

# INFORMATION

[BACK](#)

“Information is that which allows you to make a  
correct prediction with accuracy better than chance.”

Adami, Christoph. “What Is Information?” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences*, vol. 374, no. 2063, Mar. 2016, p. 20150230, <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsta.2015.0230>.

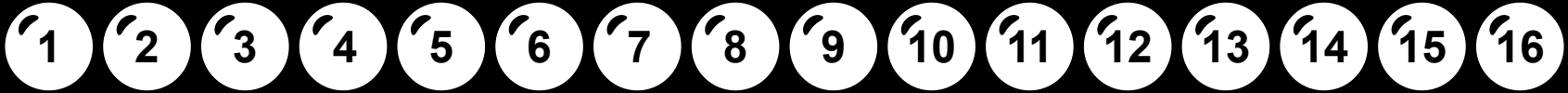
“Information is that which allows you to make a  
correct prediction with accuracy better than chance.”

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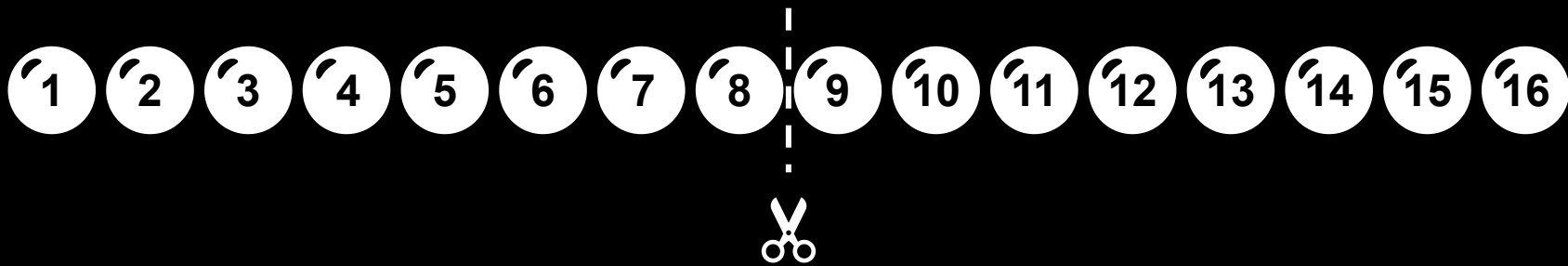
defining and measuring information

guess the number am I thinking of!

what is the most efficient approach?



is it > 8?

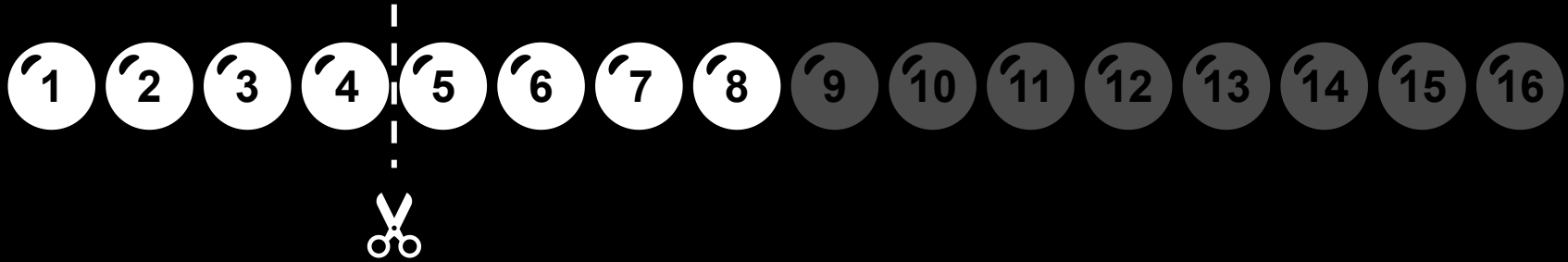


is it > 8? ✗



is it > 8? ✖

is it > 4?





is it > 8? ✗

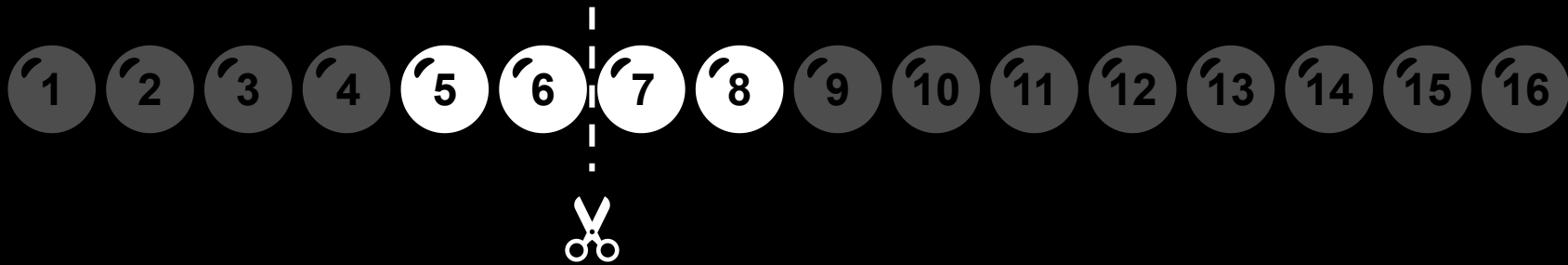
is it > 4? ✓



is it > 8? ✗

is it > 4? ✓

is it > 6?



is it > 8? ✗

is it > 4? ✓

is it > 6? ✓

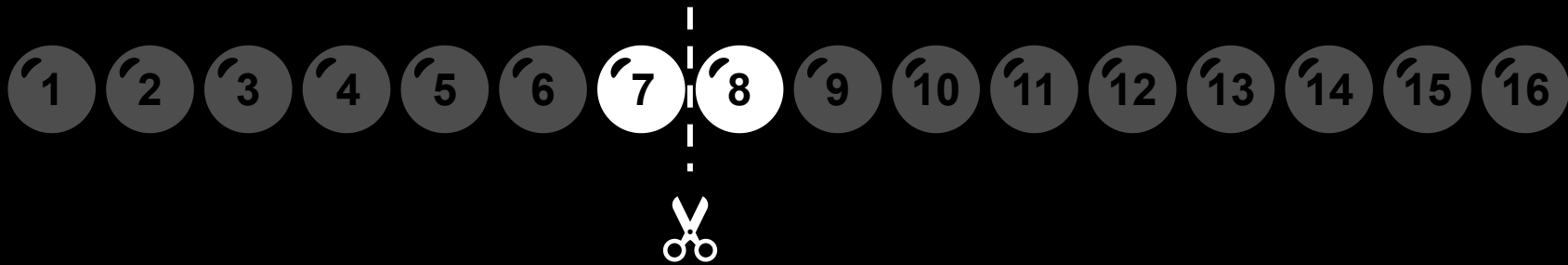


is it > 8? ✗

is it > 4? ✓

is it > 6? ✓

is it > 7?



is it > 8? ✗

is it > 4? ✓

is it > 6? ✓

is it > 7? ✗



is it > 8? ✗

is it > 4? ✓

is it > 6? ✓

is it > 7? ✗



with 4 questions from 16 to 1

|            |   |   |   |
|------------|---|---|---|
| is it > 8? | ✗ | } | 0 |
| is it > 4? | ✓ |   | 1 |
| is it > 6? | ✓ |   | 1 |
| is it > 7? | ✗ |   | 0 |

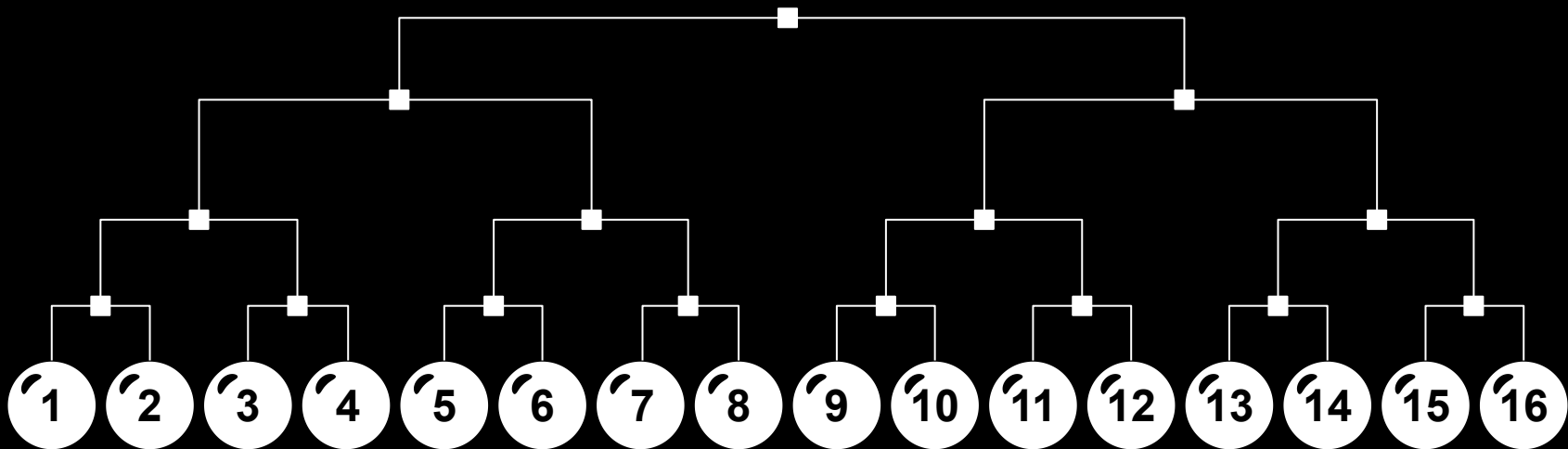


with 4 questions from 16 to 1

where is the information?

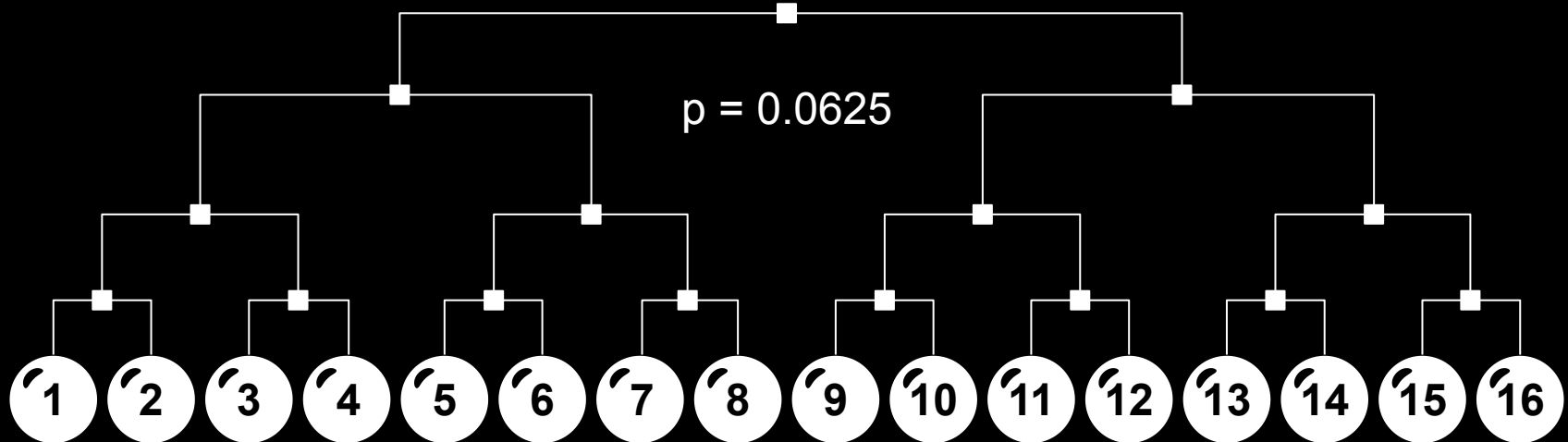


# where is the information?



where is the information?

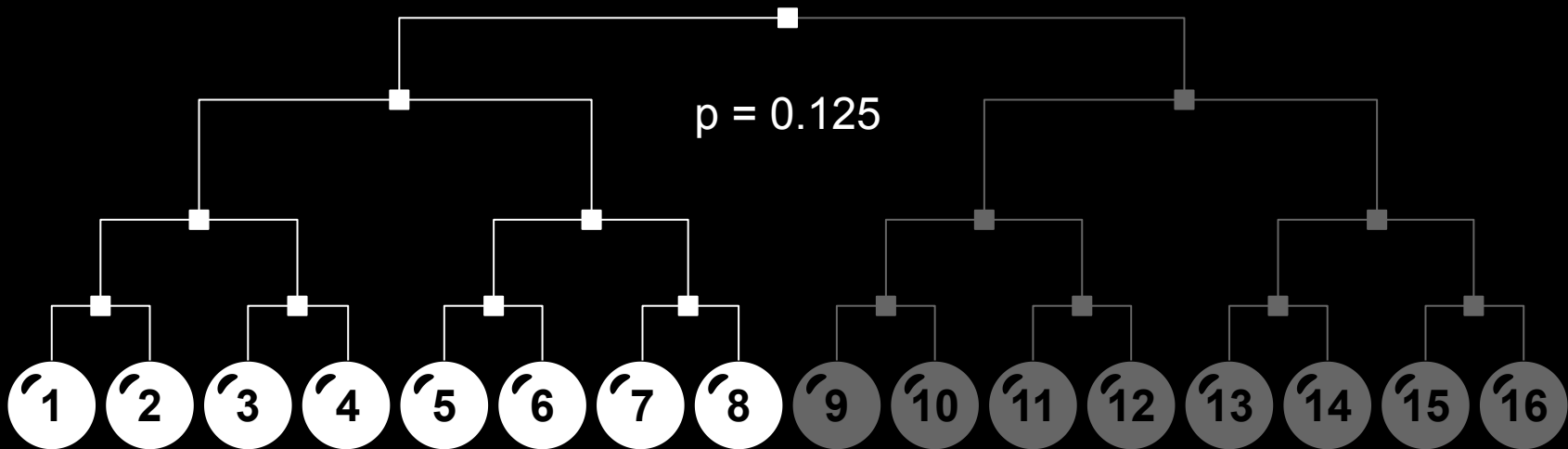
$N = 16$



# where is the information?

~~N = 16~~

N = 8

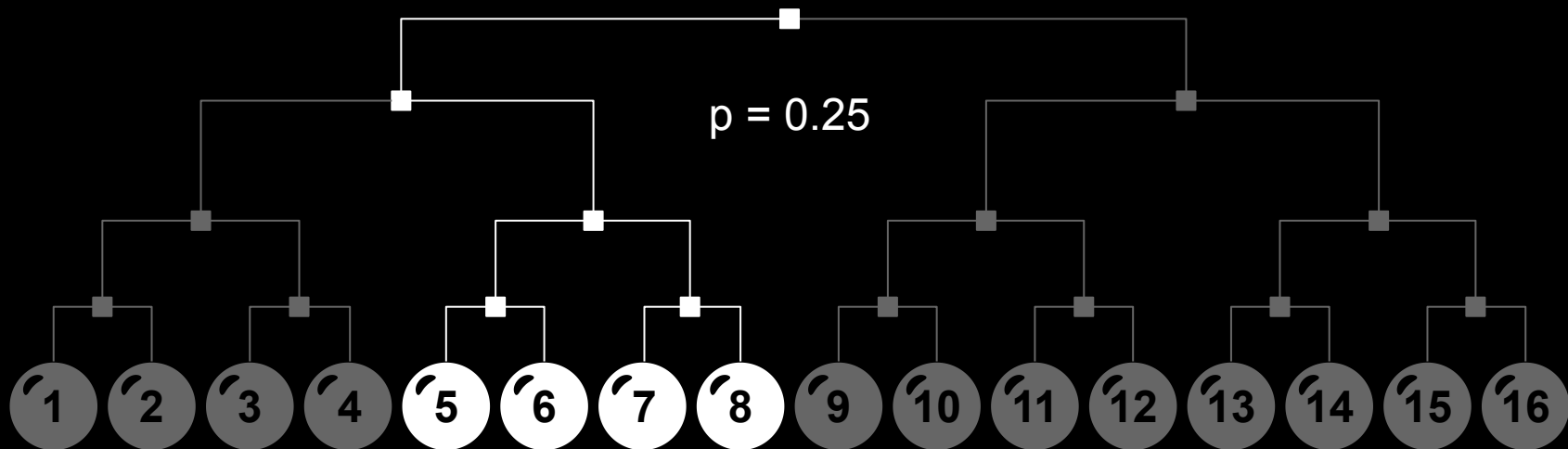


where is the information?

