

Self-Balancing Binary Search Trees



EECS3101 E:
Design and Analysis of Algorithms
Fall 2025

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Learning Outcomes of this Lecture



This module is designed to help you understand:

- When the **Worst-Case RT** of a **BST Search** Occurs
- **Height-Balance** Property
- Review: Insertion & Deletion on a BST
- Performing **Rotations** to Restore Tree **Balance**

Implementation: Generic BST Nodes



```
public class BSTNode<E> {  
    private int key; /* key */  
    private E value; /* value */  
    private BSTNode<E> parent; /* unique parent node */  
    private BSTNode<E> left; /* left child node */  
    private BSTNode<E> right; /* right child node */  
  
    public BSTNode() { ... }  
    public BSTNode(int key, E value) { ... }  
  
    public boolean isExternal() {  
        return this.getLeft() == null && this.getRight() == null;  
    }  
    public boolean isInternal() {  
        return !this.isExternal();  
    }  
  
    public int getKey() { ... }  
    public void setKey(int key) { ... }  
    public E getValue() { ... }  
    public void setValue(E value) { ... }  
    public BSTNode<E> getParent() { ... }  
    public void setParent(BSTNode<E> parent) { ... }  
    public BSTNode<E> getLeft() { ... }  
    public void setLeft(BSTNode<E> left) { ... }  
    public BSTNode<E> getRight() { ... }  
    public void setRight(BSTNode<E> right) { ... }  
}
```

Implementing BST Operation: Searching

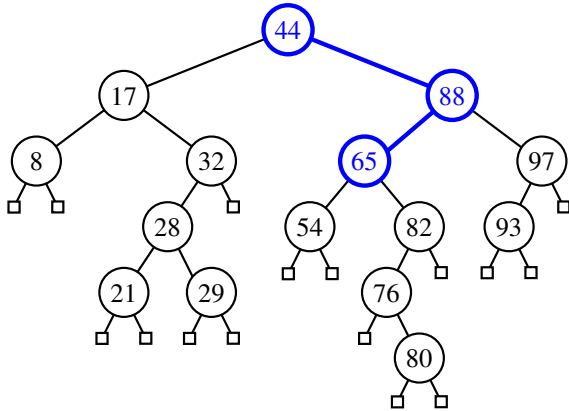


Given a **BST** rooted at node **p**, to locate a particular **node** whose **key** matches **k**, we may view it as a **decision tree**.

```
public BSTNode<E> search(BSTNode<E> p, int k) {  
    BSTNode<E> result = null;  
    if(p.isExternal()) {  
        result = p; /* unsuccessful search */  
    }  
    else if(p.getKey() == k) {  
        result = p; /* successful search */  
    }  
    else if(k < p.getKey()) {  
        result = search(p.getLeft(), k); /* recur on LST */  
    }  
    else if(k > p.getKey()) {  
        result = search(p.getRight(), k); /* recur on RST */  
    }  
    return result;  
}
```

Visualizing BST Operation: Searching (1)

A **successful** search for **key 65**:



The *internal node* storing key 65 is returned.

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Testing BST Operation: Searching

