

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide, consisting of a network of thin, light-blue lines and small circles, resembling a circuit board or a stylized tree structure.

CONTEXT-FREE LANGUAGES

DISCRETE MATHEMATICS AND THEORY 2
MARK FLORYAN

GOALS!

1. Very quick review of the Chomsky Hierarchy (overall picture).
2. Our second model of computation, the pushdown automata!! Let's add memory to that finite state machine!!
3. What languages can this new model of computation now recognize?
Can we find languages it cannot recognize now?

The background is a dark blue gradient. In the corners, there are decorative white line art elements resembling circuit boards or neural network connections. These elements consist of thin lines that branch out and terminate in small circles, creating a symmetrical, abstract pattern in each corner.

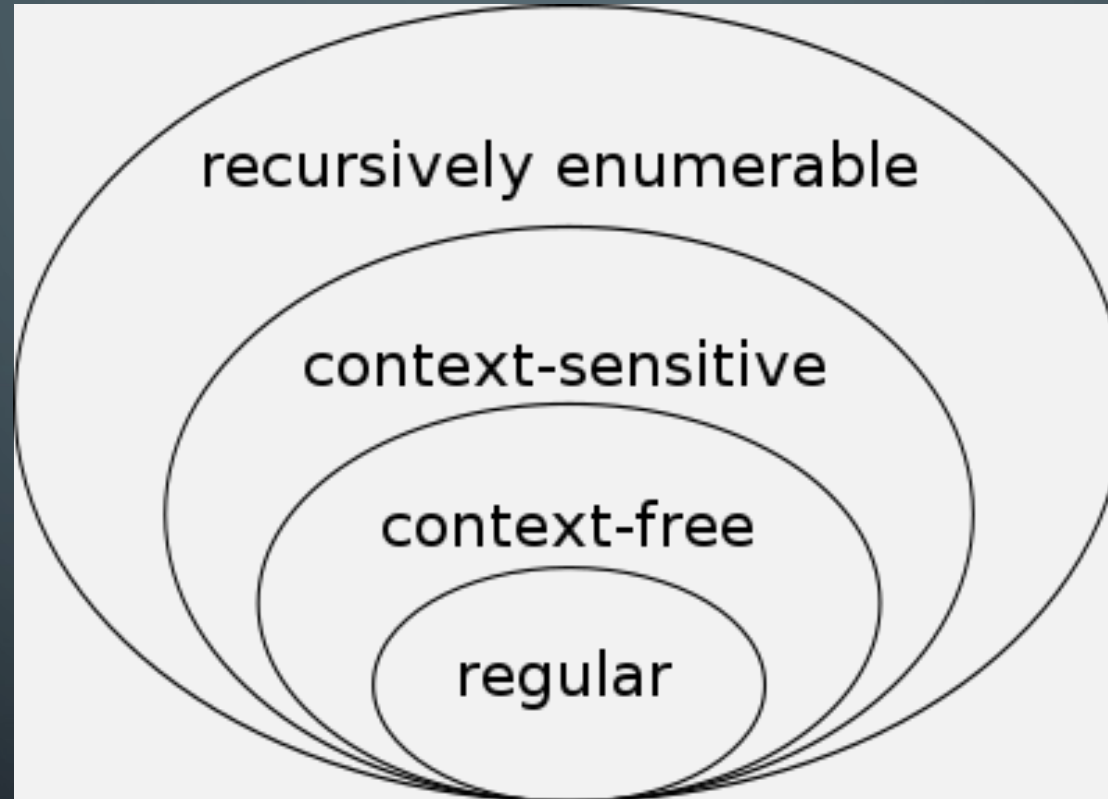
PART 1: REMINDER OF WHERE WE ARE / CHOMSKY HIERARCHY

TYPES OF PROBLEMS

Name	Decision Problem	Function	Language
XOR	Are there an odd number of 1's?		
Majority	Are there more 1s than 0s?		
Thing you want to compute	Does it have have a property?		
Is1	Is the string exactly "1"?		
Is_infinite	Is the length of the string infinite?		

CHOMSKY HIERARCHY

A description of languages and their relationship to one another



Each language has a computational model that recognizes it

In this deck, we will see the context-free languages and the machines that recognize them

OVERVIEW OF THIS DECK

These are all equivalent in their expressive power.

Pushdown Automata

NFA w/ a stack. Can recognize exactly the context-free languages

Context-Free Languages:

A Class of languages that are more expressive than regular languages

Context-Free Grammar:

A “string” description of a context-free language (by definition)

At the end of this deck, we will also see that context-free languages have a pumping lemma that can be used to prove some languages are NOT context-free.

For now, we allow non-determinism freely with this computational model. We will discuss (briefly) the ramifications for this later in the deck.

The image features a dark blue gradient background. In the corners, there are decorative white line art elements resembling circuit boards or neural networks, with lines and small circles connecting them.

PART 2: CONTEXT-FREE GRAMMARS

The background is a dark blue gradient. In the corners, there are decorative white line art elements resembling circuit boards or neural networks, with lines and small circles connecting them.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS A CONTEXT-FREE GRAMMAR

QUICK ASIDE: FINITE AUTOMATA AND REGULAR LANGUAGES

Motivating Question: Computational models are often of interest in the application of programming languages and compilers. Given a program, is it a valid program in the given language that does not contain any syntax errors.

Purple words do not need any "computation" to confirm. Just make sure the word matches something in a set of known valid keywords for types.

```
String x = "hellothere123";  
double y = 23.456;  
int z = 67.8; //syntax error
```

Green words are perfect for a finite automata. Reg. Ex. is where K is the set of reserved keywords.

Regular expressions really shine here. Each type has an automata that recognizes if string is in the valid format.

for String:
for double:
for int:

QUICK ASIDE: FINITE AUTOMATA AND REGULAR LANGUAGES

Motivating Question: Computational models are often of interest in the application of programming languages and compilers. Given a program, is it a valid program in the given language that does not contain any syntax errors.

```
String x = "hellothere123";  
double y = 23.456;  
int z = 67.8; //syntax error
```

Can even handle some entire lines of code with finite automata. declarations of double:

But in reality, code is more complicated than this. Consider:

- *the right side of assignment can be a bigger expression, or maybe result of an if statement.*
- *For loops can have nothing inside or a whole set of assignments.*

EXAMPLE CONTEXT-FREE GRAMMAR

Variables are denoted with capital letters. The first variable here is called the start variable

$V \rightarrow T N = E;$
 $T \rightarrow \text{int} \mid \text{double}$
 $N \rightarrow$
 $E \rightarrow C \mid E + E \mid E - E$
 $C \rightarrow \mid$

Each of these production rules can be applied to substitute for variables of the same name

Terminal characters like these cannot be replaced, but ensure the expression will eventually be completed through enough substitutions

