

Building Java Programs

read: 12.5

Recursive backtracking



Road Map - Quarter

CS Concepts

- Client/Implementer
- Efficiency
- Recursion
- Regular Expressions
- Grammars
- Sorting
- Backtracking
- Hashing
- Huffman Compression

Data Structures

- Lists
- Stacks
- Queues
- Sets
- Maps
- Priority Queues

Java Language

- Exceptions
- Interfaces
- References
- Comparable
- Generics
- Inheritance/Polymorphism
- Abstract Classes

Java Collections

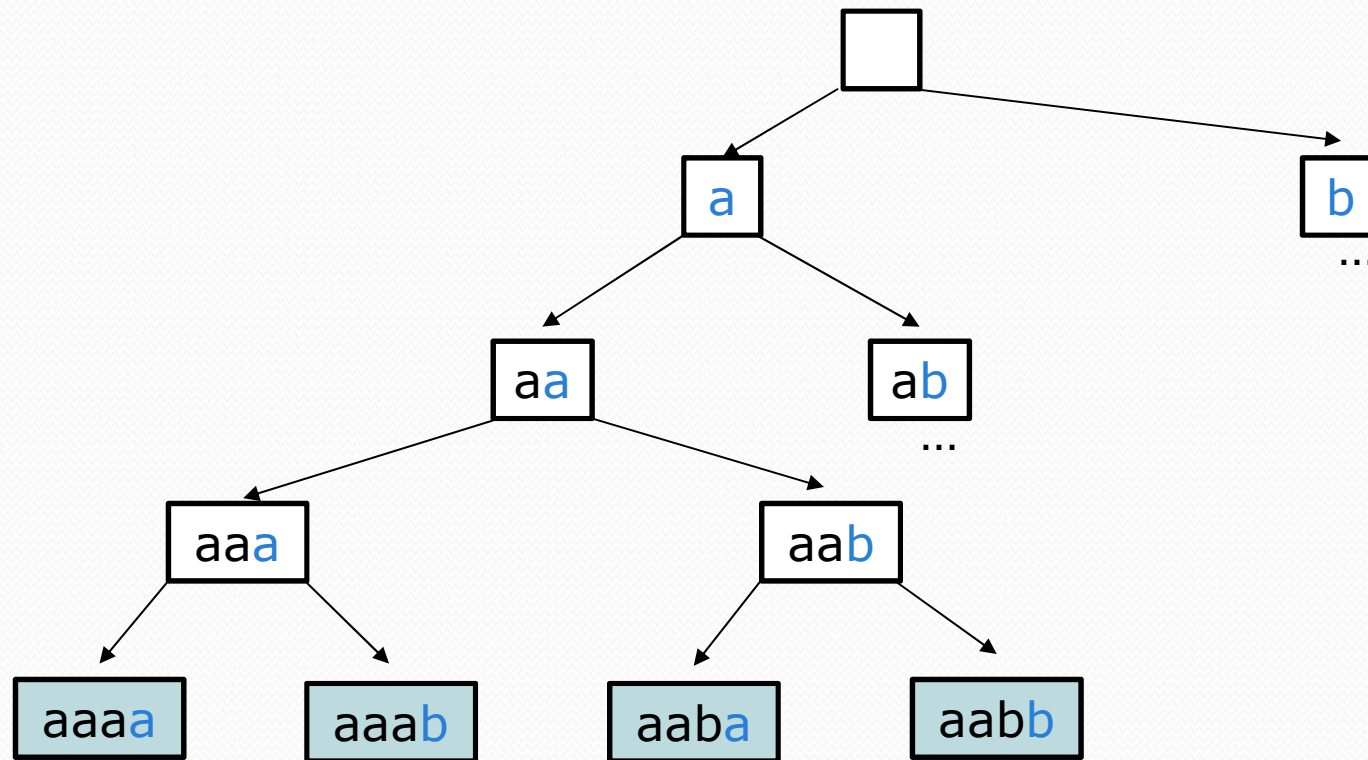
- Arrays
- ArrayList ✖
- LinkedList ✖
- Stack
- TreeSet / TreeMap
- HashSet / HashMap
- PriorityQueue

