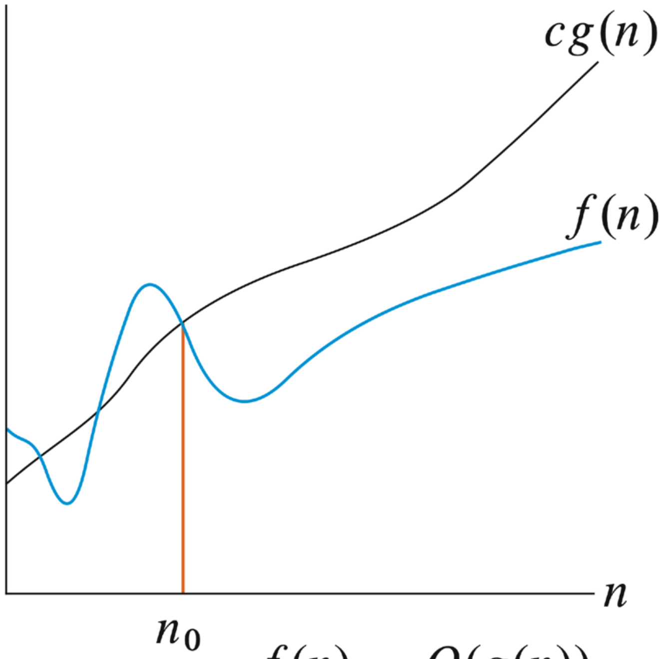
Asymptotic Notations (continued)

Adapted from the CLRS book slides

O-notation

$$O(g(n)) = \{ f(n) : \text{there exist positive constants } c \text{ and } n_0 \text{ such that } 0 \le f(n) \le cg(n) \text{ for all } n \ge n_0 \}.$$



$f(n) = O(g(n))$

$g(n)$ is an ***asymptotic upper bound*** for $f(n)$.

If $f(n) \in O(g(n))$, we write $f(n) = O(g(n))$

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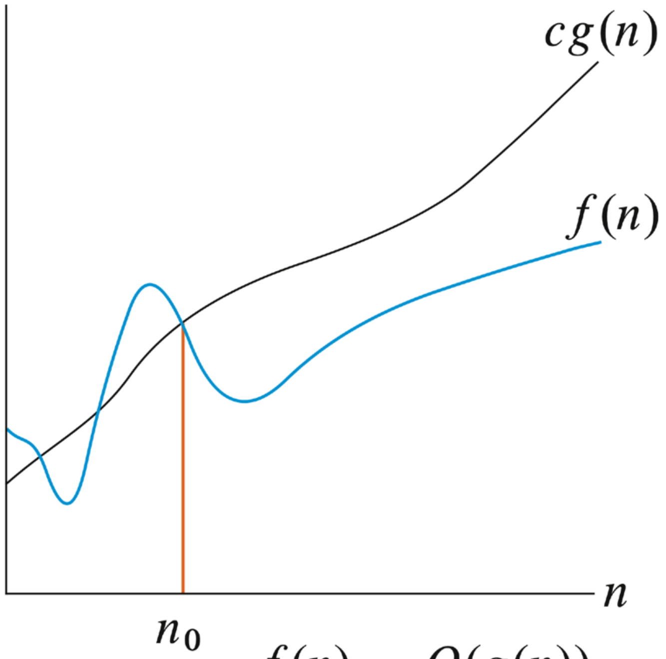

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Example

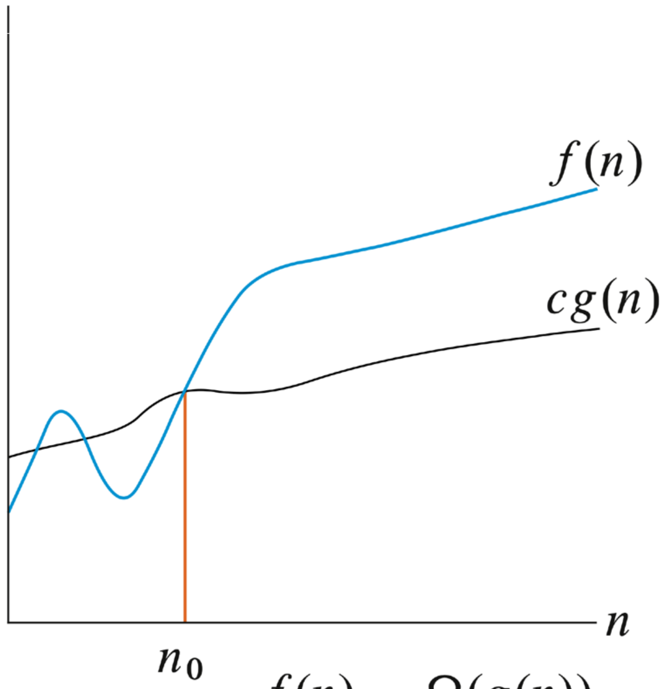
$2n^2 = O(n^3)$, with $c = 1$ and $n_0 = 2$.

