

Chapter 1

Introduction

Competitive programming combines two topics: (1) the design of algorithms and (2) the implementation of algorithms.

The **design of algorithms** consists of problem solving and mathematical thinking. Skills for analyzing problems and solving them creatively are needed. An algorithm for solving a problem has to be both correct and efficient, and the core of the problem is often about inventing an efficient algorithm.

Theoretical knowledge of algorithms is important to competitive programmers. Typically, a solution to a problem is a combination of well-known techniques and new insights. The techniques that appear in competitive programming also form the basis for the scientific research of algorithms.

The **implementation of algorithms** requires good programming skills. In competitive programming, the solutions are graded by testing an implemented algorithm using a set of test cases. Thus, it is not enough that the idea of the algorithm is correct, but the implementation also has to be correct.

A good coding style in contests is straightforward and concise. Programs should be written quickly, because there is not much time available. Unlike in traditional software engineering, the programs are short (usually at most a few hundred lines of code), and they do not need to be maintained after the contest.

Programming languages

At the moment, the most popular programming languages used in contests are C++, Python and Java. For example, in Google Code Jam 2017, among the best 3,000 participants, 79 % used C++, 16 % used Python and 8 % used Java [29]. Some participants also used several languages.

Many people think that C++ is the best choice for a competitive programmer, and C++ is nearly always available in contest systems. The benefits of using C++ are that it is a very efficient language and its standard library contains a large collection of data structures and algorithms.

On the other hand, it is good to master several languages and understand their strengths. For example, if large integers are needed in the problem, Python can be a good choice, because it contains built-in operations for calculating with

large integers. Still, most problems in programming contests are set so that using a specific programming language is not an unfair advantage.

All example programs in this book are written in C++, and the standard library's data structures and algorithms are often used. The programs follow the C++11 standard, which can be used in most contests nowadays. If you cannot program in C++ yet, now is a good time to start learning.

C++ code template

A typical C++ code template for competitive programming looks like this:

```
#include <bits/stdc++.h>

using namespace std;

int main() {
    // solution comes here
}
```

The `#include` line at the beginning of the code is a feature of the `g++` compiler that allows us to include the entire standard library. Thus, it is not needed to separately include libraries such as `iostream`, `vector` and `algorithm`, but rather they are available automatically.

The `using` line declares that the classes and functions of the standard library can be used directly in the code. Without the `using` line we would have to write, for example, `std::cout`, but now it suffices to write `cout`.

The code can be compiled using the following command:

```
g++ -std=c++11 -O2 -Wall test.cpp -o test
```

This command produces a binary file `test` from the source code `test.cpp`. The compiler follows the C++11 standard (`-std=c++11`), optimizes the code (`-O2`) and shows warnings about possible errors (`-Wall`).

Input and output

In most contests, standard streams are used for reading input and writing output. In C++, the standard streams are `cin` for input and `cout` for output. In addition, the C functions `scanf` and `printf` can be used.

The input for the program usually consists of numbers and strings that are separated with spaces and newlines. They can be read from the `cin` stream as follows:

```
int a, b;
string x;
cin >> a >> b >> x;
```

This kind of code always works, assuming that there is at least one space or newline between each element in the input. For example, the above code can read both of the following inputs:

```
123 456 monkey
```

```
123    456
monkey
```

The cout stream is used for output as follows:

```
int a = 123, b = 456;
string x = "monkey";
cout << a << " " << b << " " << x << "\n";
```

Input and output is sometimes a bottleneck in the program. The following lines at the beginning of the code make input and output more efficient:

```
ios::sync_with_stdio(0);
cin.tie(0);
```

Note that the newline "\n" works faster than endl, because endl always causes a flush operation.

The C functions scanf and printf are an alternative to the C++ standard streams. They are usually a bit faster, but they are also more difficult to use. The following code reads two integers from the input:

```
int a, b;
scanf("%d %d", &a, &b);
```

The following code prints two integers:

```
int a = 123, b = 456;
printf("%d %d\n", a, b);
```

Sometimes the program should read a whole line from the input, possibly containing spaces. This can be accomplished by using the getline function:

```
string s;
getline(cin, s);
```

If the amount of data is unknown, the following loop is useful:

```
while (cin >> x) {
    // code
}
```

This loop reads elements from the input one after another, until there is no more data available in the input.

