Prompt:

Given a rectangular slab of size W x H and a set of rectangular plates of sizes W_1 x H_1 , W_2 x H_2 , ... W_n x H_n , design an algorithm that runs in time polynomial in n, W, and H and that outputs the minimum possible waste area.

Algorithm:

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Input: Slab dimensions W and H and a set of plates P.
Output: The minimum possible waste area.
Let t be an (W + 1) \times (H + 1) table
Let every entry in t = -1
maxCut(W, H, P):
    If t[W][H] != -1 then
        Return t [W] [H]
    EndIf
    Let C be a copy of P
    For each plate p in P do
        If p.w = W and p.h = H then
            Set t[W][H] = W * H
            Return t [W] [H]
        Else if W < p.w or H < p.h then
            Remove p from C
        EndIf
    EndFor
    Let vertCutMax = 0
    Let horizCutMax = 0
    For each plate p in C do
        If p.w != W then
            Let vertCut = maxCut(W - p.w, H, C) + maxCut(p.w, H, C)
            Set vertCutMax = max{vertCut, vertCutMax}
        EndIf
        If p.h != H then
            Let horizCut = maxCut(W, H - p.h, C) + maxCut(W, p.h, C)
            Set horizCutMax = max{horizCut, horizCutMax}
        EndIf
    EndFor
    Let maxCut = max{vertCutMax, horizCutMax}
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\begin{array}{rll} t\;[W]\;[H]\;=\; maxCut\\ \textbf{return}\;\;t\;[W]\;[H] \end{array} 
 Let maxCut\;=\; maxCut(W,\;H,\;P) 
 Output (W\;*\;H)\;-\; maxCut
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Claim:

The algorithm terminates in time polynomial in n, W, and H.

Proof:

The algorithm iterates over each plate p in P at most 2n times. In the first of these loops, the work performed is constant in time, making the dominant runtime factor the n loop iterations. In the second loop, the work is divided into 4 subproblems: 2 subproblems of size W-p.w and p.w and 2 sub problems of size H-p.h and p.h, respectively. In each case, when a solution to a subproblem is found it is stored in the $(W+1) \times (H+1)$ table making future checks of that same sized subproblem accessible in constant time. Therefore, the runtime of the problem is bounded by W * H * 2n since there are W * H entries that must be checked and for each entry as many as 2n checks against the n plates in P. Since 2 is a constant factor, we ignore that and can say that the runtime of the problem is bounded by W * H * n. Since each subproblem is monotonically smaller in size than the calling problem, since each loop iterates at most n times, and since the problems are bounded on the low end (a plate p is removed from P if it's larger than W x H), the algorithm terminates. Thus, that algorithm terminates in time polynomial in n, W, and H.

Claim:

The algorithm outputs the minimum possible waste area.

Proof:

Let OPT(W, H) denote the maximum usable area cut from a slab with dimensions W x H into plates from a set $P = \{W_1 \times H_1, W_2 \times H_2, ... W_n \times H_n\}$.

Let v(W, H) be a function that takes the slab dimensions $W \times H$ and returns the area of that slab if there is a plate p of size $W \times H$ in P and returns 0 otherwise.

$$v(W, H) = \begin{cases} W * H & \text{if p.w} = W \text{ and p.h} = H \text{ for any p in P} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

Case 1: If a slab with dimensions W x H is not cut, then the maximum usable area of that slab is W * H if there there is a plate p in P such that p.w = W and p.h = H. Otherwise, if no such plate p exists, then the maximum usable area of a slab with dimensions W x H is 0. This is given by the defined v(W, H) function.

$$OPT(W, H) = v(W, H)$$

Case 2: If a slab with dimensions $W \times H$ is cut vertically, then the cut that yields the maximum usable area for the slab with dimensions $W \times H$ will be the cut yielding two slabs with dimensions (W - p.w, H) and (p.w, H) for some plate p in P such that the sum of the maximum usable area of the two cut slabs is the maximum over all plates p in P.

$$OPT(W, H) = max{OPT(W - p.w, H) + OPT(p.w, H)}$$
 for all p in P

Case 3: If a slab with dimensions W x H is cut horizontally, then the cut that yields the maximum usable area for the slab with dimensions W x H will be the cut yielding two slabs with dimensions (W, H - p.h) and (W, p.h) for some plate p in P such that the sum of the maximum usable area of the two cut slabs is the maximum over all plates p in P.

$$OPT(W, H) = max{OPT(W, H - p.h) + OPT(W, p.h)}$$
 for all p in P

Thus, the recurrence relation that maximizes the usable area of the slab:

$$OPT(W,\,H) = \max \begin{cases} v(W,\,H) & \text{if not cut} \\ \max\{OPT(W\,\text{-}\,p.w,\,H) + OPT(p.w,\,H)\} \text{ for all } p \text{ in } P & \text{if cut vertically} \\ \max\{OPT(W,\,H\,\text{-}\,p.h) + OPT(W,\,p.h)\} \text{ for all } p \text{ in } P & \text{if cut horizontally} \end{cases}$$

To find the minimal wasted area, simply subtract the maximum usable area given by OPT(W, H) from the total area of the slab, W * H. \square