

Recursion



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CHEN-WEI WANG

Recursion: Principle

- **Recursion** is useful in expressing solutions to problems that can be **recursively** defined:
 - **Base Cases:** Small problem instances immediately solvable.
 - **Recursive Cases:**
 - Large problem instances *not immediately solvable*.
 - Solve by reusing *solution(s) to strictly smaller problem instances*.
- Similar idea learnt in high school: [**mathematical induction**]
- Recursion can be easily expressed programmatically in Java:
 - In the body of a method m , there might be *a call or calls to m itself*.
 - Each such self-call is said to be a **recursive call**.
 - Inside the execution of $m(i)$, a recursive call $m(j)$ must be that $j < i$.

```
m(i) {  
    ...  
    m(j); /* recursive call with strictly smaller value */  
    ...  
}
```

Recursion: Factorial (1)

- Recall the formal definition of calculating the n factorial:

$$n! = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n = 0 \\ n \cdot (n-1) \cdot (n-2) \cdot \dots \cdot 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1 & \text{if } n \geq 1 \end{cases}$$

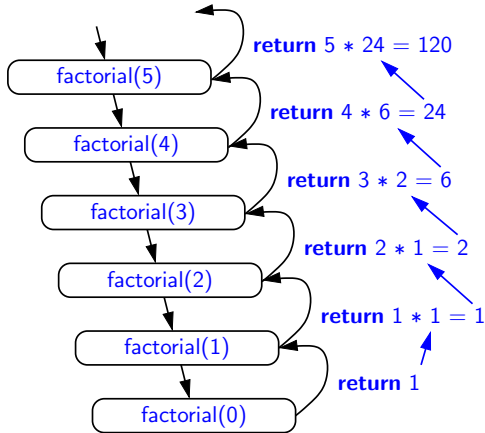
- How do you define the same problem *recursively*?

$$n! = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n = 0 \\ n \cdot (n-1)! & \text{if } n \geq 1 \end{cases}$$

- To solve $n!$, we combine n and the solution to $(n-1)!$.

```
int factorial(int n) {  
    int result;  
    if(n == 0) { /* base case */ result = 1; }  
    else { /* recursive case */  
        result = n * factorial(n - 1);  
    }  
    return result;  
}
```

Recursion: Factorial (2)



Recursion: Factorial (3)

- When running *factorial(5)*, a *recursive call factorial(4)* is made. Call to *factorial(5)* suspended until *factorial(4)* returns a value.
- When running *factorial(4)*, a *recursive call factorial(3)* is made. Call to *factorial(4)* suspended until *factorial(3)* returns a value.
- ...
- *factorial(0)* returns 1 back to *suspended call factorial(1)*.
- *factorial(1)* receives 1 from *factorial(0)*, multiplies 1 to it, and returns 1 back to the *suspended call factorial(2)*.
- *factorial(2)* receives 1 from *factorial(1)*, multiplies 2 to it, and returns 2 back to the *suspended call factorial(3)*.
- *factorial(3)* receives 2 from *factorial(1)*, multiplies 3 to it, and returns 6 back to the *suspended call factorial(4)*.
- *factorial(4)* receives 6 from *factorial(3)*, multiplies 4 to it, and returns 24 back to the *suspended call factorial(5)*.
- *factorial(5)* receives 24 from *factorial(4)*, multiplies 5 to it, and returns 120 as the result.

Recursion: Factorial (4)

- When the execution of a method (e.g., *factorial(5)*) leads to a nested method call (e.g., *factorial(4)*):
 - The execution of the current method (i.e., *factorial(5)*) is *suspended*, and a structure known as an *activation record* or *activation frame* is created to store information about the progress of that method (e.g., values of parameters and local variables).
 - The nested methods (e.g., *factorial(4)*) may call other nested methods (*factorial(3)*).
 - When all nested methods complete, the activation frame of the *latest suspended* method is re-activated, then continue its execution.
- What kind of data structure does this activation-suspension process correspond to? [LIFO Stack]

Tracing Recursion using a Stack

- When a method is called, it is **activated** (and becomes **active**) and **pushed** onto the stack.
- When the body of a method makes a (helper) method call, that (helper) method is **activated** (and becomes **active**) and **pushed** onto the stack.
 - ⇒ The stack contains activation records of all **active** methods.
 - **Top** of stack denotes the current point of execution.
 - Remaining parts of stack are (temporarily) **suspended**.
- When entire body of a method is executed, stack is **popped**.
 - ⇒ The current point of execution is returned to the new **top** of stack (which was **suspended** and just became **active**).
- Execution terminates when the stack becomes **empty**.