~~N = 16~~

~~N = 8~~

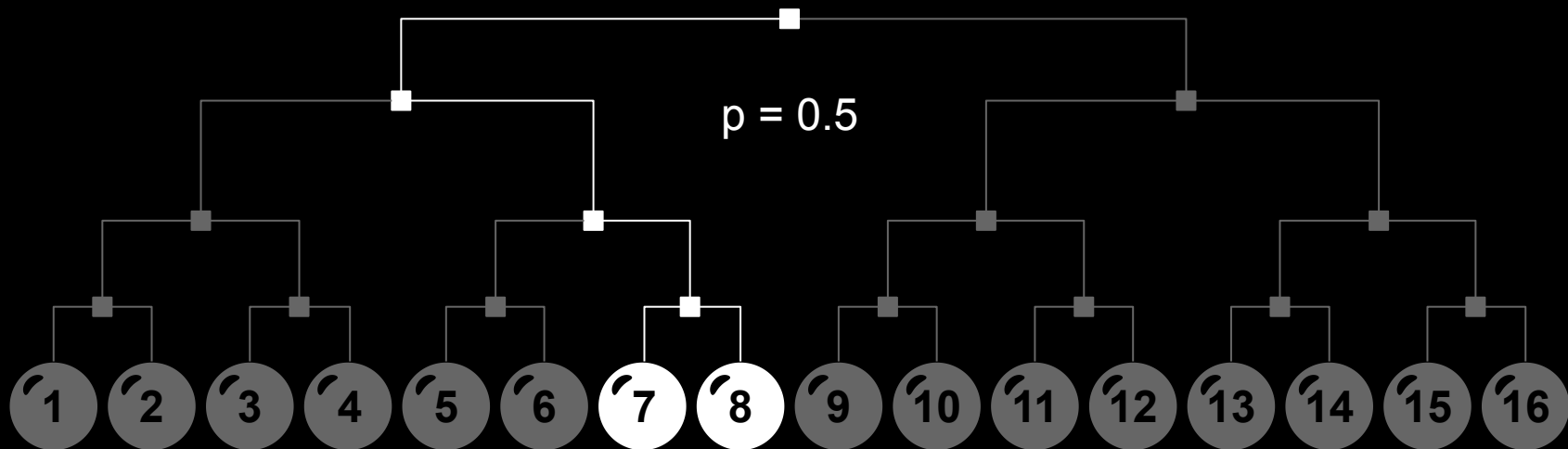
N = 4



# where is the information?

 ~~$N = 16$~~ 
$$N=8$$
~~N=4~~

N = 2



where is the information?

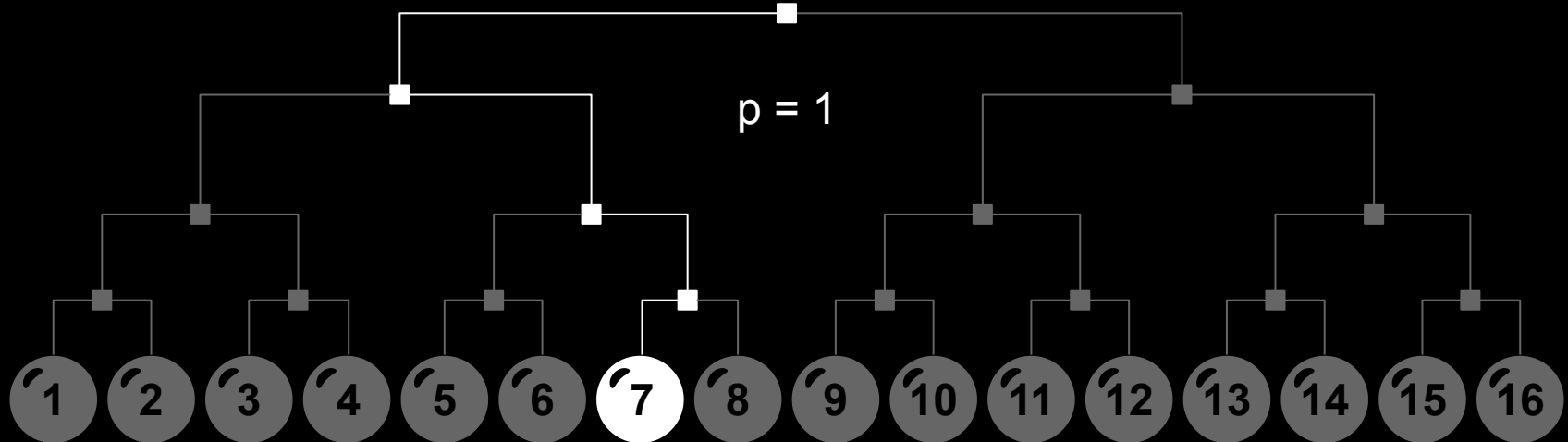
~~N = 16~~

~~N = 8~~

~~N = 4~~

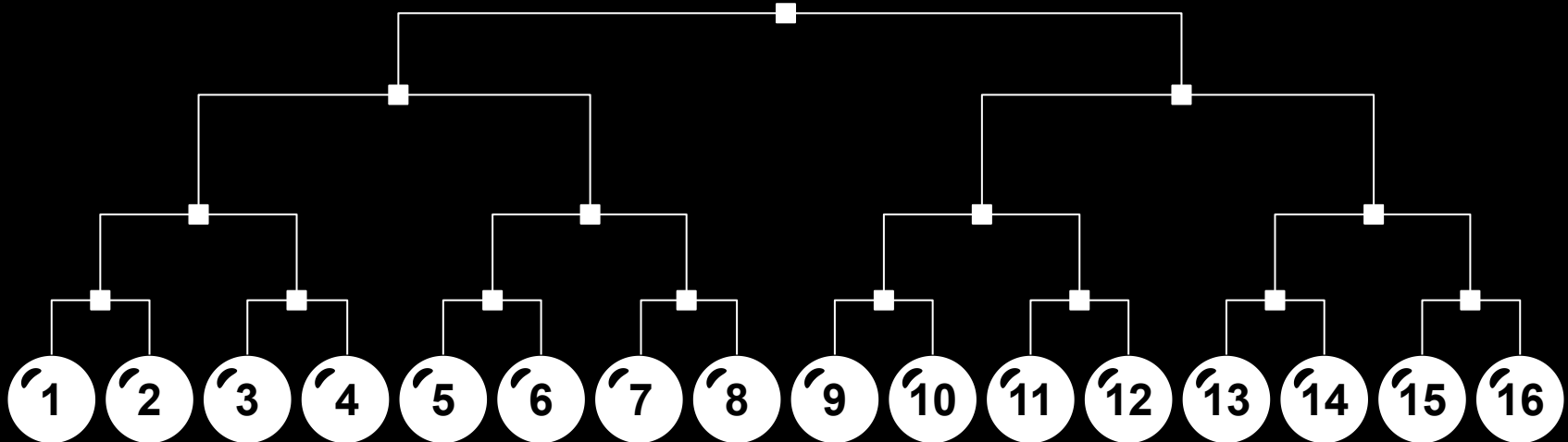
~~N = 2~~

N = 1



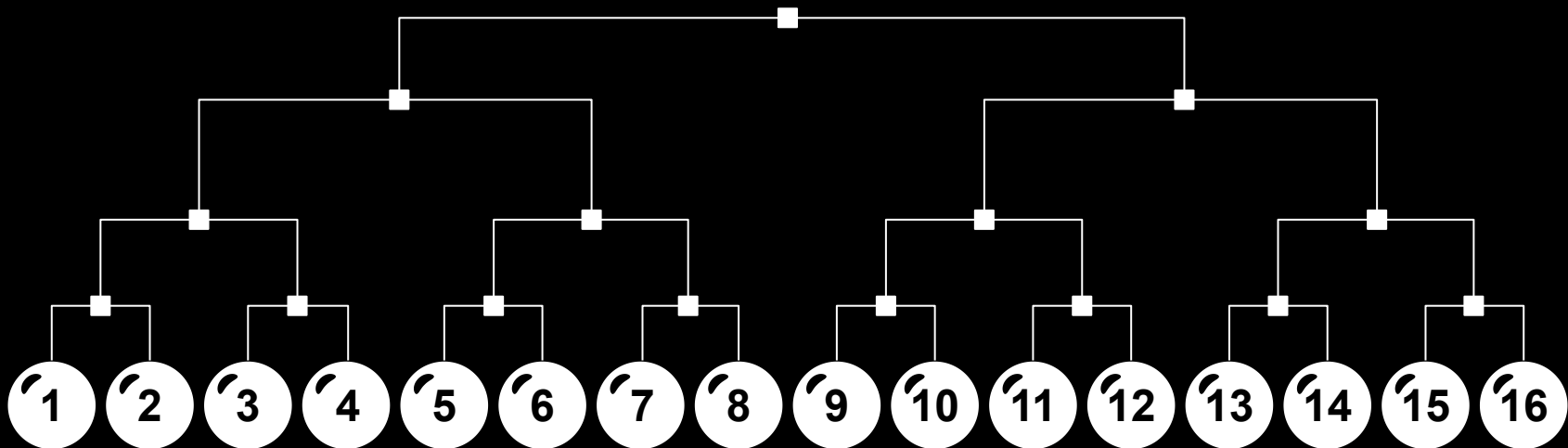
information = reduced uncertainty  
uncertainty is measured with the logarithm of N

$$H = \log_2(N)$$



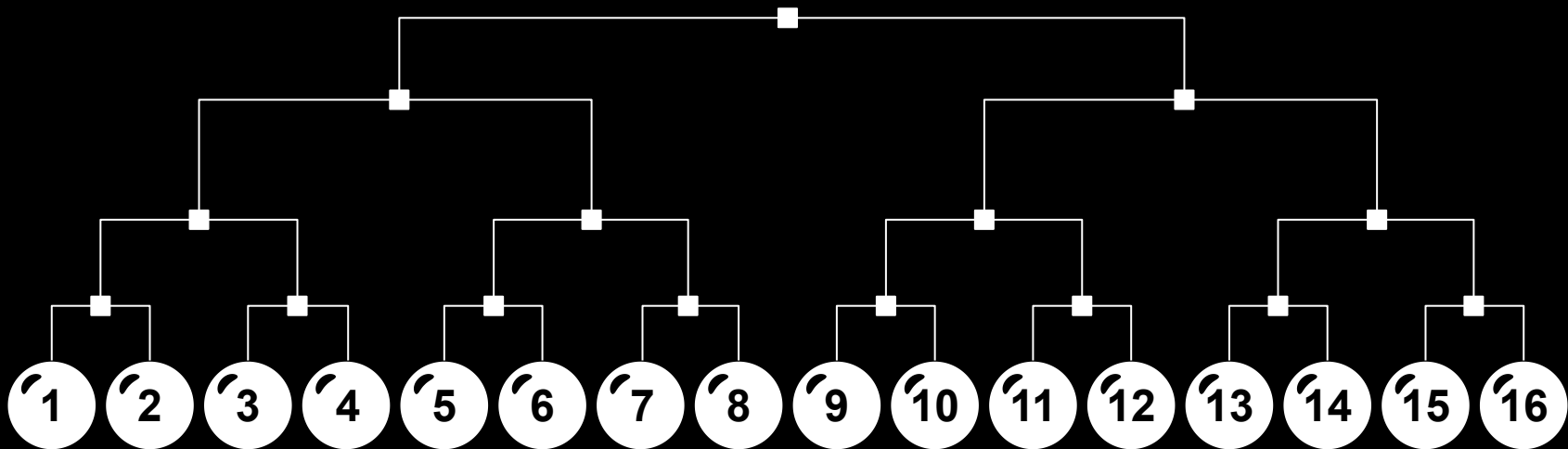
or: how often can we cut the remaining possibilities in half?

