

Combinatorial Search



- ▶ permutations
- ▶ backtracking
- ▶ counting
- ▶ subsets
- ▶ paths in a graph

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Overview

Exhaustive search. Iterate through all elements of a search space.

Backtracking. Systematic method for examining **feasible** solutions to a problem, by systematically eliminating infeasible solutions.

Applicability. Huge range of problems (include NP-hard ones).

Caveat. Search space is typically exponential in size \Rightarrow effectiveness may be limited to relatively small instances.

Caveat to the caveat. Backtracking may **prune** search space to reasonable size, even for relatively large instances

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Warmup: enumerate N-bit strings

Problem: process all 2^N N-bit strings (stay tuned for applications).

Equivalent to **counting in binary** from 0 to $2^N - 1$.

- maintain $a[i]$ where $a[i]$ represents bit i
- initialize all bits to 0
- simple recursive method does the job (call `enumerate(0)`)

```
private void enumerate(int k)
{
    if (k == N)
    { process(); return; }
    enumerate(k+1);
    a[k] = 1;
    enumerate(k+1);
    a[k] = 0;
}
```

starts with all 0s

```
0 0 0 0
0 0 0 1
0 0 1 0
0 0 1 1
0 1 0 0
0 1 0 1
0 1 1 0
0 1 1 1
1 0 0 0
1 0 0 1
1 0 1 0
1 0 1 1
1 1 0 0
1 1 0 1
1 1 1 0
1 1 1 1
```

example showing cleanups that zero out digits

ends with all 0s

Invariant (prove by induction):

Enumerates all (N-k)-bit strings and **cleans up after itself.**

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Warmup: enumerate N-bit strings (full implementation)

Equivalent to **counting in binary** from 0 to $2^N - 1$.

```
public class Counter
{
    private int N; // number of bits
    private int[] a; // bits (0 or 1)

    public Counter(int N)
    {
        this.N = N;
        a = new int[N];
        for (int i = 0; i < N; i++)
            a[i] = 0; // optional
        enumerate(0); // (in this case)
    }

    private void enumerate(int k)
    {
        if (k == N)
        { process(); return; }
        enumerate(k+1);
        a[k] = 1;
        enumerate(k+1);
        a[k] = 0;
    }

    public static void main(String[] args)
    {
        int N = Integer.parseInt(args[0]);
        Counter c = new Counter(N);
    }
}
```

all the programs in this lecture are variations on this theme

```
private void process()
{
    for (int i = 0; i < N; i++)
        StdOut.print(a[i]);
    StdOut.println();
}
```

```
% java Counter 4
0000
0001
0010
0011
0100
0101
0110
0111
1000
1001
1010
1011
1100
1101
1110
1111
```

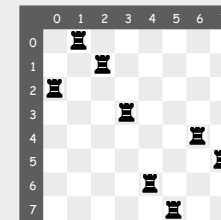
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- ▶ permutations
- ▶ backtracking
- ▶ counting
- ▶ subsets
- ▶ paths in a graph

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N-rooks Problem

How many ways are there to place
N rooks on an N-by-N board so that no rook can attack any other?



original problem: N = 8

```
int[] a = { 1, 2, 0, 3, 6, 7, 4, 5 };
```

No two in the same row, so represent solution with an array
 $a[i]$ = column of rook in row i .
No two in the same column, so array entries are all different
 $a[]$ is a **permutation** (rearrangement of $0, 1, \dots, N-1$)

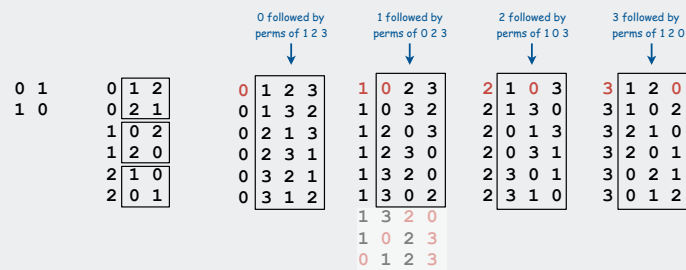
Answer: There are $N!$ non mutually-attacking placements.
Challenge: Enumerate them all.