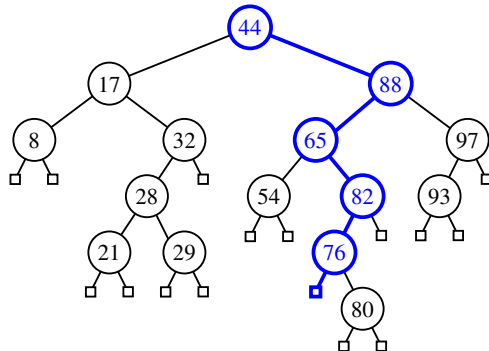
```
@Test
public void test_binary_search_trees_search() {
    BSTNode<String> n28 = new BSTNode<>(28, "alan");
    BSTNode<String> n21 = new BSTNode<>(21, "mark");
    BSTNode<String> n35 = new BSTNode<>(35, "tom");
    BSTNode<String> extN1 = new BSTNode<>();
    BSTNode<String> extN2 = new BSTNode<>();
    BSTNode<String> extN3 = new BSTNode<>();
    BSTNode<String> extN4 = new BSTNode<>();
    n28.setLeft(n21); n21.setParent(n28);
    n28.setRight(n35); n35.setParent(n28);
    n21.setLeft(extN1); extN1.setParent(n21);
    n21.setRight(extN2); extN2.setParent(n21);
    n35.setLeft(extN3); extN3.setParent(n35);
    n35.setRight(extN4); extN4.setParent(n35);

    BSTUtilities<String> u = new BSTUtilities<>();
    /* search existing keys */
    assertTrue(n28 == u.search(n28, 28));
    assertTrue(n21 == u.search(n28, 21));
    assertTrue(n35 == u.search(n28, 35));
    /* search non-existing keys */
    assertTrue(extN1 == u.search(n28, 17)); /* 17* < 21 */
    assertTrue(extN2 == u.search(n28, 23)); /* 21 < 23* < 28 */
    assertTrue(extN3 == u.search(n28, 33)); /* 28 < 33* < 35 */
    assertTrue(extN4 == u.search(n28, 38)); /* 35 < 38* */
}
```

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Visualizing BST Operation: Searching (2)

- An *unsuccessful* search for *key 68*:

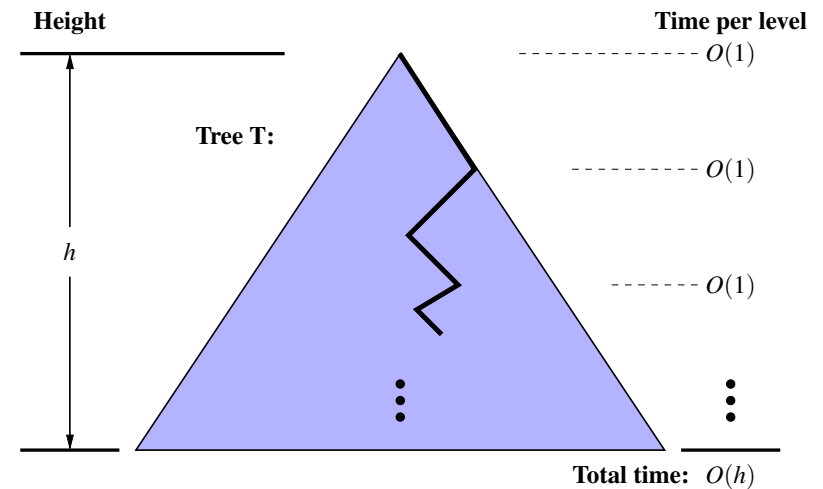


The **external, left child node** of the **internal node** storing **key 76** is **returned**.

- **Exercise**: Provide **keys** for different **external nodes** to be **returned**.

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RT of BST Operation: Searching (1)



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RT of BST Operation: Searching (2)



- Recursive calls of `search` are made on a **path** which
 - Starts from the **root**
 - Goes down one **level** at a time
 - RT of deciding from each node to go to LST or RST? [$O(1)$]
 - Stops when the key is found or when a **leaf** is reached
- Maximum** number of nodes visited by the search? [$h + 1$]
- \therefore RT of **search on a BST** is $O(h)$
- Recall:** Given a BT with n nodes, the **height** h is bounded as:

$$\log(n+1) - 1 \leq h \leq n - 1$$
 - Best** RT of a **binary search** is $O(\log(n))$ [**balanced** BST]
 - Worst** RT of a **binary search** is $O(n)$ [**ill-balanced** BST]
- Binary search** on non-linear vs. linear structures:

	Search on a BST	Binary Search on a Sorted Array
START	Root of BST	Middle of Array
PROGRESS	LST or RST	Left Half or Right Half of Array
BEST RT	$O(\log(n))$	$O(\log(n))$
WORST RT	$O(n)$	

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Sketch of BST Operation: Insertion



To **insert** an **entry** (with **key** k & **value** v) into a BST rooted at **node** n :

- Let node p be the return value from `search(n, k)`.
- If p is an **internal node**
 - \Rightarrow Key k exists in the BST.
 - \Rightarrow Set p 's value to v .
- If p is an **external node**
 - \Rightarrow Key k does **not** exist in the BST.
 - \Rightarrow Set p 's key and value to k and v .

