

RECURSION

CS10003: PROGRAMMING AND DATA STRUCTURES



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Recursion

A process by which a function calls itself repeatedly.

- Either directly.
 - F calls F.
- Or cyclically in a chain.
 - F calls G, G calls H, and H calls F.

Used for repetitive computations in which each action is stated in terms of a previous result.

$$\text{fact}(n) = n * \text{fact}(n-1)$$

Basis and Recursion

For a problem to be written in recursive form, two conditions are to be satisfied:

- It should be possible to express the problem in recursive form.
- The problem statement must include a stopping condition

```
fact(n) = 1,           if n = 0      /* Stopping criteria */  
          = n * fact(n - 1), if n > 0  /* Recursive form */
```

Examples:

- **Factorial:**

$$\text{fact}(0) = 1$$

$$\text{fact}(n) = n * \text{fact}(n - 1), \text{ if } n > 0$$

- **GCD:**

$$\text{gcd}(m, m) = m$$

$$\text{gcd}(m, n) = \text{gcd}(m \% n, n), \text{ if } m > n$$

$$\text{gcd}(m, n) = \text{gcd}(n, n \% m), \text{ if } m < n$$

- **Fibonacci series (1,1,2,3,5,8,13,21,...)**

$$\text{fib}(0) = 1$$

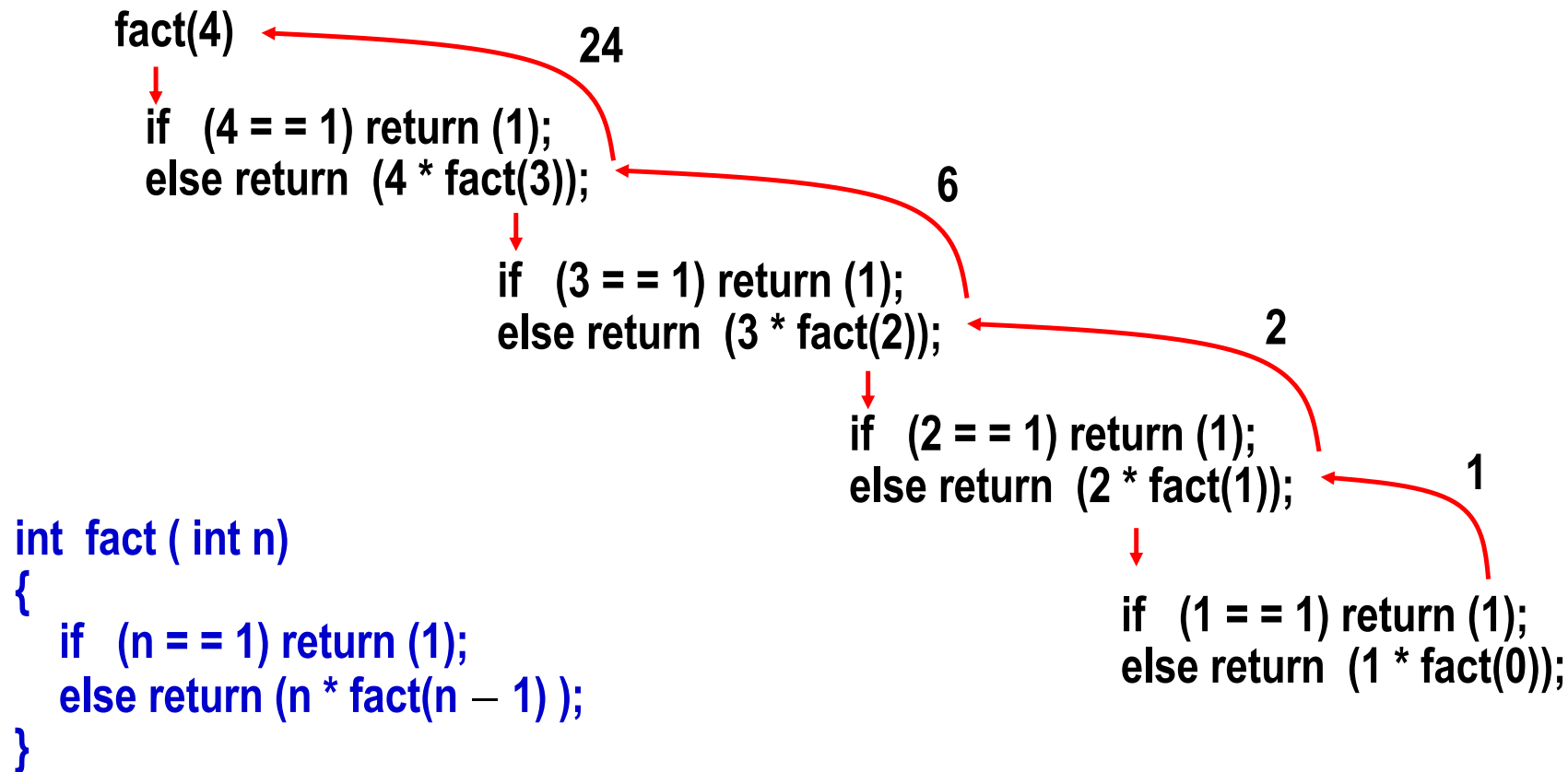
$$\text{fib}(1) = 1$$

$$\text{fib}(n) = \text{fib}(n - 1) + \text{fib}(n - 2), \text{ if } n > 1$$

Example 1 :: Factorial

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

Example 1 :: Factorial Execution