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Enumerating permutations

Recursive algorithm to enumerate all $N!$ permutations of size N :

- Start with $0\ 1\ 2\ \dots\ N-1$.
- For each value of i
 - swap i into position 0
 - enumerate all $(N-1)!$ arrangements of $a[1..N-1]$
 - clean up (swap i and 0 back into position)



example showing cleanup swaps
that bring perm back to original

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N-rooks problem (enumerating all permutations): scaffolding

```
public class Rooks
{
    private int N;
    private int[] a;

    public Rooks(int N)
    {
        this.N = N;
        a = new int[N];
        for (int i = 0; i < N; i++)
            a[i] = i;
        enumerate(0);
    }

    private void enumerate(int k)
    { /* See next slide. */ }

    private void exch(int i, int j)
    { int t = a[i]; a[i] = a[j]; a[j] = t; }

    private void process()
    {
        for (int i = 0; i < N; i++)
            StdOut.print(a[i] + " ");
        StdOut.println();
    }

    public static void main(String[] args)
    {
        int N = Integer.parseInt(args[0]);
        Rooks t = new Rooks(N);
        t.enumerate(0);
    }
}
```

← initialize a[0..N-1] to 0..N-1

```
% java Rooks 3
0 1 2
0 2 1
1 0 2
1 2 0
2 1 0
2 0 1
```

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N-rooks problem (enumerating all permutations): recursive enumeration

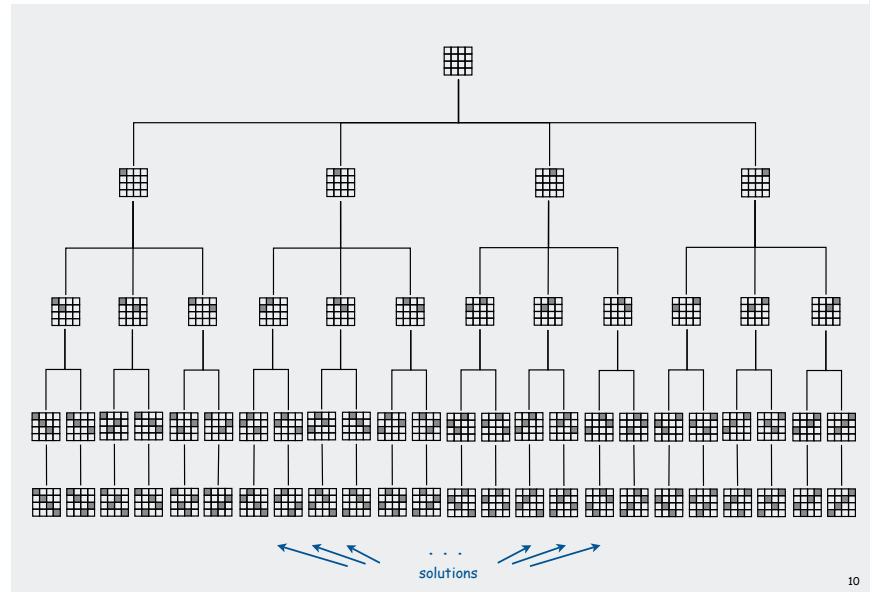
Recursive algorithm to enumerate all $N!$ permutations of size N :

- Start with $0\ 1\ 2\ \dots\ N-1$.
- For each value of i
 - swap i into position 0
 - enumerate all $(N-1)!$ arrangements of $a[1..N-1]$
 - clean up (swap i and 0 back into position)

```
private void enumerate(int k)
{
    if (k == N)
    {
        process();
        return;
    }
    for (int i = k; i < N; i++)
    {
        exch(a, k, i);
        enumerate(k+1);
        exch(a, k, i); // clean up
    }
}
```

```
% java Rooks 4
0 1 2 3
0 1 3 2
0 2 1 3
0 2 3 1
0 3 2 1
0 3 1 2
1 0 2 3
1 0 3 2
1 2 0 3
1 2 3 0
1 3 2 0
1 3 0 2
2 1 0 3
2 1 3 0
2 0 1 3
2 0 3 1
2 3 0 1
2 3 1 0
3 1 2 0
3 1 0 2
3 2 1 0
3 2 0 1
3 0 2 1
3 0 1 2
```