Exercise: fourAB

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

aaaa	baaa
aaab	baab
aaba	baba
aabb	babb
abaa	bbaa
abab	bbab
abba	bbba
abbb	bbbb

Decision Tree







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);`

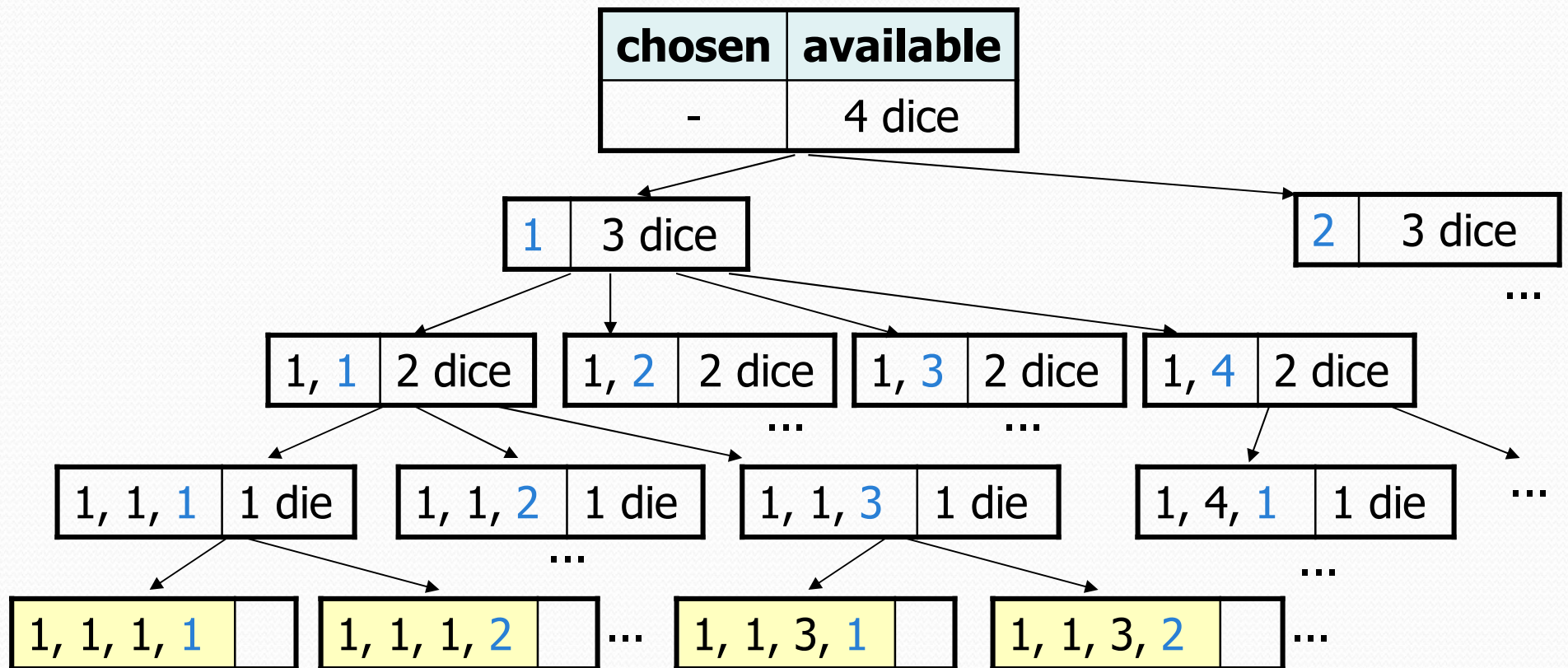
[1, 1]	[3, 1]	[5, 1]
[1, 2]	[3, 2]	[5, 2]
[1, 3]	[3, 3]	[5, 3]
[1, 4]	[3, 4]	[5, 4]
[1, 5]	[3, 5]	[5, 5]
[1, 6]	[3, 6]	[5, 6]
[2, 1]	[4, 1]	[6, 1]
[2, 2]	[4, 2]	[6, 2]
[2, 3]	[4, 3]	[6, 3]
[2, 4]	[4, 4]	[6, 4]
[2, 5]	[4, 5]	[6, 5]
[2, 6]	[4, 6]	[6, 6]



`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]
...
[6, 6, 4]
[6, 6, 5]
[6, 6, 6]

A decision tree



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?



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.

```
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(**choices**):

- if there are no more **choices** to make: stop.
- else:
 - Make a single choice **C**.
 - Explore the remaining **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.

```
diceSum(2, 7);
```

```
[1, 6]  
[2, 5]  
[3, 4]  
[4, 3]  
[5, 2]  
[6, 1]
```

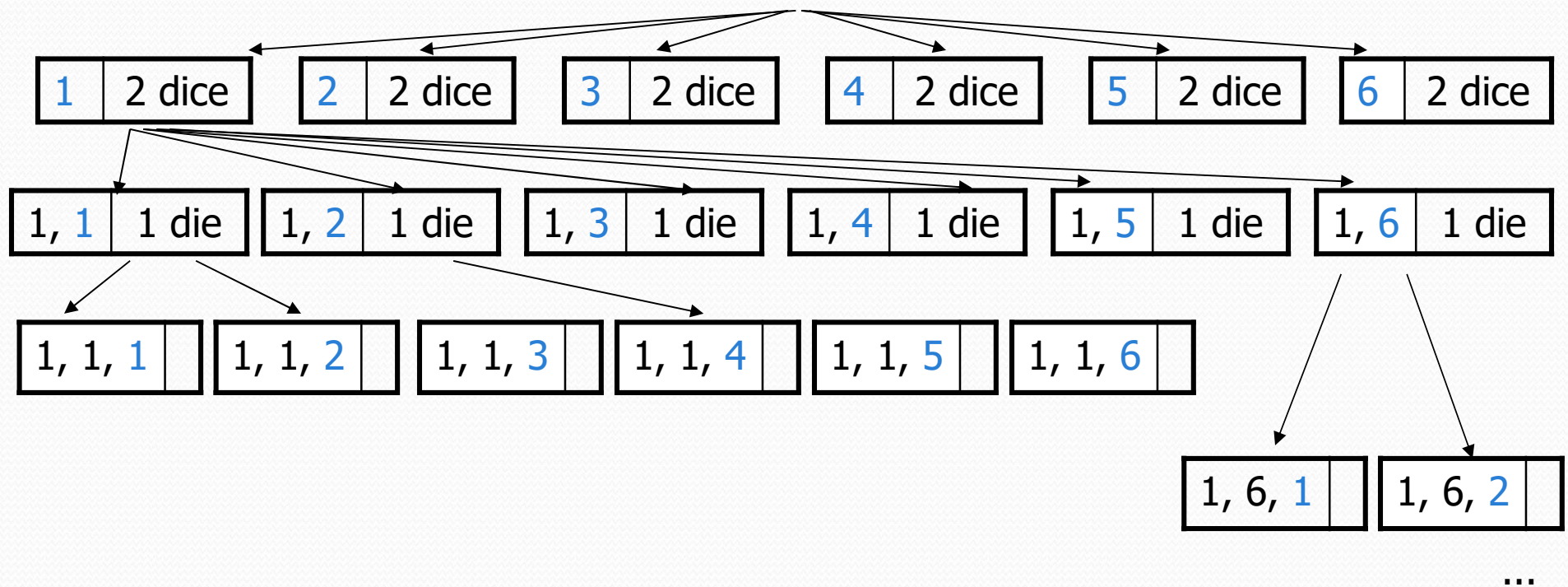