EXAMPLE CONTEXT-FREE GRAMMAR

$V \rightarrow T N = E;$

$T \rightarrow \text{int} \mid \text{double}$

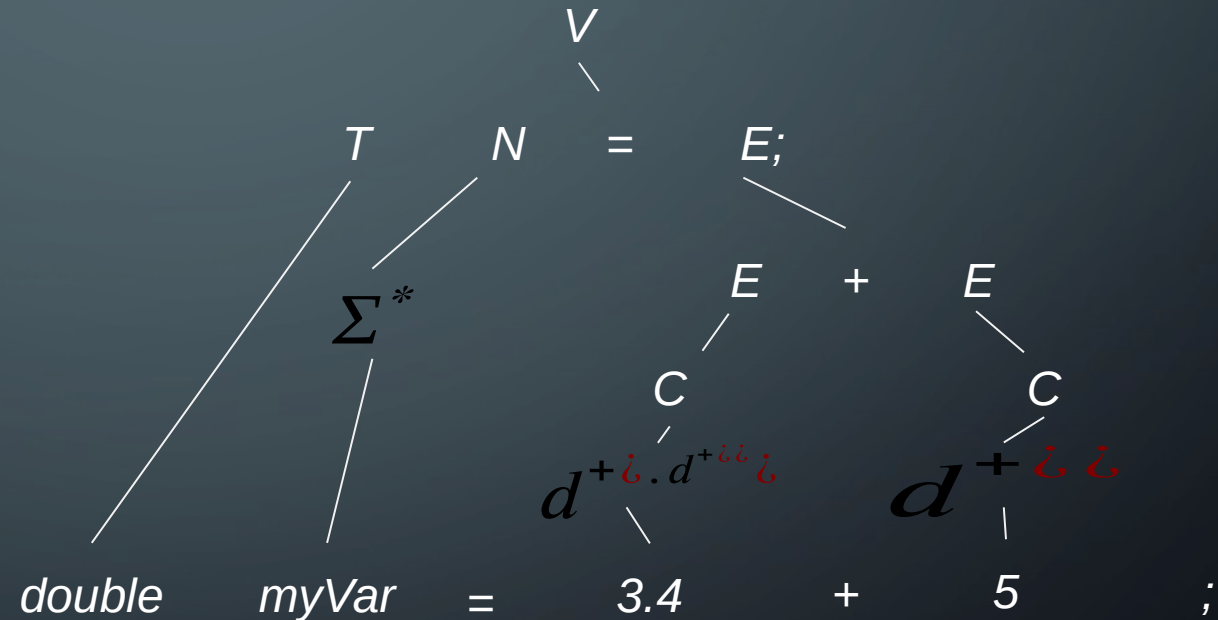
$N \rightarrow$

$E \rightarrow C \mid E + E \mid E - E$

$C \rightarrow \mid$

Example string in this grammar:

Derivation of that string:



ANOTHER EXAMPLE CFG

We learned last time that the language is NOT regular.

Can you generate a context-free grammar that recognizes it?

Hint: You do not need regular expressions as terminal characters here. Your terminal characters will be 0 and 1.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE CFG

We learned last time that the language is NOT regular.

$S \rightarrow B$
 $B \rightarrow 0B1$
 $B \rightarrow$

Example Derivation of :

S
 B
 $0B1$
 $00B11$
 $000B111$
 000111

FORMAL DEFINITION OF A CFG

A context free grammar is:

A 4-tuple where:

1. is a finite set called the **variables**
2. is a finite set, disjoint from , called the **terminals**
3. is a finite set of **rules**, with each rule being a variable and a string of variables and terminals
4. is the start variable

CHALLENGE

Can you generate the following grammar on your own:

The grammar of all well formed arithmetic expressions containing at most two variables (x and y), parentheses, and two operators ($+$ and $$).*

Example string: $(x+y)(x*x)$*

CHOMSKY NORMAL FORM

A context-free grammar is in Chomsky normal form if every rule is of the form

Where a is any terminal and u, v , and w are any variables. u and v may not be the start variable. In addition we allow the rule $S \rightarrow w$ for the start variable

Why is this useful? Well, it is easier to do proofs about grammars if you can assume the grammar is always in a simplified form (fewer cases to handle).

But can any context-free grammar be in Chomsky normal form?

CHOMSKY NORMAL FORM

A context-free grammar is in Chomsky normal form if every rule is of the form

Where a is any terminal and u , v , and w are any variables. u and v may not be the start variable. In addition we allow the rule $S \rightarrow w$ for the start variable

Theorem: Any context-free language is generated by a context-free grammar in Chomsky normal form.

We are NOT going to prove this one. Just trust me (proof is in the book on pg. 107/108 if you are interested).

The background is a dark blue gradient. In the corners, there are decorative white line art elements resembling circuit boards or neural networks. These elements consist of thin lines connecting small circles, some of which are larger than others, creating a sense of connectivity and flow.

PART 2: PUSHDOWN AUTOMATA

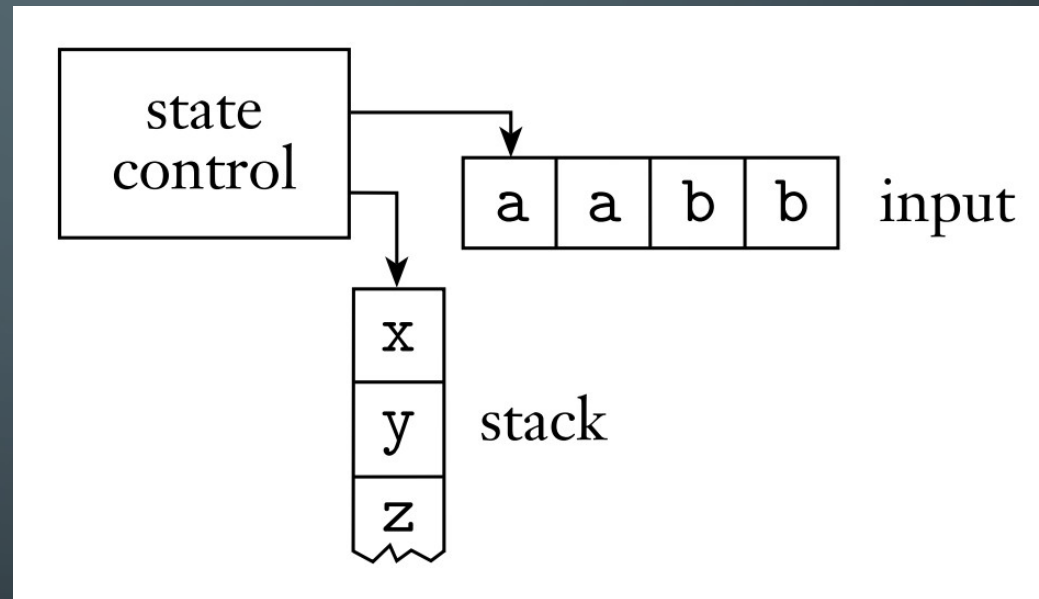
PUSHDOWN AUTOMATA

This state control is just a DFA/NFA just like before!

Input is read in character by character (same as NFA)

Pushdown Automata:

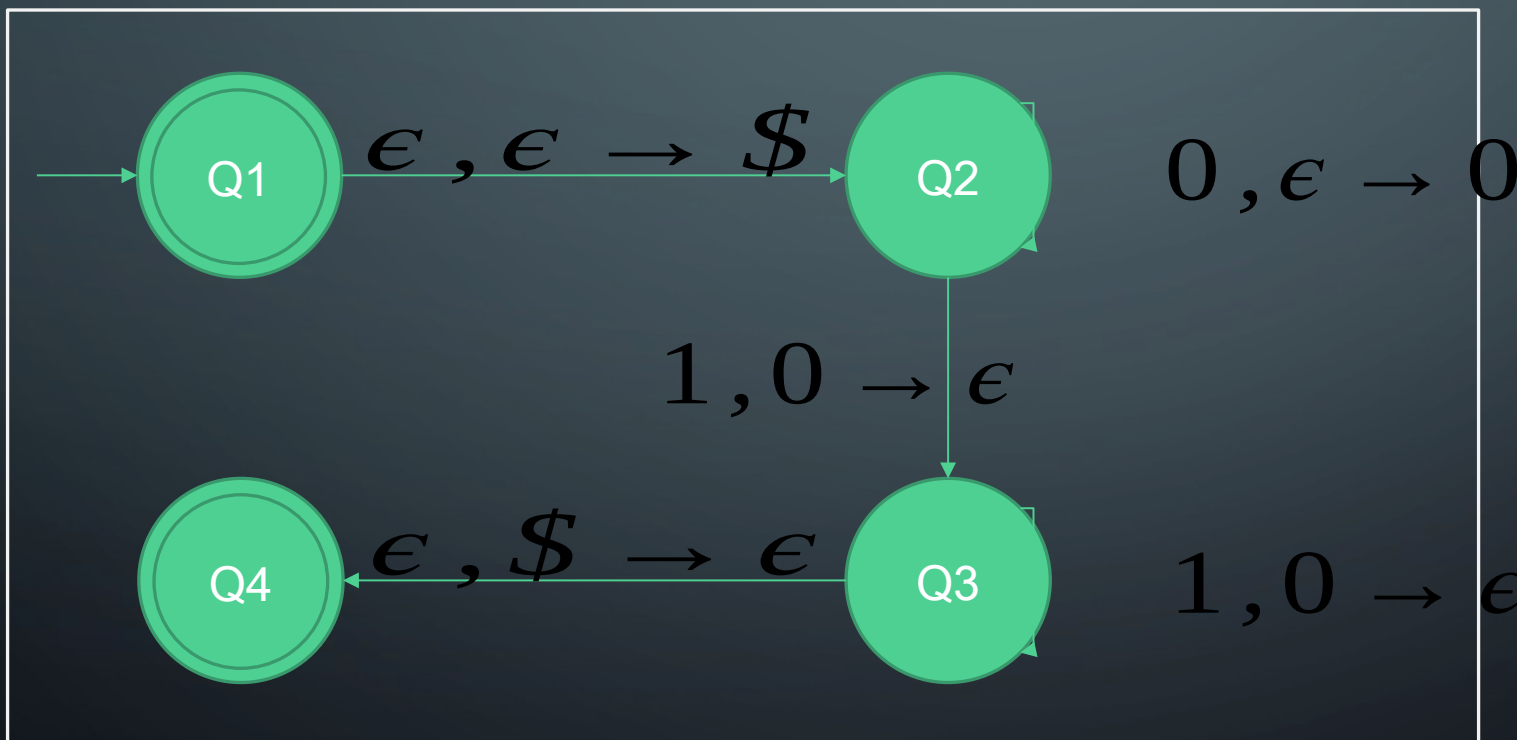
Informally, is a machine that combines an NFA (state control) but adds a stack. The machine can push and pop to the stack



The **stack** provides the machine with memory. The machine can **push** or **pop** from the top of the stack only during any state transition (one push or pop per transition)

PUSHDOWN AUTOMATA

This pushdown automata recognizes the language:

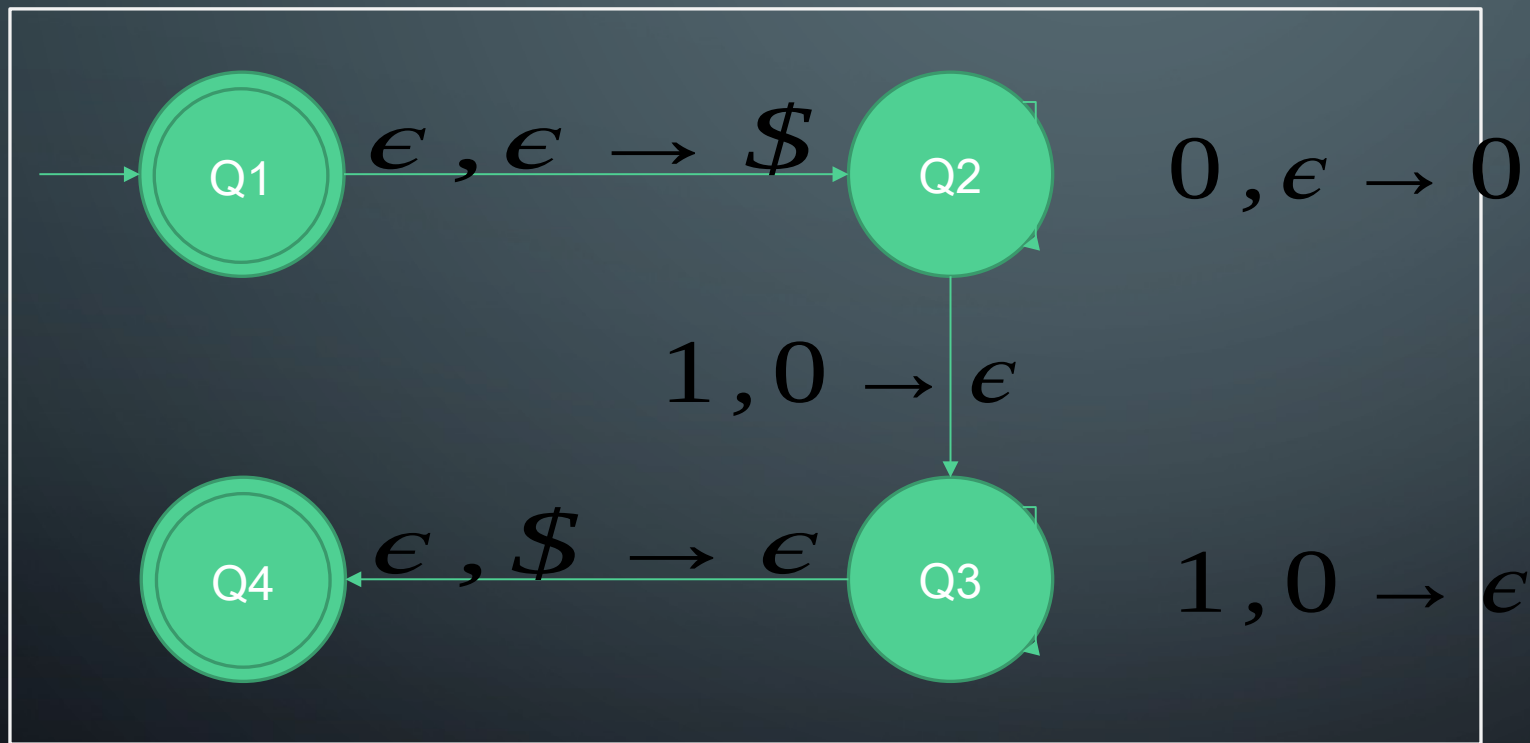


Make sure you know how to read these transitions.

means if you read a 1 from input and a 0 is on top of stack (pop it), and don't push (epsilon) anything

PUSHDOWN AUTOMATA

This pushdown automata recognizes the language:



Let's step through w/ input:

000111

PUSHDOWN AUTOMATA

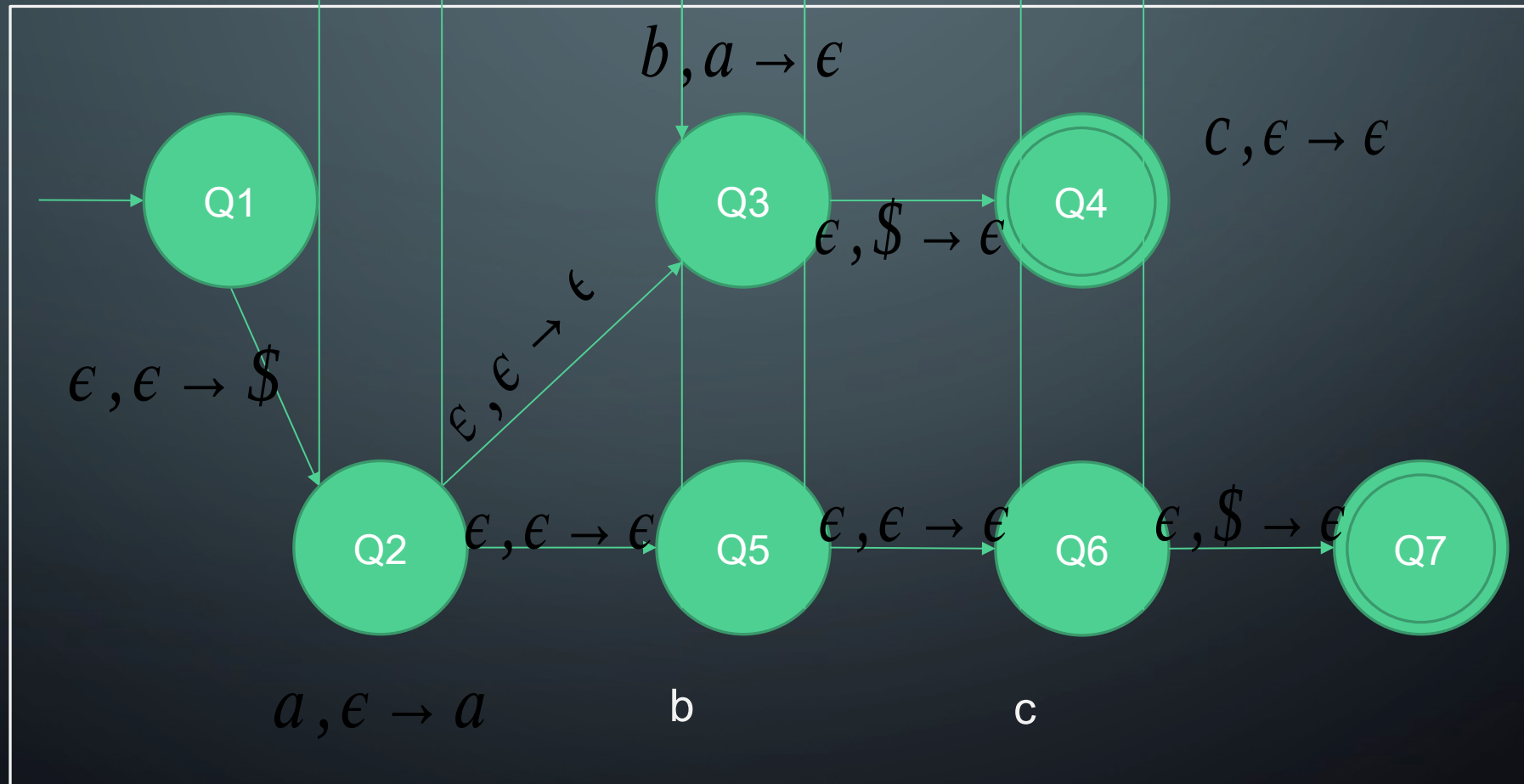
This pushdown automata recognizes the language:

Basic Idea: Push the a's to the stack and then read them off to match them to either the b's or the c's

Do not be afraid to use non-determinism here.
We don't really know whether to match the number of a's with the b's or the c's. Can we try both?

PUSHDOWN AUTOMATA

This pushdown automata recognizes the language:



FORMAL DEFINITION PUSHDOWN AUTOMATA

A **pushdown automata** is:

A 6-tuple where Q , Σ , Γ , and δ are all finite sets and:

1. Q is the set of states
2. Σ is the input alphabet
3. Γ is the stack alphabet
4. δ is the transition function
5. q_0 is the start state
6. F is the set of accept states

TRY IT ON YOUR OWN!

Can you create PD that recognizes:

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EQUIVALENCE WITH CONTEXT-FREE GRAMMARS

YOU KNOW THE DRILL!

Theorem: A language L is context-free if and only if some pushdown automata recognizes it

How to prove:

Direction 1: Assume L is context-free, show how to construct the pushdown automata for it.

Direction 2: Assume we have a pushdown automata, show how to construct the context-free grammar that describes it.

YOU KNOW THE DRILL!

Theorem: A language L is context-free if and only if some pushdown automata recognizes it

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YOU KNOW THE DRILL!

Theorem: A language L is context-free if and only if some pushdown automata recognizes it

Direction 1: Assume L is context-free, show how to construct the pushdown automata for it.

High level idea of proof:

Let L be a context-free grammar, this means it can be described by a set of substitutions of variables / terminals (see formal definition of CFG)

To construct the PDA that recognizes it:

1. Put the start variable on the stack
2. Loop: Pop a variable off the stack, look at rules that can be substituted for, non-deterministically branch off for each one and put new symbol on the stack.
3. If terminal is on the stack, pop it and check. it against the next character of input.

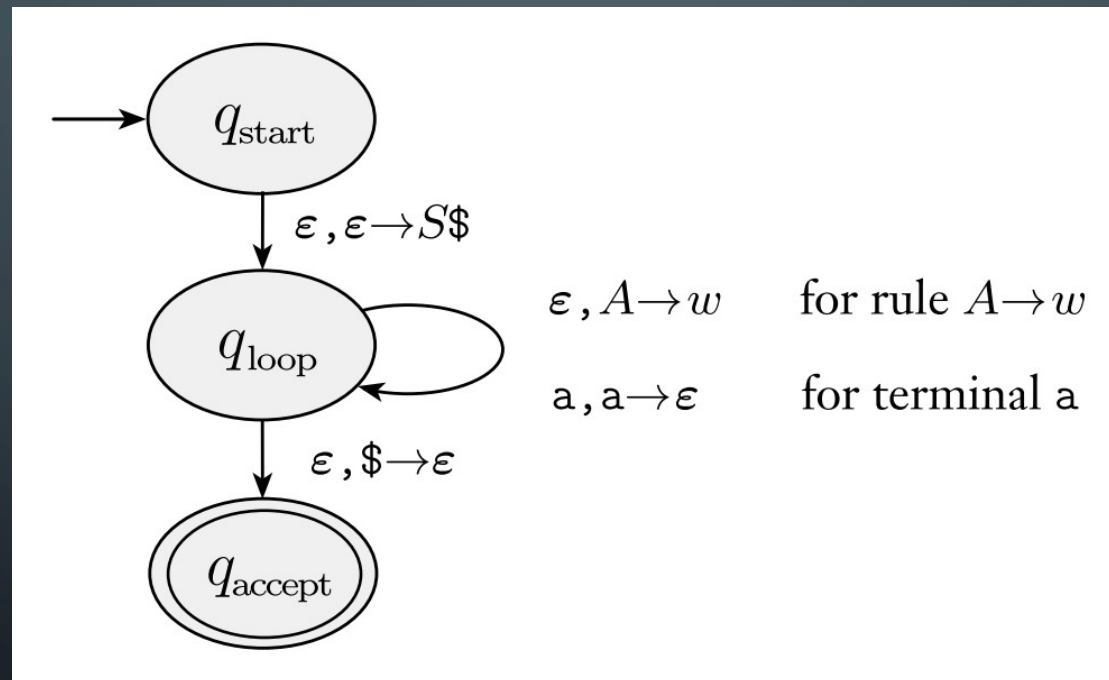
YOU KNOW THE DRILL!

Theorem: A language L is context-free if and only if some pushdown automata recognizes it

Direction 1: Assume L is context-free, show how to construct the pushdown automata for it.