Running time?

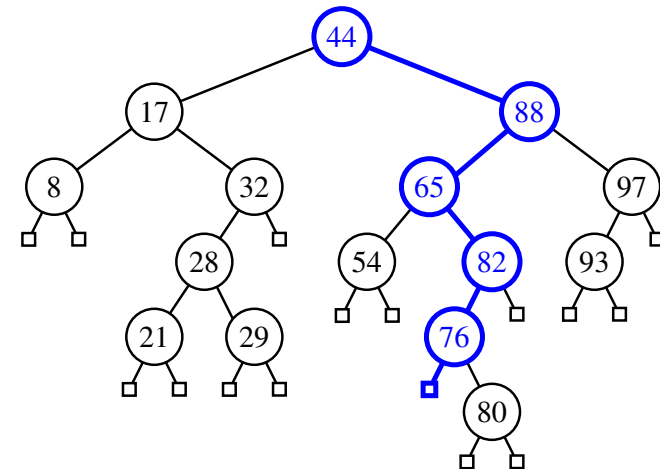
[$O(h)$]

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Visualizing BST Operation: Insertion (1)



Before **inserting** an entry with **key** 68 into the following BST:

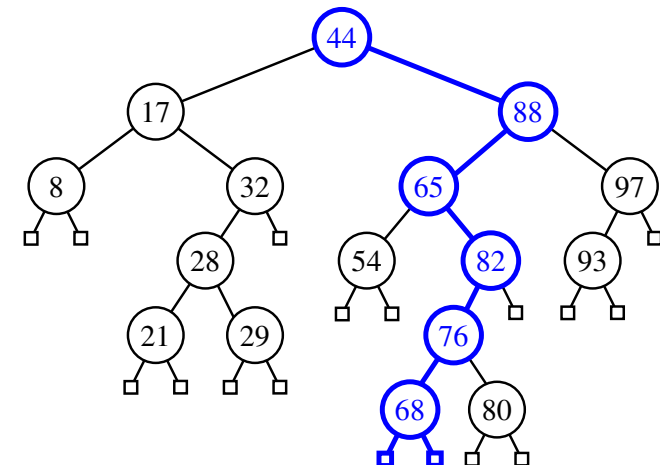


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Visualizing BST Operation: Insertion (2)



After **inserting** an entry with **key** 68 into the following BST:



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Exercise on BST Operation: Insertion



Exercise: In BSTUtilities class, **implement** and **test** the

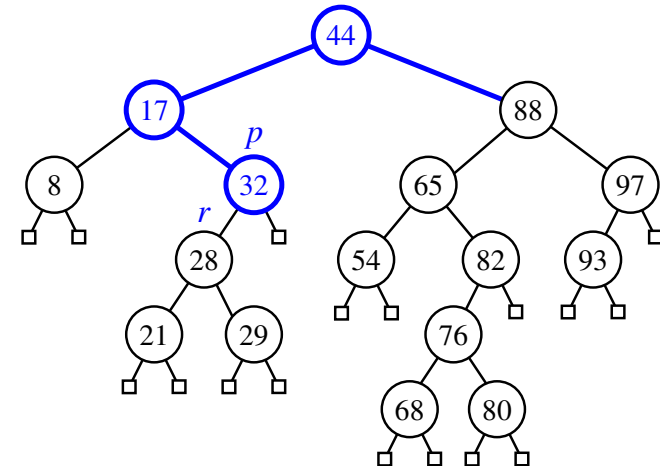
`void insert(BSTNode<E> p, int k, E v)` method.