```
diceSum(3, 7);
```

```
[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?

chosen	available	desired sum
-	3 dice	5

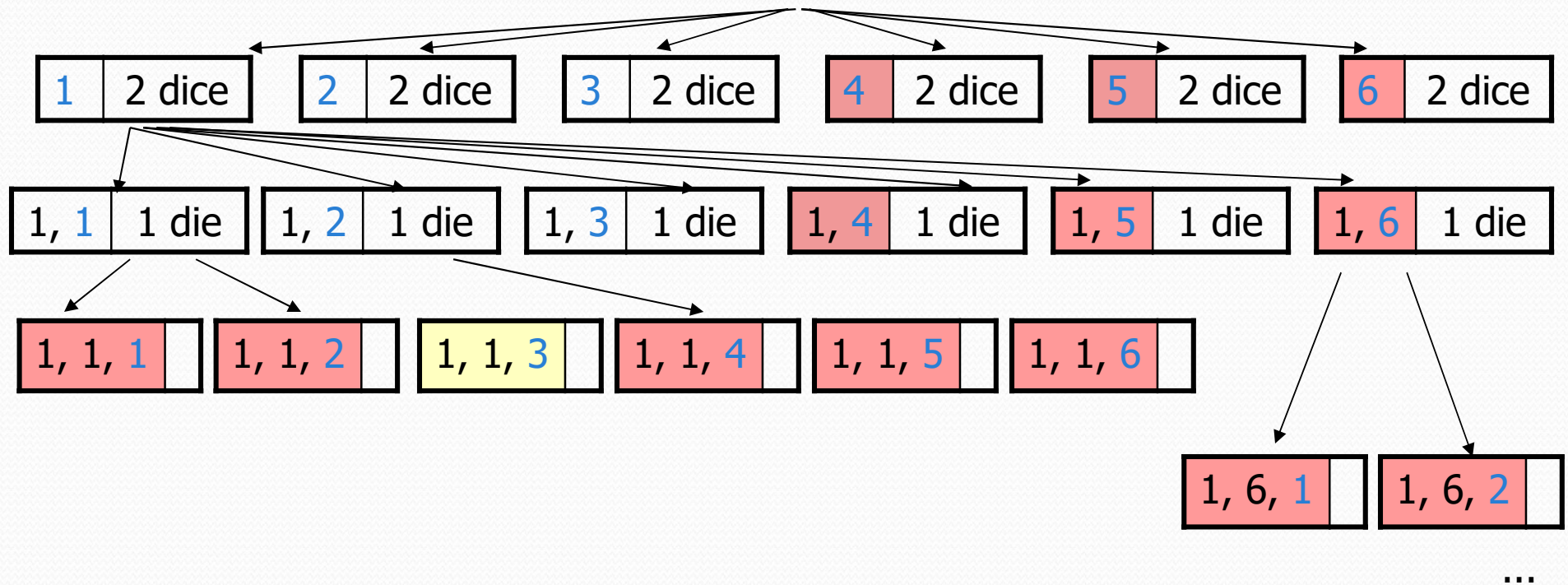


Optimizations

- 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.
 - $(1+1+1 = \dots, 1+1+2 = \dots, 1+1+3 = \dots, 1+1+4 = \dots, \dots)$

New decision tree

chosen	available	desired sum
-	3 dice	5



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.

EGL	LEG
EGO	LEO
ELG	LGE
ELO	LGO
EOG	LOE
EOL	LOG
GEL	OEG
GEO	OEL
GLE	OGE
GLO	OGL
GOE	OLE
GOL	OLG

Initial attempt

```
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.

Exercise solution

```
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);  
            }  
        }  
    }  
  
}
```