Start by pushing $\$$ onto the stack following by start variable S

This main loop has a non-deterministic condition for every possible rule substitution



if we see a variable A on top of stack (e.g., $)$, pop A off and push the things it can be substituted with onto stack one character at a time

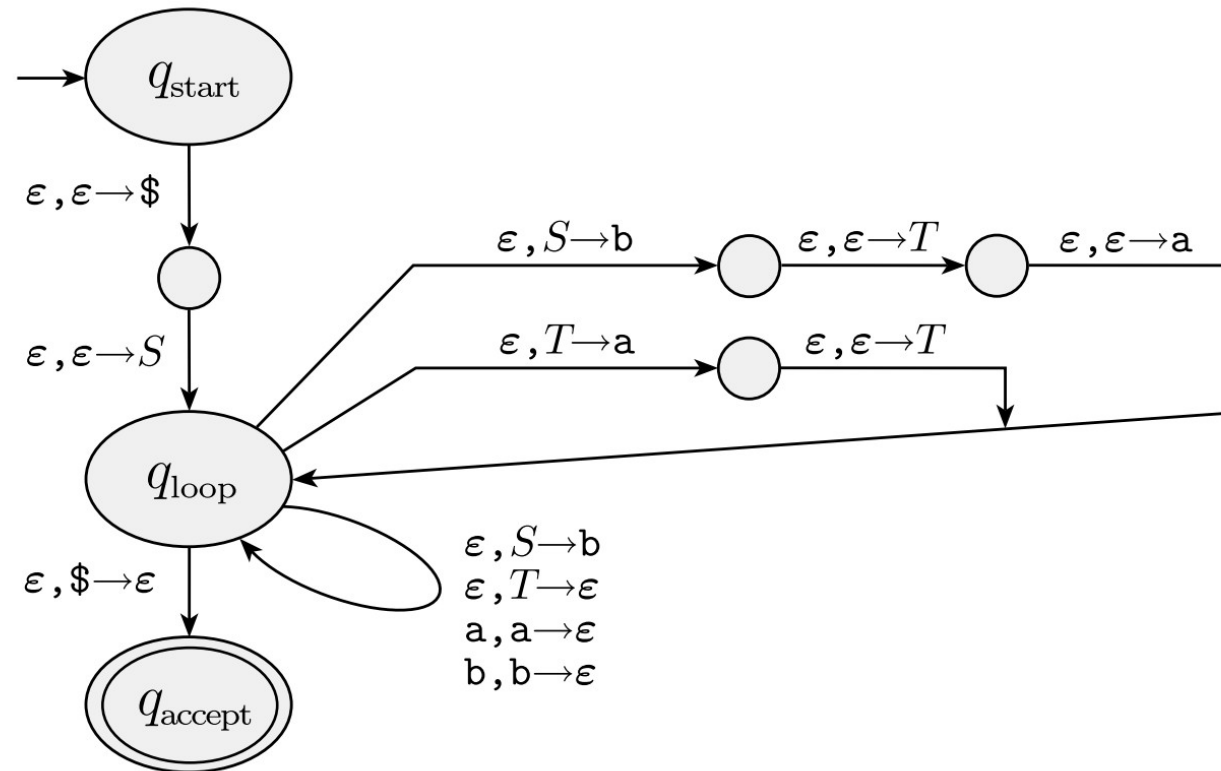
If we see a terminal a on top of stack, pop it off and check it against the next character of input

YOU KNOW THE DRILL!

Theorem: A language L is context-free if and only if some pushdown automata recognizes it

Direction 1: Assume L is context-free, show how to construct the pushdown automata for it.

EXAMPLE:
Consider the
grammar:



YOU KNOW THE DRILL!

Theorem: A language L is context-free if and only if some pushdown automata recognizes it

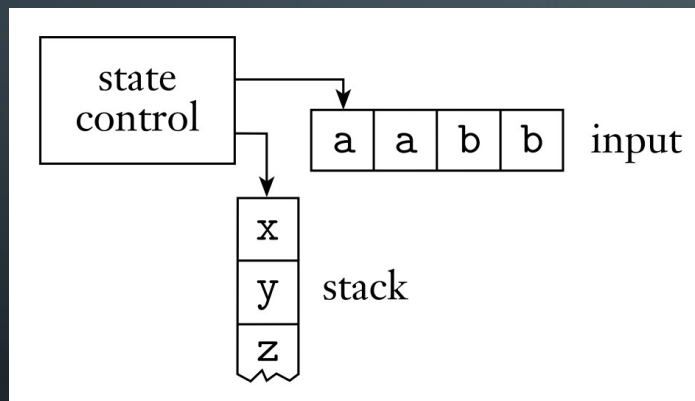
Direction 2: Assume we have a pushdown automata, show how to construct the context-free grammar that describes it.

YOU KNOW THE DRILL!

Theorem: A language L is context-free if and only if some pushdown automata recognizes it

Direction 2: Assume we have a pushdown automata, show how to construct the CFG that describes it.

Start with an arbitrary PDA, called P



Convert into

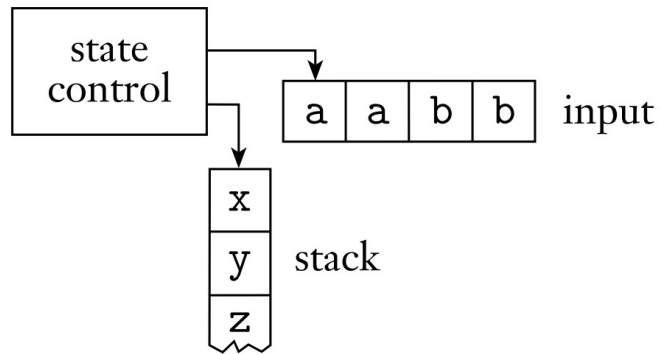
A grammar that is equivalent to P :

YOU KNOW THE DRILL!

Theorem: A language L is context-free if and only if some pushdown automata recognizes it

Direction 2: Assume we have a pushdown automata, show how to construct the CFG that describes it.

Start with an arbitrary PDA, called P



Step 1: Let's simplify P a little bit so we know SOMETHING about its structure.

We make the following changes to P :

1. If P has multiple accept states, change it to have only one
2. If P has elements on the stack before accepting, empty the stack first
3. Every transition either pushes a symbol, or pops a symbol, but not both

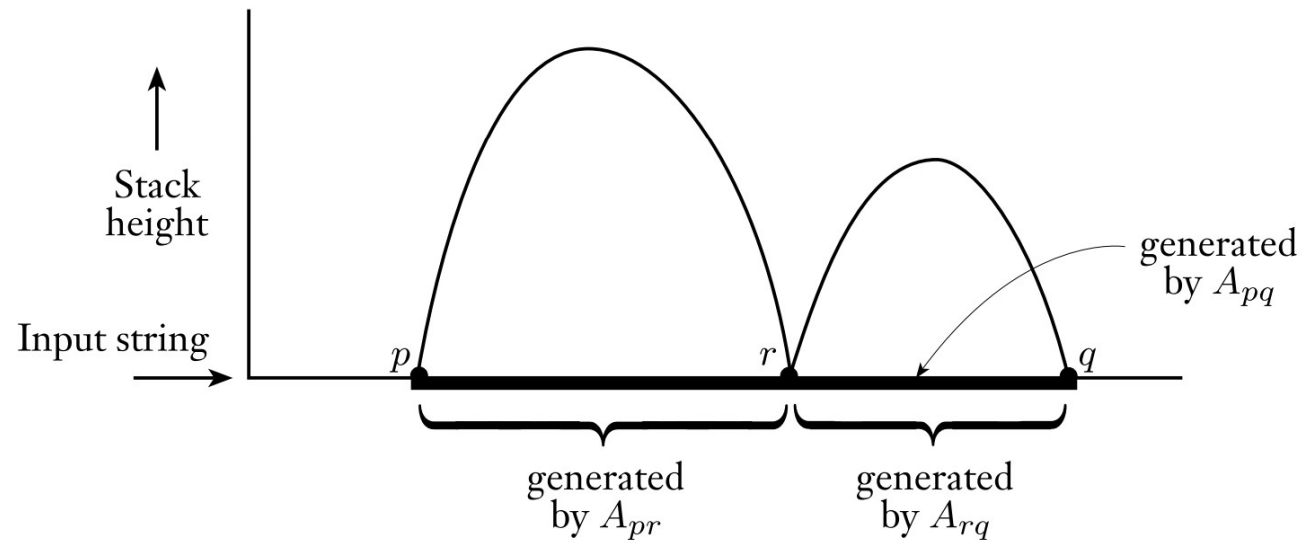
These changes are not too difficult to make.
I will verbally describe how to do all 3 of these.