$$H = \log_2(N)$$

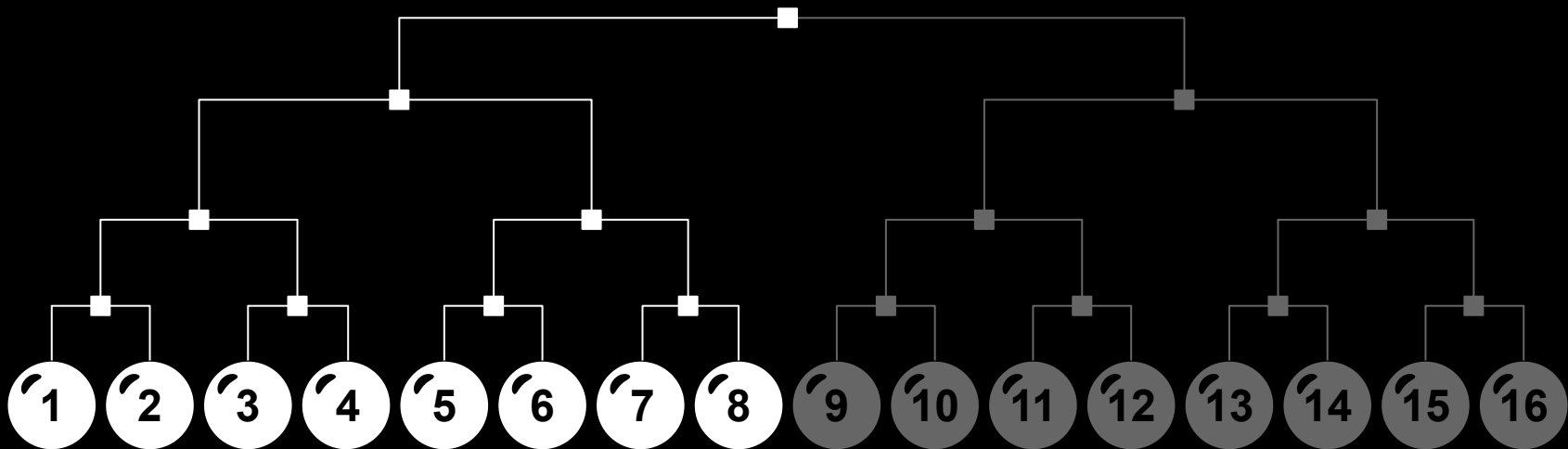




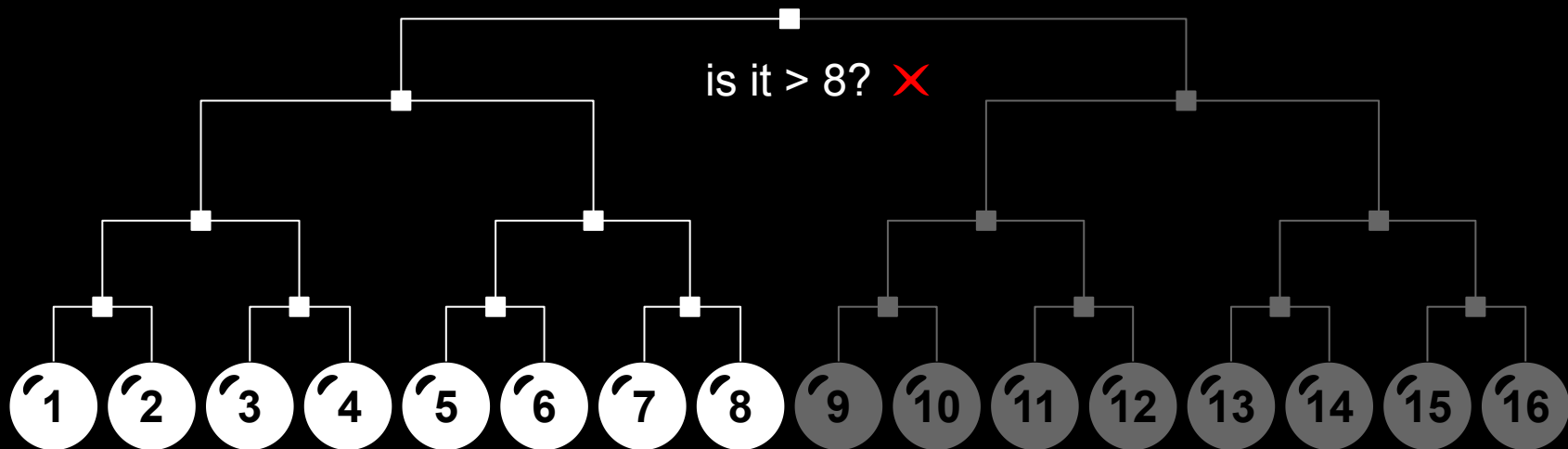
$$H_0 = \log_2(16) = 4$$



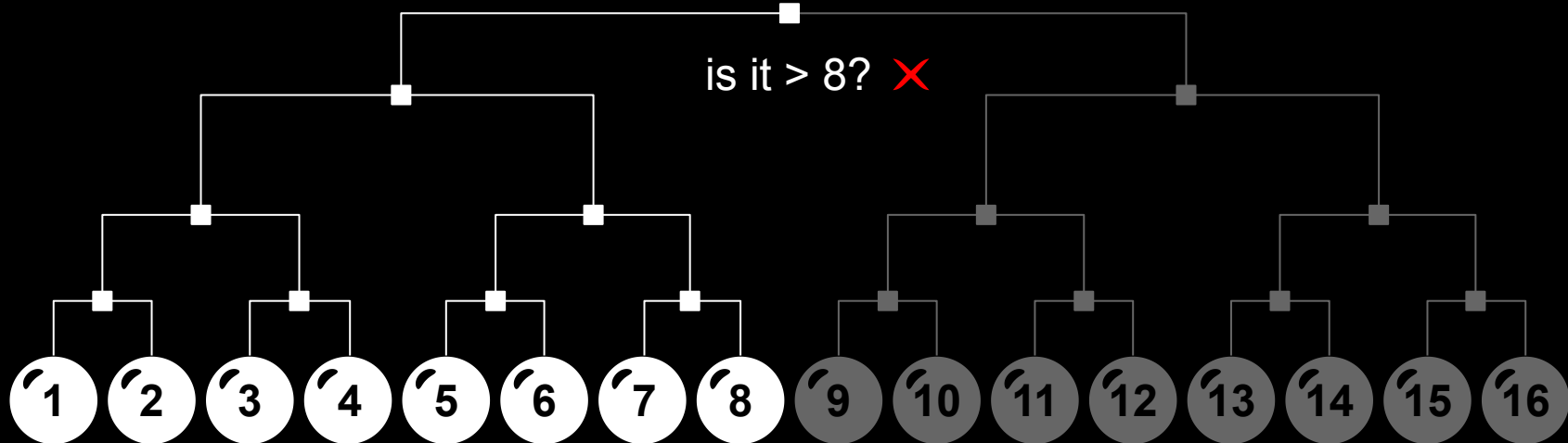
$$H_1 = \log_2(8) = 3$$



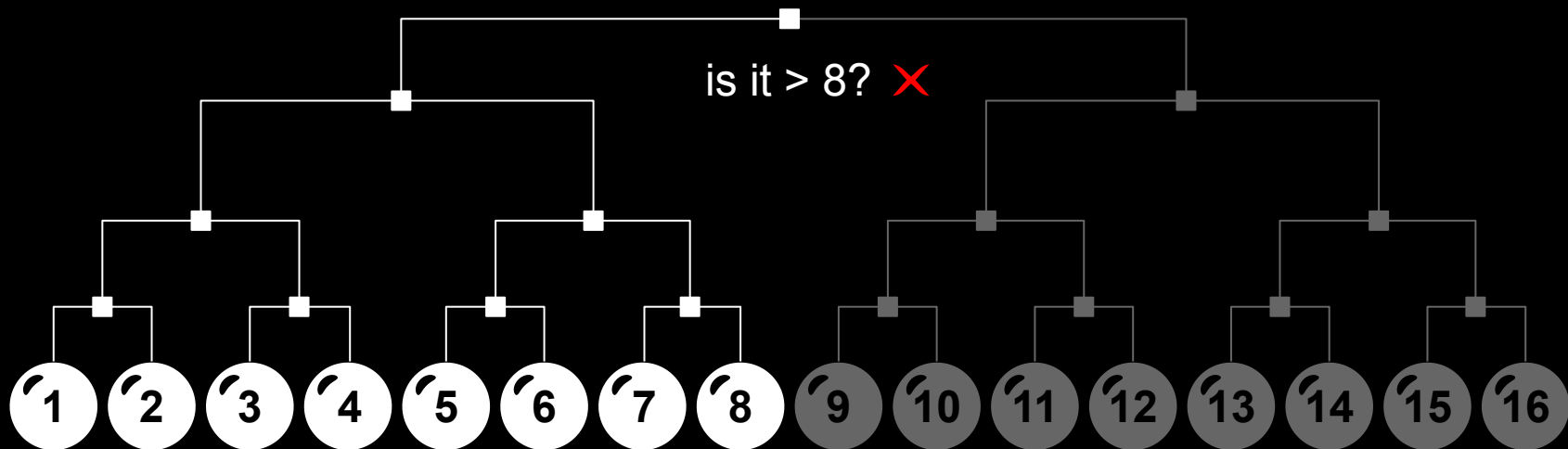
$$I = H_0 - H_1$$



$$I = \log_2(16) - \log_2(8)$$



$$I = 4 - 3 = 1$$



uncertainty and information are  
measured in **bits**

how many yes/no questions to reduce  
uncertainty to zero?

$$H = 0 = \log_2(1)$$

how many yes/no questions to reduce  
uncertainty to zero?

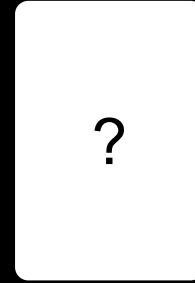
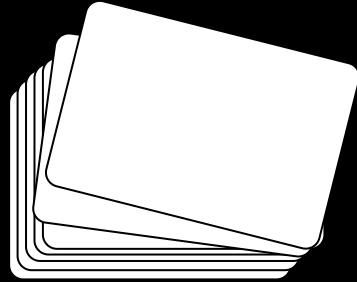
$$H = 0 = \log_2(1)$$

$$H = \log_2(N)$$























































poker

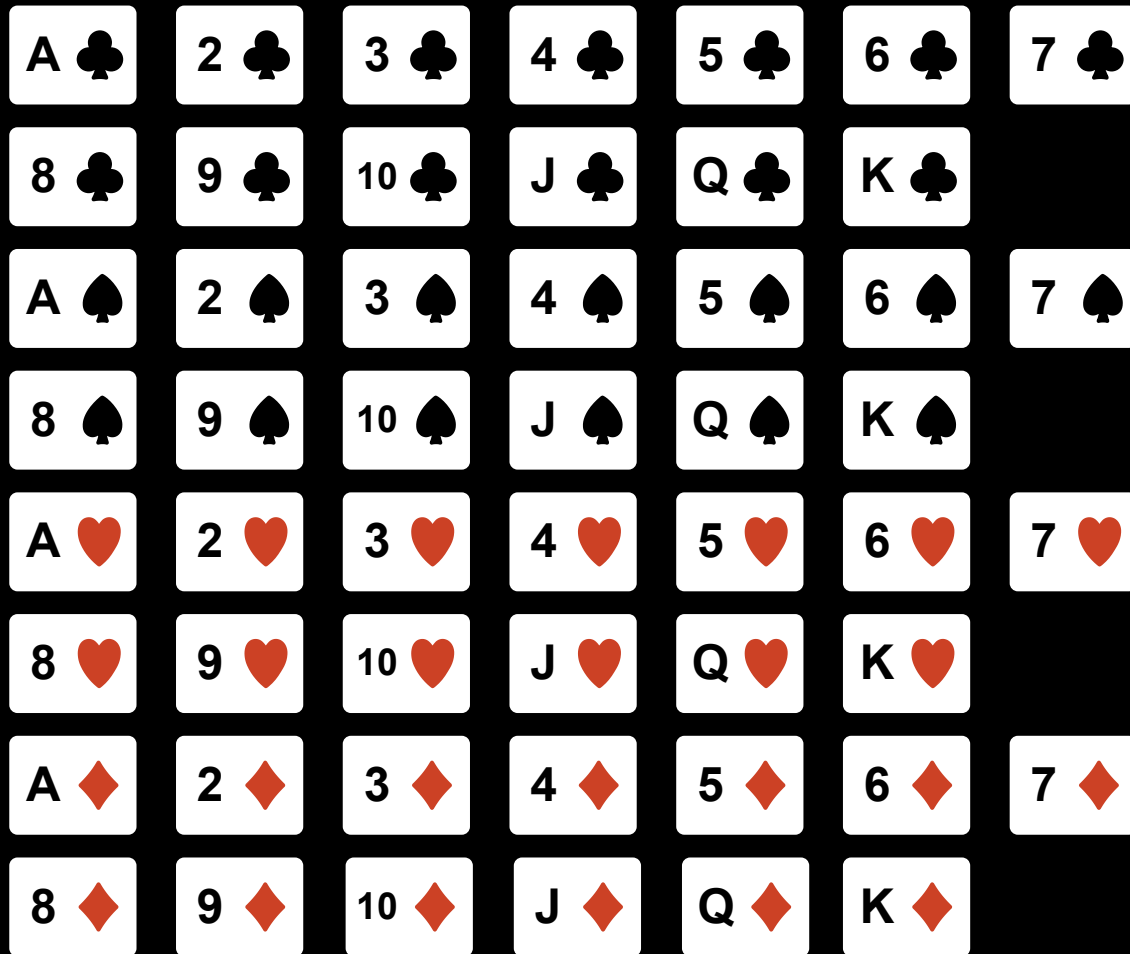
which card am I holding?



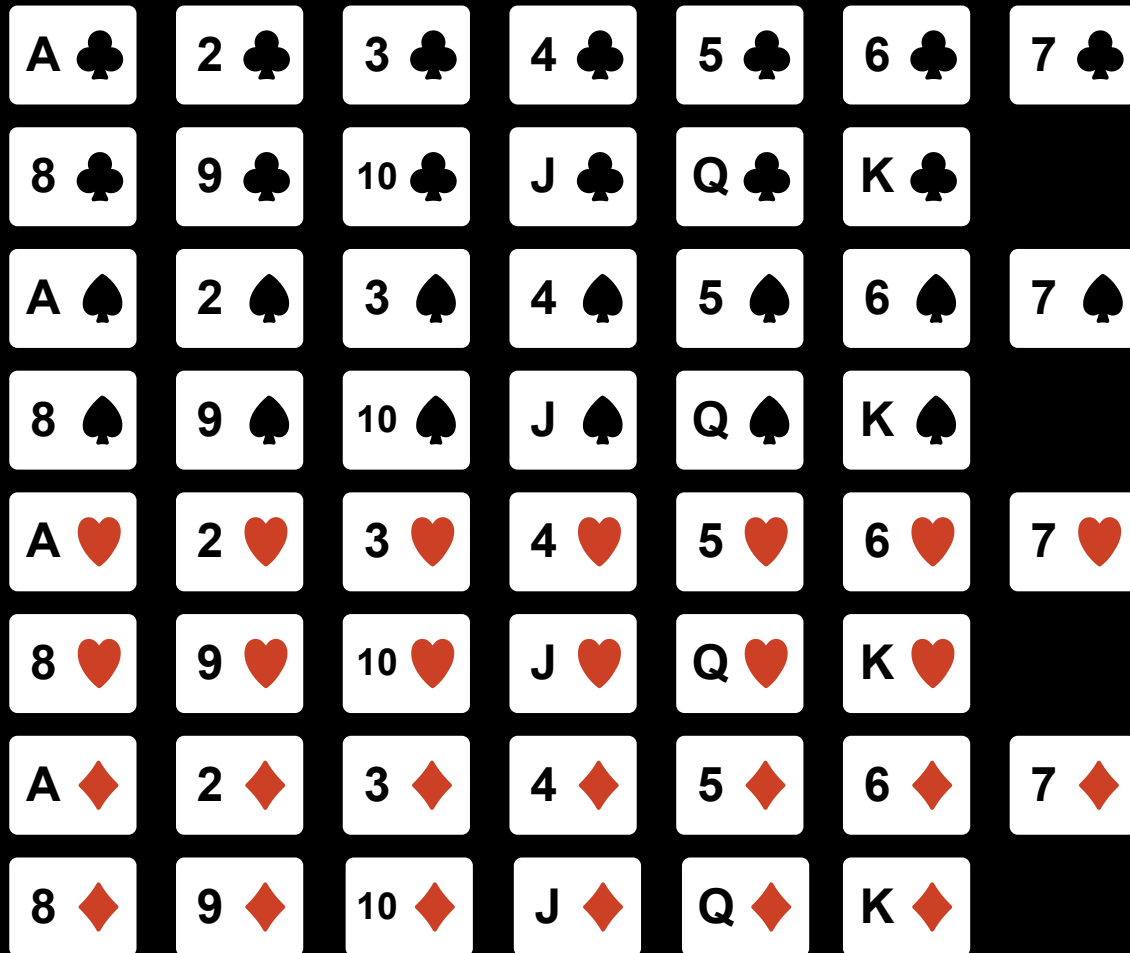
52 card poker deck

|  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| A    | 2    | 3     | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7   |
| 8   | 9   | 10   | J   | Q   | K   |   |
| A   | 2   | 3    | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7  |
| 8   | 9   | 10   | J   | Q   | K   |   |
| A   | 2   | 3    | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7  |
| 8   | 9   | 10   | J   | Q   | K   |   |
| A   | 2   | 3    | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7  |
| 8  | 9  | 10  | J  | Q  | K  |   |