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Visualizing BST Operation: Deletion (1.1)



(Case 3) Before **deleting** the node storing **key 32**:



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Sketch of BST Operation: Deletion



To **delete** an **entry** (with **key k**) from a BST rooted at **node n**:

Let node **p** be the return value from `search(n, k)`.

- **Case 1:** Node **p** is **external**.
 k is not an existing key \Rightarrow Nothing to remove
- **Case 2:** Both of node **p**'s child nodes are **external**.
 No "orphan" subtrees to be handled \Rightarrow Remove **p** [Still BST?]
- **Case 3:** One of the node **p**'s children, say **r**, is **internal**.
 r 's sibling is **external** \Rightarrow Replace node **p** by node **r** [Still BST?]
- **Case 4:** Both of node **p**'s children are **internal**.
 • Let **r** be the **right-most internal node p's LST**.
 $\Rightarrow r$ contains the **largest key s.t. $key(r) < key(p)$** .
Exercise: Can **r** contain the **smallest key s.t. $key(r) > key(p)$** ?
 • Overwrite node **p**'s entry by node **r**'s entry. [Still BST?]
 • **r** being the **right-most internal node** may have:
 ◊ Two **external child nodes** \Rightarrow Remove **r** as in **Case 2**.
 ◊ An **external, RC** & an **internal LC** \Rightarrow Remove **r** as in **Case 3**.

Running time?

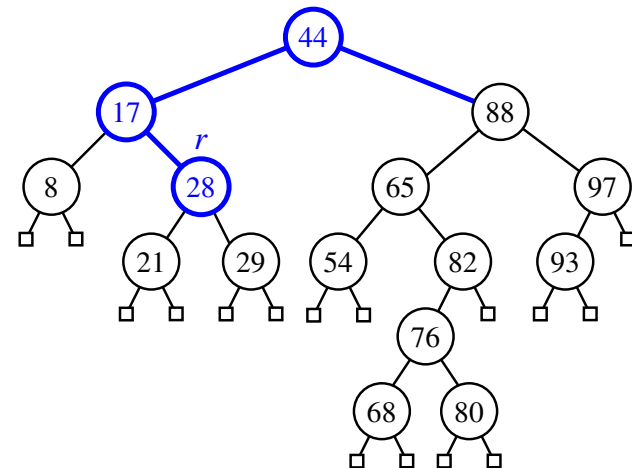
[$O(h)$]

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Visualizing BST Operation: Deletion (1.2)



(Case 3) After **deleting** the node storing **key 32**:

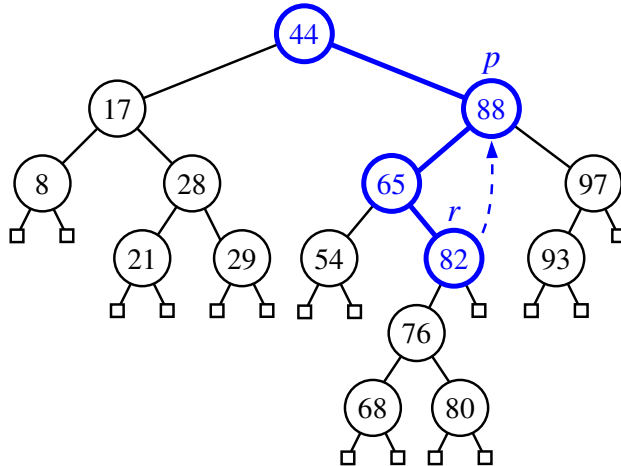


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Visualizing BST Operation: Deletion (2.1)



(Case 4) Before **deleting** the node storing **key 88**:



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Exercise on BST Operation: Deletion