YOU KNOW THE DRILL!

Theorem: A language L is context-free if and only if some pushdown automata recognizes it

Direction 2: Assume we have a pushdown automata, show how to construct the CFG that describes it.

Overall idea: We need to get from start state (empty stack) to accept state (empty stack)



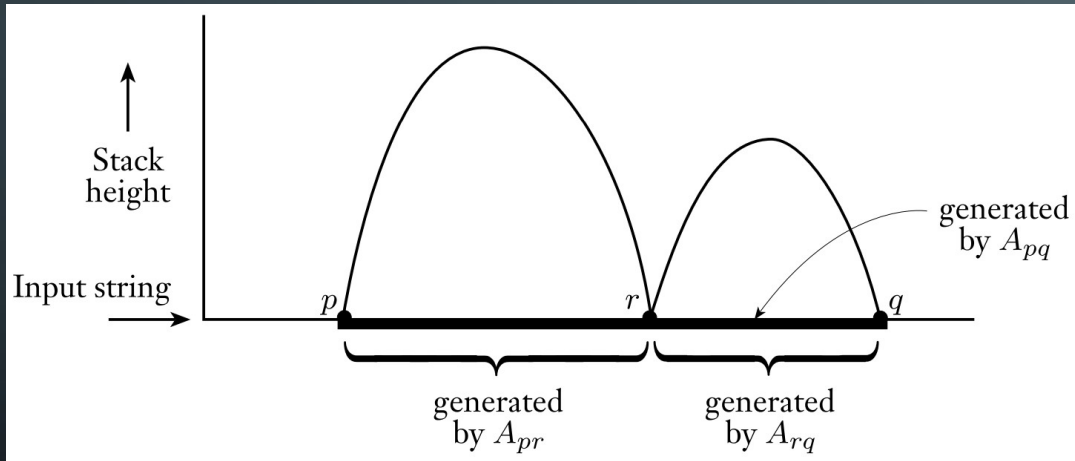
Variable represents moving from state p to state q without changing the state of the stack

Notice that in this case, we move from state p to r (without altering stack) and then again from r to q (without altering stack)

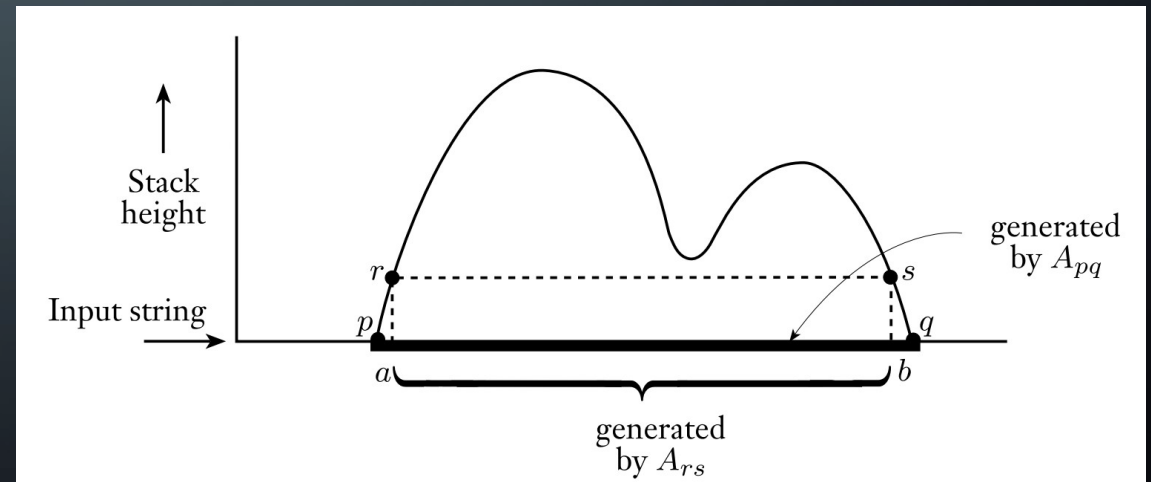
YOU KNOW THE DRILL!

Theorem: A language L is context-free if and only if some pushdown automata recognizes it

Direction 2: Assume we have a pushdown automata, show how to construct the CFG that describes it.



Situation can also look like this. Stack moves up and down but eventually comes back to being empty. The first symbol that is pushed must match the last symbol popped.



YOU KNOW THE DRILL!

Theorem: A language L is context-free if and only if some pushdown automata recognizes it

Direction 2: Assume we have a pushdown automata, show how to construct the CFG that describes it.

Let's start constructing the grammar from the PDA. The variables represent moving from each pair of states p, q by using, but not altering the stack (empty stack to empty stack).

start variable will simply be a dummy variable that represents getting from the start state to the accept state

Given a PDA , construct grammar :

Variables of are

Start variable is

YOU KNOW THE DRILL!

Theorem: A language L is context-free if and only if some pushdown automata recognizes it

Direction 2: Assume we have a pushdown automata, show how to construct the CFG that describes it.

This next rule covers every pair of states the push and pop the same symbol (e.g., first step is to push a symbol t , then a bunch of stuff happens, then eventually we pop off the t).

Given a PDA , construct grammar :

Variables of are

Start variable is

For each , and , if contains and contains , put the rule **into**

YOU KNOW THE DRILL!

Theorem: A language L is context-free if and only if some pushdown automata recognizes it

Direction 2: Assume we have a pushdown automata, show how to construct the CFG that describes it.

Given a PDA , construct grammar :

Variables of are

Start variable is

For each , and , if contains and contains , put the rule into

For each , put the rule in

This rule covers all cases where you empty the stack twice (at least). Once from state p to r and again from state r to q .

YOU KNOW THE DRILL!

Theorem: A language L is context-free if and only if some pushdown automata recognizes it

Direction 2: Assume we have a pushdown automata, show how to construct the CFG that describes it.

Given a PDA P , construct grammar G :

Variables of G are

Start variable is S

For each $p \in Q$, and $a \in \Sigma \cup \{\epsilon\}$, if p contains a and p contains X , put the rule $S \rightarrow aX$ into G

For each $p \in Q$, put the rule $S \rightarrow p$ in G

Finally, for each $p \in Q$, put the rule $S \rightarrow p$ in G

Last rule, base case! Nothing needs to happen when going from a state p to itself.

YOU KNOW THE DRILL!

Theorem: A language L is context-free if and only if some pushdown automata recognizes it

Direction 2: Assume we have a pushdown automata, show how to construct the CFG that describes it.

So, is it the case that if a string X accepts in the original automata P , then this grammar will definition accept it (and similarly for rejection)?

Yes, let's verbally describe why.

Given a PDA , construct grammar :

Variables of are

Start variable is

For each , and , if contains and contains , put the rule into

For each , put the rule in

Finally, for each , put the rule in

WE DID IT!