Recursion: Fibonacci (1)

Recall the formal definition of calculating the n_{th} number in a Fibonacci series (denoted as F_n), which is already itself recursive:

$$F_n = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n = 1 \\ 1 & \text{if } n = 2 \\ F_{n-1} + F_{n-2} & \text{if } n > 2 \end{cases}$$

```
int fib (int n) {
    int result;
    if(n == 1) { /* base case */ result = 1; }
    else if(n == 2) { /* base case */ result = 1; }
    else { /* recursive case */
        result = fib (n - 1) + fib (n - 2);
    }
    return result;
}
```


Recursion: Fibonacci (2)

```

fib(5)
= {fib(5) = fib(4) + fib(3); push(fib(5)); suspended: {fib(5)}; active: fib(4)}
  fib(4) + fib(3)
= {fib(4) = fib(3) + fib(2); suspended: {fib(4), fib(5)}; active: fib(3)}
  ( fib(3) + fib(2) ) + fib(3)
= {fib(3) = fib(2) + fib(1); suspended: {fib(3), fib(4), fib(5)}; active: fib(2)}
  (( fib(2) + fib(1) ) + fib(2) ) + fib(3)
= {fib(2) returns 1; suspended: {fib(3), fib(4), fib(5)}; active: fib(1)}
  ((1 + fib(1) ) + fib(2) ) + fib(3)
= {fib(1) returns 1; suspended: {fib(3), fib(4), fib(5)}; active: fib(3)}
  ((1 + 1) + fib(2) ) + fib(3)
= {fib(3) returns 1 + 1; pop(); suspended: {fib(4), fib(5)}; active: fib(2)}
  (2 + fib(2) ) + fib(3)
= {fib(2) returns 1; suspended: {fib(4), fib(5)}; active: fib(4)}
  (2 + 1) + fib(3)
= {fib(4) returns 2 + 1; pop(); suspended: {fib(5)}; active: fib(3)}
  3 + fib(3)
= {fib(3) = fib(2) + fib(1); suspended: {fib(3), fib(5)}; active: fib(2)}
  3 + ( fib(2) + fib(1) )
= {fib(2) returns 1; suspended: {fib(3), fib(5)}; active: fib(1)}
  3 + (1 + fib(1) )
= {fib(1) returns 1; suspended: {fib(3), fib(5)}; active: fib(3)}
  3 + (1 + 1)
= {fib(3) returns 1 + 1; pop(); suspended: {fib(5)}; active: fib(5)}
  3 + 2
= {fib(5) returns 3 + 2; suspended: {}}

```

Java Library: String

```
public class StringTester {
    public static void main(String[] args) {
        String s = "abcd";
        System.out.println(s.isEmpty()); /* false */
        /* Characters in index range [0, 0) */
        String t0 = s.substring(0, 0);
        System.out.println(t0); /* "" */
        /* Characters in index range [0, 4) */
        String t1 = s.substring(0, 4);
        System.out.println(t1); /* "abcd" */
        /* Characters in index range [1, 3) */
        String t2 = s.substring(1, 3);
        System.out.println(t2); /* "bc" */
        String t3 = s.substring(0, 2) + s.substring(2, 4);
        System.out.println(s.equals(t3)); /* true */
        for(int i = 0; i < s.length(); i++) {
            System.out.print(s.charAt(i));
        }
        System.out.println();
    }
}
```

Recursion: Palindrome (1)

Problem: A palindrome is a word that reads the same forwards and backwards. Write a method that takes a string and determines whether or not it is a palindrome.

```
System.out.println(isPalindrome("")); true
System.out.println(isPalindrome("a")); true
System.out.println(isPalindrome("madam")); true
System.out.println(isPalindrome("racecar")); true
System.out.println(isPalindrome("man")); false
```

Base Case 1: Empty string → Return *true* immediately.

Base Case 2: String of length 1 → Return *true* immediately.

Recursive Case: String of length ≥ 2 →

- 1st and last characters match, **and**
- *the rest (i.e., middle) of the string* is a palindrome .