Example 2 :: Fibonacci number

Fibonacci number $f(n)$ can be defined as:

$$f(0) = 0$$

$$f(1) = 1$$

$$f(n) = f(n-1) + f(n-2), \text{ if } n > 1$$

- The successive Fibonacci numbers are:

0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21,

Function definition:

```
int f (int n)
{
    if (n < 2) return (n);
    else return ( f(n - 1) + f(n - 2) );
}
```

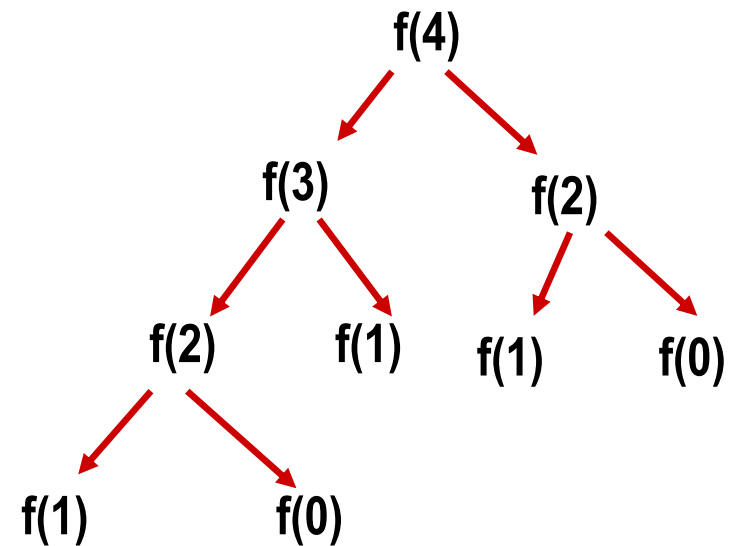
Tracing Execution

```
int f(int n)
{
    if (n < 2) return (n);
    else return ( f(n - 1) + f(n - 2) );
}
```

How many times is the function called when evaluating $f(4)$?

Inefficiency:

- Same thing is computed several times.



called 9 times

Notable Point

- Every recursive program can also be written without recursion
- Recursion is used for programming convenience, not for performance enhancement
- Sometimes, if the function being computed has a nice recurrence form, then a recursive code may be more readable

Important things to remember

- Think how the whole problem can be solved if you can solve the exact same problem on a smaller problem.
- **But then, do NOT think how the smaller problem will be solved**, just call the function recursively and assume it will be solved.
- When you write a recursive function
 - **First write the terminating/base condition**
 - **Then write the rest of the function**
 - **Always double-check that you have both**

