



UC Berkeley EECS
Lecturer
Michael Ball

Computational Structures in Data Science



Recursion





Announcements

- Maps is out
 - No slip days for the checkpoint, but slip days for the rest of the project.
- SECTION TIMES:
 - Wednesday 11-1pm (Tommy)
 - Friday 2-4pm (Lukas)
 - Wednesday 5-7pm (Hetal)
- Late Add / 61A Swap Extensions Form



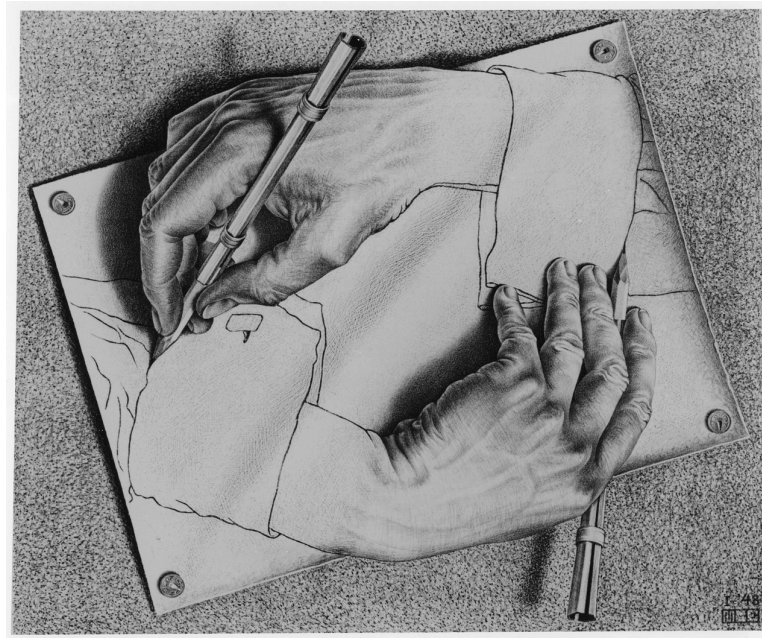
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M. C. Escher : *Drawing Hands*





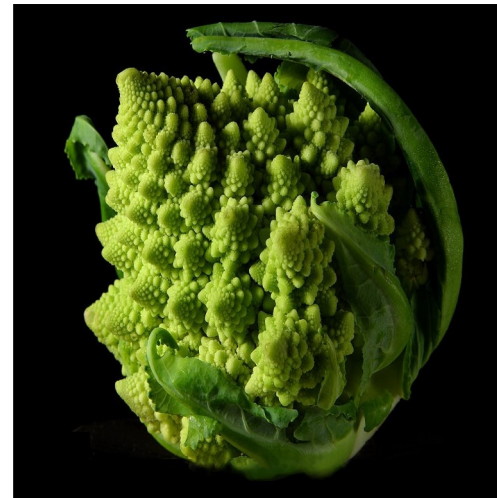
Demo: vee

- `python3 -i 10-Recursion.py`
- This uses Turtle Graphics.
 - The turtle module is really cool, but not something you need to learn
- vee is the one recursive problem that doesn't have a base case
 - But fractals in general are a fun way to visualize self-similar structures
- Use the following keys to play with the demo
 - Space to draw
 - C to Clear
 - Up to add "vee" to the functions list
 - Down to remove the "vee" functions from the list.
- [Some cool variations on vee, seen in Snap! \(the language of CS10\)](#)



Why Recursion?

- Recursive structures exist (sometimes hidden) in nature and therefore in data!
- It's mentally and sometimes computationally more efficient to process recursive structures using recursion.
- Sometimes, the recursive definition is easier to understand or write, even if it is computationally slower.





Today: Recursion

re·cur·sion

/ri'kərZHən/

noun MATHEMATICS LINGUISTICS

the repeated application of a recursive procedure or definition.

- a recursive definition.

plural noun: **recursions**

re·cur·sive

/ri'kərsiv/

adjective

characterized by recurrence or repetition, in particular.

- MATHEMATICS LINGUISTICS

relating to or involving the repeated application of a rule, definition, or procedure to successive results.

- COMPUTING

relating to or involving a program or routine of which a part requires the application of the whole, so that its explicit interpretation requires in general many successive executions.