4-Rooks search tree



N-rooks problem: back-of-envelope running time estimate

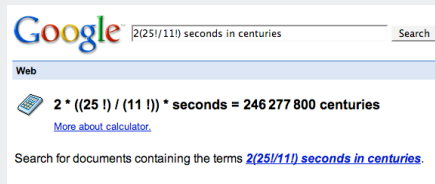
[Studying slow way to compute $N!$ but good warmup for calculations.]

```
% java Rooks 10
3628800 solutions ← instant

% java Rooks 11
39916800 solutions ← about 2 seconds

% java Rooks 12
479001600 solutions ← about 24 seconds (checks with N! hypothesis)
```

Hypothesis: Running time is about $2(N! / 11!)$ seconds.

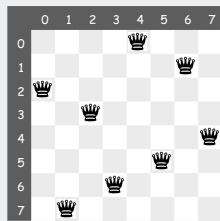


```
% java Rooks 25
← millions of centuries
```

- ▶ permutations
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- ▶ paths in a graph

N-Queens problem

How many ways are there to place
N queens on an N-by-N board so that no queen can attack any other?

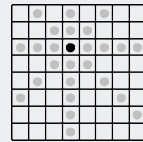


original problem: N = 8

```
int[] a = { 4, 6, 0, 2, 7, 5, 3, 1 };
```

Representation. Same as for rooks:
represent solution as a permutation: $a[i]$ = column of queen in row i .

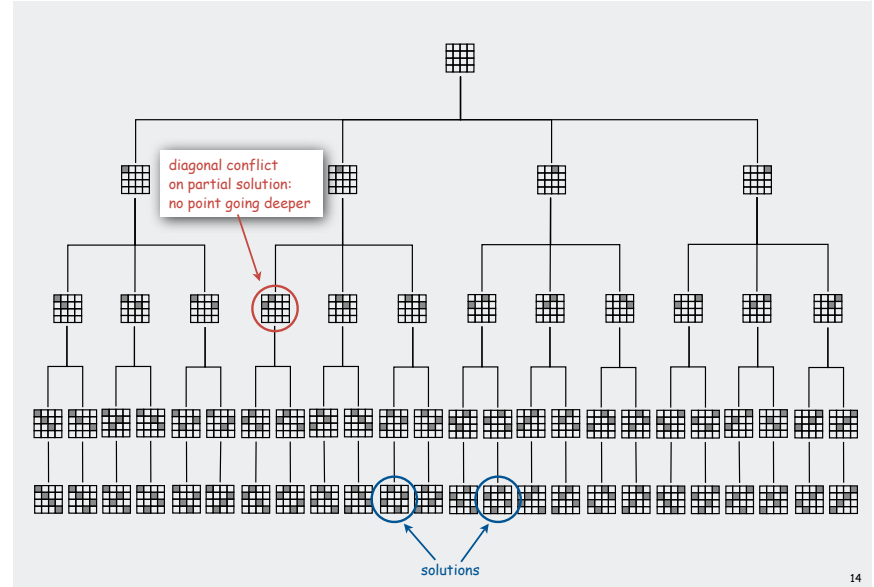
Additional constraint: no diagonal attack is possible



Challenge: Enumerate (or even count) the solutions

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4-Queens search tree



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N Queens: Backtracking solution

Iterate through elements of search space.

- when there are N possible choices, make one choice and recur.
- if the choice is a dead end, **backtrack** to previous choice, and make next available choice.

Identifying dead ends allows us to **prune** the search tree

For N queens:

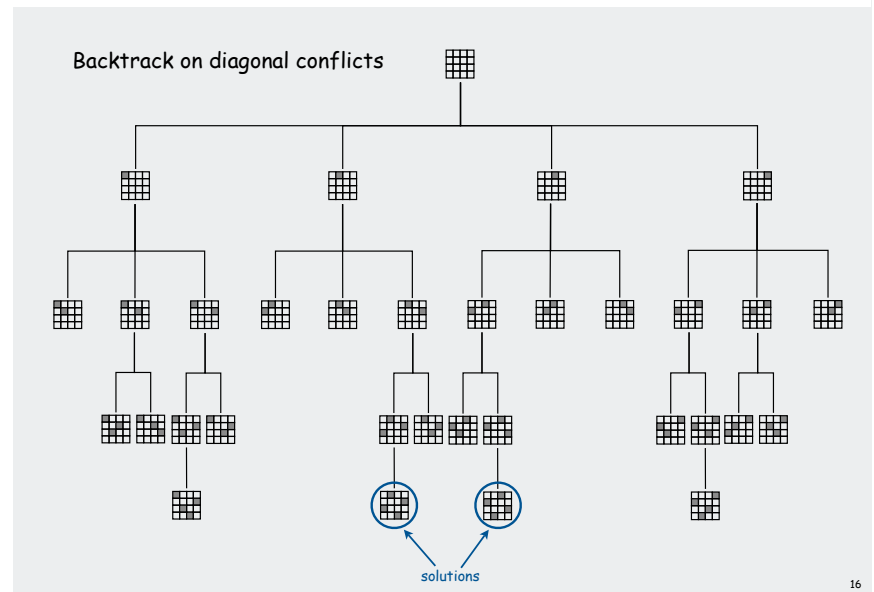
- dead end: a diagonal conflict
- pruning: backtrack and try next row when diagonal conflict found

In general, improvements are possible:

- try to make an "intelligent" choice
- try to reduce cost of choosing/backtracking

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4-Queens Search Tree (pruned)



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N-Queens: Backtracking solution

```
private boolean backtrack(int k)
{
    for (int i = 0; i < k; i++)
    {
        if ((a[i] - a[k]) == (k - i)) return true;
        if ((a[k] - a[i]) == (k - i)) return true;
    }
    return false;
}

private void enumerate(int k)
{
    if (k == N)
    {
        process();
        return;
    }
    for (int i = k; i < N; i++)
    {
        exch(a, k, i);
        if (!backtrack(k)) enumerate(k+1);
        exch(a, k, i);
    }
}
}
```

stop enumerating if adding the n^{th} queen leads to a diagonal violation

```
% java Queens 4
1 3 0 2
2 0 3 1

% java Queens 5
0 2 4 1 3
0 3 1 4 2
1 3 0 2 4
1 4 2 0 3
2 0 3 1 4
2 4 1 3 0
3 1 4 2 0
3 0 2 4 1
4 1 3 0 2
4 2 0 3 1

% java Queens 6
1 3 5 0 2 4
2 5 1 4 0 3
3 0 4 1 5 2
4 2 0 5 3 1
```

N-Queens: Effectiveness of backtracking

Pruning the search tree leads to enormous time savings

N	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Q(N)	0	0	2	10	4	40	92	352	724	2,680	14,200
N!	2	6	24	120	720	5,040	40,320	362,880	3,628,800	39,916,800	479,001,600

N	13	14	15	16
Q(N)	73,712	365,596	2,279,184	14,772,512
N!	6,227,020,800	87,178,291,200	1,307,674,368,000	20,922,789,888,000

savings: factor of more than 1-million

N-Queens: How many solutions?

Answer to original question easy to obtain:

- add an instance variable to count solutions (initialized to 0)
- change process() to increment the counter
- add a method to return its value

```
% java Queens 4
2 solutions

% java Queens 8
92 solutions

% java Queens 16
14772512 solutions
```

Source: On-line encyclopedia of integer sequences, N. J. Sloane [sequence A000170]

N	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Q(N)	0	0	2	10	4	40	92	352	724	2,680	14,200	73,712	365,596	2,279,184
N	16	17	18	19	...		25							
Q(N)	14,772,512	95,815,104	666,090,624	4,968,057,848			2,207,893,435,808,350							

took 53 years of CPU time (2005)

N-queens problem: back-of-envelope running time estimate

Hypothesis ??

```
% java Queens 13
73712 solutions ← about a second

% java Queens 14
365596 solutions ← about 7 seconds

% java Queens 15
2279184 solutions ← about 49 seconds

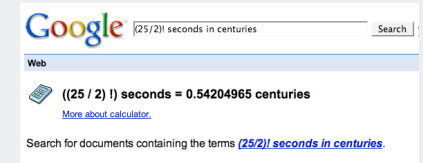
% java Queens 16
14772512 solutions ← about 360 seconds
```

ratio
↓
6.32

6.73

7.38

Hypothesis: Running time is about $(N/2)!$ seconds.



```
% java Queens 25 ← about 54 years ✓
```

