DATA STRUCTURES

Data Structures are the programmatic way of storing data so that data can be used efficiently. Almost every enterprise application uses various types of data structures in one or the other way.

Following terms are the foundation terms of a data structure.

* **Interface** − each data structure has an interface. Interface represents the set of operations that a data structure supports. An interface only provides the list of supported operations, type of parameters they can accept and return type of these operations.
* **Implementation** − Implementation provides the internal representation of a data structure. Implementation also provides the definition of the algorithms used in the operations of the data structure.

Characteristics of a Data Structure

* **Correctness** − Data structure implementation should implement its interface correctly.
* **Time Complexity** − Running time or the execution time of operations of data structure must be as small as possible.
* **Space Complexity** − Memory usage of a data structure operation should be as little as possible.

## Need for Data Structure

* **Data Search** − Consider an inventory of 1 million(106) items of a store. If the application is to search an item, it has to search an item in 1 million(106) items every time slowing down the search. As data grows, search will become slower.
* **Processor speed** − Processor speed although being very high, falls limited if the data grows to billion records.
* **Multiple requests** − As thousands of users can search data simultaneously on a web server, even the fast server fails while searching the data.

To solve the above-mentioned problems, data structures come to rescue. Data can be organized in a data structure in such a way that all items may not be required to be searched, and the required data can be searched almost instantly.

## Characteristics of an Algorithm

Not all procedures can be called an algorithm. An algorithm should have the following characteristics −

* **Unambiguous** − Algorithm should be clear and unambiguous. Each of its steps (or phases), and their inputs/outputs should be clear and must lead to only one meaning.
* **Input** − An algorithm should have 0 or more well-defined inputs.
* **Output** − An algorithm should have 1 or more well-defined outputs, and should match the desired output.
* **Finiteness** − Algorithms must terminate after a finite number of steps.
* **Feasibility** − Should be feasible with the available resources.
* **Independent** − An algorithm should have step-by-step directions, which should be independent of any programming code.