

## Kth Smallest Number in M Sorted Lists (Medium)

We'll cover the following ^

- Problem Statement
- Try it yourself
- Solution
- Code
  - Time complexity
  - Space complexity
- Similar Problems

### Problem Statement #

Given 'M' sorted arrays, find the K'th smallest number among all the arrays.

#### Example 1:

Input: L1=[2, 6, 8], L2=[3, 6, 7], L3=[1, 3, 4], K=5  
Output: 4  
Explanation: The 5th smallest number among all the arrays is 4, this can be verified from the merged list of all the arrays: [1, 2, 3, 3, 4, 6, 6, 7, 8]

#### Example 2:

Input: L1=[5, 8, 9], L2=[1, 7], K=3  
Output: 7  
Explanation: The 3rd smallest number among all the arrays is 7.

### Try it yourself #

Try solving this question here:

 Java

 Python3

 JS

 C++

```
1 def find_Kth_smallest(lists, k):
2     number = -1
3     # TODO: Write your code here
4     return number
5
6
7 def main():
8     print("Kth smallest number is: " +
9           str(find_Kth_smallest([[2, 6, 8], [3, 6, 7], [1, 3, 4]], 5)))
10
11
12 main()
```



## Solution #

This problem follows the **K-way merge** pattern and we can follow a similar approach as discussed in Merge K Sorted Lists

(<https://www.educative.io/collection/page/5668639101419520/5671464854355968/4611799594827776/>).

We can start merging all the arrays, but instead of inserting numbers into a merged list, we will keep count to see how many elements have been inserted in the merged list. Once that count is equal to 'K', we have found our required number.

A big difference from Merge K Sorted Lists

(<https://www.educative.io/collection/page/5668639101419520/5671464854355968/4611799594827776/>) is that in this problem, the input is a list of arrays compared to LinkedLists. This means that when we want to push the next number in the heap we need to know what the index of the current number in the current array was. To handle this, we will need to keep track of the array and the element indices.

## Code #

Here is what our algorithm will look like:

Java

Python3

C++







JS

```

1  from heapq import *
2
3
4  def find_Kth_smallest(lists, k):
5      minHeap = []
6
7      # put the 1st element of each list in the min heap
8      for i in range(len(lists)):
9          heappush(minHeap, (lists[i][0], 0, lists[i]))
10
11     # take the smallest(top) element form the min heap, if the running count is equal to k r
12     numberCount, number = 0, 0
13     while minHeap:
14         number, i, list = heappop(minHeap)
15         numberCount += 1
16         if numberCount == k:
17             break
18         # if the array of the top element has more elements, add the next element to the heap
19         if len(list) > i+1:
20             heappush(minHeap, (list[i+1], i+1, list))
21
22     return number
23
24
25 def main():
26     print("Kth smallest number is: " +
27         str(find_Kth_smallest([[2, 6, 8], [3, 6, 7], [1, 3, 4]], 5)))
28
29

```

```
30 main()
31
```



### Time complexity #

Since we'll be going through at most 'K' elements among all the arrays, and we will remove/add one element in the heap in each step, the time complexity of the above algorithm will be  $O(K * \log M)$  where 'M' is the total number of input arrays.

### Space complexity #

The space complexity will be  $O(M)$  because, at any time, our min-heap will be storing one number from all the 'M' input arrays.

## Similar Problems #

**Problem 1:** Given 'M' sorted arrays, find the median number among all arrays.

**Solution:** This problem is similar to our parent problem with  $K = \text{Median}$ . So if there are 'N' total numbers in all the arrays we need to find the K'th minimum number where  $K = N/2$ .

**Problem 2:** Given a list of 'K' sorted arrays, merge them into one sorted list.

**Solution:** This problem is similar to Merge K Sorted Lists

(<https://www.educative.io/collection/page/5668639101419520/5671464854355968/4611799594827776/>) except that the input is a list of arrays compared to **LinkedLists**. To handle this, we can use a similar approach as discussed in our parent problem by keeping a track of the array and the element indices.


← Back


Next →

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✓ Completed

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