Recursion: Palindrome (2)

```
boolean isPalindrome (String word) {  
    if(word.length() == 0 || word.length() == 1) {  
        /* base case */  
        return true;  
    }  
    else {  
        /* recursive case */  
        char firstChar = word.charAt(0);  
        char lastChar = word.charAt(word.length() - 1);  
        String middle = word.substring(1, word.length() - 1);  
        return  
            firstChar == lastChar  
            /* See the API of java.lang.String.substring. */  
            && isPalindrome (middle);  
    }  
}
```

Recursion: Reverse of String (1)

Problem: The reverse of a string is written backwards. Write a method that takes a string and returns its reverse.

```
System.out.println(reverseOf("")); /* "" */  
System.out.println(reverseOf("a")); "a"  
System.out.println(reverseOf("ab")); "ba"  
System.out.println(reverseOf("abc")); "cba"  
System.out.println(reverseOf("abcd")); "dcba"
```

Base Case 1: Empty string → Return *empty string*.

Base Case 2: String of length 1 → Return *that string*.

Recursive Case: String of length ≥ 2 →

- 1) Head of string (i.e., first character)
- 2) Reverse of the tail of string (i.e., all but the first character)

Return the concatenation of **1)** and **2)**.

Recursion: Reverse of a String (2)

```
String reverseOf (String s) {  
    if(s.isEmpty()) { /* base case 1 */  
        return "";  
    }  
    else if(s.length() == 1) { /* base case 2 */  
        return s;  
    }  
    else { /* recursive case */  
        String tail = s.substring(1, s.length());  
        String reverseOfTail = reverseOf (tail);  
        char head = s.charAt(0);  
        return reverseOfTail + head;  
    }  
}
```

Recursion: Number of Occurrences (1)

Problem: Write a method that takes a string s and a character c , then count the number of occurrences of c in s .

```
System.out.println(occurrencesOf("", 'a')); /* 0 */  
System.out.println(occurrencesOf("a", 'a')); /* 1 */  
System.out.println(occurrencesOf("b", 'a')); /* 0 */  
System.out.println(occurrencesOf("baaba", 'a')); /* 3 */  
System.out.println(occurrencesOf("baaba", 'b')); /* 2 */  
System.out.println(occurrencesOf("baaba", 'c')); /* 0 */
```

Base Case: Empty string \rightarrow Return 0 .

Recursive Case: String of length $\geq 1 \rightarrow$

- 1) Head of s (i.e., first character)
- 2) Number of occurrences of c in the tail of s (i.e., all but the first character)

If head is equal to c , return $1 + 2$).

If head is not equal to c , return $0 + 2$).

Recursion: Number of Occurrences (2)

```
int occurrencesOf (String s, char c) {
    if (s.isEmpty()) {
        /* Base Case */
        return 0;
    }
    else {
        /* Recursive Case */
        char head = s.charAt(0);
        String tail = s.substring(1, s.length());
        if (head == c) {
            return 1 + occurrencesOf (tail, c);
        }
        else {
            return 0 + occurrencesOf (tail, c);
        }
    }
}
```


Recursion: All Positive (1)

Problem: Determine if an array of integers are all positive.

```
System.out.println(allPositive({})); /* true */  
System.out.println(allPositive({1, 2, 3, 4, 5})); /* true */  
System.out.println(allPositive({1, 2, -3, 4, 5})); /* false */
```

Base Case: Empty array \rightarrow Return *true* immediately.

The base case is *true* \because we can *not* find a counter-example (i.e., a number *not* positive) from an empty array.

Recursive Case: Non-Empty array \rightarrow

- 1st element positive, **and**
- *the rest of the array* is all positive.

Exercise: Write a method `boolean somePositive(int[]`

a) which *recursively* returns *true* if there is some positive number in a, and *false* if there are no positive numbers in a.

Hint: What to return in the base case of an empty array? [*false*]

\because No witness (i.e., a positive number) from an empty array

Making Recursive Calls on an Array

- Recursive calls denote solutions to *smaller* sub-problems.
- *Naively*, explicitly create a new, smaller array:

```
void m(int[] a) {
    int[] subArray = new int[a.length - 1];
    for(int i = 1; i < a.length; i++) { subArray[0] = a[i - 1]; }
    m(subArray) }
```

- For *efficiency*, we pass the same array **by reference** and specify the *range of indices* to be considered:

```
void m(int[] a, int from, int to) {
    if(from == to) { /* base case */ }
    else { m(a, from + 1, to) } }
```

- $m(a, 0, a.length - 1)$ [Initial call; entire array]
- $m(a, 1, a.length - 1)$ [1st r.c. on array of size $a.length - 1$]
- $m(a, 2, a.length - 1)$ [2nd r.c. on array of size $a.length - 2$]
- ...
- $m(a, a.length-1, a.length-1)$ [Last r.c. on array of size 1]