In some contest systems, files are used for input and output. An easy solution for this is to write the code as usual using standard streams, but add the following lines to the beginning of the code:

```
freopen("input.txt", "r", stdin);
freopen("output.txt", "w", stdout);
```

After this, the program reads the input from the file "input.txt" and writes the output to the file "output.txt".

Working with numbers

Integers

The most used integer type in competitive programming is `int`, which is a 32-bit type with a value range of $-2^{31} \dots 2^{31} - 1$ or about $-2 \cdot 10^9 \dots 2 \cdot 10^9$. If the type `int` is not enough, the 64-bit type `long long` can be used. It has a value range of $-2^{63} \dots 2^{63} - 1$ or about $-9 \cdot 10^{18} \dots 9 \cdot 10^{18}$.

The following code defines a `long long` variable:

```
long long x = 123456789123456789LL;
```

The suffix `LL` means that the type of the number is `long long`.

A common mistake when using the type `long long` is that the type `int` is still used somewhere in the code. For example, the following code contains a subtle error:

```
int a = 123456789;
long long b = a*a;
cout << b << "\n"; // -1757895751
```

Even though the variable `b` is of type `long long`, both numbers in the expression `a*a` are of type `int` and the result is also of type `int`. Because of this, the variable `b` will contain a wrong result. The problem can be solved by changing the type of `a` to `long long` or by changing the expression to `(long long)a*a`.

Usually contest problems are set so that the type `long long` is enough. Still, it is good to know that the `g++` compiler also provides a 128-bit type `__int128_t` with a value range of $-2^{127} \dots 2^{127} - 1$ or about $-10^{38} \dots 10^{38}$. However, this type is not available in all contest systems.

Modular arithmetic

We denote by $x \bmod m$ the remainder when x is divided by m . For example, $17 \bmod 5 = 2$, because $17 = 3 \cdot 5 + 2$.

Sometimes, the answer to a problem is a very large number but it is enough to output it "modulo m ", i.e., the remainder when the answer is divided by m (for

example, "modulo $10^9 + 7$ "). The idea is that even if the actual answer is very large, it suffices to use the types `int` and `long long`.

An important property of the remainder is that in addition, subtraction and multiplication, the remainder can be taken before the operation:

$$\begin{aligned}(a + b) \bmod m &= (a \bmod m + b \bmod m) \bmod m \\(a - b) \bmod m &= (a \bmod m - b \bmod m) \bmod m \\(a \cdot b) \bmod m &= (a \bmod m \cdot b \bmod m) \bmod m\end{aligned}$$

Thus, we can take the remainder after every operation and the numbers will never become too large.

For example, the following code calculates $n!$, the factorial of n , modulo m :

```
long long x = 1;
for (int i = 2; i <= n; i++) {
    x = (x*i)%m;
}
cout << x%m << "\n";
```

Usually we want the remainder to always be between $0 \dots m - 1$. However, in C++ and other languages, the remainder of a negative number is either zero or negative. An easy way to make sure there are no negative remainders is to first calculate the remainder as usual and then add m if the result is negative:

```
x = x%m;
if (x < 0) x += m;
```

However, this is only needed when there are subtractions in the code and the remainder may become negative.

Floating point numbers

The usual floating point types in competitive programming are the 64-bit `double` and, as an extension in the g++ compiler, the 80-bit `long double`. In most cases, `double` is enough, but `long double` is more accurate.

The required precision of the answer is usually given in the problem statement. An easy way to output the answer is to use the `printf` function and give the number of decimal places in the formatting string. For example, the following code prints the value of x with 9 decimal places:

```
printf("%.9f\n", x);
```

A difficulty when using floating point numbers is that some numbers cannot be represented accurately as floating point numbers, and there will be rounding errors. For example, the result of the following code is surprising:

```
double x = 0.3*3+0.1;
printf("%.20f\n", x); // 0.99999999999999988898
```

Due to a rounding error, the value of x is a bit smaller than 1, while the correct value would be 1.

