

# k largest(or smallest) elements in an array | added Min Heap method

**Question:** Write an efficient program for printing k largest elements in an array. Elements in array can be in any order.

For example, if given array is [1, 23, 12, 9, 30, 2, 50] and you are asked for the largest 3 elements i.e.,  $k = 3$  then your program should print 50, 30 and 23.

## Method 1 (Use Bubble k times)

Thanks to Shailendra for suggesting this approach.

- 1) Modify **Bubble Sort** to run the outer loop at most k times.
- 2) Print the last k elements of the array obtained in step 1.

Time Complexity:  $O(nk)$

Like Bubble sort, other sorting algorithms like **Selection Sort** can also be modified to get the k largest elements.

## Method 2 (Use temporary array)

K largest elements from  $arr[0..n-1]$

- 1) Store the first k elements in a temporary array  $temp[0..k-1]$ .
- 2) Find the smallest element in  $temp[]$ , let the smallest element be *min*.
- 3) For each element  $x$  in  $arr[k]$  to  $arr[n-1]$   
If  $x$  is greater than the min then remove *min* from  $temp[]$  and insert  $x$ .
- 4) Print final k elements of  $temp[]$

Time Complexity:  $O((n-k)*k)$ . If we want the output sorted then  $O((n-k)*k + k\log k)$

Thanks to nesamani1822 for suggesting this method.

## Method 3(Use Sorting)

- 1) Sort the elements in descending order in  $O(n\log n)$
- 2) Print the first k numbers of the sorted array  $O(k)$ .

Time complexity:  $O(n\log n)$

## Method 4 (Use Max Heap)

- 1) Build a Max Heap tree in  $O(n)$
- 2) Use **Extract Max** k times to get k maximum elements from the Max Heap  $O(k\log n)$

Time complexity:  $O(n + k\log n)$

## Method 5(Use Order Statistics)

- 1) Use order statistic algorithm to find the kth largest element. Please [see the topic selection in worst-case linear time](#)  $O(n)$
- 2) Use **QuickSort** Partition algorithm to partition around the kth largest number  $O(n)$ .
- 3) Sort the k-1 elements (elements greater than the kth largest element)  $O(k\log k)$ . This step is needed only if sorted output is required.

Time complexity:  $O(n)$  if we don't need the sorted output, otherwise  $O(n+k\log k)$

Thanks to [Shilpi](#) for suggesting the first two approaches.

## Method 6 (Use Min Heap)

This method is mainly an optimization of method 1. Instead of using  $temp[]$  array, use Min Heap.

Thanks to [geek4u](#) for suggesting this method.

- 1) Build a Min Heap MH of the first k elements ( $arr[0]$  to  $arr[k-1]$ ) of the given array.  $O(k)$
- 2) For each element, after the kth element ( $arr[k]$  to  $arr[n-1]$ ), compare it with root of MH.  
.....a) If the element is greater than the root then make it root and call **heapify** for MH  
.....b) Else ignore it.  
// The step 2 is  $O((n-k)*\log k)$

- 3) Finally, MH has k largest elements and root of the MH is the kth largest element.

Time Complexity:  $O(k + (n-k)\log k)$  without sorted output. If sorted output is needed then  $O(k + (n-k)\log k + k\log k)$

All of the above methods can also be used to find the kth largest (or smallest) element.

Please write comments if you find any of the above explanations/algorithms incorrect, or find better ways to solve the same problem.

## References:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selection\\_algorithm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selection_algorithm)

Asked by [geek4u](#)