- ▶ permutations
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- ▶ paths in a graph

Counting: Java Implementation

Problem: enumerate all N-digit base-R numbers
Solution: generalize binary counter in lecture warmup

enumerate N-digit base-R numbers

```
private static void enumerate(int k)
{
    if (k == N)
    { process(); return; }

    for (int n = 0; n < R; n++)
    {
        a[k] = n;
        enumerate(k + 1);
    }
    a[k] = 0; // ← clean up not needed: Why?
}
```

enumerate binary numbers (from warmup)

```
private void enumerate(int k)
{
    if (k == N)
    { process(); return; }
    enumerate(k+1);
    a[k] = 1;
    enumerate(k+1);
    a[k] = 0; // ← clean up
}
```

0 0 0	1 0 0	2 0 0
0 0 1	1 0 1	2 0 1
0 0 2	1 0 2	2 0 2
0 1 0	1 1 0	2 1 0
0 1 1	1 1 1	2 1 1
0 1 2	1 1 2	2 1 2
0 2 0	1 2 0	2 2 0
0 2 1	1 2 1	2 2 1
0 2 2	1 2 2	2 2 2

example showing cleanups that zero out digits

0 2 0
0 0 0

Counting application: Sudoku

Problem:
 Fill 9-by-9 grid so that every row, column, and box contains each of the digits 1 through 9.

7	8		2	1		3		
5								
	4			8		2	6	
3			1				9	
	9		6		7			4

Remark: Natural generalization is NP-hard.

Counting application: Sudoku

Problem:
 Fill 9-by-9 grid so that every row, column, and box contains each of the digits 1 through 9.

7	2	8	9	4	6	3	1	5
9	3	4	2	5	1	6	7	8
5	1	6	7	3	8	2	4	9
1	4	7	5	9	3	8	2	6
3	6	9	4	8	2	1	5	7
8	5	2	1	6	7	4	9	3
2	9	3	6	1	5	7	8	4
4	8	1	3	7	9	5	6	2
6	7	5	8	2	4	9	3	1

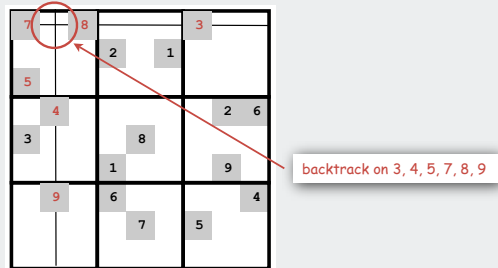
Solution: Enumerate all 81-digit base-9 numbers (with backtracking).



Sudoku: Backtracking solution

Iterate through elements of search space.

- For each empty cell, there are 9 possible choices.
- Make one choice and recur.
- If you find a conflict in row, column, or box, then backtrack.



Improvements are possible.

- try to make an "intelligent" choice
- try to reduce cost of choosing/backtracking

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Sudoku: Java implementation

```
private static void solve(int cell)
{
    if (cell == 81)
    { show(board); return; }

    if (board[cell] != 0)
    { solve(cell + 1); return; }

    for (int n = 1; n <= 9; n++)
    {
        if (! backtrack(cell, n))
        {
            board[cell] = n;
            solve(cell + 1);
        }
    }

    board[cell] = 0;
}
```

← already filled in

← try all 9 possibilities

← unless a Sudoku constraint is violated (see booksite for code)

← clean up

```
...
int[81] board;
for (int i = 0; i < 81; i++)
    board[i] = StdOut.readInt();
Solver s = new Solver(board);
s.solve();
...
```

```
% more board.txt
7 0 8 0 0 0 3 0 0
0 0 0 2 0 1 0 0 0
5 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 4 0 0 0 0 0 2 6
3 0 0 0 8 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 1 0 0 0 9 0
0 9 0 6 0 0 0 0 4
0 0 0 0 7 0 5 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

% java Solver
7 2 8 9 4 6 3 1 5
9 3 4 2 5 1 6 7 8
5 1 6 7 3 8 2 4 9
1 4 7 5 9 3 8 2 6
3 6 9 4 8 2 1 5 7
8 5 2 1 6 7 4 9 3
2 9 3 6 1 5 7 8 4
4 8 1 3 7 9 5 6 2
6 7 5 8 2 4 9 3 1
```

Works remarkably well (plenty of constraints). Try it!