It is risky to compare floating point numbers with the `==` operator, because it is possible that the values should be equal but they are not because of precision errors. A better way to compare floating point numbers is to assume that two numbers are equal if the difference between them is less than ϵ , where ϵ is a small number.

In practice, the numbers can be compared as follows ($\epsilon = 10^{-9}$):

```
if (abs(a-b) < 1e-9) {  
    // a and b are equal  
}
```

Note that while floating point numbers are inaccurate, integers up to a certain limit can still be represented accurately. For example, using `double`, it is possible to accurately represent all integers whose absolute value is at most 2^{53} .

Shortening code

Short code is ideal in competitive programming, because programs should be written as fast as possible. Because of this, competitive programmers often define shorter names for datatypes and other parts of code.

Type names

Using the command `typedef` it is possible to give a shorter name to a datatype. For example, the name `long long` is long, so we can define a shorter name `ll`:

```
typedef long long ll;
```

After this, the code

```
long long a = 123456789;  
long long b = 987654321;  
cout << a*b << "\n";
```

can be shortened as follows:

```
ll a = 123456789;  
ll b = 987654321;  
cout << a*b << "\n";
```

The command `typedef` can also be used with more complex types. For example, the following code gives the name `vi` for a vector of integers and the name `pi` for a pair that contains two integers.

```
typedef vector<int> vi;  
typedef pair<int,int> pi;
```

Macros

Another way to shorten code is to define **macros**. A macro means that certain strings in the code will be changed before the compilation. In C++, macros are defined using the `#define` keyword.

For example, we can define the following macros:

```
#define F first
#define S second
#define PB push_back
#define MP make_pair
```

After this, the code

```
v.push_back(make_pair(y1,x1));
v.push_back(make_pair(y2,x2));
int d = v[i].first+v[i].second;
```

can be shortened as follows:

```
v.PB(MP(y1,x1));
v.PB(MP(y2,x2));
int d = v[i].F+v[i].S;
```

A macro can also have parameters which makes it possible to shorten loops and other structures. For example, we can define the following macro:

```
#define REP(i,a,b) for (int i = a; i <= b; i++)
```

After this, the code

```
for (int i = 1; i <= n; i++) {
    search(i);
}
```

can be shortened as follows:

```
REP(i,1,n) {
    search(i);
}
```

Sometimes macros cause bugs that may be difficult to detect. For example, consider the following macro that calculates the square of a number:

```
#define SQ(a) a*a
```

This macro *does not* always work as expected. For example, the code

```
cout << SQ(3+3) << "\n";
```

corresponds to the code

```
cout << 3+3*3+3 << "\n"; // 15
```

A better version of the macro is as follows:

```
#define SQ(a) (a)*(a)
```

Now the code

```
cout << SQ(3+3) << "\n";
```

corresponds to the code

```
cout << (3+3)*(3+3) << "\n"; // 36
```

Mathematics

Mathematics plays an important role in competitive programming, and it is not possible to become a successful competitive programmer without having good mathematical skills. This section discusses some important mathematical concepts and formulas that are needed later in the book.

Sum formulas

Each sum of the form

$$\sum_{x=1}^n x^k = 1^k + 2^k + 3^k + \dots + n^k,$$

where k is a positive integer, has a closed-form formula that is a polynomial of degree $k + 1$. For example¹,

$$\sum_{x=1}^n x = 1 + 2 + 3 + \dots + n = \frac{n(n+1)}{2}$$

and

$$\sum_{x=1}^n x^2 = 1^2 + 2^2 + 3^2 + \dots + n^2 = \frac{n(n+1)(2n+1)}{6}.$$

An **arithmetic progression** is a sequence of numbers where the difference between any two consecutive numbers is constant. For example,

3, 7, 11, 15

¹ There is even a general formula for such sums, called **Faulhaber's formula**, but it is too complex to be presented here.