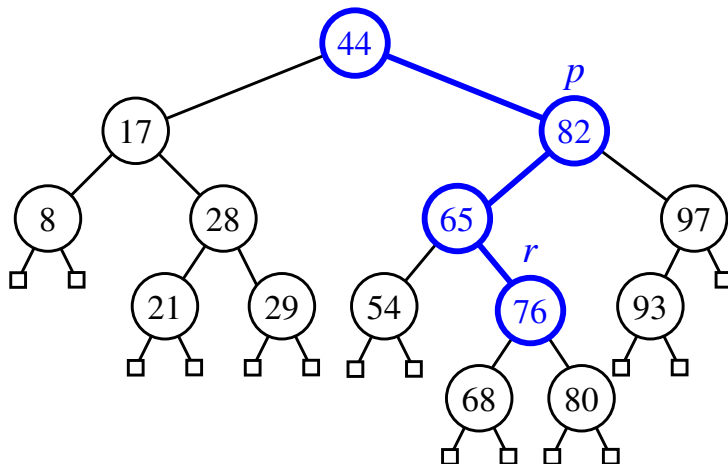
Exercise: In BSTUtilities class, **implement** and **test** the
`void delete(BSTNode<E> p, int k)` method.

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Visualizing BST Operation: Deletion (2.2)



(Case 4) After **deleting** the node storing **key 88**:



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Balanced Binary Search Trees: Motivation



- After **insertions** into a BST, the **worst-case RT** of a **search** occurs when the **height h** is at its **maximum: $O(n)$** :
 - e.g., Entries were inserted in an **decreasing order** of their keys
 $\langle 100, 75, 68, 60, 50, 1 \rangle$
 \Rightarrow **One-path, left-slanted** BST
 - e.g., Entries were inserted in an **increasing order** of their keys
 $\langle 1, 50, 60, 68, 75, 100 \rangle$
 \Rightarrow **One-path, right-slanted** BST
 - e.g., Last entry's key is **in-between** keys of the previous two entries
 $\langle 1, 100, 50, 75, 60, 68 \rangle$
 \Rightarrow **One-path, side-alternating** BST
- To avoid the worst-case RT (\because a **ill-balanced tree**), we need to take actions **as soon as** the tree becomes **unbalanced**.

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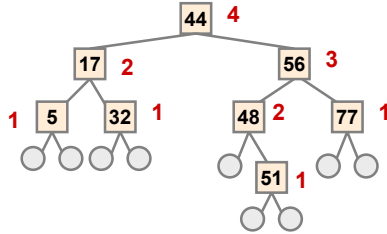
Balanced Binary Search Trees: Definition



- Given a node p , the **height** of the subtree rooted at p is:

$$\text{height}(p) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } p \text{ is external} \\ 1 + \text{MAX}(\{\text{height}(c) \mid \text{parent}(c) = p\}) & \text{if } p \text{ is internal} \end{cases}$$

- A **balanced** BST T satisfies the **height-balance property**:
For every **internal node** n , **heights** of n 's **child nodes** differ ≤ 1 .



Q: Is the above tree a **balanced BST**?

✓

Q: Will the tree remain **balanced** after inserting 55?

✗

Q: Will the tree remain **balanced** after inserting 63?

✓

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After Insertions: Trinode Restructuring via Rotation(s)



After **inserting** a new node n :

- Case 1:** Nodes on n 's **ancestor path** remain **balanced**.
⇒ No rotations needed
- Case 2:** At least one of n 's **ancestors** becomes **unbalanced**.
 - Get the **first/lowest unbalanced** node **a** on n 's **ancestor path**.
 - Get a 's child node **b** in n 's **ancestor path**.
 - Get b 's child node **c** in n 's **ancestor path**.
 - Perform rotation(s) based on the **alignment** of a , b , and c :
 - Slanted the **same** way ⇒ **single rotation** on the **middle** node **b**
 - Slanted **different** ways ⇒ **double rotations** on the **lower** node **c**