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- ▶ permutations
- ▶ backtracking
- ▶ counting
- ▶ subsets
- ▶ paths in a graph

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Enumerating subsets: natural binary encoding

Given n items, enumerate all 2^n subsets.

- count in binary from 0 to $2^n - 1$.
- bit i represents item i
- if 0, in subset; if 1, not in subset

i	binary	subset	complement
0	0 0 0 0	empty	4 3 2 1
1	0 0 0 1	1	4 3 2
2	0 0 1 0	2	4 3 1
3	0 0 1 1	2 1	4 3
4	0 1 0 0	3	4 2 1
5	0 1 0 1	3 1	4 2
6	0 1 1 0	3 2	4 1
7	0 1 1 1	3 2 1	4
8	1 0 0 0	4	3 2 1
9	1 0 0 1	4 1	3 2
10	1 0 1 0	4 2	3 1
11	1 0 1 1	4 2 1	3
12	1 1 0 0	4 3	2 1
13	1 1 0 1	4 3 1	2
14	1 1 1 0	4 3 2	1
15	1 1 1 1	4 3 2 1	empty

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Enumerating subsets: natural binary encoding

Given N items, enumerate all 2^N subsets.

- count in binary from 0 to $2^N - 1$.
- maintain $a[i]$ where $a[i]$ represents item i
- if 0, $a[i]$ in subset; if 1, $a[i]$ not in subset

Binary counter from warmup does the job

```
private void enumerate(int k)
{
    if (k == N)
    { process(); return; }
    enumerate(k+1);
    a[k] = 1;
    enumerate(k+1);
    a[k] = 0;
}
```

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Digression: Samuel Beckett play

Quad. Starting with empty stage, 4 characters enter and exit one at a time, such that each subset of actors appears exactly once.

code	subset	move
0 0 0 0	empty	
0 0 0 1	1	enter 1
0 0 1 1	2 1	enter 2
0 0 1 0	2	exit 1
0 1 1 0	3 2	enter 3
0 1 1 1	3 2 1	enter 1
0 1 0 1	3 1	exit 2
0 1 0 0	3	exit 1
1 1 0 0	4 3	enter 4
1 1 0 1	4 3 1	enter 1
1 1 1 1	4 3 2 1	enter 2
1 1 1 0	4 3 2	exit 1
1 0 1 0	4 2	exit 3
1 0 1 1	4 2 1	enter 1
1 0 0 1	4 1	exit 2
1 0 0 0	4	exit 1



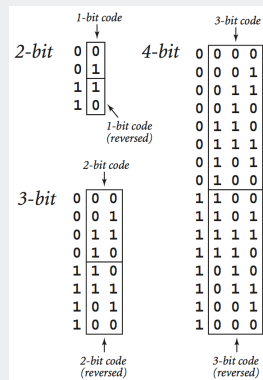
↑ ruler function

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Binary reflected gray code

The n-bit binary reflected Gray code is:

- the (n-1) bit code with a 0 prepended to each word, followed by
- the (n-1) bit code in reverse order, with a 1 prepended to each word.



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Beckett: Java implementation

```
public static void moves(int n, boolean enter)
{
    if (n == 0) return;
    moves(n-1, true);
    if (enter) System.out.println("enter " + n);
    else System.out.println("exit " + n);
    moves(n-1, false);
}
```

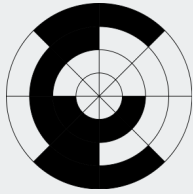
```
% java Beckett 4
enter 1
enter 2
exit 1
enter 3
enter 1
exit 2
exit 1
enter 4
enter 1
enter 2
exit 1
exit 3
enter 1
exit 2
exit 1
```

stage directions
for 3-actor play
moves(3, true)

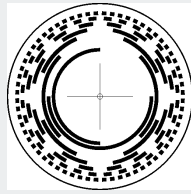
reverse stage directions
for 3-actor play
moves(3, false)

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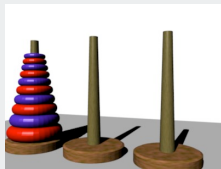
More Applications of Gray Codes