Recursion: All Positive (2)

```
boolean allPositive(int[] a) {  
    return allPositiveHelper(a, 0, a.length - 1);  
}  
  
boolean allPositiveHelper(int[] a, int from, int to) {  
    if (from > to) { /* base case 1: empty range */  
        return true;  
    }  
    else if (from == to) { /* base case 2: range of one element */  
        return a[from] > 0;  
    }  
    else { /* recursive case */  
        return a[from] > 0 && allPositiveHelper(a, from + 1, to);  
    }  
}
```

Recursion: Is an Array Sorted? (1)

Problem: Determine if an array of integers are sorted in a non-descending order.

```
System.out.println(isSorted({})); true
```

```
System.out.println(isSorted({1, 2, 2, 3, 4})); true
```

```
System.out.println(isSorted({1, 2, 2, 1, 3})); false
```

Base Case: Empty array → Return *true* immediately.

The base case is *true* ∵ we can *not* find a counter-example (i.e., a pair of adjacent numbers that are *not* sorted in a non-descending order) from an empty array.

Recursive Case: Non-Empty array →

- 1st and 2nd elements are sorted in a non-descending order, **and**
- *the rest of the array*, starting from the 2nd element, **are sorted in a non-descending order**.

Recursion: Is an Array Sorted? (2)

```
boolean isSorted(int[] a) {  
    return isSortedHelper(a, 0, a.length - 1);  
}  
  
boolean isSortedHelper(int[] a, int from, int to) {  
    if (from > to) { /* base case 1: empty range */  
        return true;  
    }  
    else if (from == to) { /* base case 2: range of one element */  
        return true;  
    }  
    else {  
        return a[from] <= a[from + 1]  
            && isSortedHelper(a, from + 1, to);  
    }  
}
```

Recursion: Sorting an Array (1)

Problem: Sort an array into a non-descending order, using the *selection-sort* strategy.

Base Case: Arrays of size 0 or 1 \rightarrow Completed immediately.

Recursive Case: Non-Empty array $a \rightarrow$

Run an iteration from indices $i = 0$ to $a.length - 1$.

In each iteration:

- In index range $[i, a.length - 1]$, *recursively* compute the *minimum* element e .
- Swap $a[i]$ and e if $e < a[i]$.

Recursion: Sorting an Array (2)

```
public static int getMinIndex(int[] a, int from, int to) {  
    if(from == to) { return from; }  
    else {  
        int minIndexofTail = getMinIndex(a, from + 1, to);  
        if(a[from] < a[minIndexofTail]) { return from; }  
        else { return minIndexofTail; }  
    }  
}  
  
public static void selectionSort(int[] a) {  
    if(a.length == 0 || a.length == 1) { /* sorted, do nothing */ }  
    else {  
        for(int i = 0; i < a.length; i++) {  
            int minIndex = getMinIndex(a, i, a.length - 1);  
            /* swap a[i] and a[minIndex] */  
            int temp = a[i];  
            a[i] = a[minIndex];  
            a[minIndex] = temp;  
        }  
    }  
}
```

Recursion: Binary Search (1)

- **Searching Problem**

Input: A number a and a **sorted** list of n numbers $\langle a_1, a_2, \dots, a_n \rangle$ such that $a'_1 \leq a'_2 \leq \dots \leq a'_n$

Output: Whether or not a exists in the input list

- **An Efficient Recursive Solution**

Base Case: Empty list \rightarrow *False*.

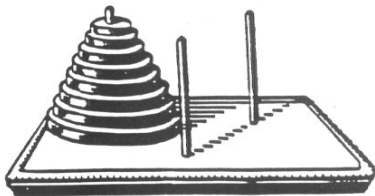
Recursive Case: List of size $\geq 1 \rightarrow$

- **Compare** the *middle* element against a .
 - All elements to the left of *middle* are $\leq a$
 - All elements to the right of *middle* are $\geq a$
- If the *middle* element *is* equal to $a \rightarrow$ *True*.
- If the *middle* element *is not* equal to a :
 - If $a < middle$, recursively find a on the left half.
 - If $a > middle$, recursively find a on the right half.