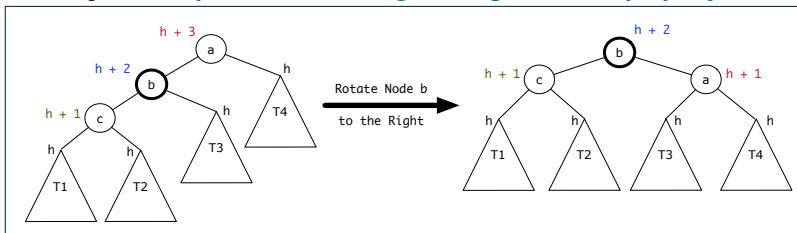
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Fixing Unbalanced BST: Rotations



A tree **rotation** is performed:

- When the latest **insertion/deletion** creates **unbalanced** nodes, along the **ancestor path** of the node being inserted/deleted.
- To change the **shape** of tree, **restoring** the **height-balance property**



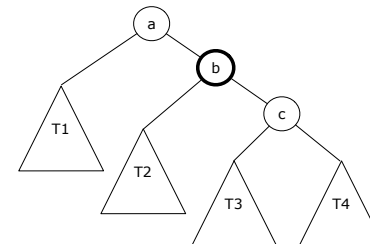
Q. An **in-order traversal** on the resulting tree?

A. Still produces a sequence of **sorted keys** $\langle T_1, c, T_2, b, T_3, a, T_4 \rangle$

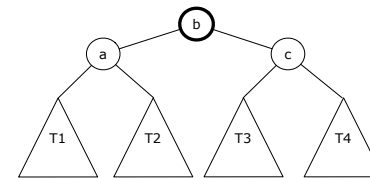
- After **rotating** node b to the **right**:
 - Heights of **descendants** (b, c, T_1, T_2, T_3) and **sibling** (T_4) stay **unchanged**.
 - Height of **parent** (a) is **decreased by 1**.
⇒ **Balance** of node a was **restored** by the **rotation**.

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Trinode Restructuring: Single, Left Rotation



After a **left rotation** on the **middle** node b :



BST property maintained?

$\langle T_1, a, T_2, b, T_3, c, T_4 \rangle$

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Left Rotation



- **Insert** the following sequence of nodes into an empty BST:
 $\langle 44, 17, 78, 32, 50, 88, 95 \rangle$
- Is the BST now **balanced**?
- **Insert** 100 into the BST.
- Is the BST still **balanced**?
- Perform a **left rotation** on the appropriate node.
- Is the BST again **balanced**?

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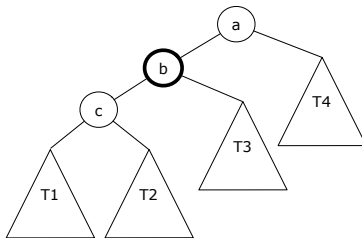
Right Rotation



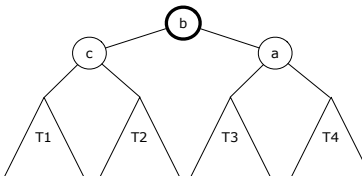
- **Insert** the following sequence of nodes into an empty BST:
 $\langle 44, 17, 78, 32, 50, 88, 48 \rangle$
- Is the BST now **balanced**?
- **Insert** 46 into the BST.
- Is the BST still **balanced**?
- Perform a **right rotation** on the appropriate node.
- Is the BST again **balanced**?

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Trinode Restructuring: Single, Right Rotation



After a **right rotation** on the middle node b:

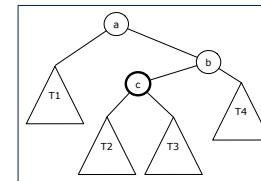


BST property maintained?

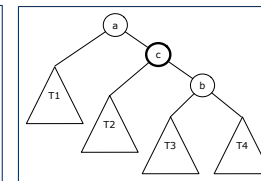
$\langle T_1, a, T_2, b, T_3, c, T_4 \rangle$

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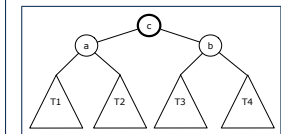
Trinode Restructuring: Double, R-L Rotations



Perform a **Right Rotation** on Node c



Perform a **Left Rotation** on Node c



After Right-Left Rotations

BST property maintained?

