
Tricks

by David Oniani



Contents

1	Backtracking	3
1.1	Generate Permutations	4
2	Dynamic Programming	5
2.1	Largest Area Square	6
2.2	Levenshtein Distance (Edit Distance)	7
3	Geometry	8
3.1	π Approximation	9
3.2	Bresenham's Circle Drawing Algorithm	10
3.3	Draw Circle (Trigonometry)	11
3.4	Valid Square	12
4	Linked List	13
4.1	Floyd's Cycle Finding Algorithm (Linked List Cycle Detection)	14
4.2	Remove Elements	15
4.3	Reverse Linked List	16
5	Problem Dependent	17
5.1	Balanced Parentheses	18
5.2	Boyer-Moore Majority Vote Algorithm – Majority Element	19
5.3	Flood Fill – Number of Islands	20
5.4	Kadane's Algorithm – Maximum Contiguous Subarray	21
6	Sorting	22
6.1	Merge Sort	23
7	Trie	24
7.1	Trie (A Prefix Tree)	25

1 Backtracking

1.1 Generate Permutations

Optimal Solution:

Time Complexity: $O(m!)$ where m is the length of the array.

Space Complexity: $O(m!)$ where m is the length of the array.

```
def permute(nums: list[int]) -> list[list[int]]:
    """Use backtracking to generate all permutations."""

    # Use Python's implicit "booleans"
    # `[]` => `False` (generally works for empty sequences)
    if not nums:
        return []

    # The array to be filled
    res: list[list[int]] = []

    # Backtrack and fill the results list
    # NOTE: lists in Python work like pass-by-reference in C++
    backtrack(nums, 0, [], res)

    # Return the result
    return res


def backtrack(
    nums: list[int], start: int, cur: list[int], res: list[list[int]]
) -> None:
    """Perform backtracking on the array of numbers."""

    # Base case: we got one full permutation
    if len(cur) == len(nums):
        # Need to copy since
        res.append(cur[:])
        return

    # Recursive case: generate, recurse, and backtrack
    for i in range(start, len(nums)):
        # Append to the current permutation
        cur.append(nums[i])

        # Place the `i`th element at the start position
        # NOTE: Needed to include previous elements (before `start`)
        nums[i], nums[start] = nums[start], nums[i]

        # Recurse
        backtrack(nums, start + 1, cur, res)

        # Backtrack
        nums[start], nums[i] = nums[i], nums[start]
        cur.pop()
```

2 Dynamic Programming

2.1 Largest Area Square

Optimal Solution:

Time Complexity: $O(m \times n)$ where m is the number of rows and n is the number of columns.

Space Complexity: $O(m \times n)$ where m is the number of rows and n is the number of columns.

Given an $m \times n$ binary matrix filled with 0s and 1s, return the area of largest square containing only 1s.

```
def largest_area(self, matrix: list[list[int]]) -> int:
    m: int = len(matrix)
    n: int = len(matrix[0])

    dp: list[list[int]] = [[0] * n for _ in range(m)]

    res: int = 0
    for i in range(m):
        for j in range(n):
            if matrix[i][j] == 1:
                dp[i][j] = 1 + min(dp[i - 1][j], dp[i][j - 1], dp[i - 1][j - 1])
                res = max(res, dp[i][j])

    return res ** 2
```

2.2 Levenshtein Distance (Edit Distance)

Optimal Solution:

Time Complexity: $O(m \times n)$ where m is the number of rows and n is the number of columns.

Space Complexity: $O(m \times n)$ where m is the number of rows and n is the number of columns.

Given two strings word1 and word2, we need to find the optimal/minimum number of operations required to convert word1 to word2. We are permitted the following four operations:

1. Insert a character
2. Delete a character
3. Replace a character
4. Keep a character

We take the bottom-up dynamic programming approach:

```
def levenshtein_distance(word1: str, word2: str) -> int:
    """Computes the Levenshtein's distance between two words."""

    # Get the lengths
    m: int = len(word1)
    n: int = len(word2)

    # Prepopulate the DP matrix
    dp: list[list[int]] = [[0] * (n + 1) for _ in range(m + 1)]

    # Initialize the DP matrix with base cases
    for i in range(1, m + 1):
        dp[i][0] += i
    for j in range(1, n + 1):
        dp[0][j] += j

    # Fill the DP Matrix
    for i in range(1, m + 1):
        for j in range(1, n + 1):
            left: int = dp[i][j - 1]
            top: int = dp[i - 1][j]
            top_left: int = dp[i - 1][j - 1]

            # If characters are equal, just copy the diagonal value
            if word1[i - 1] == word2[j - 1]:
                dp[i][j] = top_left
            # Otherwise, take the minimum of three adjacent cells and
            # increment the result by one
            else:
                dp[i][j] = min(left, top, top_left) + 1

    # Return the optimal solution
    return dp[m][n]
```

3 Geometry

3.1 π Approximation

Optimal Solution:

Time Complexity: $O(m)$ where m is the number of iterations.