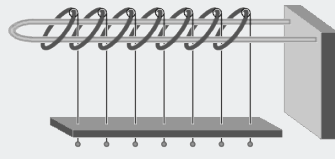
3-bit rotary encoder



8-bit rotary encoder



Towers of Hanoi



Chinese ring puzzle

Enumerating subsets using Gray code

Two simple changes to binary counter from warmup:

- flip $a[k]$ instead of setting it to 1
- eliminate cleanup

Gray code enumeration

```
private void enumerate(int k)
{
    if (k == N)
    { process(); return; }
    enumerate(k+1);
    a[k] = 1 - a[k];
    enumerate(k+1);
}
```

000
001
011
010
110
111
101
100

standard binary (from warmup)

```
private void enumerate(int k)
{
    if (k == N)
    { process(); return; }
    enumerate(k+1);
    a[k] = 1;
    enumerate(k+1);
    a[k] = 0; // cleanup
}
```

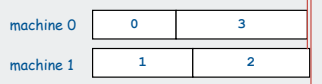
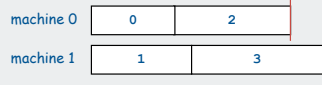
000
001
010
011
100
101
110
111

Advantage (same as Beckett): only one item changes subsets

Scheduling

Scheduling (set partitioning). Given n jobs of varying length, divide among two machines to minimize the time the last job finishes.

job	length
0	1.41
1	1.73
2	2.00
3	2.23



Remark: NP-hard.

or, equivalently, difference between finish times

```
public double[] finish(int[] a)
{
    double[] time = new double[2];
    time[0] = 0.0; time[1] = 0.0;
    for (int i = 0; i < N; i++)
        time[a[i]] += jobs[i];
    return time;
}

private double cost(int[] a)
{
    double[] time = finish(a);
    return Math.abs(time[0] - time[1]);
}
```

i	a[]	time[0]	time[1]
0	0 1 1 0	1.41	0
0	0 1 1 0	1.41	0
1	0 1 1 0	1.41	1.73
2	0 1 1 0	1.41	3.73
3	0 1 1 0	3.64	3.73
		3.64	3.73

cost: .09

Scheduling (full implementation)

```
public class Scheduler
{
    int N; // Number of jobs.
    int[] a; // Subset assignments.
    int[] b; // Best assignment.
    double[] jobs; // Job lengths.

    public Scheduler(double[] jobs)
    {
        this.N = jobs.length;
        this.jobs = jobs;
        a = new int[N];
        b = new int[N];
        for (int i = 0; i < N; i++)
            a[i] = 0;
        for (int i = 0; i < N; i++)
            b[i] = a[i];
        enumerate(0);
    }

    public int[] best()
    { return b; }

    private void enumerate(int k)
    { /* Gray code enumeration. */ }

    private void process()
    {
        if (cost(a) < cost(b))
            for (int i = 0; i < N; i++)
                b[i] = a[i];
    }

    public static void main(String[] args)
    { /* Create Scheduler, print result. */ }
}
```

trace of
% java Scheduler 4 < jobs.txt

a[]	finish times	cost
0 0 0 0	7.38	0.00
0 0 0 1	5.15	2.24
0 0 1 1	3.15	4.24
0 0 1 0	5.38	2.00
0 1 1 0	3.65	3.73
0 1 1 1	1.41	5.97
0 1 0 1	3.41	3.97
0 1 0 0	5.65	1.73
1 1 0 0	4.24	3.15
1 1 0 1	2.00	5.38
1 1 1 1	0.00	7.38
1 1 1 0	2.24	5.15
1 0 1 0	3.97	3.41
1 0 1 1	1.73	5.65
1 0 0 1	3.73	3.65
1 0 0 0	5.97	1.41

MACHINE 0	MACHINE 1
1.4142135624	
	1.7320508076
2.2360679775	2.0000000000

3.6502815399	3.7320508076

Scheduling (larger example)

```
java SchedulerEZ 24 < jobs.txt
MACHINE 0      MACHINE 1
1.4142135624
1.7320508076
2.0000000000
2.2360679775
2.4494897428
2.6457513111
2.8284271247
3.0000000000
3.1622776602
3.3166247904
3.4641016151
3.6055512755
3.7416573868
3.8729833462
4.0000000000
4.1231056256
4.2426406871
4.3588989435
4.4721359550
4.5825756950
4.6904157598
4.7958315233
4.8989794856
5.0000000000
-----
42.3168901295 42.3168901457
```

cost < 10^{-8}

Large number of subsets leads to remarkably low cost

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Scheduling: improvements

Many opportunities (details omitted)