- Recursive function calls itself, directly or indirectly



Demo: Countdown

```
def countdown(n):  
    if n == 0:  
        print('Blastoff!')  
    else:  
        print(n)  
        countdown(n - 1)
```



The Recursive Process

Recursive solutions involve two major parts:

- **Base case(s)**, the problem is simple enough to be solved directly
- **Recursive case(s)**. A recursive case has three components:
 - **Divide** the problem into one or more simpler or smaller parts
 - **Invoke** the function (recursively) on each part, and
 - **Combine** the solutions of the parts into a solution for the problem.



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Recursion





Learning Objectives

- Compare Recursion and Iteration to each other
 - Translate some simple functions from one method to another
- Write a recursive function
 - Understand the base case and a recursive case



Palindromes

- Palindromes are the same word forwards and backwards.
- Python has some tricks, but how could we build this?
 - `palindrome = lambda w: w == w[::-1]`
 - `[::-1]` is a slicing shortcut `[0:len(w):-1]` to reverse items.
- Let's write Reverse:

```
def reverse(s):  
    result = ''  
    for letter in s:  
        result = letter + result  
    return result
```

```
def reverse_while(s):  
    """  
    >>> reverse_while('hello')  
    'olleh'  
    """  
    result = ''  
    while s:  
        first = s[0]  
        s = s[1:] # remove the first letter  
        result = first + result  
    return result
```



reverse recursive

```
def reverse(s):  
    if not s:  
        return ''  
    return
```

Recursive Case

```
def palindrome(word):  
    return word == reverse(word)
```



Fun Palindromes

- C88C
- racecar
- LOL
- radar
- a man a plan a canal panama
- aibohphobia 😈
 - The fear of palindromes.
- <https://czechtheworld.com/best-palindromes/#palindrome-words>



Iteration vs Recursion: Sum Numbers

For loop:

```
def sum(n):  
    s=0  
    for i in range(0,n+1):  
        s=s+i  
    return s
```



Iteration vs Recursion: Sum Numbers

While loop:

```
def sum(n):  
    s=0  
    i=0  
    while i<n:  
        i=i+1  
        s=s+i  
    return s
```



Iteration vs Recursion: Sum Numbers

Recursion:

```
def sum(n):  
    if n == 0:  
        return 0  
    return n+sum(n-1)
```




Iteration vs Recursion: Cheating!

Sometimes it's best to just use a formula! But that's not always the point. 😊

```
def sum(n):  
    return (n * (n + 1)) / 2
```



The Recursive Process

- Recursive solutions involve two major parts:
 - Base case(s), the problem is simple enough to be solved directly
 - Recursive case(s). A recursive case has three components:
 - Divide the problem into one or more simpler or smaller parts
 - Invoke the function (recursively) on each part, and
 - Combine the solutions of the parts into a solution for the problem.

Recall: Iteration



```
def sum_of_squares(n):  
    accum = 0  
    for i in range(1, n+1):  
        accum = accum + i*i  
    return accum
```

1. Initialize the “base” case of no iterations

2. Starting value

3. Ending value

4. New loop variable value



Recursion Key concepts – by example

1. Test for simple “base” case

2. Solution in simple “base” case

```
def sum_of_squares(n):  
    if n < 1:  
        return 0  
    else:  
        return sum_of_squares(n-1) + n**2
```

3. Assume recursive solution to simpler problem

4. “Combine” the simpler part of the solution, with the recursive case



In words

- The sum of no numbers is zero
- The sum of 1^2 through n^2 is the
 - sum of 1^2 through $(n-1)^2$
 - plus n^2

```
def sum_of_squares(n):  
    if n < 1:  
        return 0  
    else:  
        return sum_of_squares(n-1) + n**2
```