Space Complexity: $O(1)$.

Given a function that produces random numbers from the uniform distribution of $[0, 1]$, estimate π .

```
import numpy as np

def pi(iterations: int) -> float:
    """A function for approximating the Pi."""

    circle_area: int = 0
    square_area: int = 0
    for _ in range(iterations):
        # Notice the following:
        # (1)  $0 \leq \text{np.random.uniform()} < 1$ 
        # (2)  $0 \leq 2 * \text{np.random.uniform()} < 2$ 
        # (3)  $-1 \leq 2 * \text{np.random.uniform()} - 1 < 1$ 
        x: float = 2 * np.random.uniform() - 1
        y: float = 2 * np.random.uniform() - 1
        distance: float = np.sqrt(x ** 2 + y ** 2)
        if distance <= 1:
            circle_area += 1
        square_area += 1

    return circle_area / square_area * 4
```

3.2 Bresenham's Circle Drawing Algorithm

Optimal Solution:

Time Complexity: $O(m)$ where m is the radius of the circle.

Space Complexity: $O(1)$.

Given a function that can draw a dot on the screen, write a function that draws the circle with the given radius.

```
import numpy as np
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt

def bresenham(radius: float) -> None:
    """Draw a circle using Bresenham's Circle Drawing Algorithm."""

    # Initial x coordinate
    x: int = 0

    # Initial y coordinate
    y: int = radius

    # Decision parameter
    d: int = 3 - 2 * radius

    # While x coordinate is not less than the x coordinate
    while x <= y:
        plt.scatter(
            [x, x, -x, -x, y, -y, y, -y],
            [y, -y, y, -y, x, x, -x, -x],
            marker=".",
        )

        if d <= 0:
            d += 4 * x + 6
        else:
            y -= 1
            d += 4 * (x - y) + 10

        x += 1

    plt.title("Bresenham's Circle Drawing Algorithm")
    plt.show()
```

3.3 Draw Circle (Trigonometry)

Optimal Solution:

Time Complexity: $O(m)$ where m is the number of iterations.

Space Complexity: $O(1)$.

Given a function that can draw a dot on the screen, write a function that draws the circle with the given radius.

```
import numpy as np
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt

def draw_circle(radius: float, iterations: int) -> None:
    """Draw a circle with a given radius."""

    for angle in range(iterations):
        # Degree -> Radian Formula: 180 * degree / pi
        # But apparently `np.deg2rad` was designed just for this
        a: float = np.deg2rad(angle)
        x: float = radius * np.cos(a)
        y: float = radius * np.sin(a)
        plt.plot(x, y, marker=".")

plt.title("Trigonometry-based Circle Drawing Algorithm")
plt.show()
```

3.4 Valid Square

Optimal Solution:

Time Complexity: $O(1)$.

Space Complexity: $O(1)$.

Given the coordinates of four points in 2D space p_1, p_2, p_3 and p_4 , check if the given four points can construct a valid square.

```
from collections import Counter
from math import sqrt

# A type to denote a point in two-dimensional space
Point = tuple[float, float]

def valid_square(p1: Point, p2: Point, p3: Point, p4: Point) -> bool:
    """Checks if the given coordinates form a valid square."""

    # All possible edges
    edges: list[tuple[Point, Point]] = [
        (p1, p2),
        (p1, p3),
        (p1, p4),
        (p2, p3),
        (p2, p4),
        (p3, p4),
    ]

    def distance(p1: Point, p2: Point) -> float:
        """Calculate the the Euclidean distance between two points."""

        return sqrt((p1[0] - p2[0]) ** 2 + (p1[1] - p2[1]) ** 2)

    # Counts
    distances: Counter[float] = Counter(
        map(lambda pair: distance(pair[0], pair[1]), edges)
    )

    # All edges must be different with only two corresponding values
    if 0 in distances or set(distances.values()) != {2, 4}:
        return False

    return True
```

4 Linked List

4.1 Floyd's Cycle Finding Algorithm (Linked List Cycle Detection)

Optimal Solution:

Time Complexity: $O(m)$ where m is the number of nodes.

