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Asymptotic Notation

Formal Definition

Let f denote functions from $\mathbb{N}$ to $\mathbb{R}^+$.

- $\mathcal{O}(f) = \{g \mid \exists c > 0 \; \exists n_0 \in \mathbb{N}_0 \; \forall n \geq n_0 : [g(n) \leq c \cdot f(n)]\}$
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There is an equivalent definition using limes notation. f and g are functions from $\mathbb{N}$ to $\mathbb{R}^+$.

- $g \in \mathcal{O}(f)$: $\quad 0 \leq \lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{g(n)}{f(n)} < \infty$

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Abuse of notation

1. People write $f = \mathcal{O}(g)$, when they mean $f \in \mathcal{O}(g)$. This is **not** an equality (how could a function be equal to a set of functions).
2. People write $f(n) = \mathcal{O}(g(n))$, when they mean $f \in \mathcal{O}(g)$, with $f : \mathbb{N} \to \mathbb{R}^+, n \mapsto f(n)$, and $g : \mathbb{N} \to \mathbb{R}^+, n \mapsto g(n)$.
3. People write e.g. $h(n) = f(n) + o(g(n))$ when they mean that there exists a function $z : \mathbb{N} \to \mathbb{R}^+, n \mapsto z(n), z \in o(g)$ such that $h(n) \leq f(n) + z(n)$.
4. People write $\mathcal{O}(f(n)) = \mathcal{O}(g(n))$, when they mean $\mathcal{O}(f(n)) \subseteq \mathcal{O}(g(n))$. Again this is not an equality.

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Lemma 3

Let f, g be functions with the property
$\exists n_0 > 0\ \forall n \geq n_0 : f(n) > 0$ *(the same for g). Then*

- $c \cdot f(n) \in \Theta(f(n))$ *for any constant* c
- $\mathcal{O}(f(n)) + \mathcal{O}(g(n)) = \mathcal{O}(f(n) + g(n))$
- $\mathcal{O}(f(n)) \cdot \mathcal{O}(g(n)) = \mathcal{O}(f(n) \cdot g(n))$
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The expressions also hold for Ω. Note that this means that
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Comments

- Do not use asymptotic notation within induction proofs.
- For any constants a, b we have $\log_a n = \Theta(\log_b n)$. Therefore, we will usually ignore the base of a logarithm within asymptotic notation.
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