52 possible cards

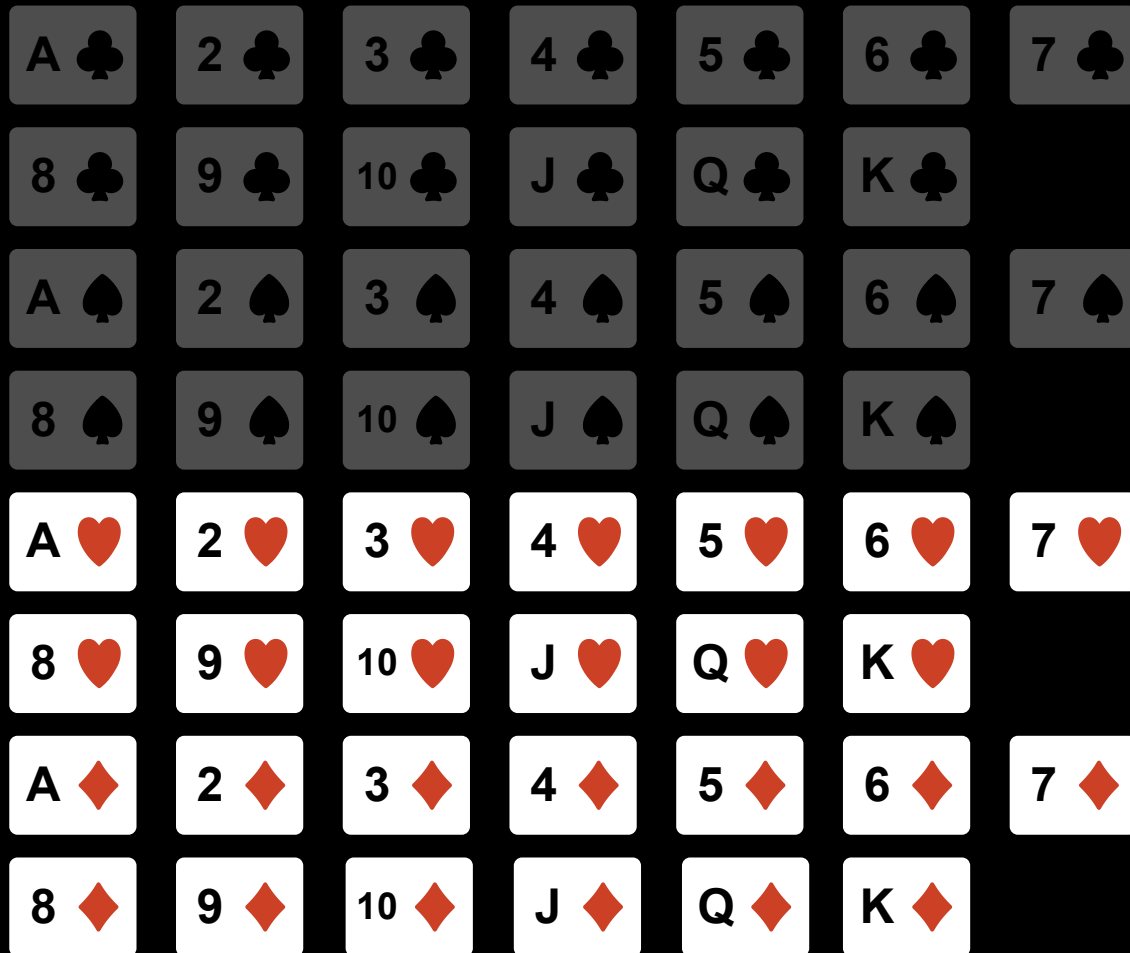


is the card black?



is the card black?

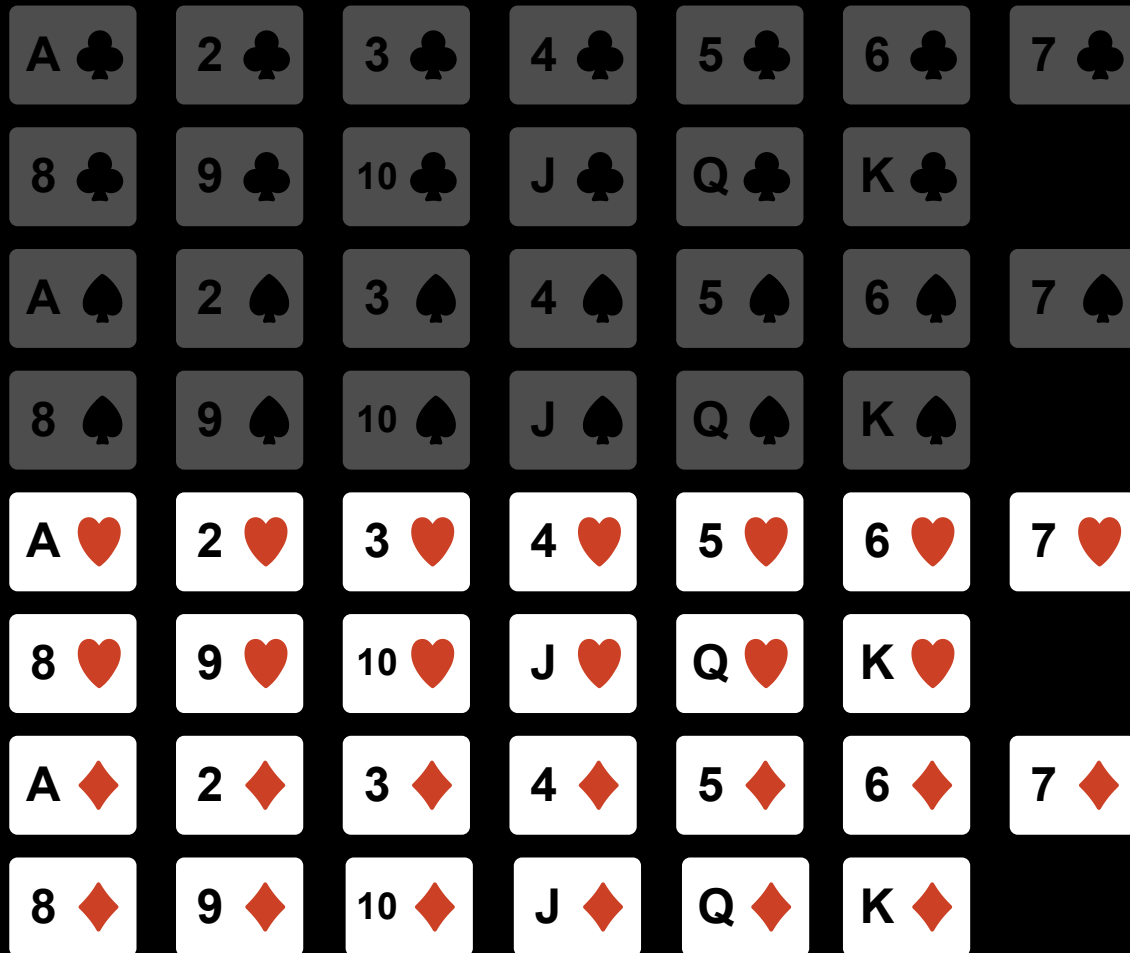
no



is the card black?

no

is it hearts?

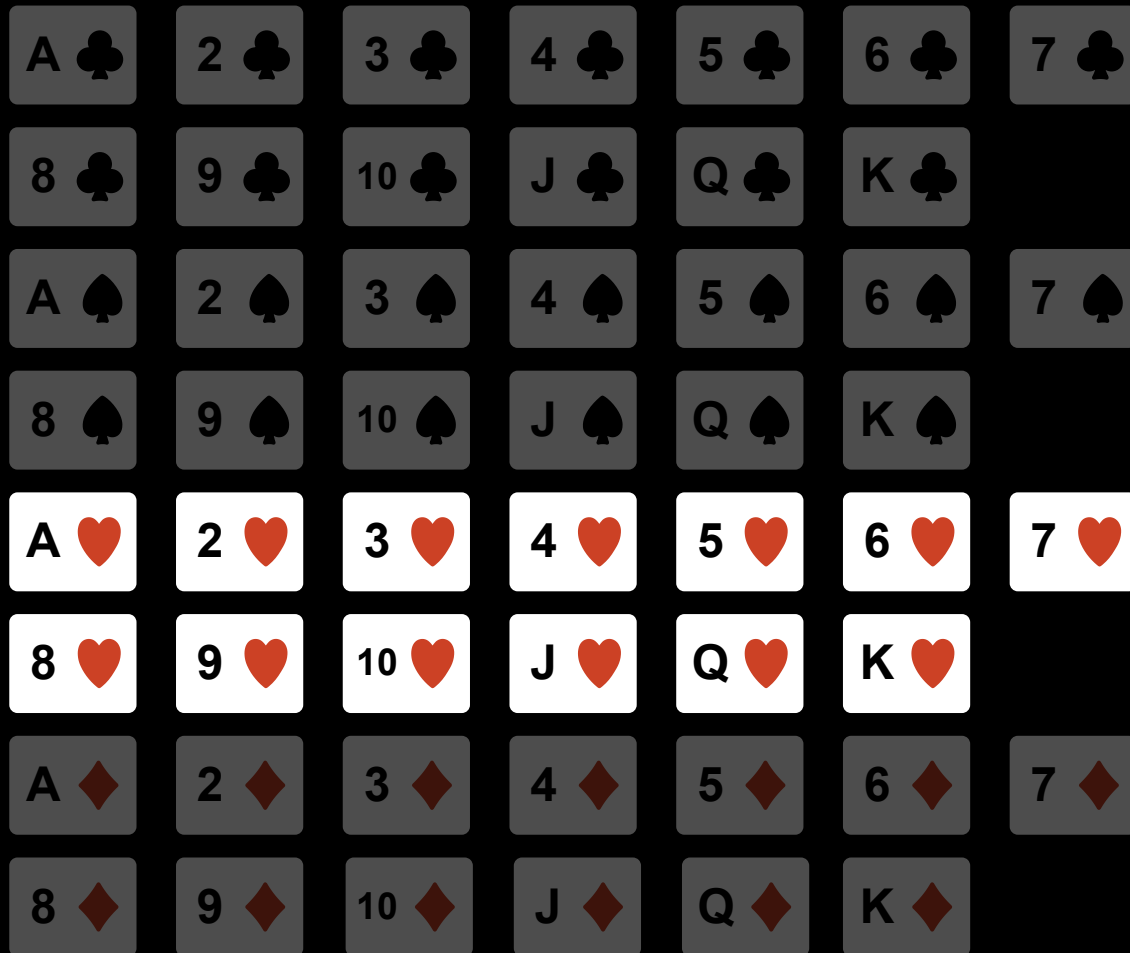


is the card black?

no

is it hearts?

yes





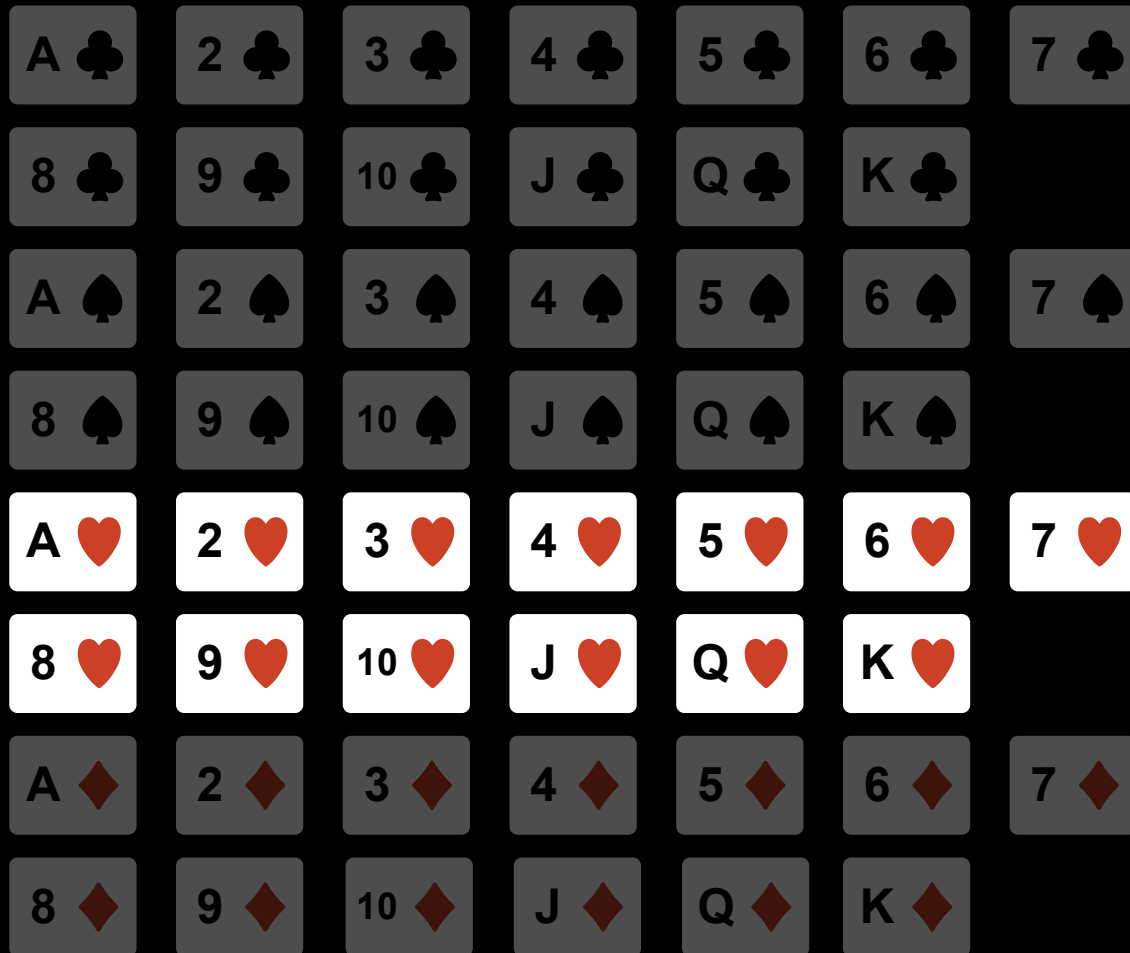
is the card black?

no

is it hearts?

yes

is it 8 or above?



is the card black?