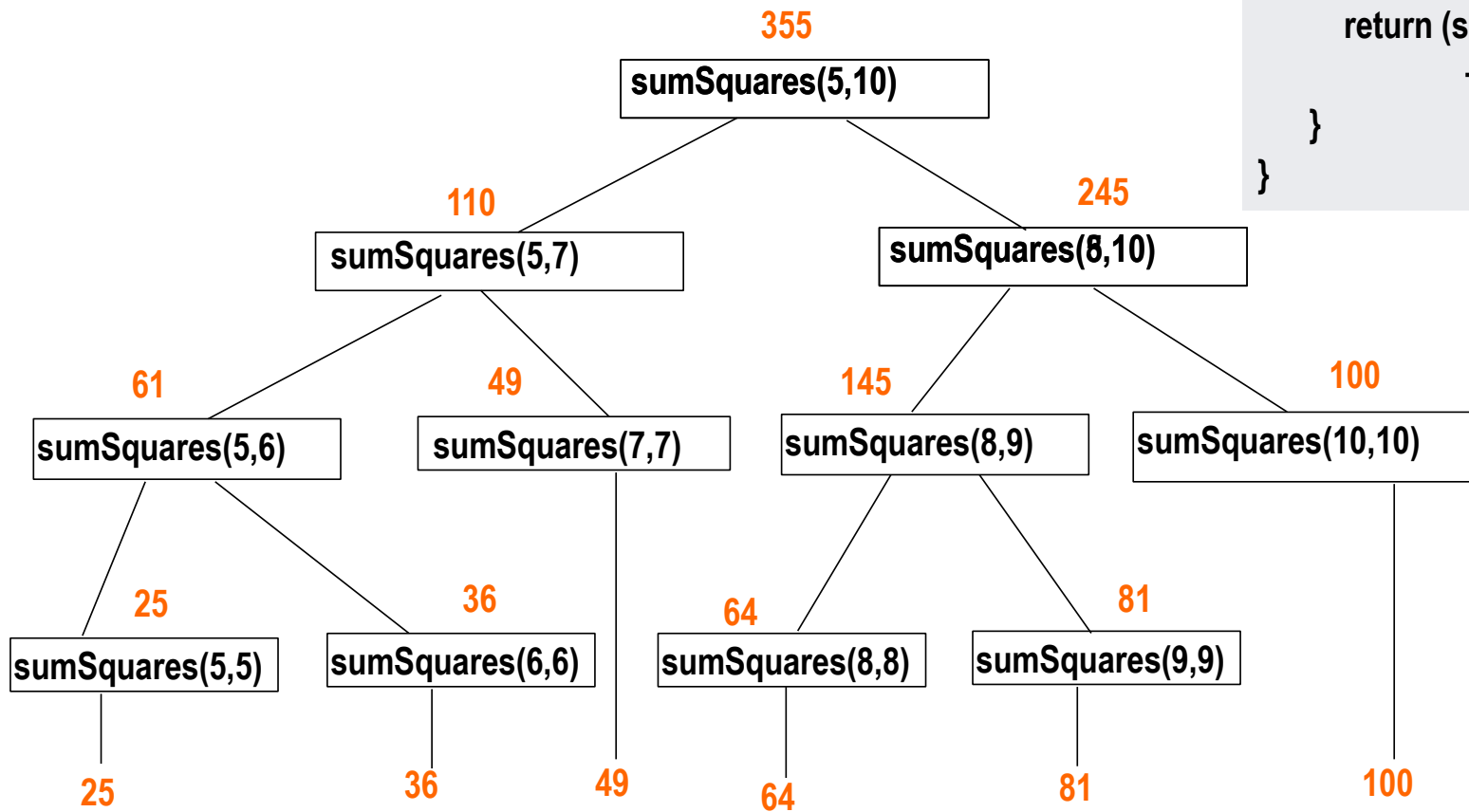
Example: Sum of Squares

Write a function that takes two integers m and n as arguments, and computes and returns the sum of squares of every integer in the range $[m:n]$, both inclusive.

```
int sumSquares (int m, int n)
{
    int middle ;
    if (m == n) return(m*m);
    else
    {
        middle = (m+n)/2;
        return (sumSquares(m,middle) + sumSquares(middle+1,n));
    }
}
```

Annotated Call Tree

```
int sumSquares (int m, int n)
{
    int middle ;
    if (m == n) return(m*m);
    else {
        middle = (m+n)/2;
        return (sumSquares(m,middle)
                + sumSquares(middle+1,n));
    }
}
```



Example: Printing the digits of an Integer in Reverse

Print the last digit, then print the remaining number in reverse

- **Ex:** If integer is 743, then reversed is print 3 first, then print the reverse of 74

```
void printReversed( int i )
{
    if (i < 10) {
        printf("%d\n", i); return;
    }
    else {
        printf("%d", i%10);
        printReversed(i/10);
    }
}
```

Counting Zeros in a Positive Integer

Check last digit from right

- If it is 0, number of zeros = 1 + number of zeroes in remaining part of the number
- If it is non-0, number of zeros = number of zeroes in remaining part of the number

```
int zeros(int number)
{
    if(number<10) return 0;
    if (number%10 == 0)
        return( 1 + zeros(number/10) );
    else
        return( zeros(number/10) );
}
```