Examples of functions in $O(n^2)$:

n^2
$n^2 + n$
$n^2 + 1000n$
$1000n^2 + 1000n$
Also,
n
$n/1000$
$n^{1.99999}$
$n^2/\lg\lg\lg n$

Ω-notation

$$\Omega(g(n)) = \{f(n) : \text{there exist positive constants } c \text{ and } n_0 \text{ such that } 0 \le cg(n) \le f(n) \text{ for all } n \ge n_0\}.$$



$f(n) = \Omega(g(n))$

$g(n)$ is an ***asymptotic lower bound*** for $f(n)$.

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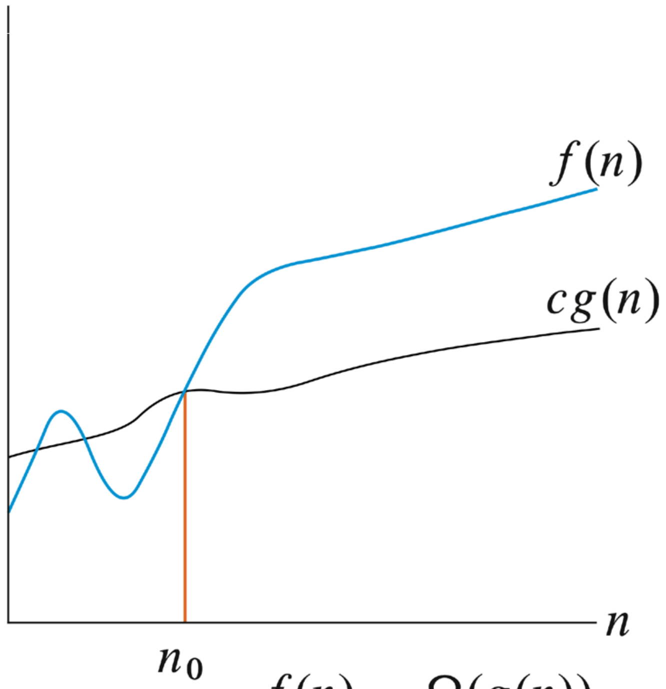
$$\Omega(g(n)) = \{f(n) : \text{there exist positive constants } c \text{ and } n_0 \text{ such that } 0 \le cg(n) \le f(n) \text{ for all } n \ge n_0\} .$$



$f(n) = \Omega(g(n))$

$g(n)$ is an ***asymptotic lower bound*** for $f(n)$.

Example

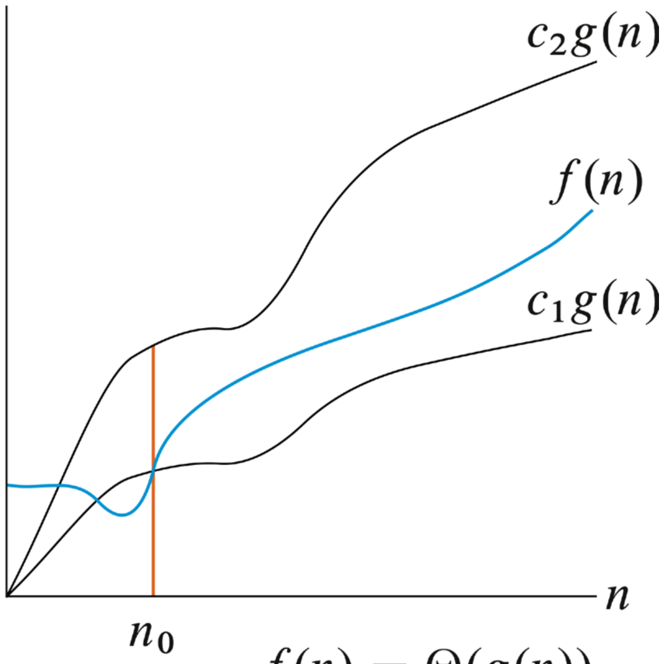
$\sqrt{n} = \Omega(\lg n)$, with $c = 1$ and $n_0 = 16$.

