantum Sort.

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It has been proven that any quantum algorithm in the quantum circuits which sorts at time T and storage space S has to satisfy the restriction $TS = \Omega(n^{3/2})$ [Kla03]. In the regime of $S \geq \log^3(n)$, it has been shown that the bound is tight up to logarithmic factors. However, in the regime where S is strictly $\Theta(\log(n))$, not much advancement has been reached beyond $T = \Theta(n^{1\frac{1}{2}} \log n)$. Here, we present a quantum algorithm that sorts with $\log(n)$ storage memory and $\Theta(n^{3/2})$ time. We achieved this by quantifying the sorting algorithm invented by Stanley P. Y. Fung [Fun21], who coined its name - "ICan'tBelieveItCanSort" - due to the surprise of having such a simple sorting algorithm.

The insight that allows getting rid of the logarithmic factor is the fact that in any iteration of the "ICan'tBelieveItCanSort" algorithm, it looks for the first position $k < i$ such that $A_k > A_i$, assuming $A_1 \leq A_2 \dots A_{i-1}$. Under this assumption, this task can be done using Grover in time \sqrt{i} , while in the previous attempts, the subroutines that were being used were extracting the maximum, which requires $\Omega(\sqrt{n} \log n)$ when done accurately.

The paper is organized as follows: first, we introduce "ICan'tBelieveItCanSort" presented in Algorithm 1 and prove its correctness. The correctness proof will imply the equivalence of Algorithm 2. Then, we present the quantum space bound version, Algorithm 3, and analyze its complexity.

1 Classical Starting Point - "ICan'tBelieveItCanSort".

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Result: Sorting  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$ 
1 for  $i \in [n]$  do
2   for  $j \in [n]$  do
3     if  $A_i < A_j$  then
4       swap  $A_i \leftrightarrow A_j$ 
5     end
6   end
7 end
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Algorithm 1: "ICan'tBelieveItCanSort" alg.

Claim 1.1. *After the i th iteration, $A_1 \leq A_2 \leq A_3 \dots \leq A_i$ and A_i is the maximum of the whole array.*

Proof. By induction on the iteration number i .

1. Base. For $i = 1$, it is clear that when j reaches the position of the maximum element, an exchange will occur and A_1 will be set to be the maximum element. Thus, the condition on line (3) will not be satisfied for the remaining j -iterations of the inner loop. Therefore, at the end of the first iteration, A_1 is indeed the maximum.
2. Assumption. Assume the correctness of the claim for any $i' < i$.

3. Step. Consider the i th iteration. And observe that if $A_i = A_{i-1}$ then A_i is also the maximal element in A , namely no exchange will be made in the i th iteration, yet $A_1 \leq A_2 \leq \dots \leq A_{i-1}$ by the induction assumption, thus $A_1 \leq A_2 \leq \dots \leq A_{i-1} \leq A_i$ and A_i is the maximal element, so the claim holds in the end of the iteration. If $A_i < A_{i-1}$ then there exists $k \in [1, i-1]$ such that $A_k > A_i$. Set k to be the minimal position for which the inequality holds. For convenience, denote by $A^{(j)}$ the array in the beginning of the j th iteration of the inner loop. And let's split into cases according to j value.

- (a) $j < k$ By definition of k , for any $j < k$, $A_j^{(1)} < A_i^{(1)}$, Hence in the first $k-1$ iterations no exchange will be made and we can conclude that $A_l^{(j)} = A_l^{(1)}$ for any $l \in [n]$ and $j \leq k$.
- (b) $j \geq k$ and $j \leq i$, We claim that for each such j an exchange will always occur. (The proof is given below.)

Claim 1.2. For any $j \in [k, i]$ we have that in the end of the j th iteration:

- $A_j^{(j+1)} = A_i^{(j)}$.
 - $A_i^{(j+1)} = A_j^{(j)} = A_j^{(1)}$.
 - For any $l > j$ and $l \neq i$ we have $A_l^{(j+1)} = A_l^{(1)}$.
- (c) $j > i$, so we know that $A_i^{(i+1)}$ is the maximal element in A . Therefore, for any j , it holds that $A_i^{(i+1)} \geq A_j^{(i)}$. It follows that no exchange would be made and $A_i^{(j)}$ will remain the maximum til the end of the inner loop. Thus for any $j > i$:

$$A_i^{(j)} = A_i^{(j-1)} = \dots = A_i^{(i+2)} = A_i^{(i+1)} = A_{i-1}^{(i)} = A_{i-1}^{(0)} = \max A$$