Common Errors in Writing Recursive Functions

Non-terminating Recursive Function (Infinite recursion)

- No base case
- The base case is never reached

```
int badFactorial(int x) {  
    return x * badFactorial(x-1);  
}
```

```
int badSum2(int x)  
{  
    if(x==1) return 1;  
    return(badSum2(x--));  
}
```

```
int anotherBadFactorial(int x) {  
    if(x == 0)  
        return 1;  
    else  
        return x*(x-1)*anotherBadFactorial(x-2);  
    // When x is odd, base case never reached!!  
}
```

Common Errors in Writing Recursive Functions

Mixing up loops and recursion

```
int anotherBadFactorial(int x) {  
    int i, fact = 0;  
    if (x == 0)  
        return 1;  
    else {  
        for (i=x; i>0; i=i-1) {  
            fact = fact + x*anotherBadFactorial(x-1);  
        }  
        return fact;  
    }  
}
```

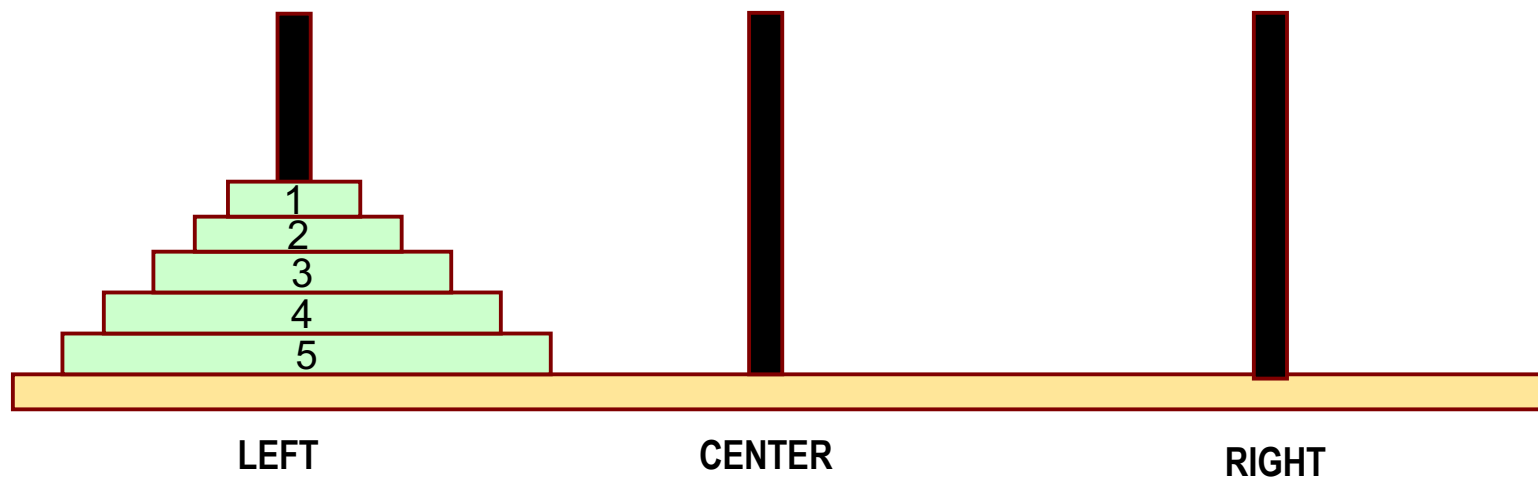
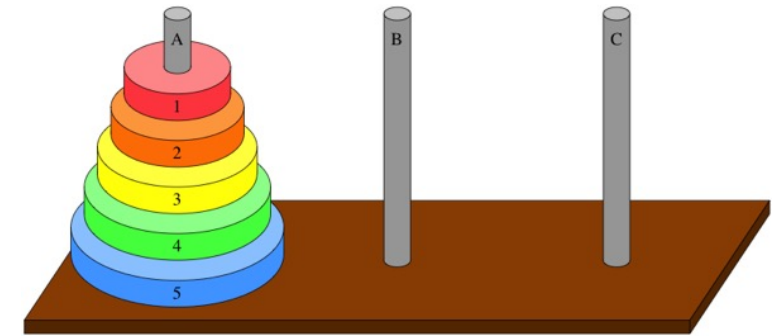
In general, if you have recursive function calls within a loop, think carefully if you need it.

