Building Java Programs

read: 12.5
Recursive backtracking
Wednesday Notecards

- What is static?
  - Belongs to *class*, not any particular *instance*

- Why don’t we learn the diamond operator?
Exercise: fourAB

- Write a method `fourAB` that prints out all strings of length 4 composed only of a’s and b’s
- Example Output

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>aaaa</th>
<th>baaa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aaab</td>
<td>baab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aaba</td>
<td>baba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aabb</td>
<td>babb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abaa</td>
<td>bbba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abab</td>
<td>bbab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abba</td>
<td>bbb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abbb</td>
<td>bbbb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise: Dice rolls

- Write a method `diceRoll` that accepts an integer parameter representing a number of 6-sided dice to roll, and output all possible arrangements of values that could appear on the dice.

```
diceRoll(2);
[1, 1]
[1, 2]
[1, 3]
[1, 4]
[1, 5]
[1, 6]
[2, 1]
[2, 2]
[2, 3]
[2, 4]
[2, 5]
[2, 6]
```

```
diceRoll(3);
[1, 1, 1]
[1, 1, 2]
[1, 1, 3]
[1, 1, 4]
[1, 1, 5]
[1, 1, 6]
[1, 2, 1]
[1, 2, 2]
[1, 2, 3]
[1, 2, 4]
[1, 2, 5]
[1, 2, 6]
[1, 3, 1]
[1, 3, 2]
[1, 3, 3]
[1, 3, 4]
[1, 3, 5]
[1, 3, 6]
[1, 4, 1]
[1, 4, 2]
[1, 4, 3]
[1, 4, 4]
[1, 4, 5]
[1, 4, 6]
[1, 5, 1]
[1, 5, 2]
[1, 5, 3]
[1, 5, 4]
[1, 5, 5]
[1, 5, 6]
[1, 6, 1]
[1, 6, 2]
[1, 6, 3]
[1, 6, 4]
[1, 6, 5]
[1, 6, 6]
[2, 1, 1]
[2, 1, 2]
[2, 1, 3]
[2, 1, 4]
[2, 1, 5]
[2, 1, 6]
[2, 2, 1]
[2, 2, 2]
[2, 2, 3]
[2, 2, 4]
[2, 2, 5]
[2, 2, 6]
[2, 3, 1]
[2, 3, 2]
[2, 3, 3]
[2, 3, 4]
[2, 3, 5]
[2, 3, 6]
[2, 4, 1]
[2, 4, 2]
[2, 4, 3]
[2, 4, 4]
[2, 4, 5]
[2, 4, 6]
[2, 5, 1]
[2, 5, 2]
[2, 5, 3]
[2, 5, 4]
[2, 5, 5]
[2, 5, 6]
[2, 6, 1]
[2, 6, 2]
[2, 6, 3]
[2, 6, 4]
[2, 6, 5]
[2, 6, 6]
```
Examining the problem

- We want to generate all possible sequences of values.
  for (each possible first die value):
    for (each possible second die value):
      for (each possible third die value):
        ...
        print!

- This is called a **depth-first search**

- How can we completely explore such a large search space?
A decision tree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>chosen</th>
<th>available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 dice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 | 3 dice

1, 1 | 2 dice

1, 1, 1 | 1 die

1, 1, 1, 1 | 1 die

1, 1, 1, 2 | 1 die

1, 1, 2 | 1 die

1, 1, 3 | 1 die

1, 1, 3, 1 | 1 die

1, 1, 3, 2 | 1 die

1, 1, 4 | 2 dice

2 | 3 dice

...
Solving recursively

- Pick a value for the first die
- Recursively find values for the remaining dice
- Repeat with other values for the first die
- What is the base case?
Private helpers

- Often the method doesn't accept the parameters you want.
  - So write a **private helper** that accepts more parameters.
  - Extra params can represent current state, choices made, etc.

```csharp
public int methodName(params):
  ...
  return helper(params, moreParams);

private int helper(params, moreParams):
  ...
  (use moreParams to help solve the problem)
```
Exercise solution

// Prints all possible outcomes of rolling the given
// number of six-sided dice in [#,#,#] format.
public static void diceRolls(int dice) {
    List<Integer> chosen = new ArrayList<Integer>();
    diceRolls(dice, chosen);
}

// private recursive helper to implement diceRolls logic
private static void diceRolls(int dice, List<Integer> chosen) {
    if (dice == 0) {
        System.out.println(chosen);   // base case
    } else {
        for (int i = 1; i <= 6; i++) {
            chosen.add(i); // choose
diceRolls(dice - 1, chosen); // explore
            chosen.remove(chosen.size() - 1); // un-choose
        }
    }
}
Backtracking

- **backtracking**: Finding solution(s) by trying partial solutions and then abandoning them if they are not suitable.
  - a "brute force" algorithmic technique (tries all paths)
  - often implemented recursively