- fix last job on machine 0 (quick factor-of-two improvement)
- backtrack when partial schedule cannot beat best known (check total against goal: half of total job times)

```
private void enumerate(int k)
{
    if (k == N-1)
    { process(); return; }
    if (backtrack(k)) return;
    enumerate(k+1);
    a[k] = 1 - a[k];
    enumerate(k+1);
}
```

- process all 2^k subsets of last k jobs, keep results in memory, (reduces time to 2^{N-k} when 2^k memory available).

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Backtracking summary

- N-Queens : permutations with backtracking
- Sudoku : counting with backtracking
- Scheduling: subsets with backtracking

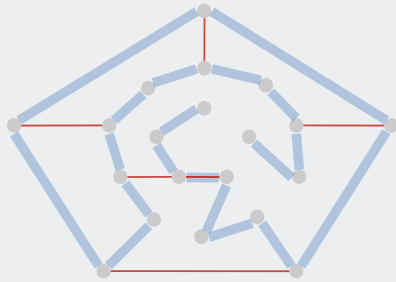
39

- ▶ permutations
- ▶ backtracking
- ▶ counting
- ▶ subsets
- ▶ paths in a graph

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Hamilton Path

Hamilton path. Find a simple path that visits every vertex exactly once.



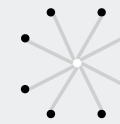
Remark. Euler path easy, but Hamilton path is NP-complete.

↑
visit every edge
exactly once

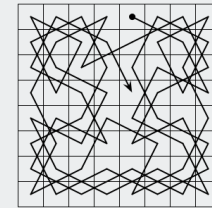
41

Knight's Tour

Knight's tour. Find a sequence of moves for a knight so that, starting from any square, it visits every square on a chessboard exactly once.



legal knight moves



a knight's tour

Solution. Find a Hamilton path in knight's graph.

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Hamilton Path: Backtracking Solution

Backtracking solution. To find Hamilton path starting at v :

- Add v to current path.
- For each vertex w adjacent to v
find a simple path starting at w using all remaining vertices
- Remove v from current path.

How to implement?

Add cleanup to DFS (!!)

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Hamilton Path: Java implementation

```
public class HamiltonPath
{
    private boolean[] marked;
    private int count;

    public HamiltonPath(Graph G)
    {
        marked = new boolean[G.V()];
        for (int v = 0; v < G.V(); v++)
            dfs(G, v, 1);
        count = 0;
    }

    private void dfs(Graph G, int v, int depth)
    {
        marked[v] = true;
        if (depth == G.V()) count++;
        for (int w : G.adj(v))
            if (!marked[w]) dfs(G, w, depth+1);
        marked[v] = false;
    }
}
```

also need code to
count solutions
(path length = V)

← cleanup

Easy exercise: Modify this code to find and print the **longest** path

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The Longest Path

Recorded by Dan Barrett in 1988 while a student at Johns Hopkins during a difficult algorithms final.

*Woh-oh-oh-oh, find the longest path!
Woh-oh-oh-oh, find the longest path!*

*If you said P is NP tonight,
There would still be papers left to write,
I have a weakness,
I'm addicted to completeness,
And I keep searching for the longest path.*

*The algorithm I would like to see
Is of polynomial degree,
But it's elusive:
Nobody has found conclusive
Evidence that we can find a longest path.*

*I have been hard working for so long.
I swear it's right, and he marks it wrong.
Some how I'll feel sorry when it's done: GPA 2.1
Is more than I hope for.*

*Garey, Johnson, Karp and other men (and women)
Tried to make it order $N \log N$.
Am I a mad fool
If I spend my life in grad school,
Forever following the longest path?*

*Woh-oh-oh-oh, find the longest path!
Woh-oh-oh-oh, find the longest path!
Woh-oh-oh-oh, find the longest path.*