Recursion: Binary Search (2)

```
boolean binarySearch(int[] sorted, int key) {  
    return binarySearchHelper(sorted, 0, sorted.length - 1, key);  
}  
boolean binarySearchHelper(int[] sorted, int from, int to, int key) {  
    if (from > to) { /* base case 1: empty range */  
        return false; }  
    else if (from == to) { /* base case 2: range of one element */  
        return sorted[from] == key; }  
    else {  
        int middle = (from + to) / 2;  
        int middleValue = sorted[middle];  
        if (key < middleValue) {  
            return binarySearchHelper(sorted, from, middle - 1, key);  
        }  
        else if (key > middleValue) {  
            return binarySearchHelper(sorted, middle + 1, to, key);  
        }  
        else { return true; }  
    }  
}
```

Tower of Hanoi: Specification



- *Given:* A tower of 8 disks, initially stacked in decreasing size on one of 3 pegs
- *Rules:*
 - Move only one disk at a time
 - Never move a larger disk onto a smaller one
- *Problem:* Transfer the entire tower to one of the other pegs.

Tower of Hanoi: Strategy

- Generalize the problem by considering n disks.
- Introduce appropriate notation:
 - T_n denotes the *minimum* number of moves required to transfer n disks from one to another under the rules.
- General patterns are easier to perceive when the extreme or base cases are well understood.
 - Look at small cases first:
 - $T_1 = 1$
 - $T_2 = 3$
 - How about T_3 ? Does it help us perceive the general case of n ?

Tower of Hanoi: A General Solution Pattern

A possible (yet to be proved as *optimal*) solution requires 3 steps:

1. Transfer the $n - 1$ smallest disks to a different peg.
2. Move the largest to the remaining free peg.
3. Transfer the $n - 1$ disks back onto the largest disk.

How many moves are required from the above 3 steps?

$$(2 \times T_{n-1}) + 1$$

However, we have only proved that the # moves required by this solution are *sufficient*:

$$T_n \leq (2 \times T_{n-1}) + 1$$

But are the above steps all *necessary*? Can you justify?

$$T_n \geq (2 \times T_{n-1}) + 1$$

Tower of Hanoi: Recurrence Relation for T_n



We end up with the following recurrence relation that allows us to compute T_n for any n we like:

$$\begin{aligned}T_0 &= 0 \\T_n &= (2 \times T_{n-1}) + 1 \quad \text{for } n > 0\end{aligned}$$

However, the above relation only gives us *indirect* information:

To calculate T_n , first calculate T_{n-1} , which requires the calculation of T_{n-2} , and so on.

Instead, we need a *closed-form solution* to the above recurrence relation, which allows us to *directly* calculate the value of T_n .

Tower of Hanoi: A Hypothesized Closed Form Solution to T_n

$$\begin{aligned}T_0 &= 0 \\T_1 &= 2 \times T_0 + 1 = 1 \\T_2 &= 2 \times T_1 + 1 = 3 \\T_3 &= 2 \times T_2 + 1 = 7 \\T_4 &= 2 \times T_3 + 1 = 15 \\T_5 &= 2 \times T_4 + 1 = 31 \\T_6 &= 2 \times T_5 + 1 = 63 \\&\dots\end{aligned}$$

Guess:

$$T_n = 2^n - 1 \quad \text{for } n \geq 0$$

Prove by *mathematical induction*.

Tower of Hanoi: Prove by Mathematical Induction

Basis:

$$T_0 = 2^0 - 1 = 0$$

Induction:

Assume that

$$T_{n-1} = 2^{n-1} - 1$$

then

$$\begin{aligned} & T_n \\ = & \{ \text{Recurrence relation for } T_n \} \\ & (2 \times T_{n-1}) + 1 \\ = & \{ \text{Inductive assumption} \} \\ & (2 \times (2^{n-1} - 1)) + 1 \\ = & \{ \text{Arithmetic} \} \\ & 2^n - 1 \end{aligned}$$

Revisiting the Tower of Hanoi

Given: A tower of 8 disks, initially stacked in decreasing size on one of 3 pegs.

This shall require

$$T_8 = 2^8 - 1 = 255$$

moves to complete.

