

# EECS 10: Computational Methods in Electrical and Computer Engineering

## Lecture 19

Rainer Dömer

doemer@uci.edu

The Henry Samueli School of Engineering  
Electrical Engineering and Computer Science  
University of California, Irvine

## Lecture 19: Overview

- Recursion
  - Introduction
  - Concept of recursion
  - Recursion vs. iteration
  - Examples
    - Factorial function: `Factorial.c`
    - Fibonacci series: `Fibonacci.c`

## Recursion

- Introduction
  - *Recursion* is an alternative to *Iteration*
  - Recursion is a very simple concept, yet very powerful
  - Recursion is present in nature
    - Trees have branches, which have branches, which have branches, ... which have leaves.
  - Recursion is traversal of hierarchy
    - *Traverse* (climb) a tree to the top:
      - start at the root
      - at a leaf, stop
      - at a branch, *traverse* one branch
    - *Traverse* a file system on a computer
      - start at the current directory
      - at a file, process the file
      - at a directory, *traverse* the directory

EECS10: Computational Methods in ECE, Lecture 19

(c) 2004 R. Doemer

3

## Recursion

- Recursive Function
  - Function that calls itself ...
    - ... directly, or
    - ... indirectly
- Concept of Recursion
  - Trivial *base case*
    - Return value defined for simple case
    - Example: `if (arg == 0) {return 1; }`
  - *Recursion step*
    - Reduce the problem towards the base case
    - Make a recursive function call
    - Example: `if (arg > 0) { return ...fct(arg-1); }`
- Termination of Recursion
  - Converging of recursive calls to the base case
  - Recursive call must be “simpler” than current call

```
int f(...)
{
  ...
  f(...);
  ...
}
```

```
int a(...)
{
  ...
  b(...);
  ...
}
int b(...)
{
  ...
  a(...);
  ...
}
```

EECS10: Computational Methods in ECE, Lecture 19

(c) 2004 R. Doemer

4

## Recursion

- Example: Factorial function  $n!$ 
  - The factorial of a non-negative integer is
    - $n! = n * (n-1) * (n-2) * (n-3) * \dots * 1$
  - This can be written as
    - $n! = n * ((n-1) * ((n-2) * ((n-3) * (\dots * 1))))$
  - Recursive definition:
    - $n=1: 1! = 1$  (base case)
    - $n>1: n! = n * (n-1)!$  (recursion step)
  - Example computation:

```

5! = 5 * 4!
    = 5 * (4 * 3!)
    = 5 * (4 * (3 * 2!))
    = 5 * (4 * (3 * (2 * 1!)))
    = 5 * (4 * (3 * (2 * 1)))
    = 5 * (4 * (3 * 2))
    = 5 * (4 * 6)
    = 5 * 24
    = 120
  
```

## Recursion

- Program example: `Factorial.c` (part 1/2)

```

/* Factorial.c: example demonstrating recursion */
/* author: Rainer Doemer */
/* modifications: */
/* 11/14/04 RD initial version */

#include <stdio.h>

/* function definition */
long factorial(long n)
{
    if (n == 1) /* base case */
    { return 1;
      } /* fi */
    else /* recursion step */
    { return n * factorial(n-1);
      } /* esle */
} /* end of factorial */

...
  
```

## Recursion

- Program example: `Factorial.c` (part 2/2)

```

...
int main(void)
{
    /* variable definitions */
    long int n, f;

    /* input section */
    printf("Please enter value n: ");
    scanf("%ld", &n);

    /* computation section */
    f = factorial(n);

    /* output section */
    printf("The factorial of %ld is %ld.\n", n, f);

    /* exit */
    return 0;
} /* end of main */

/* EOF */

```

EECS10: Computational Methods in ECE, Lecture 19

(c) 2004 R. Doemer

7

## Recursion

- Example session: `Factorial.c`

```

% vi Factorial.c
% gcc Factorial.c -o Factorial -Wall -ansi
% Factorial
Please enter value n: 1
The factorial of 1 is 1.
% Factorial
Please enter value n: 2
The factorial of 2 is 2.
% Factorial
Please enter value n: 3
The factorial of 3 is 6.
% Factorial
Please enter value n: 5
The factorial of 5 is 120.
% Factorial
Please enter value n: 10
The factorial of 10 is 3628800.
%

```

EECS10: Computational Methods in ECE, Lecture 19

(c) 2004 R. Doemer

8

## Recursion vs. Iteration

- Example: Factorial function  $n!$ 
  - The factorial of a non-negative integer is
    - $n! = n * (n-1) * (n-2) * (n-3) * \dots * 1$
  - This can be written as
    - $n! = n * ((n-1) * ((n-2) * ((n-3) * (\dots * 1))))$
  - *Recursive* definition:
    - $n=1: 1! = 1$  (base case)
    - $n>1: n! = n * (n-1)!$  (recursion step)
  - *Iterative* implementation:
    - Compute  $n$  products in a loop
    - $n! = n * (n-1) * (n-2) * (n-3) * \dots * 1$
    - `p = n;`
    - `for (f=n-1; f>=1; f--)`
    - `{ p = p * f; }`