Examples of functions in $\Omega(n^2)$:

n^2
$n^2 + n$
$n^2 - n$
$1000n^2 + 1000n$
$1000n^2 - 1000n$
Also,
n^3
$n^{2.00001}$
$n^2 \lg \lg \lg n$
2^{2^n}

Θ-notation

$$\Theta(g(n)) = \{f(n) : \text{there exist positive constants } c_1, c_2, \text{ and } n_0 \text{ such that } 0 \le c_1 g(n) \le f(n) \le c_2 g(n) \text{ for all } n \ge n_0\}.$$



$f(n) = \Theta(g(n))$

Example

$n^2/2 - 2n = \Theta(n^2)$, with $c_1 = 1/4$, $c_2 = 1/2$, and $n_0 = 8$.

Theorem

$f(n) = \Theta(g(n))$ if and only if $f = O(g(n))$ and $f = \Omega(g(n))$.

Leading constants and low-order terms don't matter.

$g(n)$ is an ***asymptotically tight bound*** for $f(n)$.

ASYMPTOTIC NOTATION AND RUNNING TIMES

Need to be careful to use asymptotic notation correctly when characterizing a running time. Asymptotic notation describes functions, which in turn describe running times. Must be careful to specify ***which*** running time.

For example:

The worst-case running time for insertion sort is $O(n^2)$, $\Omega(n^2)$, and $\Theta(n^2)$; all are correct. Prefer to use $\Theta(n^2)$ here, since it's the most precise.

The best-case running time for insertion sort is $O(n)$, $\Omega(n)$, and $\Theta(n)$; prefer $\Theta(n)$.

ASYMPTOTIC NOTATION AND RUNNING TIMES (continued)

But ***cannot*** say that the running time for insertion sort is $\Theta(n^2)$, with "worst-case" omitted. Omitting the case means making a blanket statement that covers ***all*** cases, and insertion sort does ***not*** run in $\Theta(n^2)$ time in all cases.

Can make the blanket statement that the running time for insertion sort is $O(n^2)$, or that it's $\Omega(n)$, because these asymptotic running times are true for all cases.

For merge sort, its running time is $\Theta(n \lg n)$ in all cases, so it's OK to omit which case.

ASYMPTOTIC NOTATION AND RUNNING TIMES (continued)

Common error: conflating O-notation with Θ-notation by using O-notation to indicate an asymptotically tight bound. O-notation gives only an asymptotic upper bound. Saying "an $O(n \lg n)$-time algorithm runs faster than an $O(n^2)$-time algorithm" is not necessarily true. An algorithm that runs in $\Theta(n)$ time also runs in $O(n^2)$ time. If you really mean an asymptotically tight bound, then use Θ-notation.

Use the simplest and most precise asymptotic notation that applies. Suppose that an algorithm's running time is $3n^2 + 20n$. Best to say that it's $\Theta(n^2)$. Could say that it's $O(n^3)$, but that's less precise. Could say that it's $\Theta(3n^2 + 20n)$ but that obscures the order of growth.

ASMPTOTIC NOTATION IN EQUATIONS

When on right-hand side:

$O(n^2)$ stands for some anonymous function in the set $O(n^2)$.

$2n^2 + 3n + 1 = 2n^2 + \Theta(n)$ means $2n^2 + 3n + 1 = 2n^2 + f(n)$ *for some* $f(n) \in \Theta(n)$. In particular, $f(n) = 3n + 1$.

When on left-hand side:

No matter how the anonymous functions are chosen on the left-hand side, there is a way to choose the anonymous functions on the right-hand side to make the equation valid.

Interpret $2n^2 + \Theta(n) = \Theta(n^2)$ as meaning *for all* functions $f(n) \in \Theta(n)$, there exists a function $g(n) \in \Theta(n^2)$ such that $2n^2 + f(n) = g(n)$.

ASMPTOTIC NOTATION IN EQUATIONS (continued)

Can chain together:

$$\begin{aligned} 2n^2 + 3n + 1 &= 2n^2 + \Theta(n) \\ &= \Theta(n^2) \ . \end{aligned}$$

Interpretation:

- First equation: There exists $f(n) \in \Theta(n)$ such that $2n^2 + 3n + 1 = 2n^2 + f(n)$.
- Second equation: For all $g(n) \in \Theta(n)$ (such as the $f(n)$ used to make the first equation hold), there exists $h(n) \in \Theta(n^2)$ such that $2n^2 + g(n) = h(n)$.