Why does it work



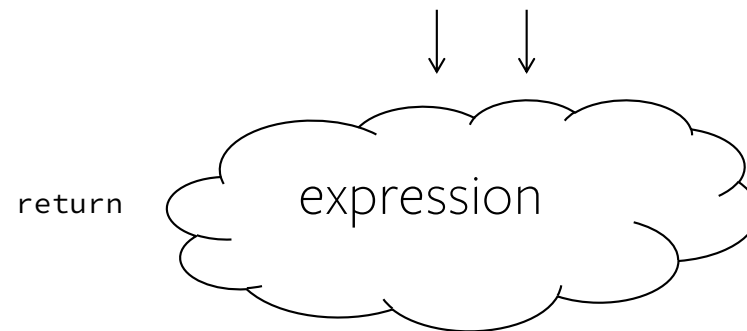
`sum_of_squares(3)`

```
# sum_of_squares(3) => sum_of_squares(2) + 3**2
#                   => sum_of_squares(1) + 2**2 + 3**2
#                   => sum_of_squares(0) + 1**2 + 2**2 + 3**2
#                   => 0 + 1**2 + 2**2 + 3**2 = 14
```



Review: Functions

`def <function name> (<argument list>) :`



`return`

```
def concat(str1, str2):  
    return str1+str2;
```

```
concat("Hello","World")
```

- Generalizes an expression or set of statements to apply to lots of instances of the problem
- A function should *do one thing well*



How does it work?

- Each recursive call gets its own local variables
 - Just like any other function call
- Computes its result (possibly using additional calls)
 - Just like any other function call
- Returns its result and returns control to its caller
 - Just like any other function call
- The function that is called happens to be itself
 - Called on a simpler problem
 - Eventually stops on the simple base case



Questions

- In what order do we sum the squares ?
- How does this compare to iterative approach ?

```
def sum_of_squares(n):  
    accum = 0  
    for i in range(1,n+1):  
        accum = accum + i*i  
    return accum
```

```
def sum_of_squares(n):  
    if n < 1:  
        return 0  
    else:  
        return sum_of_squares(n-1) + n**2
```

```
def sum_of_squares(n):  
    if n < 1:  
        return 0  
    else:  
        return n**2 + sum_of_squares(n-1)
```

Trust ...



- The recursive “leap of faith” works as long as we hit the base case eventually

What happens if we don't?



Why Recursion?

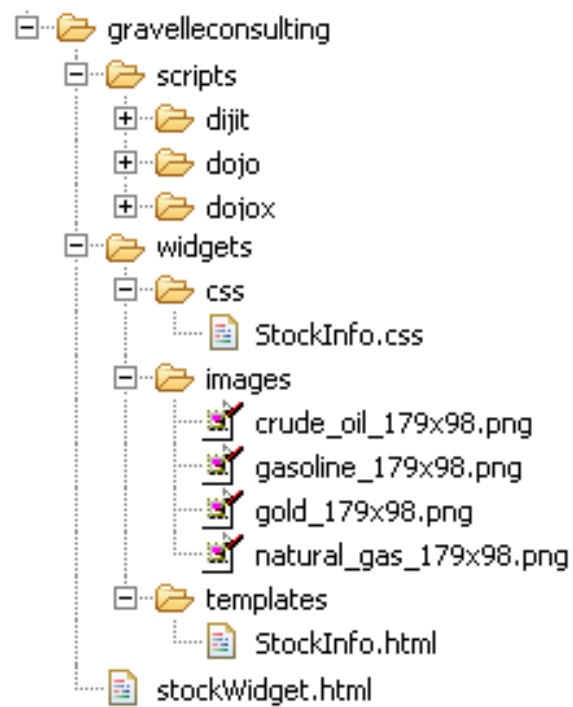
- “After Abstraction, Recursion is probably the 2nd biggest idea in this course”
- “It’s tremendously useful when the problem is self-similar”
- “It’s no more powerful than iteration, but often leads to more concise & better code”
- “It’s more ‘mathematical’”
- “It embodies the beauty and joy of computing”
- ...





Example I

List all items on your hard disk



- Files
- Folders contain
 - Files
 - Folders

Recursion!



Another Example

```
def first(s):  
    """Return the first element in a sequence."""  
    return s[0]  
def rest(s):  
    """Return all elements in a sequence after the first"""  
    return s[1:]  
  
def min_r(s):  
    """Return minimum value in a sequence."""  
    if Base Case  
    else:  
        Recursive Case
```

indexing an element of a sequence

Slicing a sequence of elements

- Recursion over sequence length, rather than number magnitude



Why Recursion? More Reasons

- Recursive structures exist (sometimes hidden) in nature and therefore in data!
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