Space Complexity: $O(1)$ where m is the number of nodes.

```
from typing import Union

class Node:
    def __init__(self, val: int = 0, nxt: Node = Union[None, Node]):
        self._val = val
        self._next = nxt

def floyd_cycle(head: Node) -> bool:
    """An implementation of Floyd's Cycle Finding Algorithm."""

    if not head:
        return False

    # Initialize slow and fast pointers
    slow: Node = head
    fast: Node = head.next
    while slow != fast:
        # No need to check if `fast._next._next`
        # We check only `fast._next` so that `fast = fast._next._next`
        # does not result in an error
        if not fast or not fast._next:
            return False

        slow = slow._next
        fast = fast._next._next

    return True
```

4.2 Remove Elements

Optimal Solution:

Time Complexity: $O(m)$ where m is the length of the list.

Space Complexity: $O(1)$ where m is the length of the list.

Remove all nodes of the given value from the linked list.

```
def remove_elements(head: ListNode, val: int) -> ListNode:
    """Remove elements from the linked list."""

    # We need the dummy node since the first node # can also be equal
    # to `val`
    dummy: ListNode = ListNode(0)
    dummy._next: ListNode = head

    pre: ListNode = dummy
    cur: ListNode = head
    while cur:
        # If the given value is encountered, we unlink the element
        if cur._val == val:
            pre._next = cur._next
            # Otherwise, we move forward
        else:
            pre = pre._next

        # The current point always moves forward
        cur = cur._next

    # Return the result
    # NOTE: We return `dummy._next` as first node is a throwaway node
    return dummy._next
```


4.3 Reverse Linked List

Optimal Solution:

Time Complexity: $O(m)$ where m is the number of nodes.

Space Complexity: $O(m)$ where m is the number of nodes.

```
from typing import Union

class Node:
    def __init__(self, val: int = 0, next: Node = Union[None, Node]):
        self._val = val
        self._next = next

def reverse(head: Node) -> bool:
    """Reverse a linked list."""

    cur: Node = head
    pre: Node = Union[None, Node]
    while cur:
        # Variable `tmp` is needed for moving forward in the loop
        tmp: Node = cur._next

        # Rearrange pointers
        cur._next: Union[None, Node] = pre
        pre = cur

        # Move forward
        cur = tmp

    return pre
```

5 Problem Dependent

5.1 Balanced Parentheses

Optimal Solution:

Time Complexity: $O(m)$ where m is the length of the string.

Space Complexity: $O(n)$ where n is the number parentheses symbols.

The parentheses in a string are balanced if and only if the following two conditions are met:

1. The number of "(" and ")" are equal
2. Scanning through the string from left to right and counting how many "(" and ")" there are so far, there should never be a time where there are more ")" than "(". We denote the balance of the string as `balance = count("(") - count(")")`

If we only allow for "()" pair of parentheses, then the following will check if the parenthesis are balanced:

```
def is_balanced(string: str) -> bool:
    """Check if a given string has balanced parentheses."""

    balance: int = 0
    for char in string:
        if char == "(":
            balance += 1
        elif char == ")":
            balance -= 1

        if balance < 0:
            return False

    return balance == 0
```

If we allow for more than one pair of parentheses, the following stack-based implementation generalizes well:

```
def is_balanced(string: str) -> bool:
    """Check if a given string has balanced parentheses."""

    stack: list[str] = []
    closing: dict[str, str] = {")": "(", "}": "{", "]": "["}
    opening: set[str] = set(closing.values())
    for char in string:
        if char in opening:
            stack.append(char)
        elif char in closing:
            if not stack or closing[char] != stack.pop():
                return False

    return not stack
```

5.2 Boyer-Moore Majority Vote Algorithm – Majority Element

Optimal Solution:

Time Complexity: $O(m)$ where m is the length of the array.

Space Complexity: $O(1)$.

```
def majority_element(nums: list[int]) -> int:
    """Find the majority element in the array (element that occurs more
       than `m` times where `m` is the length of the array).
    """

    candidate: int = 0
    count: int = 0
    for num in nums:
        # Candidate gets change iff `count == 0`
        candidate = candidate if count else num
        # Count gets incremented if the candidate and the current number
        # are the same and decrement otherwise
        count += 1 if candidate == num else -1

    return candidate
```

5.3 Flood Fill – Number of Islands

Optimal Solution:

Time Complexity: $O(m \times n)$ where m is the number of rows and n is the number of columns.