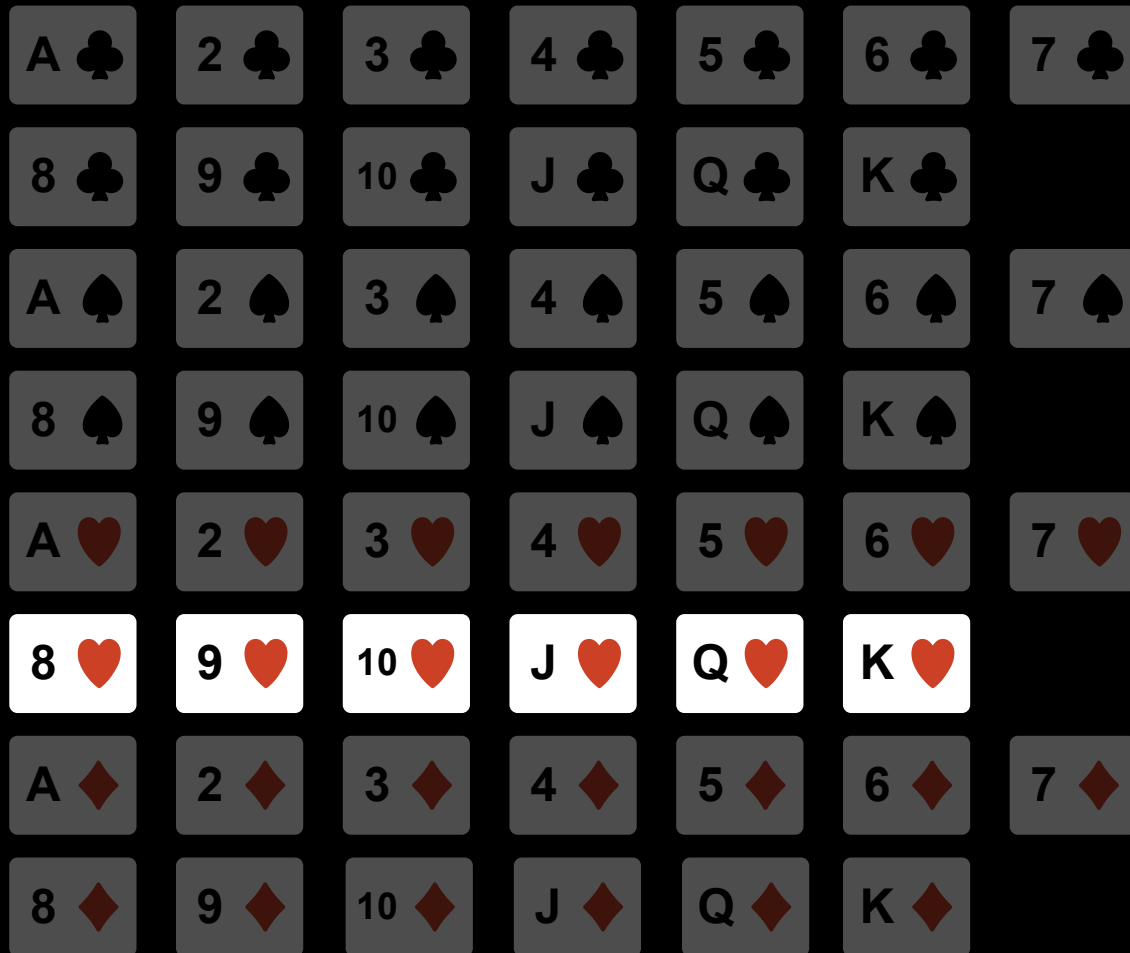
no

is it hearts?

yes

is it 8 or above?

yes



is the card black?

no

is it hearts?

yes

is it 8 or above?

yes

is it jack or above?

|     |     |      |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| A ♣ | 2 ♣ | 3 ♣  | 4 ♣ | 5 ♣ | 6 ♣ | 7 ♣ |
| 8 ♣ | 9 ♣ | 10 ♣ | J ♣ | Q ♣ | K ♣ |     |
| A ♠ | 2 ♠ | 3 ♠  | 4 ♠ | 5 ♠ | 6 ♠ | 7 ♠ |
| 8 ♠ | 9 ♠ | 10 ♠ | J ♠ | Q ♠ | K ♠ |     |
| A ♥ | 2 ♥ | 3 ♥  | 4 ♥ | 5 ♥ | 6 ♥ | 7 ♥ |
| 8 ♥ | 9 ♥ | 10 ♥ | J ♥ | Q ♥ | K ♥ |     |
| A ♦ | 2 ♦ | 3 ♦  | 4 ♦ | 5 ♦ | 6 ♦ | 7 ♦ |
| 8 ♦ | 9 ♦ | 10 ♦ | J ♦ | Q ♦ | K ♦ |     |

is the card black?

no

is it hearts?





















































yes

is it 8 or above?

yes

is it jack or above?

yes

|  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| A    | 2    | 3     | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7   |
| 8   | 9   | 10   | J   | Q   | K   |   |
| A   | 2   | 3    | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7  |
| 8   | 9   | 10   | J   | Q   | K   |   |
| A   | 2   | 3    | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7  |
| 8   | 9   | 10   | J   | Q   | K   |   |
| A   | 2   | 3    | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7  |
| 8  | 9  | 10  | J  | Q  | K  |   |

is the card black?

no

is it hearts?

yes

is it 8 or above?

yes

is it jack or above?

yes

is it queen or above?

|     |     |      |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| A ♣ | 2 ♣ | 3 ♣  | 4 ♣ | 5 ♣ | 6 ♣ | 7 ♣ |
| 8 ♣ | 9 ♣ | 10 ♣ | J ♣ | Q ♣ | K ♣ |     |
| A ♠ | 2 ♠ | 3 ♠  | 4 ♠ | 5 ♠ | 6 ♠ | 7 ♠ |
| 8 ♠ | 9 ♠ | 10 ♠ | J ♠ | Q ♠ | K ♠ |     |
| A ♥ | 2 ♥ | 3 ♥  | 4 ♥ | 5 ♥ | 6 ♥ | 7 ♥ |
| 8 ♥ | 9 ♥ | 10 ♥ | J ♥ | Q ♥ | K ♥ |     |
| A ♦ | 2 ♦ | 3 ♦  | 4 ♦ | 5 ♦ | 6 ♦ | 7 ♦ |
| 8 ♦ | 9 ♦ | 10 ♦ | J ♦ | Q ♦ | K ♦ |     |

is the card black?

no

is it hearts?

yes

is it 8 or above?





















































yes

is it jack or above?

yes

is it queen or above?

yes

|  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| A    | 2    | 3     | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7   |
| 8   | 9   | 10   | J   | Q   | K   |   |
| A   | 2   | 3    | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7  |
| 8   | 9   | 10   | J   | Q   | K   |   |
| A   | 2   | 3    | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7  |
| 8   | 9   | 10   | J   | Q   | K   |   |
| A   | 2   | 3    | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7  |
| 8  | 9  | 10  | J  | Q  | K  |   |

is the card black?

no

is it hearts?

yes

is it 8 or above?

yes





















































is it jack or above?

yes

is it queen or above?

yes

is it king?

|   |  |  |   |   |   |   |
|---|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| A   | 2   | 3    | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
| 8  | 9  | 10  | J  | Q  | K  |   |
| A  | 2  | 3   | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 8  | 9  | 10  | J  | Q  | K  |   |
| A  | 2  | 3   | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 8  | 9  | 10  | J  | Q  | K  |   |
| A  | 2  | 3   | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 8  | 9  | 10  | J  | Q  | K  |   |

is the card black?

no

is it hearts?

yes

is it 8 or above?

yes

is it jack or above?





















































yes

is it queen or above?

yes

is it king?

no

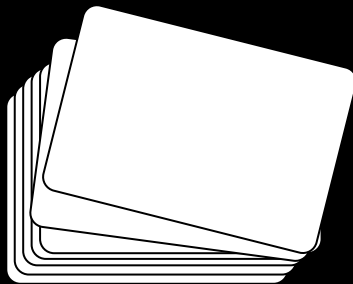
|   |  |  |   |   |   |   |
|---|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| A   | 2   | 3    | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
| 8  | 9  | 10  | J  | Q  | K  |   |
| A  | 2  | 3   | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 8  | 9  | 10  | J  | Q  | K  |   |
| A  | 2  | 3   | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 8  | 9  | 10  | J  | Q  | K  |   |
| A  | 2  | 3   | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 8  | 9  | 10  | J  | Q  | K  |   |



with 6 questions  
from 52 to 1

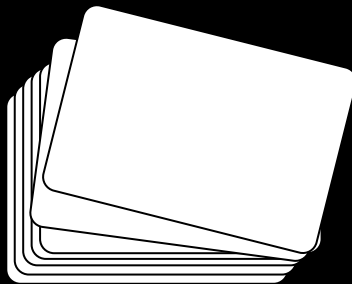
|     |     |      |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| A ♣ | 2 ♣ | 3 ♣  | 4 ♣ | 5 ♣ | 6 ♣ | 7 ♣ |
| 8 ♣ | 9 ♣ | 10 ♣ | J ♣ | Q ♣ | K ♣ |     |
| A ♠ | 2 ♠ | 3 ♠  | 4 ♠ | 5 ♠ | 6 ♠ | 7 ♠ |
| 8 ♠ | 9 ♠ | 10 ♠ | J ♠ | Q ♠ | K ♠ |     |
| A ♥ | 2 ♥ | 3 ♥  | 4 ♥ | 5 ♥ | 6 ♥ | 7 ♥ |
| 8 ♥ | 9 ♥ | 10 ♥ | J ♥ | Q ♥ | K ♥ |     |
| A ♦ | 2 ♦ | 3 ♦  | 4 ♦ | 5 ♦ | 6 ♦ | 7 ♦ |
| 8 ♦ | 9 ♦ | 10 ♦ | J ♦ | Q ♦ | K ♦ |     |

uncertainty with  $N = 52$  possibilities?

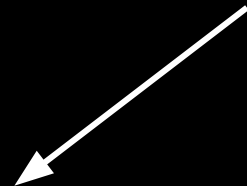


$$H = \log_2(52) \approx 5.7$$

uncertainty with  $N = 52$  possibilities?



average # of yes/no  
questions



$$H = \log_2(52) \approx 5.7$$

one bit of information with each answer...

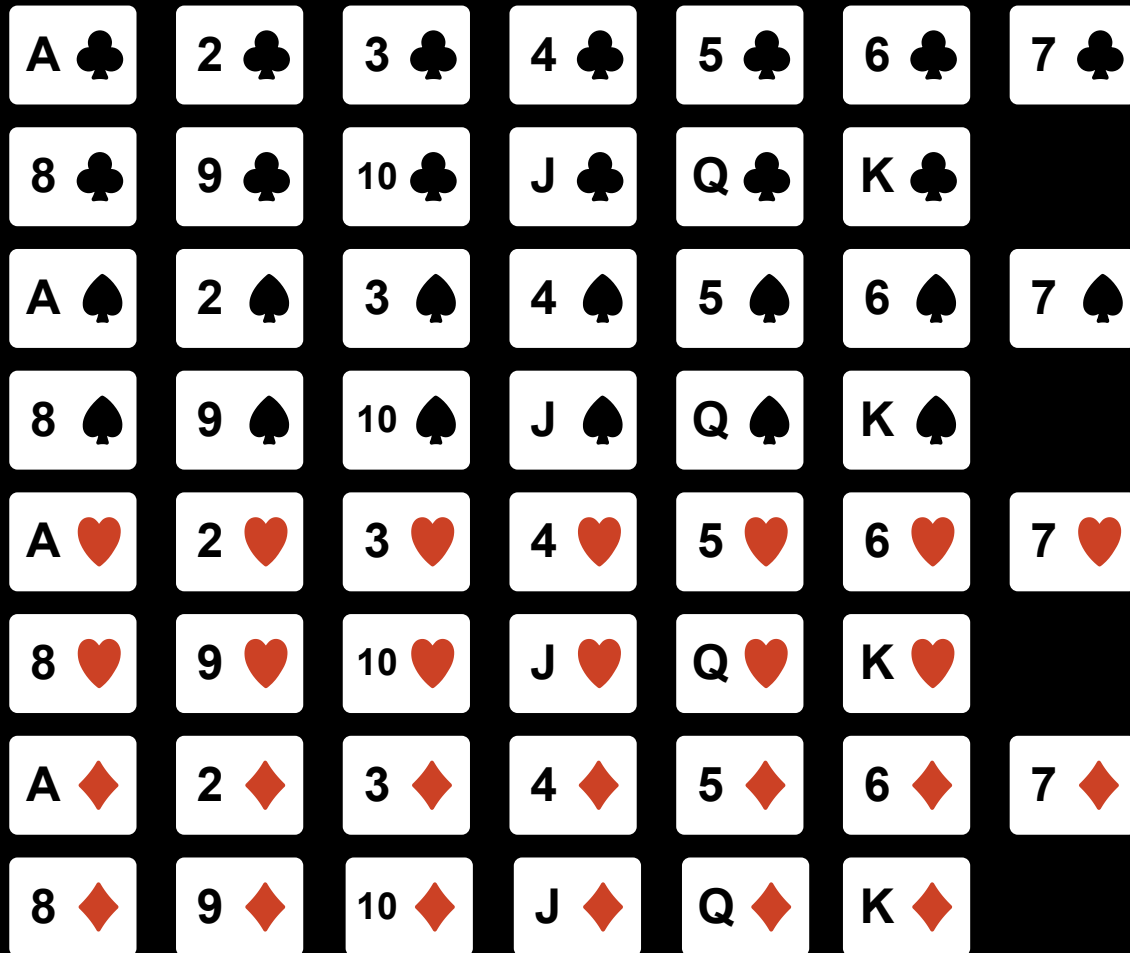
$$\log_2(52) - \log_2(26) = 1$$

one bit of information with each answer...

$$\log_2(52) - \log_2(26) = 1$$

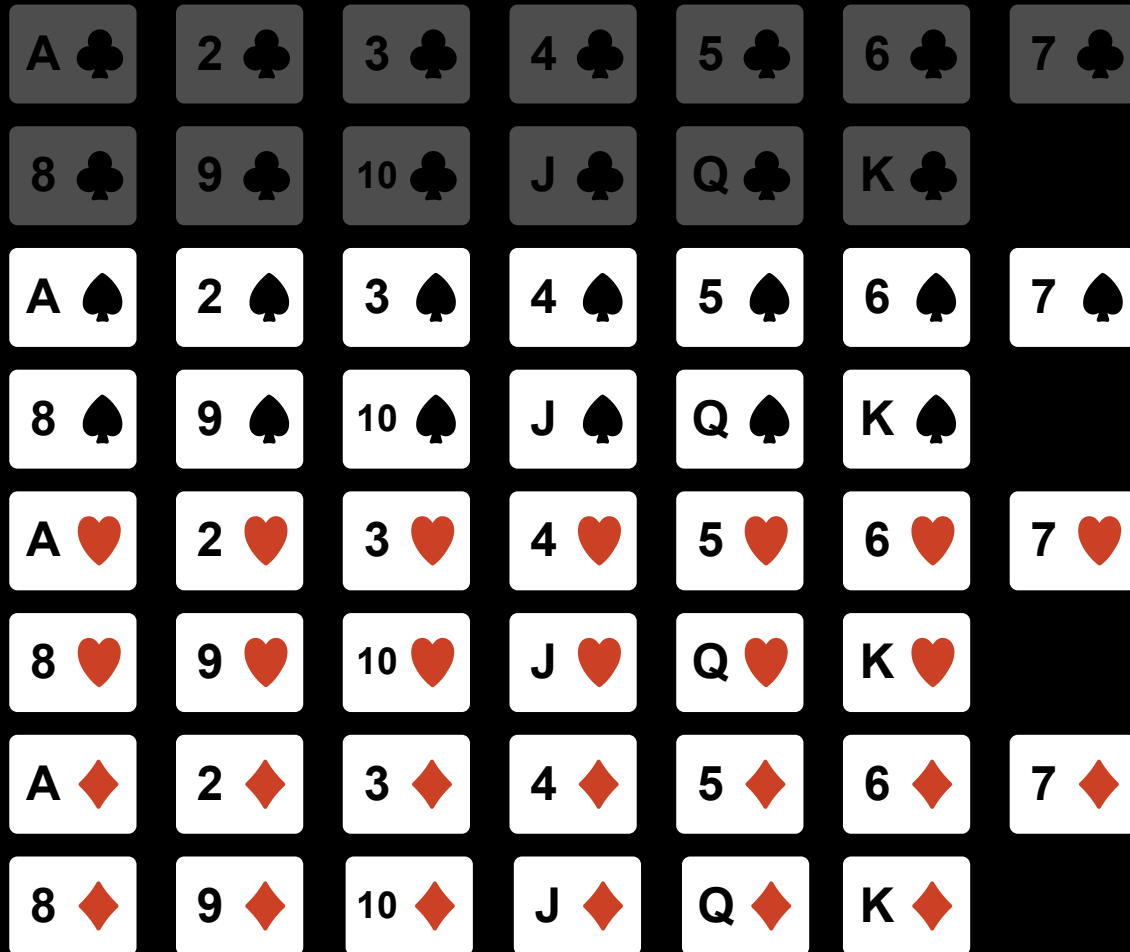
...that cuts the remaining options in half

is it a spades card?



is it a spades card?

