Use what you’ve got

Recursion

Lawrence Snyder
University of Washington
Recursion means to call a function in its own definition
Recursion

- If the “concept applies,” use it.
Often, Recursive Is Easiest Solution

- Specification: Draw alternating purple & gold bars across the top, leaving 10 px at each end
  - How large is canvas?
  - How many bars are needed?
  - What color to start/end with?

Don’t Know? Make solution that is flexible and adjust later
Recursion: Draw A Pair, Ask “More?”

```cpp
void setup() {
    size(500, 500);
    background(0);
}

void draw() {
    husky(10, 100);
}

void husky(int xpos, int ypos) {
    fill(157, 0, 255);
    rect(xpos, ypos, 10, 50);
    fill(255, 235, 0);
    rect(xpos + 10, ypos, 10, 50);
    if (xpos + 20 <= width - 30) {
        husky(xpos + 20, ypos);
    }
}
```

Just Do It!
void draw( ) {
    husky(10, 20, true);
}

void husky(int xpos, int ypos, boolean p0Rg) {
    if (p0Rg) {
        fill(157,0,255); // Pick Purple
    } else {
        fill(255,235,0); // Pick Gold
    }
    rect(xpos, ypos, 10,50);   // Draw bar
    if (xpos+10 <= width-20) {
        husky(xpos+10, ypos, !p0Rg); // Yes
    }
}
One More Example: Factorial

- Math people say $n! = n \times (n-1)\times(n-2)\times \ldots \times 2 \times 1$
- CS people say $n! = \text{if } n == 1, \text{ then } 1, \text{ else } n\times(n-1)!$

```c
int fact(int n) {
    int soFar = 1;
    for(int i = 2; i <= n; i = i + 1) {
        soFar = soFar * i;
    }
    return soFar;
}
```

```c
int fact(int n) {
    if (n <= 1) {
        return 1;
    } else {
        return n*fact(n-1);
    }
}
```
Generally, in recursion, the program will show two cases: Base and Recursive … you need both

```c
int fact( int n ) {
    if (n <= 1) {
        return 1;
    } else {
        return n*fact(n-1);
    }
}
```

Basis Case – It Stops The Recursion

Recursive Case – It Keeps The Recursion Going
Check it Out: Sierpinski Triangle
What is it?

Abstracting, we have

- “A Sierpinski Triangle is an equilateral triangle”
- “A Sierpinski Triangle can also be three copies of a Sierpinski Triangle, touching at their corners”
What is it?

Abstracting, we have

- “A Sierpinski Triangle is an equilateral triangle”
- “A Sierpinski Triangle can also be three copies of a Sierpinski Triangle, touching at their corners”

What’s the base case? What’s the recursive case?
Sierpinski Triangle Code (tiny)

```c
// Sierpinski.pde by Martin Prout
float T_HEIGHT = sqrt(3)/2;
float TOP_Y = 1/sqrt(3);
float BOT_Y = sqrt(3)/6;
float triangleSize = 800;

void setup(){
    size(int(triangleSize), int(T_HEIGHT*triangleSize));
    smooth();
    fill(255);
    background(0);
    noStroke();
    drawSierpinski(width/2, height * (TOP_Y/T_HEIGHT), triangleSize);
}

void drawSierpinski(float cx, float cy, float sz){
    if (sz < 5){  // Limit no of recursions on size
        drawTriangle(cx, cy, sz); // Only draw terminals
        noLoop();
    } else{
        float cx0 = cx;
        float cy0 = cy - BOT_Y * sz;
        float cx1 = cx - sz/4;
        float cy1 = cy + (BOT_Y/2) * sz;
        float cx2 = cx + sz/4;
        float cy2 = cy + (BOT_Y/2) * sz;
        drawSierpinski(cx0, cy0, sz/2);
        drawSierpinski(cx1, cy1, sz/2);
        drawSierpinski(cx2, cy2, sz/2);
    }
}

void drawTriangle(float cx, float cy, float sz){
    float cx0 = cx;
    float cy0 = cy - TOP_Y * sz;
    float cx1 = cx - sz/2;
    float cy1 = cy + BOT_Y * sz;
    float cx2 = cx + sz/2;
    float cy2 = cy + BOT_Y * sz;
    triangle(cx0, cy0, cx1, cy1, cx2, cy2);
}
```
void setup(){
  size(int(triangleSize), int(T_HEIGHT*triangleSize));
  smooth();
  fill(255);
  background(0);
  noStroke();
  drawSierpinski(width/2, height * (TOP_Y/T_HEIGHT), triangleSize);
}

void drawSierpinski(float cx, float cy, float sz){
  if (sz < 5){  // Limit no of recursions on size
    drawTriangle(cx, cy, sz);  // Only draw terminals
    noLoop();
  } else{
    float cx0 = cx;
    float cy0 = cy - BOT_Y * sz;
    float cx1 = cx - sz/4;
    float cy1 = cy + (BOT_Y/2) * sz;
    float cx2 = cx + sz/4;
    float cy2 = cy + (BOT_Y/2) * sz;
    drawSierpinski(cx0, cy0, sz/2);
    drawSierpinski(cx1, cy1, sz/2);
    drawSierpinski(cx2, cy2, sz/2);
  }
}

triangle(cx0, cy0, cx1, cy1, cx2, cy2);
Often we can solve a problem “top down”

Fibonacci numbers –

1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, ...

i\text{th} item is i-1\text{st} + i-2\text{nd} except the first two, both 1

Translate definition directly:

\[\text{fib}(n) = \begin{cases} 
1 & \text{if } n<2 \\
\text{fib}(n-1) + \text{fib}(n-2) & \text{otherwise}
\end{cases}\]

It works like all functions work
If anyone actually cared about Fibonacci numbers, they could be computed ...

```c
int fib(int n) {
  if (n < 2) {
    return 1;
  } else {
    return fib(n-1) + fib(n-2);
  }
}
```
Leave The Thinking To The Agent ...

\[
\text{fib}(n) = \begin{cases} 
1 & \text{if } n < 2 \\
\text{fib}(n-1) + \text{fib}(n-2) & \text{otherwise}
\end{cases}
\]

\[
\text{fib}(4) = \text{fib}(3) + \text{fib}(2)
\]

- \[
\text{fib}(3) = \text{fib}(2) + \text{fib}(1)
\]
  - \[
\text{fib}(2) = \text{fib}(1) + \text{fib}(0) = 1 + 1 = 2
\]
  - \[
\text{fib}(2) = 2 + 1 = 3
\]

So, \[
\text{fib}(4) = 3 + \text{fib}(2)
\]

- \[
\text{fib}(2) = \text{fib}(1) + \text{fib}(0) = 1 + 1 = 2
\]

So, \[
\text{fib}(4) = 3 + 2 = 5
\]

Programmers don’t need to worry about the details if the definition is right and the termination is right; the computer does the rest.
The boxes are drawn in order, left to right.
void box(int level) {
    if (level > 0) {
        level = level - 1;
        box(level);
        fill(170);
        rect(xdist, 200-level*30, 20, 20);
        xdist = xdist + 25;
        box(level);
    } else {
        fill(0,255,0);
        ellipse(xdist+10, 230, 10, 20);  
    }
}
Recursion often simplifies programming
- It’s only a big deal to CS people, and for them only because it is so “elegant” (?)
- See Processing Ref for this cute program
All Circles From 1 Call Are 1 Color