EECS10: Computational Methods in ECE, Lecture 19

(c) 2004 R. Doemer

9

## Recursion vs. Iteration

- Program example: `Factorial2.c` (part 1/2)

```

/* Factorial2.c: example demonstrating iteration */
/* author: Rainer Doemer */
/* modifications: */
/* 11/14/04 RD initial version (based on Factorial.c) */
#include <stdio.h>

/* function definition */
long factorial(long n)
{
    long product, factor;
    product = n;
    for(factor = n-1; factor >=1; factor--)
        { product *= factor;
          } /* rof */
    return product;
} /* end of factorial */

...

```

EECS10: Computational Methods in ECE, Lecture 19

(c) 2004 R. Doemer

10

## Recursion vs. Iteration

- Program example: `Factorial2.c` (part 2/2)

```

...
int main(void)
{
    /* variable definitions */
    long int n, f;

    /* input section */
    printf("Please enter value n: ");
    scanf("%ld", &n);

    /* computation section */
    f = factorial(n);

    /* output section */
    printf("The factorial of %ld is %ld.\n", n, f);

    /* exit */
    return 0;
} /* end of main */

/* EOF */

```

EECS10: Computational Methods in ECE, Lecture 19

(c) 2004 R. Doemer

11

## Recursion vs. Iteration

- Example session: `Factorial2.c`

```

% cp Factorial.c Factorial2.c
% vi Factorial2.c
% gcc Factorial2.c -o Factorial2 -Wall -ansi
% Factorial2
Please enter value n: 1
The factorial of 1 is 1.
% Factorial2
Please enter value n: 2
The factorial of 2 is 2.
% Factorial2
Please enter value n: 3
The factorial of 3 is 6.
% Factorial2
Please enter value n: 5
The factorial of 5 is 120.
% Factorial2
Please enter value n: 10
The factorial of 10 is 3628800.
%

```

EECS10: Computational Methods in ECE, Lecture 19

(c) 2004 R. Doemer

12

## Recursion

- Example 2: Fibonacci series
  - Sequence of integers
    - 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144, 233, 377, 610, 987, ...
  - Mathematical properties
    - The first two numbers are 0 and 1
    - Every subsequent Fibonacci number is the sum of the previous two Fibonacci numbers
  - Ratio of successive Fibonacci numbers is ...
    - ... converging to constant value 1.618...
    - ... called *Golden Ratio* or *Golden Mean*
  - Recursive definition:
    - Base case:  $fibonacci(0) = 0$   
 $fibonacci(1) = 1$
    - Recursion step:  $fibonacci(n) = fibonacci(n-1) + fibonacci(n-2)$

EECS10: Computational Methods in ECE, Lecture 19

(c) 2004 R. Doemer

13

## Recursion

- Program example: `Fibonacci.c` (part 1/2)

```

/* Fibonacci.c: example demonstrating recursion */
/* author: Rainer Doemer */
/* modifications: */
/* 11/14/04 RD initial version */

#include <stdio.h>

/* function definition */
long fibonacci(long n)
{
    if (n <= 1) /* base case */
    { return n;
      } /* fi */
    else /* recursion step */
    { return fibonacci(n-1) + fibonacci(n-2);
      } /* esle */
} /* end of fibonacci */

/* main function */
...

```

EECS10: Computational Methods in ECE, Lecture 19

(c) 2004 R. Doemer

14

## Recursion

- Program example: `Fibonacci.c` (part 2/2)

```

...
int main(void)
{
    /* variable definitions */
    long int n, f;

    /* input section */
    printf("Please enter value n: ");
    scanf("%ld", &n);

    /* computation section */
    f = fibonacci(n);

    /* output section */
    printf("The %ld-th Fibonacci number is %ld.\n", n, f);

    /* exit */
    return 0;
} /* end of main */

/* EOF */

```

EECS10: Computational Methods in ECE, Lecture 19

(c) 2004 R. Doemer

15

## Recursion

- Example session: `Fibonacci.c`

```

% cp Factorial.c Fibonacci.c
% vi Fibonacci.c
% gcc Fibonacci.c -o Fibonacci -Wall -ansi
% Fibonacci
Please enter value n: 1
The 1-th Fibonacci number is 1.
% Fibonacci
Please enter value n: 10
The 10-th Fibonacci number is 55.
% Fibonacci
Please enter value n: 20
The 20-th Fibonacci number is 6765.
% Fibonacci
Please enter value n: 30
The 30-th Fibonacci number is 832040.
% Fibonacci
Please enter value n: 40
The 40-th Fibonacci number is 102334155.
%

```

EECS10: Computational Methods in ECE, Lecture 19

(c) 2004 R. Doemer

16