SUBTLE POINT: ASYMPTOTIC NOTATION IN RECURRENCES

Often abuse asymptotic notation when writing recurrences: $T(n) = O(1)$ for $n < 3$. Strictly speaking, this statement is meaningless. Definition of O-notation says that $T(n)$ is bounded above by a constant $c > 0$ for $n \geq n_0$, for some $n_0 > 0$. The value of $T(n)$ for $n < n_0$ might not be bounded. So when we say $T(n) = O(1)$ for $n < 3$, cannot determine any constraint on $T(n)$ when $n < 3$ because could have $n_0 > 3$.

What we really mean is that there exists a constant $c > 0$ such that $T(n) \leq c$ for $n < 3$. This convention allows us to avoid naming the bounding constant so that we can focus on the more important part of the recurrence.

o-notation

$$o(g(n)) = \{f(n) : \text{ for all constants } c > 0, \text{ there exists a constant } n_0 > 0 \text{ such that } 0 \le f(n) < cg(n) \text{ for all } n \ge n_0\} .$$

Another view, probably easier to use: $\lim_{n \to \infty} \frac{f(n)}{g(n)} = 0.$

$n^{1.9999} = o(n^2)$
$n^2 / \lg n = o(n^2)$
$n^2 \ne o(n^2)$ (just like $2 \nless 2$)
$n^2/1000 \ne o(n^2)$

ω-notation

$$\omega(g(n)) = \{ f(n) : \text{for all constants } c > 0, \text{ there exists a constant } n_0 > 0 \text{ such that } 0 \le c g(n) < f(n) \text{ for all } n \ge n_0 \} .$$

Another view, again, probably easier to use: $\lim_{n \to \infty} \frac{f(n)}{g(n)} = \infty.$

$n^{2.0001} = \omega(n^2)$
$n^2 \lg n = \omega(n^2)$
$n^2 \ne \omega(n^2)$

COMPARISONS OF FUNCTIONS

Transitivity: $f(n) = \Theta(g(n))$ and $g(n) = \Theta(h(n)) \Rightarrow f(n) = \Theta(h(n))$.
Same for O, Ω, o, and ω.

Reflexivity: $f(n) = \Theta(f(n))$.
Same for O and Ω.

Symmetry: $f(n) = \Theta(g(n))$ if and only if $g(n) = \Theta(f(n))$.

Transpose symmetry: $f(n) = O(g(n))$ if and only if $g(n) = \Omega(f(n))$.
$f(n) = o(g(n))$ if and only if $g(n) = \omega(f(n))$.

COMPARISONS OF FUNCTIONS (continued)

Comparisons:

- $f(n)$ is ***asymptotically smaller*** than $g(n)$ if $f(n) = o(g(n))$.
- $f(n)$ is ***asymptotically larger*** than $g(n)$ if $f(n) = \omega(g(n))$.

No trichotomy. Although intuitively, we can liken O to $\leq$, Ω to $\geq$, etc., unlike real numbers, where $a < b$, $a = b$, or $a > b$, we might not be able to compare functions.

Example: $n^{1+\sin n}$ and n, since $1 + \sin n$ oscillates between 0 and 2.

LOGARITHMS

Notations:

$$\begin{aligned}
\lg n &= \log_2 n && \text{(binary logarithm)} \; , \\
\ln n &= \log_e n && \text{(natural logarithm)} \; , \\
\lg^k n &= (\lg n)^k && \text{(exponentiation)} \; , \\
\lg \lg n &= \lg(\lg n) && \text{(composition)} \; .
\end{aligned}$$

Logarithm functions apply only to the next term in the formula, so that $\lg n + k$ means $(\lg n) + k$, and *not* $\lg(n + k)$.

In the expression $\log_b a$:

- Hold b constant $\Rightarrow$ the expression is strictly increasing as a increases.
- Hold a constant $\Rightarrow$ the expression is strictly decreasing as b increases.

LOGARITHMS (continued)

$$
\begin{aligned}
a &= b^{\log_b a} , \\
\log_c(ab) &= \log_c a + \log_c b , \\
\log_b a^n &= n \log_b a , \\
\log_b a &= \frac{\log_c a}{\log_c b} , \\
\log_b(1/a) &= -\log_b a , \\
\log_b a &= \frac{1}{\log_a b} , \\
a^{\log_b c} &= c^{\log_b a} .
\end{aligned}
$$