Applications:
- producing all permutations of a set of values
- parsing languages
- games: anagrams, crosswords, word jumbles, 8 queens
- combinatorics and logic programming
Backtracking algorithms

A general pseudo-code algorithm for backtracking problems:

Explore(\text{choices}):\
• if there are no more \text{choices} to make: stop.\
• else:\n  • Make a single choice C.\
  • Explore the remaining \text{choices}.\
  • Un-make choice C, if necessary. (backtrack!)
Backtracking strategies

- When solving a backtracking problem, ask these questions:
  - What are the "choices" in this problem?
    - What is the "base case"? (How do I know when I'm out of choices?)
  - How do I "make" a choice?
    - Do I need to create additional variables to remember my choices?
    - Do I need to modify the values of existing variables?
  - How do I explore the rest of the choices?
    - Do I need to remove the made choice from the list of choices?
  - Once I'm done exploring, what should I do?
  - How do I "un-make" a choice?
Exercise: Dice roll sum

- Write a method `diceSum` similar to `diceRoll`, but it also accepts a desired sum and prints only arrangements that add up to exactly that sum.

```java
diceSum(2, 7);
[1, 6]
[2, 5]
[3, 4]
[4, 3]
[5, 2]
[6, 1]

diceSum(3, 7);
[1, 1, 5]
[1, 2, 4]
[1, 3, 3]
[1, 4, 2]
[1, 5, 1]
[2, 1, 4]
[2, 2, 3]
[2, 3, 2]
[2, 4, 1]
[3, 1, 3]
[3, 2, 2]
[3, 3, 1]
[4, 1, 2]
[4, 2, 1]
[5, 1, 1]
```
Consider all paths?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>chosen</th>
<th>available</th>
<th>desired sum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 dice</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1, 1 2 dice  2, 2 dice  3, 2 dice  4, 2 dice  5, 2 dice  6, 2 dice

1, 1 1 die  1, 2 1 die  1, 3 1 die  1, 4 1 die  1, 5 1 die  1, 6 1 die

1, 1, 1  1, 1, 2  1, 1, 3  1, 1, 4  1, 1, 5  1, 1, 6

1, 6, 1  1, 6, 2

...
Optimizations

- We need not visit every branch of the decision tree.
  - Some branches are clearly not going to lead to success.
  - We can preemptively stop, or prune, these branches.

- Inefficiencies in our dice sum algorithm:
  - Sometimes the current sum is already too high.
    - (Even rolling 1 for all remaining dice would exceed the sum.)
  - Sometimes the current sum is already too low.
    - (Even rolling 6 for all remaining dice would not reach the sum.)
  - When finished, the code must compute the sum every time.
    - (1+1+1 = ..., 1+1+2 = ..., 1+1+3 = ..., 1+1+4 = ..., ...)
New decision tree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>chosen</th>
<th>available</th>
<th>desired sum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 dice</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 2 dice

2 2 dice

3 2 dice

4 2 dice

5 2 dice

6 2 dice

1, 1 1 die

1, 2 1 die

1, 3 1 die

1, 4 1 die

1, 5 1 die

1, 6 1 die

1, 1, 1

1, 1, 2

1, 1, 3

1, 1, 4

1, 1, 5

1, 1, 6

1, 6, 1

1, 6, 2

...
Exercise: Combinations

- Write a method `combinations` that accepts a string `s` and an integer `k` as parameters and outputs all possible `k`-letter words that can be formed from unique letters in that string. The arrangements may be output in any order.

- Example:
  `combinations("GOOGLE", 3)` outputs the sequence of lines at right.

- To simplify the problem, you may assume that the string `s` contains at least `k` unique characters.
Initial attempt

```java
public static void combinations(String s, int length) {
    combinations(s, "", length);
}

private static void combinations(String s, String chosen, int length) {
    if (length == 0) {
        System.out.println(chosen); // base case: no choices left
    } else {
        for (int i = 0; i < s.length(); i++) {
            String ch = s.substring(i, i + 1);
            if (!chosen.contains(ch)) {
                String rest = s.substring(0, i) + s.substring(i + 1);
                combinations(rest, chosen + ch, length - 1);
            }
        }
    }
}
```

- Problem: Prints same string multiple times.
public static void combinations(String s, int length) {
    Set<String> all = new TreeSet<String>();
    combinations(s, "", all, length);
    for (String comb : all) {
        System.out.println(comb);
    }
}

private static void combinations(String s, String chosen, Set<String> all, int length) {
    if (length == 0) {
        all.add(chosen); // base case: no choices left
    } else {
        for (int i = 0; i < s.length(); i++) {
            String ch = s.substring(i, i + 1);
            if (!chosen.contains(ch)) {
                String rest = s.substring(0, i) + s.substring(i + 1);
                combinations(rest, chosen + ch, all, length - 1);
            }
        }
    }
}