Space Complexity: $O(m \times n)$ where m is the number of rows and n is the number of columns.

```
def islands(grid: List[List[str]]) -> int:
    """Counts the number of islands of 1s.

    NOTE: Uses the fact that lists are mutable (will not work in purely
    functional languages such as Haskell).
    """

    m: int = len(grid)
    n: int = len(grid[0])

    if m * n == 0:
        return 0

    islands: int = 0
    for i in range(m):
        for j in range(n):
            if grid[i][j] == "1":
                self.fill(grid, i, j)
                islands += 1

    return islands


def flood_fill(grid: list[list[int]], i: int, j: int) -> bool:
    """Implements the Flood Fill algorithm."""

    # Row index out of bounds
    if not (0 <= i <= len(grid) - 1):
        return False

    # Column index out of bounds
    if not (0 <= j <= len(grid[0]) - 1):
        return False

    # If the current symbol is not 1, no need to continue
    if grid[i][j] != "1":
        return False

    # Mark with a sentinel symbol
    grid[i][j] = "$"

    # Recurse in four directions
    flood_fill(grid, i - 1, j)
    flood_fill(grid, i + 1, j)
    flood_fill(grid, i, j - 1)
    flood_fill(grid, i, j + 1)
```

5.4 Kadane's Algorithm – Maximum Contiguous Subarray

Optimal Solution:

Time Complexity: $O(m)$ where m is the length of the array.

Space Complexity: $O(1)$

An implementation of the Kadane's algorithm.

```
def max_subarray_sum(arr: list[float]) -> float:
    """Return the maximum subarray sum."""

    cur: float = 0
    res: float = float("-inf")
    for num in arr:
        cur = max(cur + num, num)
        res = max(res, cur)
    return res
```

This algorithm is a trivial example of dynamic programming.

6 Sorting

6.1 Merge Sort

Optimal Solution:

Time Complexity: $O(m \times \log(m))$ where m is the length of the array.

Space Complexity: $O(m)$ where m is the length of the array.

Merge sort is one of the simplest sorting algorithms that scales very well. It relies on two operations - merge and sort.

```
def merge(arr1: list[int], arr2: list[int]) -> list[int]:  
    """Merge two sorted lists."""  
  
    res: list[int] = []  
  
    i: int = 0  
    j: int = 0  
    while i <= len(arr1) - 1 and j <= len(arr2) - 1:  
        if arr1[i] <= arr2[j]:  
            res.append(arr1[i])  
            i += 1  
        else:  
            res.append(arr2[j])  
            j += 1  
  
    while i <= len(arr1) - 1:  
        res.append(arr1[i])  
        i += 1  
  
    while j <= len(arr2) - 1:  
        res.append(arr2[j])  
        j += 1  
  
    return res
```

We now need to implement the sort function.

```
def sort(arr: list[int]) -> list[int]:  
    """Performs a merge sort."""  
  
    if len(nums) <= 1:  
        return nums  
  
    mid: int = len(arr) // 2  
    left: list[int] = sort(arr[:mid])  
    right: list[int] = sort(arr[mid:])  
  
    return merge(left, right)
```

7 Trie

7.1 Trie (A Prefix Tree)

There are many ways to construct a trie. We will use a hash map based approach. We first create a Node class.

```
class TrieNode:
    def __init__(self) -> None:
        """Initialize the `TrieNode` class."""

        self._children: dict[str, TrieNode] = {}
        self._isendofword: bool = False
```

We can now design the trie data structure. The initializer will only contain a root of the trie.

```
class Trie:
    def __init__(self) -> None:
        """Initialize the `Trie` class."""

        self._root = TrieNode()
```

Now, the first method to implement is the insertion operation. If we cannot insert a word into a trie, we are not going to be able to do much with it. The algorithm is very straightforward. One iterates over all characters in the word to be inserted and checks if the character is in the children of the current node. If it is, follow the path of that node. If not, create a new node at that position and once again, follow that road.

```
def insert(self, word: str) -> None:
    """Initialize the `Trie` class."""

    ptr: Node = self._root
    for char in word:
        if char not in ptr._children:
            ptr._children[char] = TrieNode()
        ptr = ptr._children[char]

    ptr._isendofword = True
```

One of the primary features of the trie is to be able to search for a word. The implementation of this algorithm is shown below.

```
def search(self, word: str) -> bool:
    """Check if a trie contains a given word."""

    ptr: Node = self._root
    for char in word:
        if char not in ptr._children:
            return False
        ptr = ptr._children[char]

    return ptr._isendofword
```

Similarly, searching a prefix is also very important. It looks almost exactly the same as the code for searching a word.

```
def prefix_search(self, word: str) -> bool:
    """Check if a trie contains a given prefix."""

    ptr: Node = self._root
    for char in word:
        if char not in ptr._children:
            return False
        ptr = ptr._children[char]

    return True
```