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Formal Definition

Let f denote functions from $\mathbb{N}$ to $\mathbb{R}^+$.

- $\mathcal{O}(f) = \{g \mid \exists c > 0\ \exists n_0 \in \mathbb{N}_0\ \forall n \geq n_0 \colon [g(n) \leq c \cdot f(n)]\}$
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There is an equivalent definition using limes notation (assuming that the respective limes exists). f and g are functions from $\mathbb{N}_0$ to $\mathbb{R}_0^+$.

- $g \in \mathcal{O}(f)$: $\quad 0 \leq \lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{g(n)}{f(n)} < \infty$

- Note that for the version of the Landau notation defined here, we assume that f and g are positive functions.
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Abuse of notation

1. People write $f = \mathcal{O}(g)$, when they mean $f \in \mathcal{O}(g)$. This is **not** an equality (how could a function be equal to a set of functions).

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Asymptotic Notation in Equations

How do we interpret an expression like:

$$2n^2 + 3n + 1 = 2n^2 + \Theta(n)$$

Here, $\Theta(n)$ stands for an anonymous function in the set $\Theta(n)$ that makes the expression true.

Note that $\Theta(n)$ is on the right hand side, otw. this interpretation is wrong.

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The $\Theta(i)$-symbol on the left represents one anonymous function $f : \mathbb{N} \to \mathbb{R}^+$, and then $\sum_i f(i)$ is computed.

How do we interpret an expression like:

$$\sum_{i=1}^{n} \Theta(i) = \Theta(n^2)$$

Careful!

"It is understood" that every occurence of an $\mathcal{O}$-symbol (or $\Theta, \Omega, o, \omega$) on the left represents one anonymous function.

Hence, the left side is **not** equal to

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We can view an expression containing asymptotic notation as generating a set:

$$n^2 \cdot \mathcal{O}(n) + \mathcal{O}(\log n)$$

represents

$$\left\{ f : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+ \mid f(n) = n^2 \cdot g(n) + h(n) \right.$$
$$\left. \text{with } g(n) \in \mathcal{O}(n) \text{ and } h(n) \in \mathcal{O}(\log n) \right\}$$

Recall that according to the previous slide e.g. the expressions $\sum_{i=1}^{n} \mathcal{O}(i)$ and $\sum_{i=1}^{n/2} \mathcal{O}(i) + \sum_{i=n/2+1}^{n} \mathcal{O}(i)$ generate different sets.

Asymptotic Notation in Equations

Then an asymptotic equation can be interpreted as containement btw. two sets:

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$$n^2 \cdot \mathcal{O}(n) + \mathcal{O}(\log n) \subseteq \Theta(n^2)$$

Note that the equation does not hold.

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Lemma 1

Let f, g *be functions with the property* $\exists n_0 > 0\, \forall n \geq n_0 : f(n) > 0$ *(the same for* g*). Then*

- $c \cdot f(n) \in \Theta(f(n))$ *for any constant* c
- $\mathcal{O}(f(n)) + \mathcal{O}(g(n)) = \mathcal{O}(f(n) + g(n))$
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The expressions also hold for Ω*. Note that this means that* $f(n) + g(n) \in \Theta(\max\{f(n), g(n)\})$*.*

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Comments

- Do not use asymptotic notation within induction proofs.
- For any constants a, b we have $\log_a n = \Theta(\log_b n)$. Therefore, we will usually ignore the base of a logarithm within asymptotic notation.
- In general $\log n = \log_2 n$, i.e., we use 2 as the default base for the logarithm.

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In general asymptotic classification of running times is a good measure for comparing algorithms:

- If the running time analysis is tight and actually occurs in practise (i.e., the asymptotic bound is not a purely theoretical worst-case bound), then the algorithm that has better asymptotic running time will always outperform a weaker algorithm for large enough values of n.
- However, suppose that I have two algorithms:
  - Algorithm A. Running time $f(n) = 1000 \log n = \mathcal{O}(\log n)$.
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  - Algorithm A. Running time $f(n) = 1000 \log n = \mathcal{O}(\log n)$.
  - Algorithm B. Running time $g(n) = \log^2 n$.

  Clearly $f = o(g)$. However, as long as $\log n \leq 1000$ Algorithm B will be more efficient.