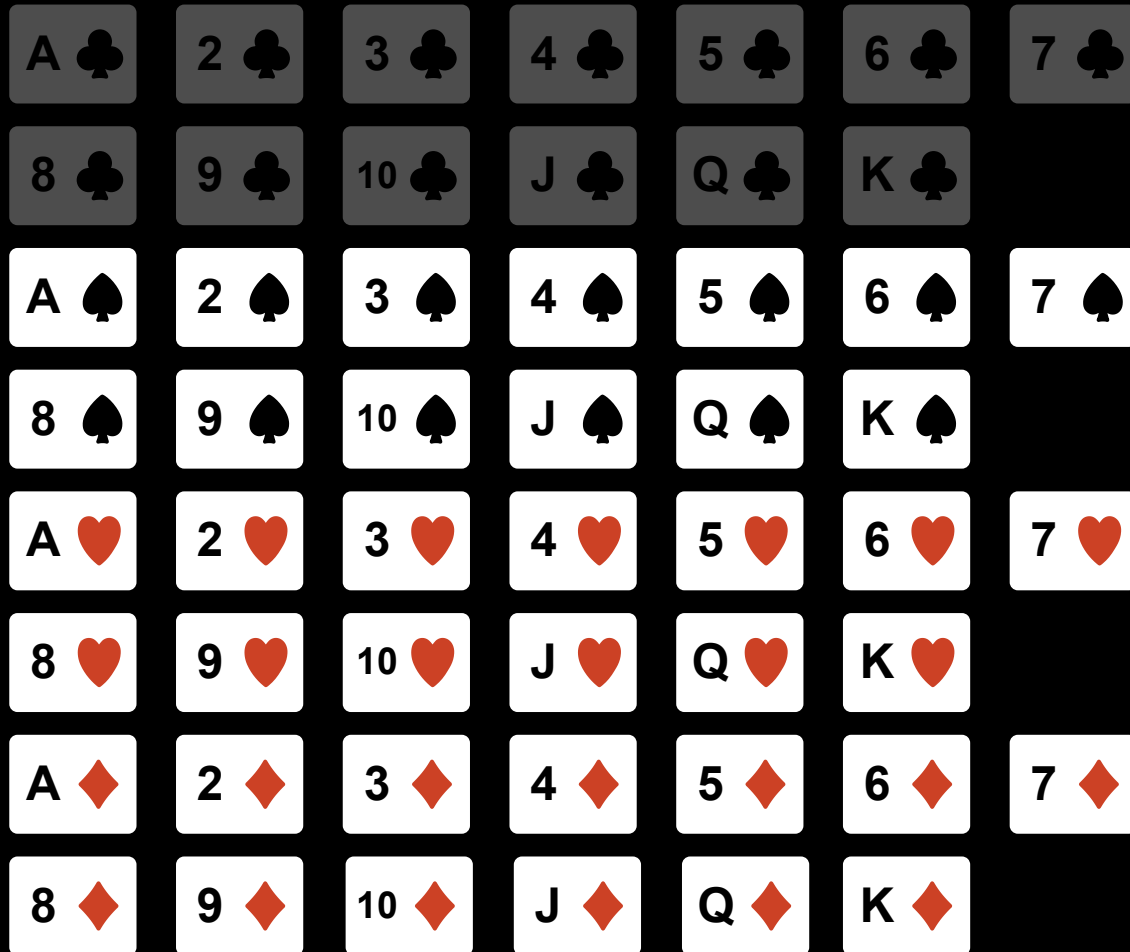
no



is it a spades card?

no

how much information?





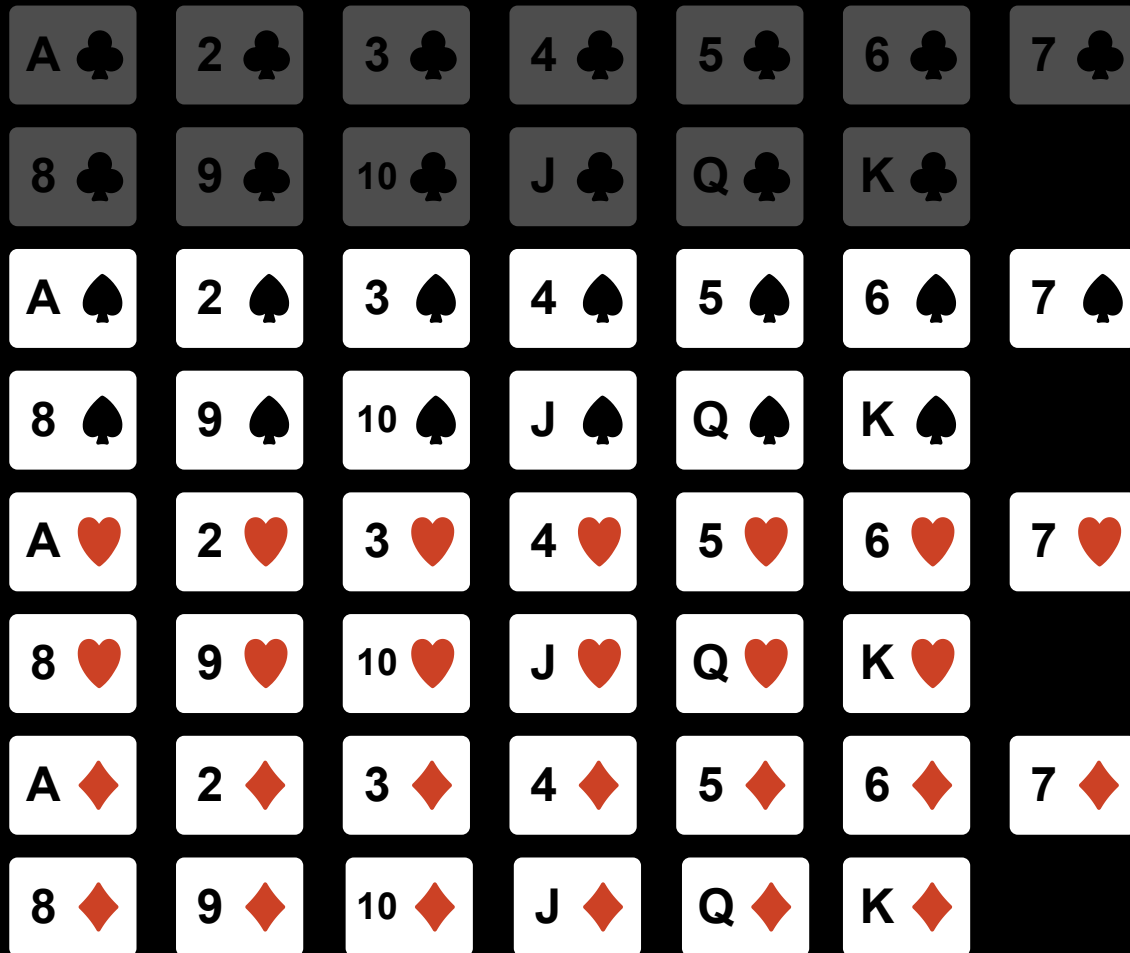
is it a spades card?

no

how much information?

$$H_0 = \log_2(52) \approx 5.7$$

$$H_1 = \log_2(39) \approx 5.29$$



is it a spades card?

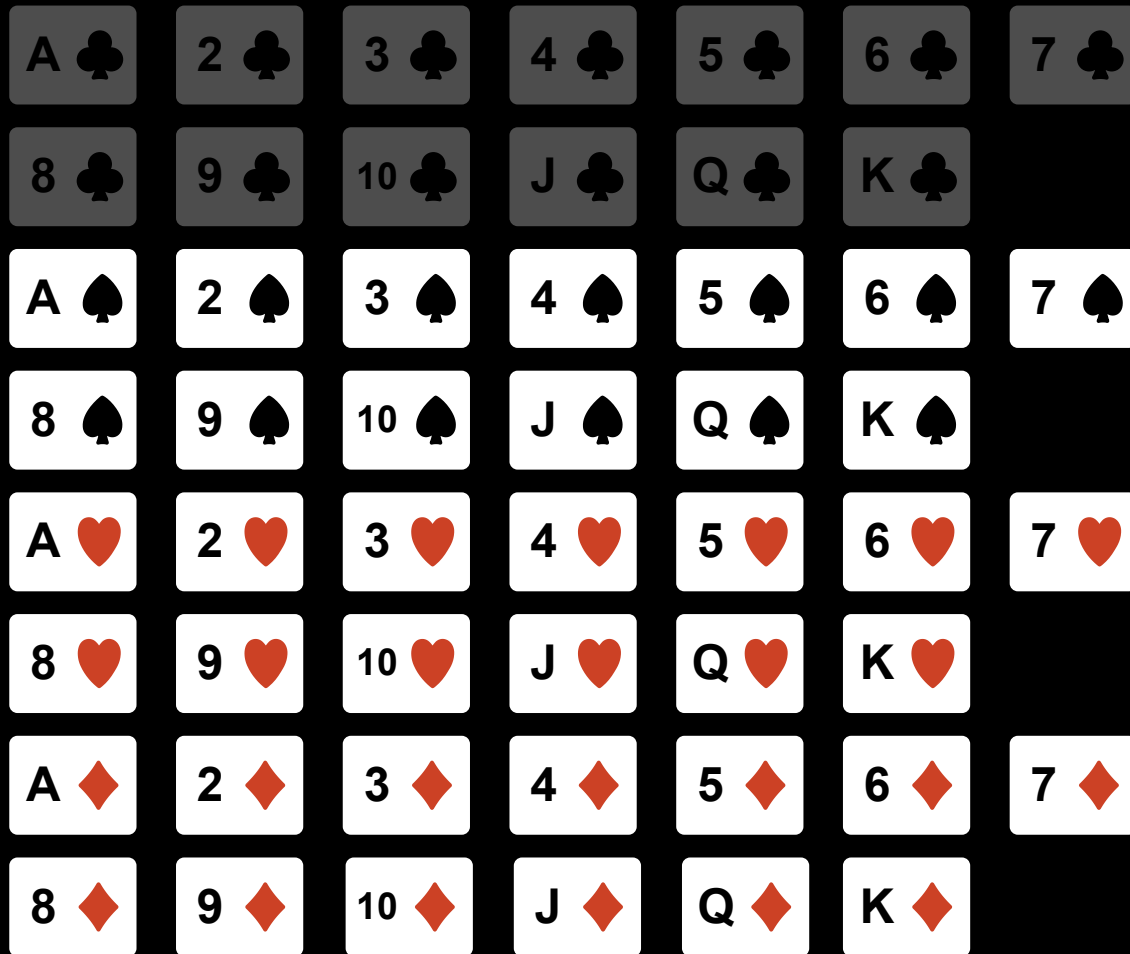
no

how much information?

$$H_0 = \log_2(52) \approx 5.7$$

$$H_1 = \log_2(39) \approx 5.29$$

$$H_0 - H_1 \approx 0.41$$



is it a spades card?

no

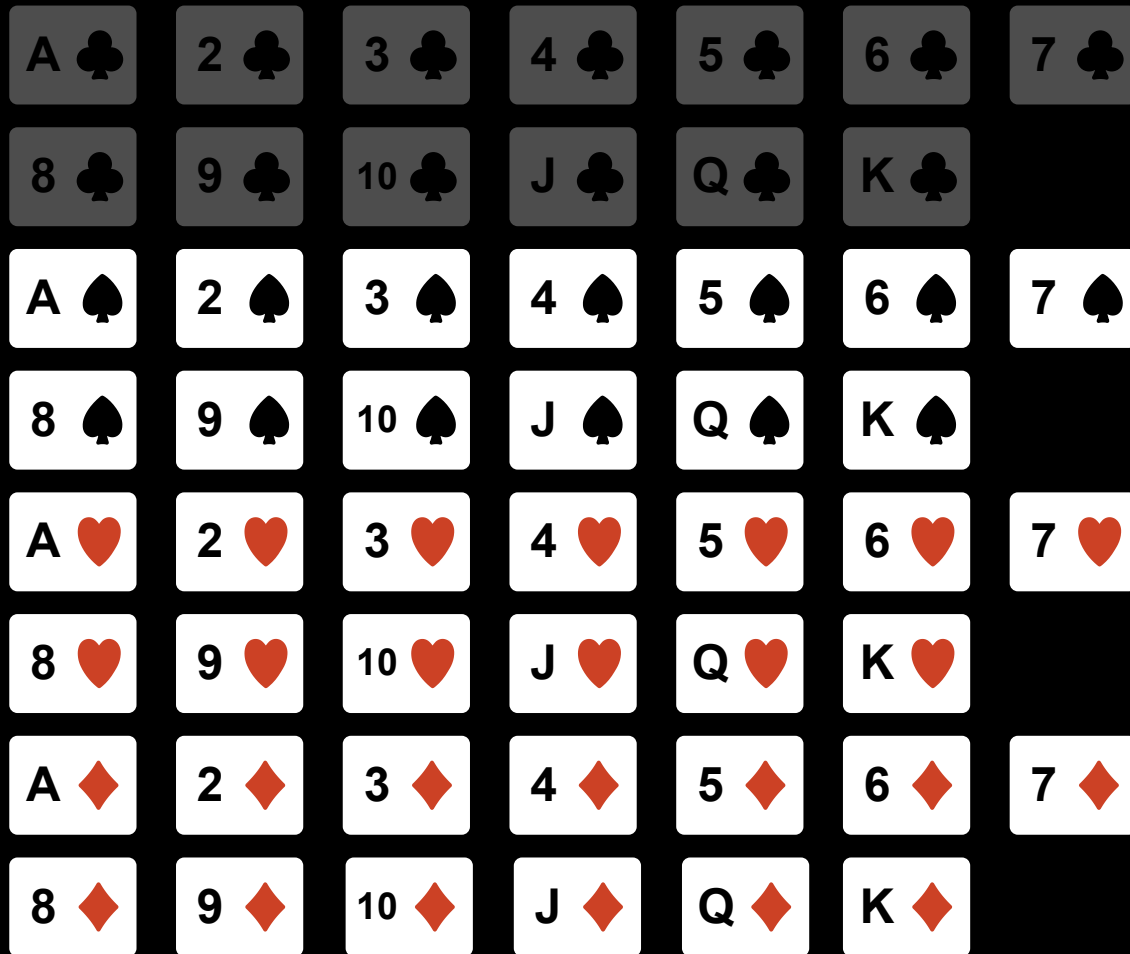
how much information?

$$H_0 = \log_2(52) \approx 5.7$$

$$H_1 = \log_2(39) \approx 5.29$$

$$H_0 - H_1 \approx 0.41$$

that's less than 1 bit



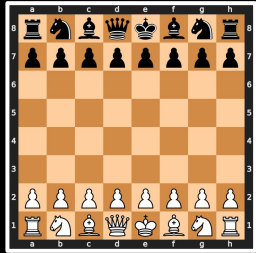
chess



next\_move()