Theorem: A language L is context-free if and only if some pushdown automata recognizes it

Great! So, pushdown automata and context-free grammars are equivalent in their descriptive power, and they are MORE powerful than regular languages / NFAs

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PART 3: NON-CONTEXT-FREE LANGUAGES

PUMPING LEMMA FOR CFL

The pumping lemma for context-free languages:

If L is a context-free language, then there is a number p (the pumping length) where, if s is any string such that $|s| \geq p$ and $s \in L$, then s may be divided into five pieces u, v, w, x, y satisfying the following:

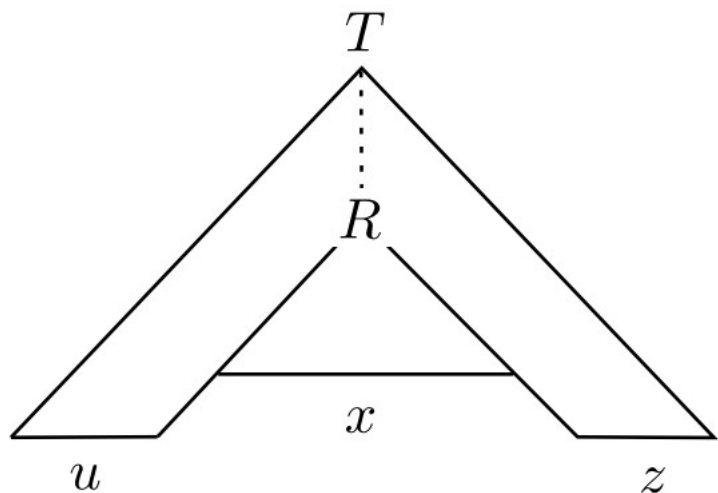
1. for each $i \geq 0$,
- 2.
- 3.

PUMPING LEMMA FOR CFL

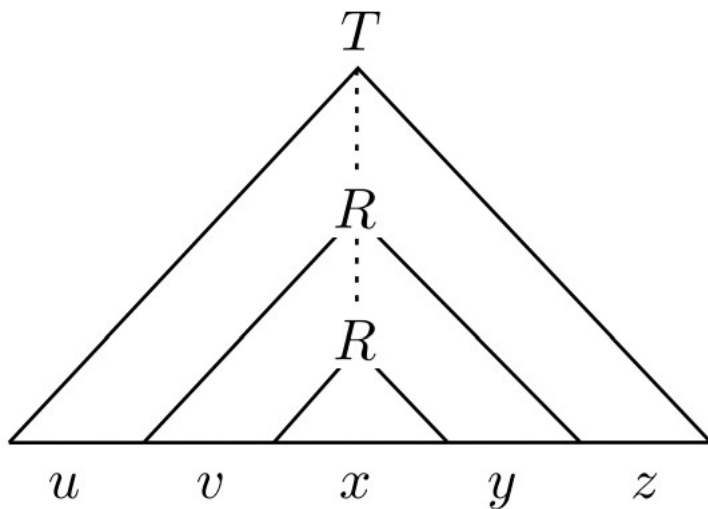
The pumping lemma for context-free languages:

If L is a context-free language, then there is a number n (the pumping length) where, if s is any string such that $|s| \geq n$ and $s \in L$, then s may be divided into five pieces satisfying the following:

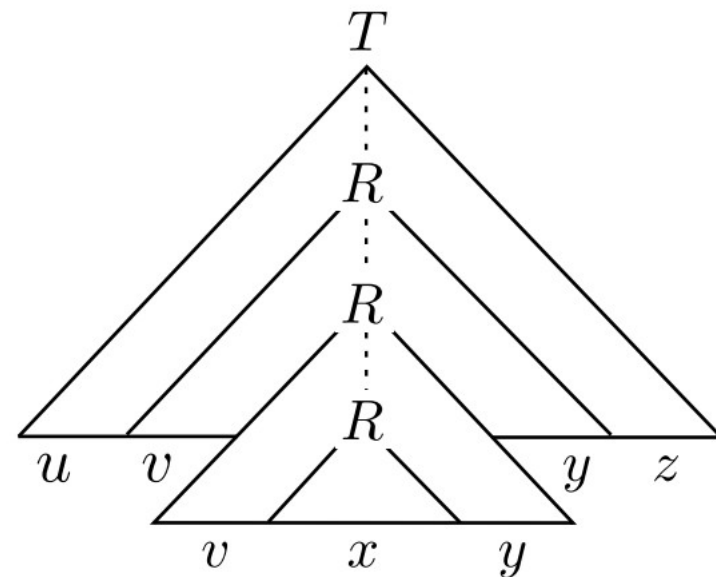
1. for each $i \geq 0$,
2. $uv^iwx^iy^iz \in L$
3. $|v| + |y| > 0$



Pump down to remove v and y



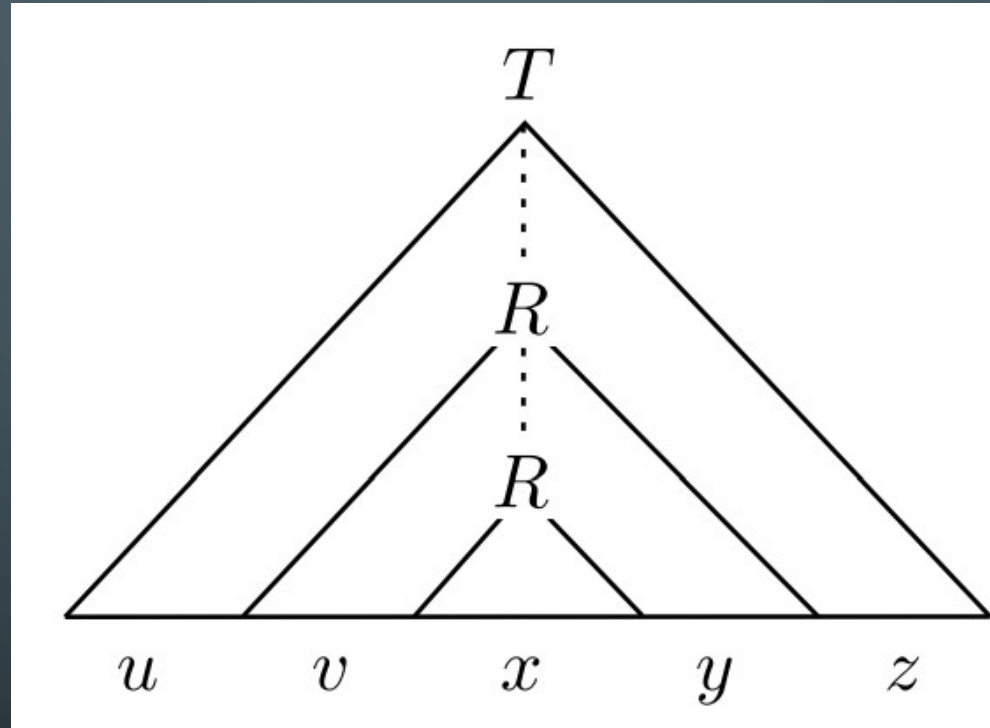
Here, R is a variable that is “re-used”



Pump up to add v and y

PUMPING LEMMA FOR CFL

Regarding the pumping length p



p needs to be set so that the length of $uvxyz$ is long enough to guarantee that some variable R is “re-used”.

How to choose p ? Given the number of variables and the number of characters that can be substituted for each, we can calculate a tree height that guarantees some variable occurs twice (pigeonhole principle).