And

$$\begin{aligned} & A_1^{(j)}, A_2^{(j)}, \dots, A_{k-1}^{(j)}, A_k^{(j)}, A_{k+1}^{(j)}, \dots, A_{i-1}^{(j)}, A_i^{(j)}, A_{i+1}^{(j)}, A_{i+2}^{(j)}, A_{i+3}^{(j)} \dots \\ &= A_1^{(0)}, A_2^{(0)}, \dots, A_{k-1}^{(0)}, A_i^{(0)}, A_k^{(0)}, \dots, A_{i-2}^{(0)}, A_{i-1}^{(0)}, A_{i+1}^{(0)}, A_{i+2}^{(0)}, A_{i+3}^{(0)} \dots \end{aligned}$$

In particular, for $j = n+1$ (Note that there is no $n+1$ th iteration). Clearly, the inequalities are satisfied and we are done. □

Proof of Claim 1.2. Observe that the third section holds trivially by the definition of the algorithm. It doesn't touch any position greater than j in the first j iterations (inner loop) except the i th position. So we have to prove only the first two bullets. Again, we are going to prove them by induction on j .

1. Base. $A_k^{(1)}$ is greater than A_i , and by the above case, we have that at the beginning of the k th iteration $A_k^{(k)} = A_k^{(1)}$, $A_i^{(k)} = A_k^{(1)}$. Therefore, the condition on line (3) is satisfied, an exchange is made, and $A_k^{(k+1)} = A_i^{(k)} = A_i^{(1)}$ and $A_i^{(k+1)} = A_k^{(k)}$.
2. Assumption. Assume the correctness of the claim for any $k \leq j' < j \leq i$.
3. Step. Consider the $j \in (k, i]$ iteration. By the induction assumption, we have that $A_{j-1}^{(j)} = A_{j-1}^{(j-1)}$ and $A_i^{(j)} = A_{j-1}^{(j-1)} = A_{j-1}^{(1)}$. On the other hand, by the induction assumption of Claim 1.1, $j-1 < i \Rightarrow A_{j-1}^{(1)} \leq A_j^{(1)}$. Combining the third bullet, we obtain that:

$$A_j^{(j)} = A_j^{(1)} \geq A_{j-1}^{(1)} = A_i^{(j)}$$

And therefore, either there is an inequality and an exchange is made or there is equality. In both cases, after the j th iteration, we have $A_j^{(j+1)} = A_i^{(j)}$ and $A_i^{(j+1)} = A_j^{(j)} = A_j^{(1)}$. □

Result: Sorting A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n

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1 swap  $A_1 \leftrightarrow \max A$ 
2 for  $i \in [n - 1]$  do
3   | Find the first  $k$  such  $A_k > A_i$ 
4   | Set  $A \leftarrow A_1, A_2 \dots A_{k-1}, A_i, A_k, A_{k+1}, \dots, A_{i-1}, A_{i+1} \dots, A_n$ 
5 end

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Algorithm 2: "ICan'tBelieveItCanSort" alg.

2 Sorting Quantumly in Space-Bounded Storage.

Result: Sorting A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n

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1 swap  $A_1 \leftrightarrow \max A$ 
2 for  $i \in [n - 1]$  do
3   | Set  $\text{current} \leftarrow \text{head.next}$ 
4   |  $k\text{-pointer} \leftarrow$  Find the first ' $k < i$ ' node such ' $A_k > A_i$ ' using Grover querying the follow
5   |   Ask if (  $\text{node.color} = \text{red}$  and  $\text{node.value} > \text{current.value}$ 
6   |     and  $\text{node.back.value} \leq \text{current.value}$  )
7   | Set  $\text{head.next} \leftarrow \text{head.next.next}$ 
8   | Set  $\text{head.next.back} \leftarrow \text{head}$ 
9   | Set  $\text{current.next} \leftarrow k\text{-pointer}$ 
10  | Set  $\text{current.back} \leftarrow k\text{-pointer.back}$ 
11  | Set  $\text{current.back.next} \leftarrow \text{current}$ 
12  | Set  $\text{current.color} \leftarrow \text{red}$ 
13 end

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Algorithm 3: "Quantum ICan'tBelieveItCanSort" alg.

References

- [Kla03] Hartmut Klauck. *Quantum Time-Space Tradeoffs for Sorting*. 2003. arXiv: [quant-ph/0211174](#) [quant-ph].
- [Fun21] Stanley P. Y. Fung. "Is this the simplest (and most surprising) sorting algorithm ever?" In: *CoRR* abs/2110.01111 (2021). arXiv: [2110.01111](#). URL: <https://arxiv.org/abs/2110.01111>.