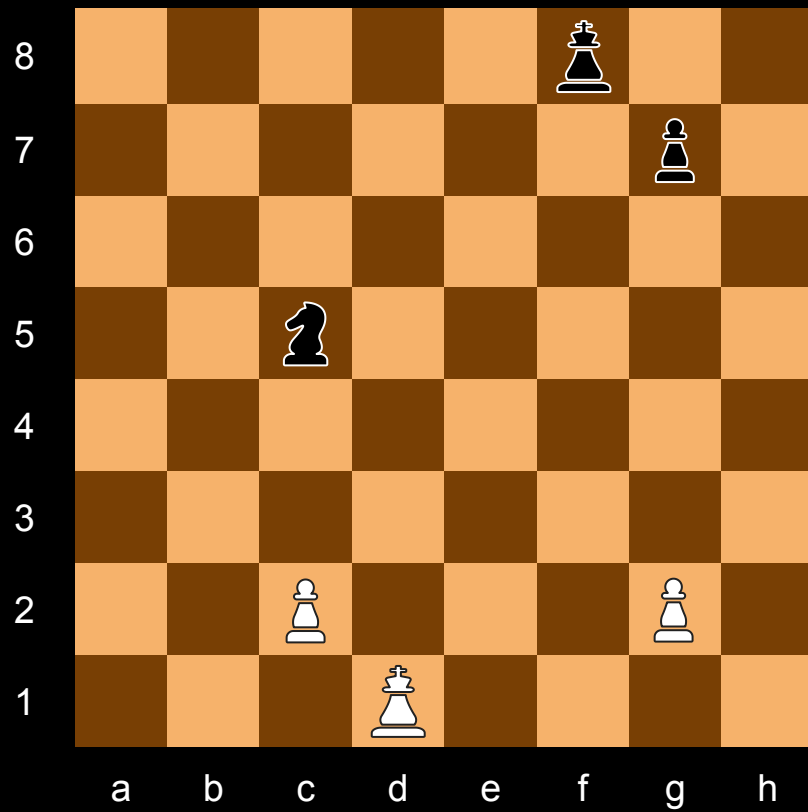
E2 → E4

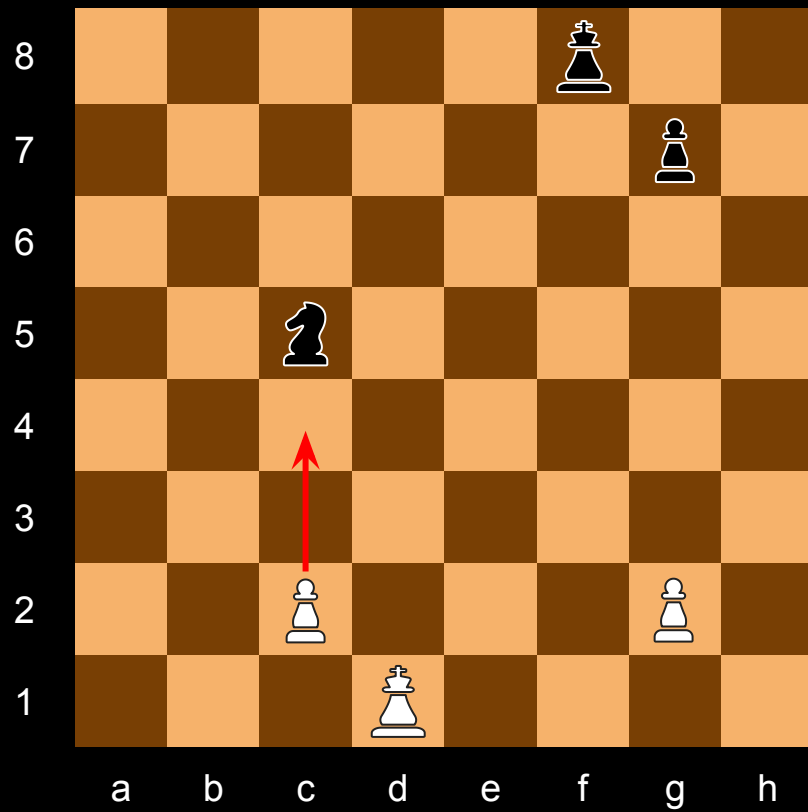
how much information is  
one move?



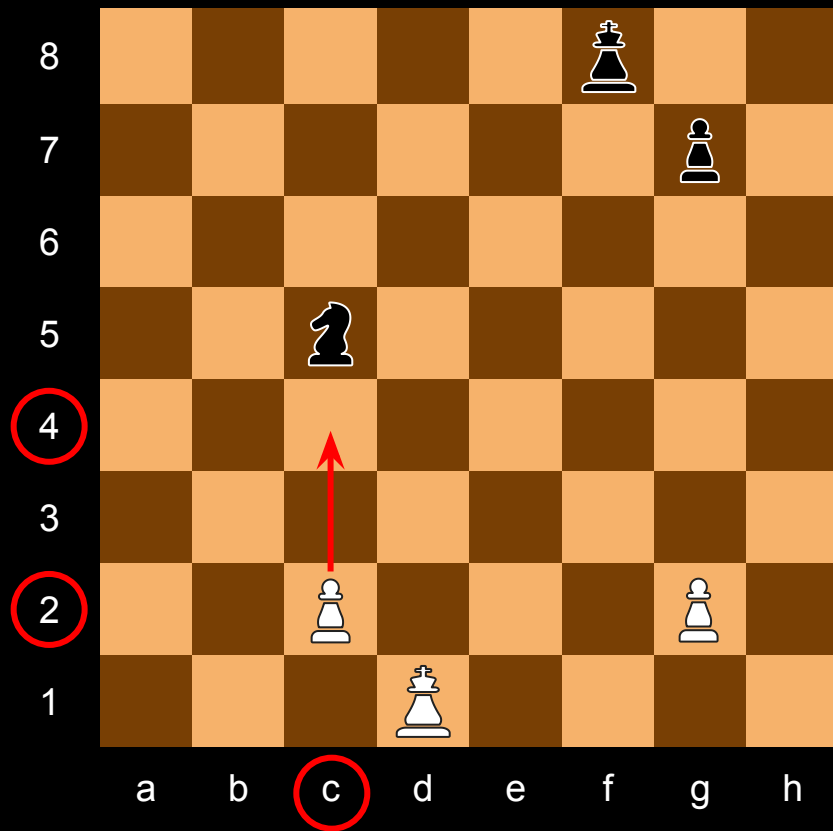
next\_move()

E2 → E4

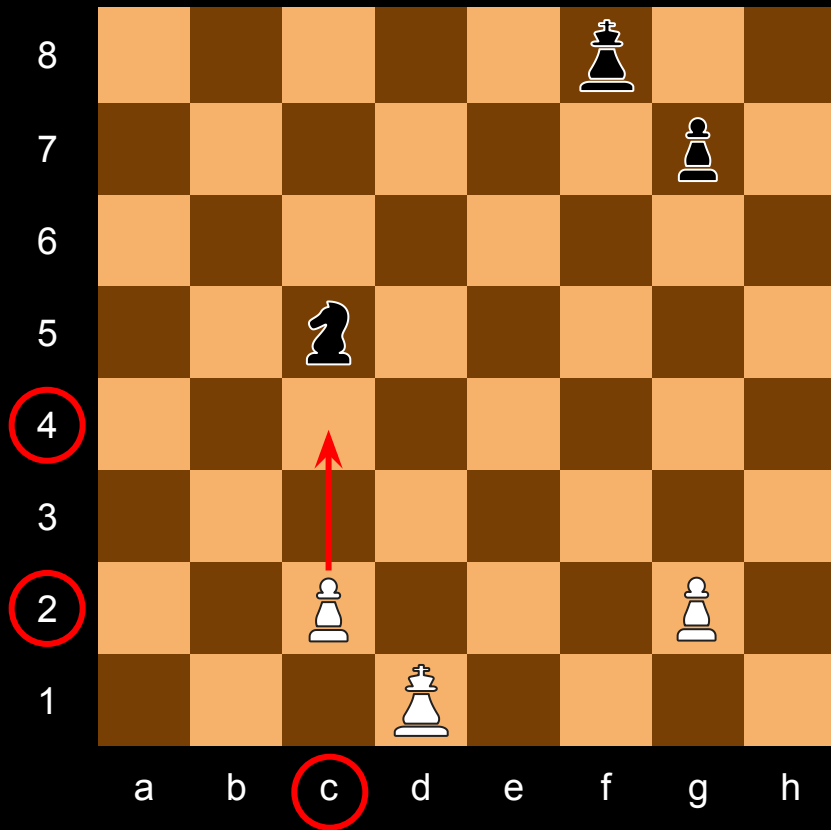




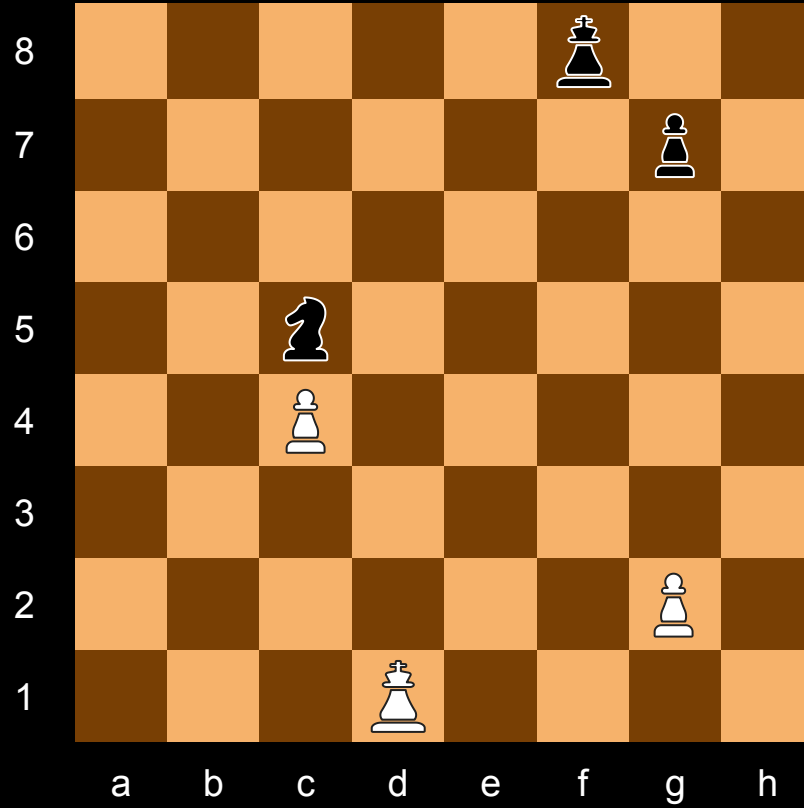




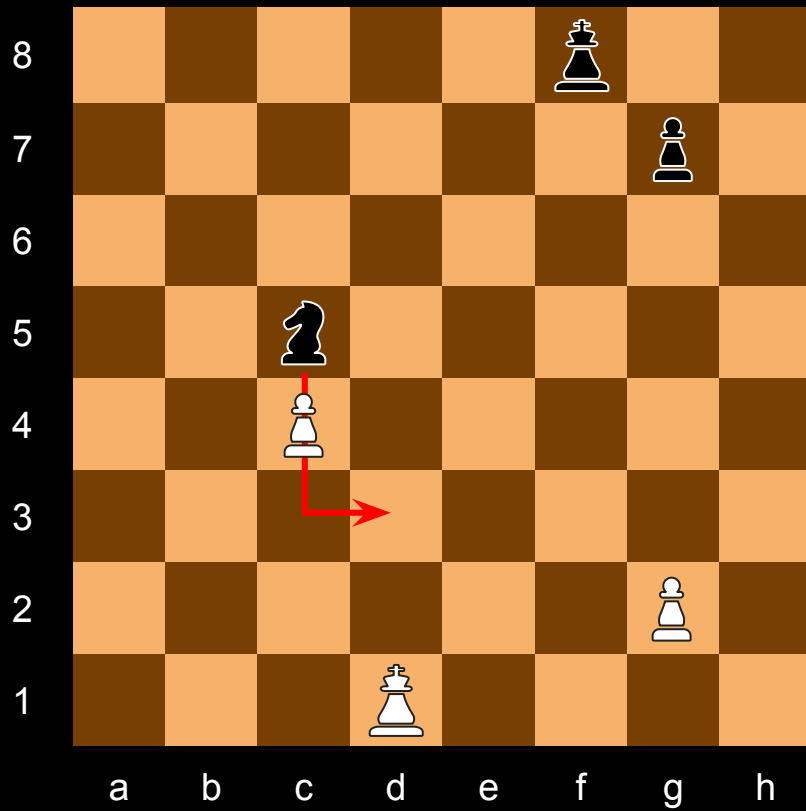
c2 → c4



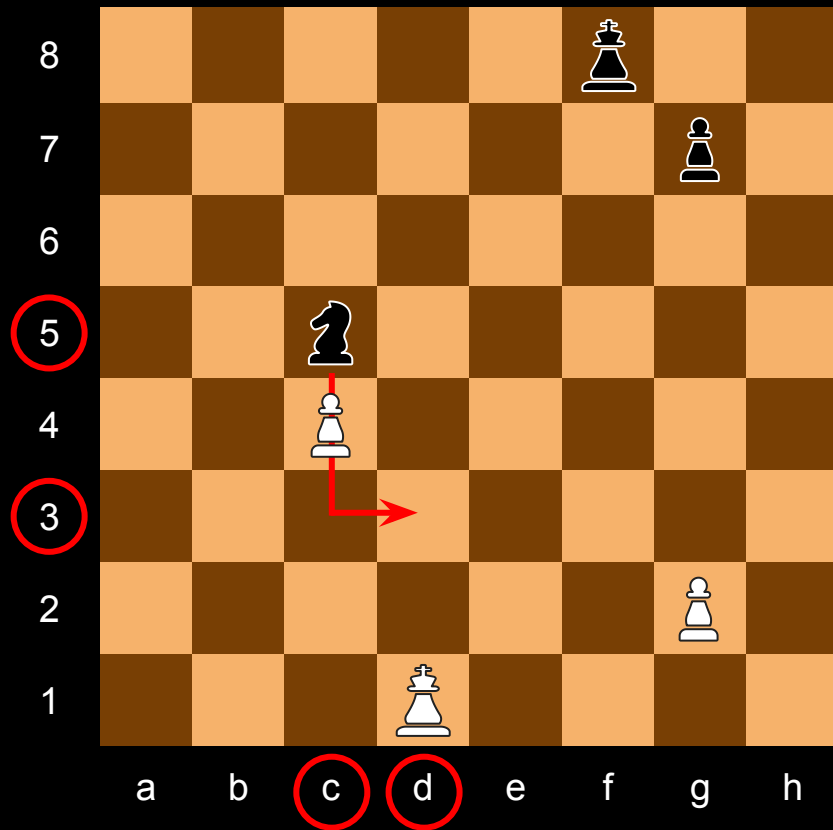
c2 → c4



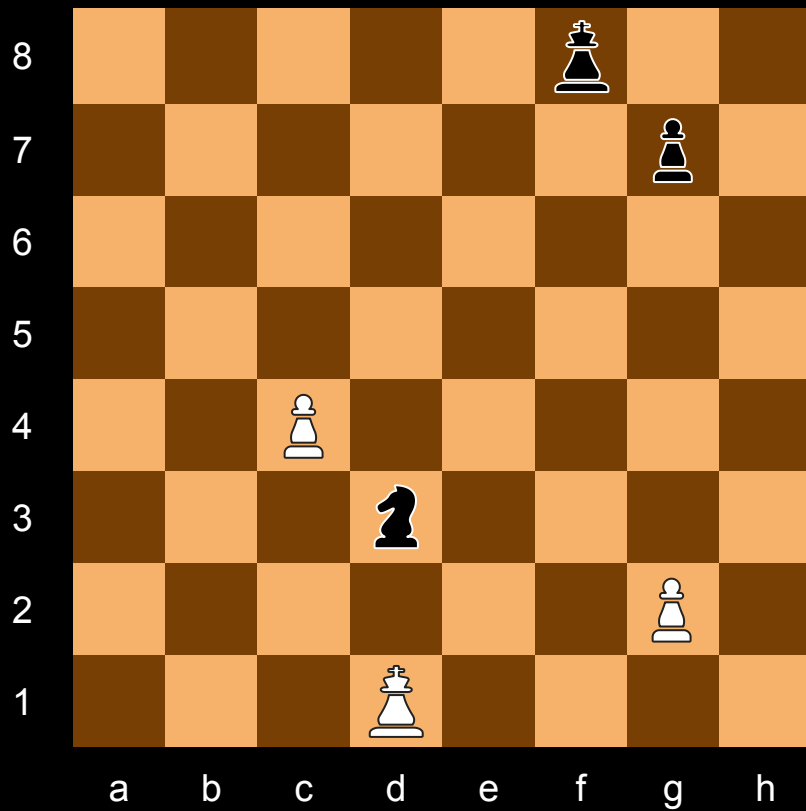
c2 → c4



c2 → c4  
c5 → d3



c2 → c4  
c5 → d3  
...



$$c_2 \rightarrow c_4$$

how many possibilities?

