

Topological Sort (Kahn's Algorithm) Pack — Cheat Sheet

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Files:

- 1) can_finish.py — cycle detection for course schedule.
- 2) topo_order.py — produce a valid topological ordering.
- 3) min_semesters.py — layered BFS to count semesters/phases.
- 4) kahn_template.py — reusable scaffold for toposort problems.

Kahn's Algorithm Core:

- Build indegree[] and adjacency list for directed edges $u \rightarrow v$.
- Queue all nodes with indegree 0.
- Pop, record/process node, decrement neighbors' indegree, push new zeros.
- If all nodes are popped, graph is acyclic; otherwise, there is a cycle.

Patterns:

- To detect cycle: check if popped count == n.
- To build order: append popped nodes into a list.
- To count layers (semesters): process queue level-by-level.

Complexity:

- $O(n + m)$ time, $O(n + m)$ space.

Tips:

- Edges direction matters: (u, v) means u precedes v .
- If multiple valid orders exist, queue ordering determines which one.
- For critical path length (longest semesters when each course takes 1), use DP on topo order instead of BFS layering.