**Depth-First Search (DFS)**

Depth-first search (DFS) is an algorithm for traversing or searching tree or graph data structures. One starts at the root and explores as far as possible along each branch before backtracking.

# Output of a Depth-First Search

## DFS ordering

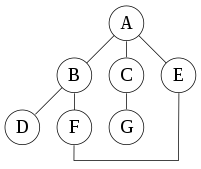
## Vertex orderings

A **preordering** is a list of the vertices in the order that they were first visited by the depth-first search algorithm.

A **postordering** is a list of the vertices in the order that they were last visited by the algorithm. A postordering of an expression tree is the expression in reverse Polish notation.

A **reverse postordering** is the reverse of a postordering, i.e. a list of the vertices in the opposite order of their last visit. Reverse postordering is not the same as preordering.

# Example

A depth-first search starting at A, will visit the nodes in the following order: A, B, D, F, E, C, G.

# Pseudocode

Input: A graph G and a vertex v of G

Output: All vertices reachable from v labeled as discovered

## Recursive implementation of DFS

procedure DFS(G,v):

label v as discovered

for all edges from v to w in G.adjacentEdges(v)

do

if vertex w is not labeled as discovered then

recursively call DFS(G,w)

The order in which the vertices are discovered by this algorithm is called the lexicographic order.

## Iterative implementation of DFS

procedure DFS-iterative(G,v):

let S be a stack

S.push(v)

while S is not empty

v = S.pop()

if v is not labeled as discovered:

label v as discovered

for all edges from v to w in G.adjacentEdges(v)

do

S.push(w)

Worst-case space complexity O(|E|)

These two variations of DFS visit the neighbours of each vertex in the opposite order from each other.

The first neighbour of v visited by the recursive variation is the first one in the list of adjacent edges, while in the iterative variation the first visited neighbour is the last one in the list of adjacent edges.

The recursive implementation will visit the nodes from the example graph in the following order: A, B, D, F, E, C, G.

The non-recursive implementation will visit the nodes as: A, E, F, B, D, C, G.

The non-recursive implementation is similar to breadth-first search but differs from it in two ways:

* it uses a stack instead of a queue, and
* it delays checking whether a vertex has been discovered until the vertex is popped from the stack rather than making this check before adding the vertex.

# Applications

Algorithms that use depth-first search as a building block include:

1. For an unweighted graph, DFS traversal of the graph produces the minimum spanning tree and all pair shortest path tree
2. Detecting cycle in a graph: A graph has cycle if and only if we see a back edge during DFS. So we can run DFS for the graph and check for back edges
3. Test if a graph is bipartite: We can augment either BFS or DFS when we first discover a new vertex, color it opposited its parents, and for each other edge, check it doesn’t link two vertices of the same color. The first vertex in any connected component can be red or black
4. Finding Strongly Connected Components of a graph: A directed graph is called strongly connected if there is a path from each vertex in the graph to every other vertex
5. Finding connected components
6. Topological sorting
7. Finding 2-(edge or vertex)-connected components
8. Finding 3-(edge or vertex)-connected components
9. Finding the bridges of a graph
10. Generating words in order to plot the Limit Set of a Group
11. Finding strongly connected components
12. Planarity testing
13. Solving puzzles with only one solution, such as mazes. (DFS can be adapted to find all solutions to a maze by only including nodes on the current path in the visited set.
14. Maze generation may use a randomized depth-first search
15. Finding bi-connectivity in graphs

# Complexity

In theoretical computer science, DFS is typically used to traverse an entire graph, and takes time Θ(|V| + |E|), linear in the size of the graph.

In these applications it also uses space O(|V|) in the worst case to store the stack of vertices on the current search path as well as the set of already-visited vertices.

# Implementation

## Recursive implementation

## Iterative Implementation

# END