# 64 fields x 64 fields

how many possibilities?



$$64 \times 64 = 4096$$

possible moves\*

\*disregarding impossible moves

$$64 \times 64 = 4096$$

$$H = \log_2(4096) = 12$$

$$64 \times 64 = 4096$$

$$H = \log_2(4096) = 12$$

one chess move is 12 bits of information

an alternative way to calculate # bits

c 2 c 4

4 digits

c 2 c 4

4 digits

8 possible symbols per digit

c 2 c 4

4 digits

8 possible symbols per digit  
how many bits per digit?

c 2 c 4

4 digits

8 possible symbols per digit

how many bits per digit?

$$H_{digit} = \log_2(8) = 3$$



c 2 c 4

4 digits

8 possible symbols per digit

how many bits per digit?

$$H_{digit} = \log_2(8) = 3$$

$$H_{move} = \log_2(8) \times 4 = 12$$

$$H_{avg} = \log_2(S) \times n$$

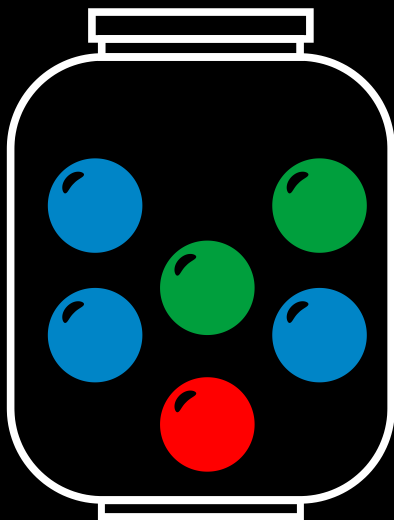
$S$ : number of possible symbols

$n$ : number of digits in our message

$$H_{max} = \lceil \log_2(S) \rceil \times n$$

when calculating bits for storage, we must  
always consider the worst case

drawing balls from an urn



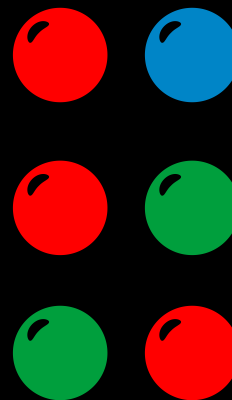
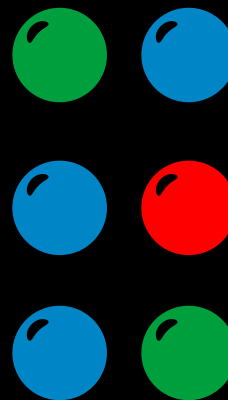
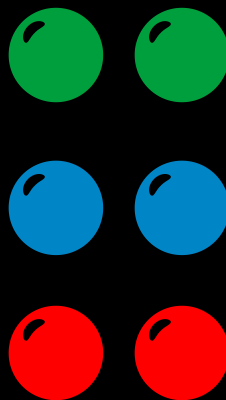
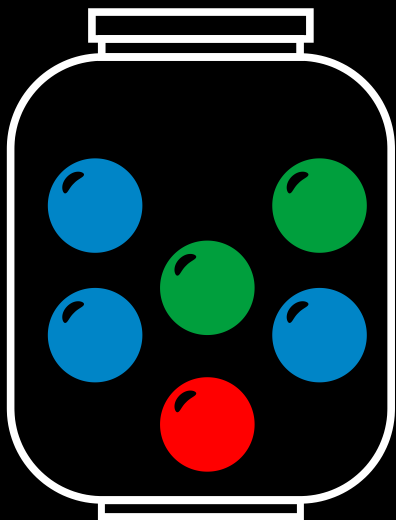
$$p(\text{blue}) = 1/2$$

$$p(\text{green}) = 2/3$$

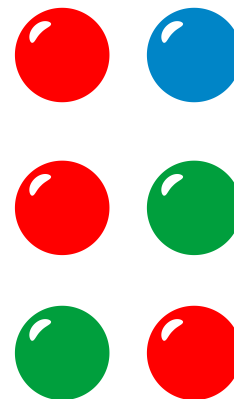
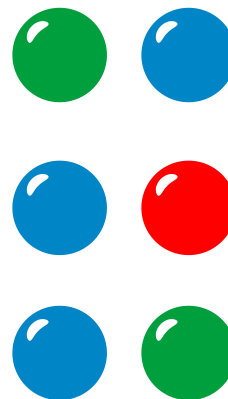
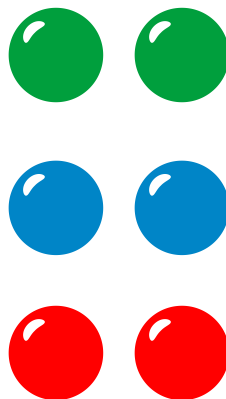
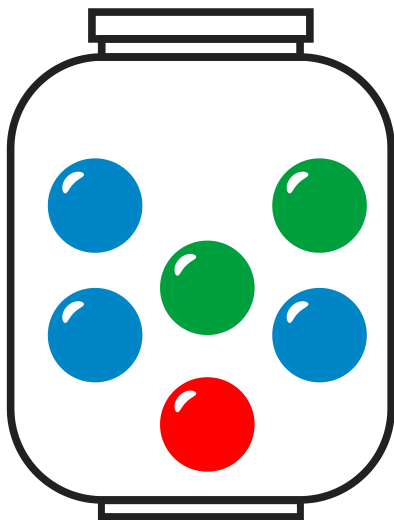
$$p(\text{red}) = 1/6$$

Example adapted from:

Pinkard, Henry, and Laura Waller. A Visual Introduction to Information Theory. arXiv:2206.07867, arXiv, 16 June 2022,  
<https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2206.07867>.



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<https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2206.07867>.

mastermind



# digits and # symbols

$\{A\}$

— —

$\{A\}$

A A

$\{A, B\}$

— —

$\{A, B\}$ 

AA, AB, BA, BB

$\{A, B, C\}$

— —

$\{A, B, C\}$

AA, AB, BA, BB,  
AC, BC, CA, CB, CC

$\{A, B, C, D\}$

— —



$$\{A, B, C, D\}$$

AA, AB, BA, BB, AC, BC, CA, CB,  
CC, AD, DA, BD, DB, CD, DC, DD

{A, B, C, D, E}

— —

$\{A, B, C, D, E\}$

AA, AB, BA, BB, AC, BC, CA, CB, CC,  
AD, DA, BD, DB, CD, DC, DD, AE, EA,  
BE, EB, CE, EC, DE, ED, EE

with # digits  $n = 2$

# symbols

# messages

1

1

2

4

3

9

4

16

5

25

with length  $n = 2$

# symbols

# messages

1

1

2

4

3

9

4

16

5

25

$f(x)$



and more digits?

$\{A, B\}$

— — —

$\{A, B\}$ 

AAA, AAB, ABA, ABB,  
BBB, BBA, BAA, BAB



$\{A, B\}$

— — — —

$\{A, B\}$

AAAA, AAAB, AABA, AABB,  
ABAA, ABAB, ABBA, ABBB,  
BAAA, BAAB, BABA, BABB,  
BBAA, BBAB, BBBA, BBBB

with # symbols  $S = 2$

# digits

# messages

1

2

2

4

3

8

4

16

5

32

with # symbols  $S = 2$

# digits

# messages

1

2

2

4

3

8

4

16

5

32

$f(x)$



with # symbols  $S = 2$

# digits

# messages

1

2

2

4

3

8

4

16

5

32

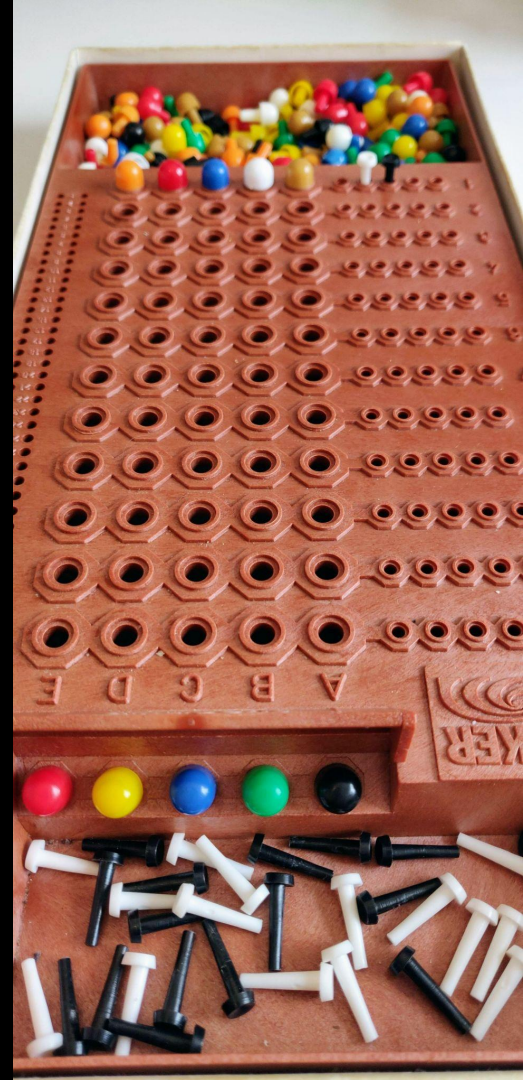
$f(x)$



# possible messages with  $n$  digits and  $S$  symbols

$$N = S^n$$

mastermind



eight colors



five slots



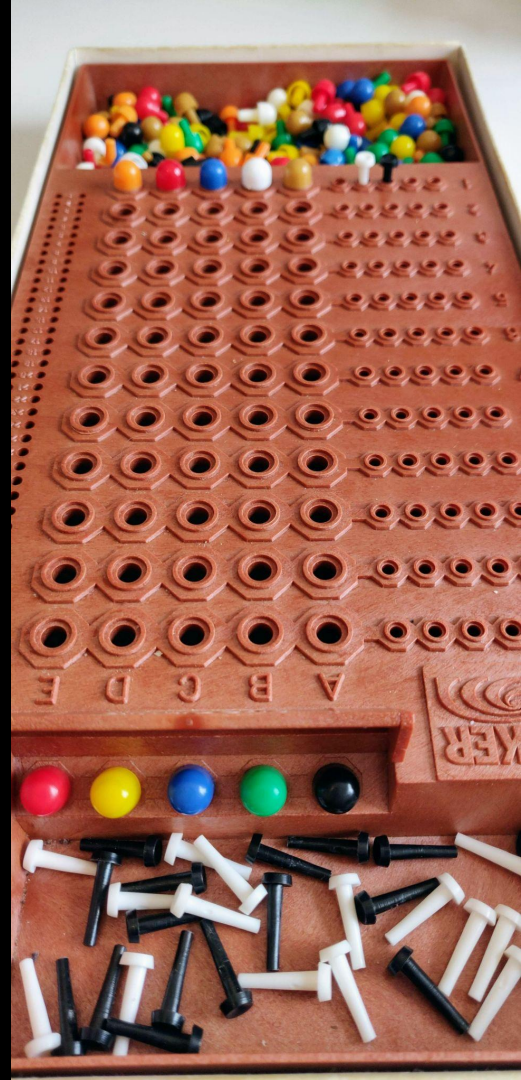
A

B

C

D

E





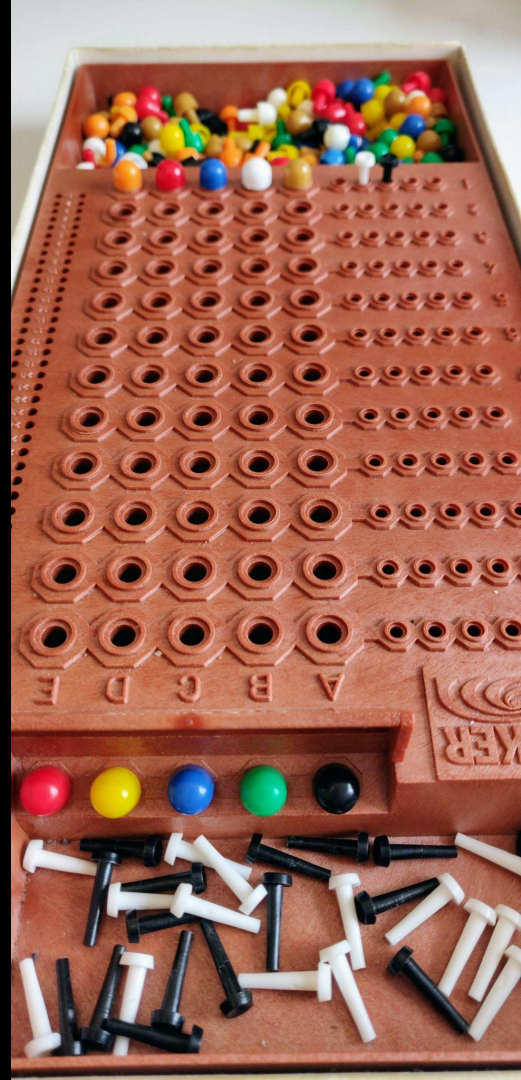
# possible permutations

$$N = 5^8 = 390625$$

# maximum entropy in bits

$$H_{max} = \log_2 5^8 = 18.575$$

hints reduce uncertainty (entropy)



first guess

opponent's hints



A

B

C

D

E

first guess

opponent's hints

correct



A

B

C

D

E

first guess

correct



A



B



C



D



E

opponent's hints



how much information did we get?



colors left



slots left



A

B

C

D

E



# new possible permutations?

$$N = 4^8 = 65536$$

# reduced entropy in bits?

$$H = \log_2 4^8 = 16$$