$\langle T_1, a, T_2, c, T_3, b, T_4 \rangle$

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R-L Rotations



- **Insert** the following sequence of nodes into an empty BST:
 $\langle 44, 17, 78, 32, 50, 88, 82, 95 \rangle$
- Is the BST now **balanced**?
- **Insert** 85 into the BST.
- Is the BST still **balanced**?
- Perform the **R-L rotations** on the appropriate node.
- Is the BST again **balanced**?

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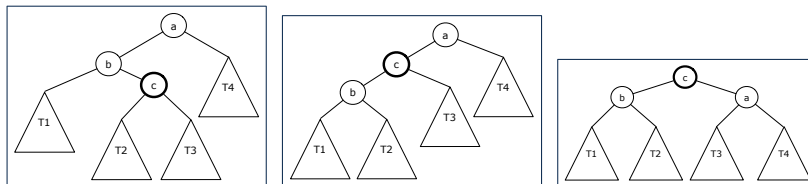
L-R Rotations



- **Insert** the following sequence of nodes into an empty BST:
 $\langle 44, 17, 78, 32, 50, 88, 48, 62 \rangle$
- Is the BST now **balanced**?
- **Insert** 54 into the BST.
- Is the BST still **balanced**?
- Perform the **L-R rotations** on the appropriate node.
- Is the BST again **balanced**?

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Trinode Restructuring: Double, L-R Rotations



Perform a **Left Rotation** on Node **c**

Perform a **Right Rotation** on Node **c**

After Left-Right Rotations

BST property maintained?

$\langle T_1, b, T_2, c, T_3, a, T_4 \rangle$

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After Deletions: Continuous Trinode Restructuring



- **Recall**: **Deletion** from a BST results in removing a node with zero or one **internal** child node.
- After **deleting** an existing node, say its child is **n**:
 - Case 1**: Nodes on **n**'s **ancestor path** remain **balanced**. \Rightarrow No rotations
 - Case 2**: At least one of **n**'s **ancestors** becomes **unbalanced**.
 1. Get the **first/lowest** **unbalanced** node **a** on **n**'s **ancestor path**.
 2. Get **a**'s **taller** child node **b**. $[b \notin n\text{'s ancestor path}]$
 3. Choose **b**'s child node **c** as follows:
 - **b**'s two child nodes have **different** heights \Rightarrow **c** is the **taller** child
 - **b**'s two child nodes have **same** height \Rightarrow **a**, **b**, **c** slant the **same** way
 4. Perform rotation(s) based on the **alignment** of **a**, **b**, and **c**:
 - Slanted the **same** way \Rightarrow **single rotation** on the **middle** node **b**
 - Slanted **different** ways \Rightarrow **double rotations** on the **lower** node **c**
- As **n**'s **unbalanced ancestors** are found, keep applying **Case 2**, until **Case 1** is satisfied. $[O(h) = O(\log n) \text{ rotations}]$

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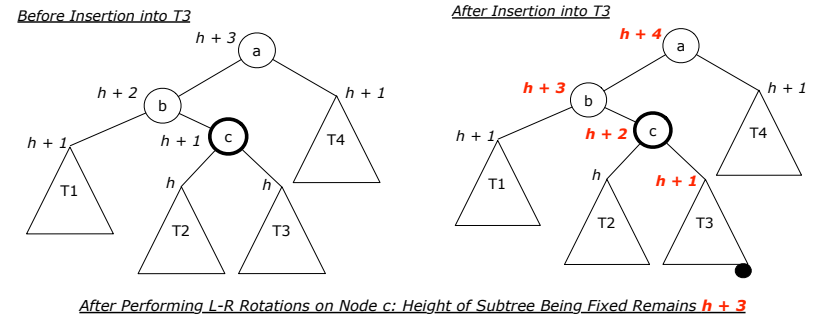
Single Trinode Restructuring Step



- **Insert** the following sequence of nodes into an empty BST:
(44, 17, 62, 32, 50, 78, 48, 54, 88)
- Is the BST now **balanced**?
- **Delete** 32 from the BST.
- Is the BST still **balanced**?
- Perform a **left rotation** on the appropriate node.
- Is the BST again **balanced**?