Tower of Hanoi in Java (1)

```
void towerOfHanoi(String[] disks) {  
    toHelper (disks, 0, disks.length - 1, 1, 3);  
}  
void toHelper(String[] disks, int from, int to, int p1, int p2) {  
    if(from > to) { }  
    else if(from == to) {  
        print("move " + disks[to] + " from " + p1 + " to " + p2);  
    }  
    else {  
        int intermediate = 6 - p1 - p2;  
        toHelper (disks, from, to - 1, p1, intermediate);  
        print("move " + disks[to] + " from " + p1 + " to " + p2);  
        toHelper (disks, from, to - 1, intermediate, p2);  
    }  
}
```

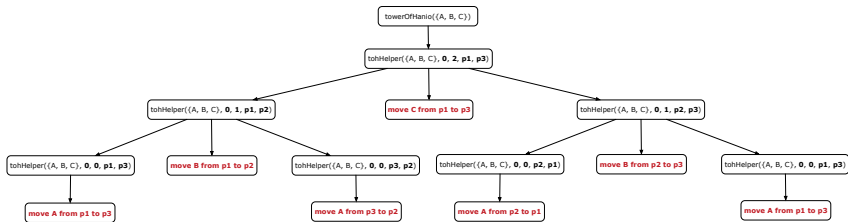
- `toHelper(disks, from, to, p1, p2)` moves disks $\{disks[from], disks[from + 1], \dots, disks[to]\}$ from peg $p1$ to peg $p2$.
- Peg id's are 1, 2, and 3 \Rightarrow The intermediate one is $6 - p1 - p2$.

Tower of Hanoi in Java (2)

Say ds (disks) is $\{A, B, C\}$, where $A < B < C$.

$$\text{tohH}(ds, \underbrace{0, 2}_{\{A, B, C\}}, p1, p3) = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Move C: } p1 \text{ to } p3 \\ \text{tohH}(ds, \underbrace{0, 1}_{\{A, B\}}, p1, p2) = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{tohH}(ds, \underbrace{0, 0}_{\{A\}}, p1, p3) = \left\{ \text{Move A: } p1 \text{ to } p3 \right. \\ \text{Move B: } p1 \text{ to } p2 \\ \text{tohH}(ds, \underbrace{0, 0}_{\{A\}}, p3, p2) = \left\{ \text{Move A: } p3 \text{ to } p2 \right. \\ \text{Move C: } p1 \text{ to } p3 \\ \text{tohH}(ds, \underbrace{0, 1}_{\{A, B\}}, p2, p3) = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{tohH}(ds, \underbrace{0, 0}_{\{A\}}, p2, p1) = \left\{ \text{Move A: } p2 \text{ to } p1 \right. \\ \text{Move B: } p2 \text{ to } p3 \\ \text{tohH}(ds, \underbrace{0, 0}_{\{A\}}, p1, p3) = \left\{ \text{Move A: } p1 \text{ to } p3 \right. \end{array} \right. \end{array} \right. \end{array} \right.$$

Tower of Hanoi in Java (3)



Recursive Methods: Correctness Proofs

```
1 boolean allPositive(int[] a) { return allPosH(a, 0, a.length - 1); }
2 boolean allPosH(int[] a, int from, int to) {
3     if (from > to) { return true; }
4     else if (from == to) { return a[from] > 0; }
5     else { return a[from] > 0 && allPosH(a, from + 1, to); } }
```

- Via mathematical induction, prove that `allPosH` is correct:

Base Cases

- In an empty array, there is no non-positive number \therefore result is **true**. [L3]
- In an array of size 1, the only one elements determines the result. [L4]

Inductive Cases

- **Inductive Hypothesis:** `allPosH(a, from + 1, to)` returns **true** if `a[from + 1], a[from + 2], ..., a[to]` are all positive; **false** otherwise.
- `allPosH(a, from, to)` should return **true** if: **1)** `a[from]` is positive; **and 2)** `a[from + 1], a[from + 2], ..., a[to]` are all positive.
- By **I.H.**, result is $a[from] > 0 \wedge \text{allPosH}(a, \text{from} + 1, \text{to})$. [L5]
- `allPositive(a)` is correct by invoking `allPosH(a, 0, a.length - 1)`, examining the entire array. [L1]

Beyond this lecture ...

- Notes on Recursion:

http://www.eecs.yorku.ca/~jackie/teaching/lectures/2017/F/EECS2030/slides/EECS2030_F17_Notes_Recursion.pdf

- API for String:

<https://docs.oracle.com/javase/8/docs/api/java/lang/String.html>

- Fantastic resources for sharpening your recursive skills for the exam:

<http://codingbat.com/java/Recursion-1>

<http://codingbat.com/java/Recursion-2>

- The **best** approach to learning about recursion is via a functional programming language:

Haskell Tutorial: <https://www.haskell.org/tutorial/>

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Beyond this lecture ...