Condition 3 of the lemma says that the substring vxy is less than or equal to the pumping length p

Then, find a length for $uvxyz$ that guarantees that tree height. Your book shows the exact calculation if you are interested.

EXAMPLE!

Proof: Use the pumping lemma to show that is NOT context-free

EXAMPLE!

Proof: Use the pumping lemma to show that is NOT context-free

Step 1: Pumping lemma states that there is some length string p , such that any string of that length can be pumped.

Step 2: Given p , we choose the string , we then show that this string cannot be pumped.

EXAMPLE!

Proof: Use the pumping lemma to show that is NOT context-free

Step 1: Pumping lemma states that there is some length string p , such that any string of that length can be pumped.

Step 2: Given p , we choose the string , we then show that this string cannot be pumped.

Case 1: divide string such that v and y both contain only one character each.

Contradiction: There are 3 different letters so when pumped, there won't be equal numbers of a , b , and c

Case 2: divide string such that at least one of v and y contain two characters.

Contradiction: When pumped, the letters will be out of order (e.g., $aabb$ becomes $aabbaabb$)

EXAMPLE!

Proof: Use the pumping lemma to show that D is NOT context-free

EXAMPLE!

Proof: Use the pumping lemma to show that D is NOT context-free

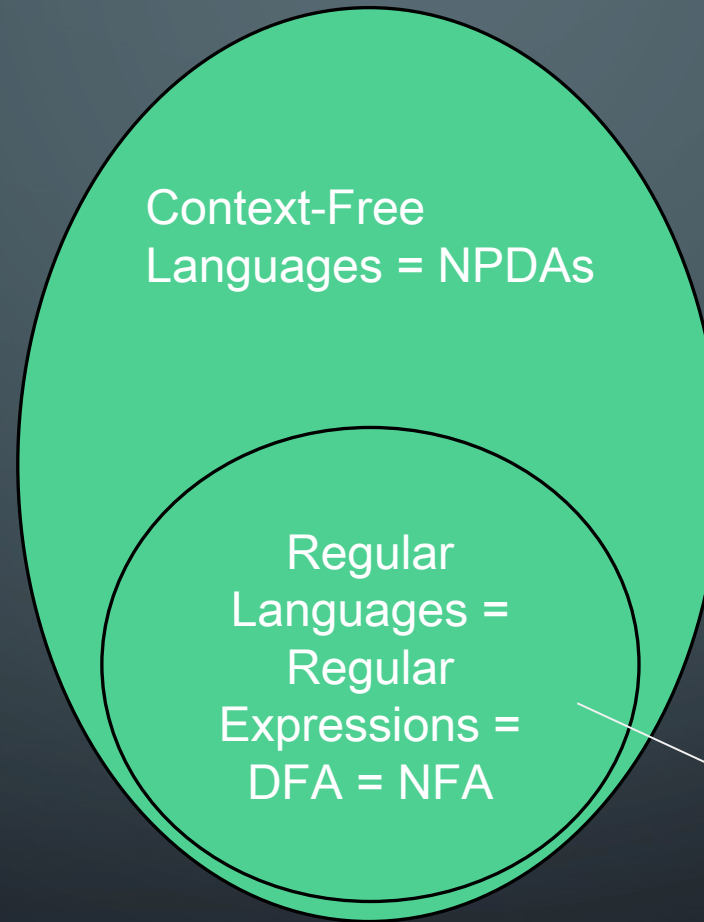
Step 1: Pumping lemma states that there is some length string p , such that any string of that length can be pumped.

Step 2: Given p , we choose the string w , we then show that this string cannot be pumped.

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ABOUT DETERMINISM VERSUS NON- DETERMINISM WITH PUSHDOWN AUTOMATA

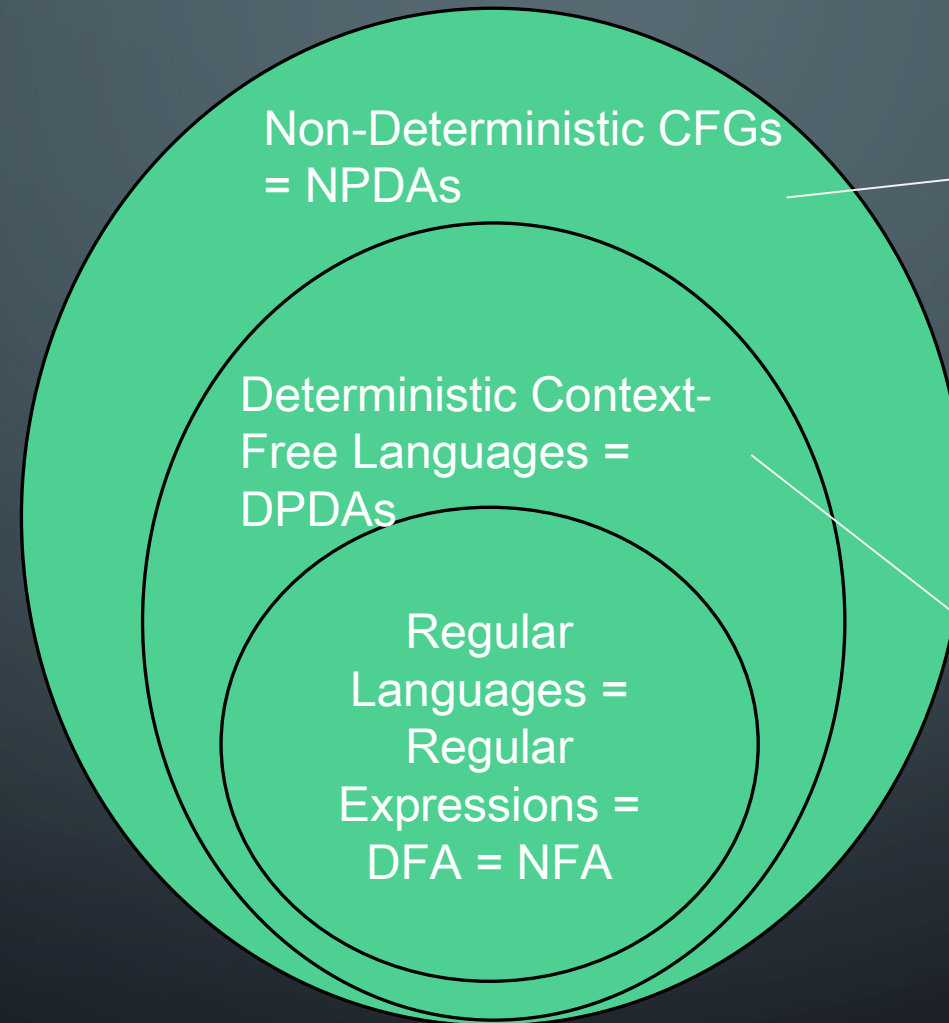
WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT COMPUTATION SO FAR



NPDA is non-deterministic pushdown automata. Remember that everything we've done so far is allowing non-determinism.

With regular languages, determinism and non-determinism models were equivalently descriptive.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT COMPUTATION SO FAR



Non-determinism is a MORE powerful descriptor within context-free languages. There are some languages that determinism cannot recognize (see book for details)

This means that programming language designers need to be careful because non-deterministic machines cannot currently be built. Need to stay in this middle section here

CONCLUSIONS

WHAT YOU LEARNED IN THIS DECK!

These are all equivalent in their expressive power.

Pushdown Automata

NFA w/ a stack. Can recognize exactly the context-free languages

Context-Free Languages:

A Class of languages that are more expressive than regular languages

Context-Free Grammar:

A “string” description of a context-free language (by definition)

Using another pumping lemma, we can find languages that are non-context free. Next we will see the most general computational model: The Turing Machine!