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Restoring Balance from Insertions



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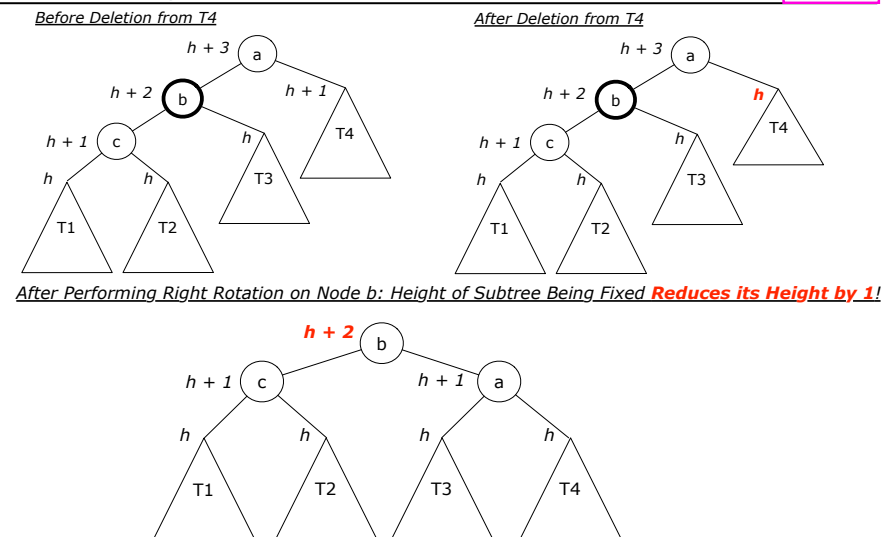
Multiple Trinode Restructuring Steps



- **Insert** the following sequence of nodes into an empty BST:
(50, 25, 10, 30, 5, 15, 27, 1, 75, 60, 80, 55)
- Is the BST now **balanced**?
- **Delete** 80 from the BST.
- Is the BST still **balanced**?
- Perform a **right rotation** on the appropriate node.
- Is the BST now **balanced**?
- Perform another **right rotation** on the appropriate node.
- Is the BST again **balanced**?

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Restoring Balance from Deletions



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Restoring Balance: Insertions vs. Deletions



- Each **rotation** involves only **POs** of setting parent-child references.
⇒ **$O(1)$** running time for each tree **rotation**
- After each **insertion**, a **trinode restructuring** step can **restore the balance** of the subtree rooted at the first **unbalanced** node.
⇒ **$O(1)$** rotations suffices to restore the balance of tree
- After each **deletion**, one or more **trinode restructuring** steps may **restore the balance** of the subtree rooted at the first **unbalanced** node.
⇒ May take **$O(\log n)$** rotations to restore the balance of tree

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Visualizing BST Operation: Searching (1)

Visualizing BST Operation: Searching (2)

Testing BST Operation: Searching

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RT of BST Operation: Searching (2)

Sketch of BST Operation: Insertion

Visualizing BST Operation: Insertion (1)

Visualizing BST Operation: Insertion (2)

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Visualizing BST Operation: Deletion (1.2)

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Balanced Binary Search Trees: Definition

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After Insertions:

Trinode Restructuring via Rotation(s)

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Left Rotation

Trinode Restructuring: Single, Right Rotation

Right Rotation

Trinode Restructuring: Double, R-L Rotations

R-L Rotations

Trinode Restructuring: Double, L-R Rotations

L-R Rotations

After Deletions:

Continuous Trinode Restructuring

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Single Trinode Restructuring Step

Multiple Trinode Restructuring Steps

Restoring Balance from Insertions

Restoring Balance from Deletions

Restoring Balance: Insertions vs. Deletions