Most recursive functions you will see in this course will not need this

Example :: Towers of Hanoi Problem

The problem statement:

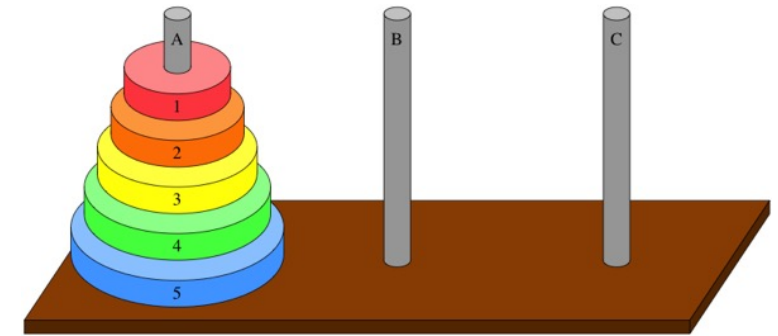
- Initially all the disks are stacked on the LEFT pole.
- Required to transfer all the disks to the RIGHT pole.
 - Only one disk can be moved at a time.
 - A larger disk cannot be placed on a smaller disk.
- CENTER pole is used for temporary storage of disks.



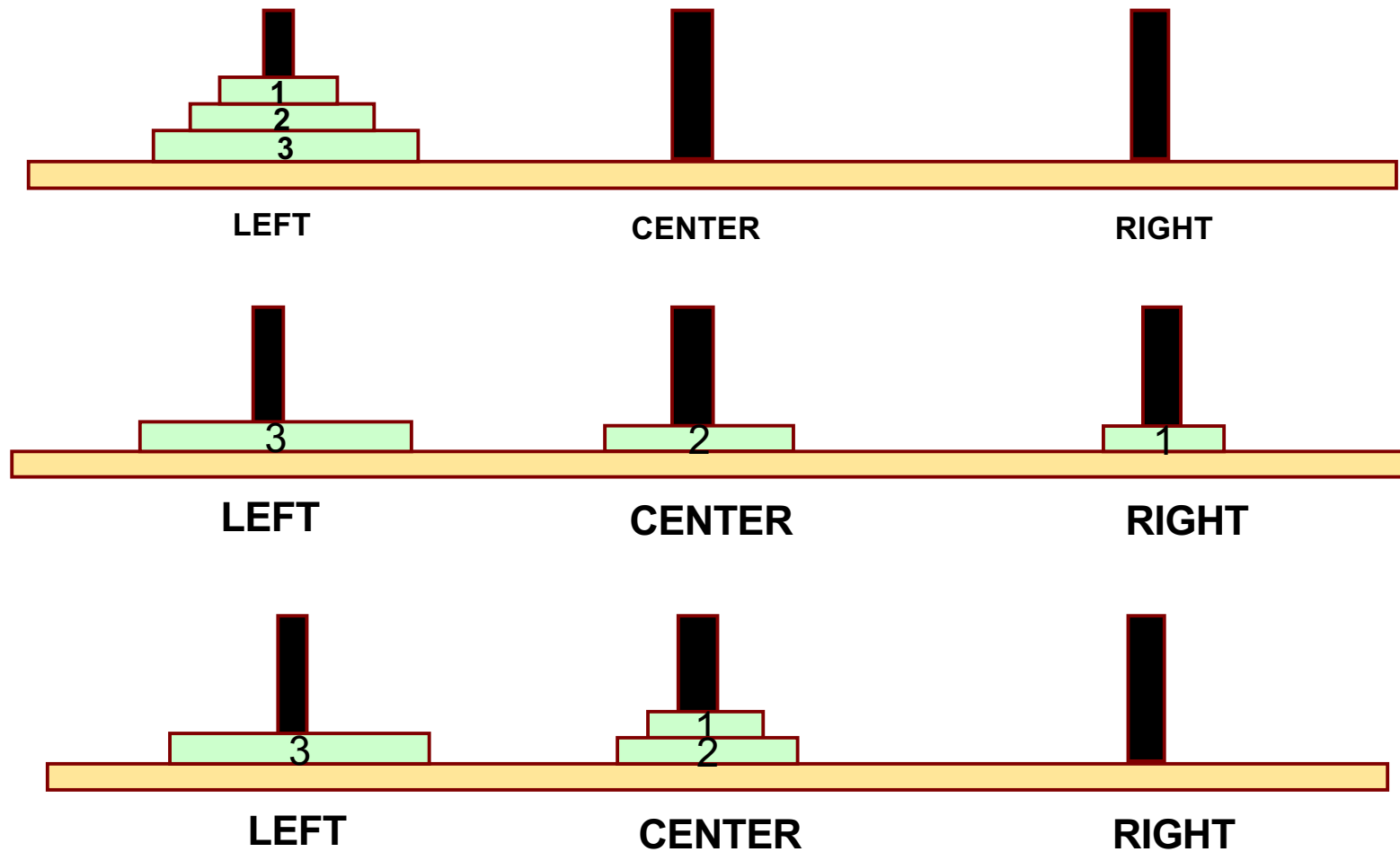
Recursive Formulation

Recursive statement of the general problem of n disks.

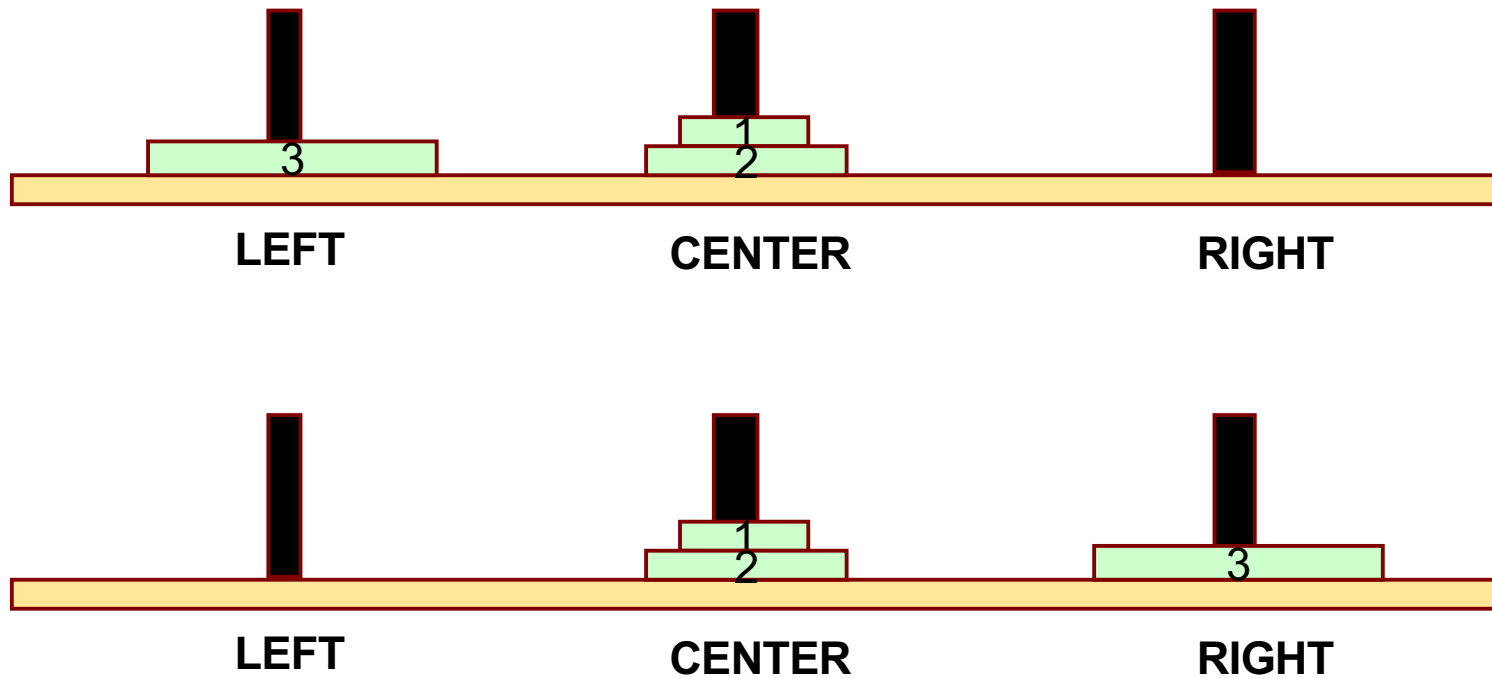
- **Step 1:**
 - Move the top $(n-1)$ disks from LEFT to CENTER.
- **Step 2:**
 - Move the largest disk from LEFT to RIGHT.
- **Step 3:**
 - Move the $(n-1)$ disks from CENTER to RIGHT.



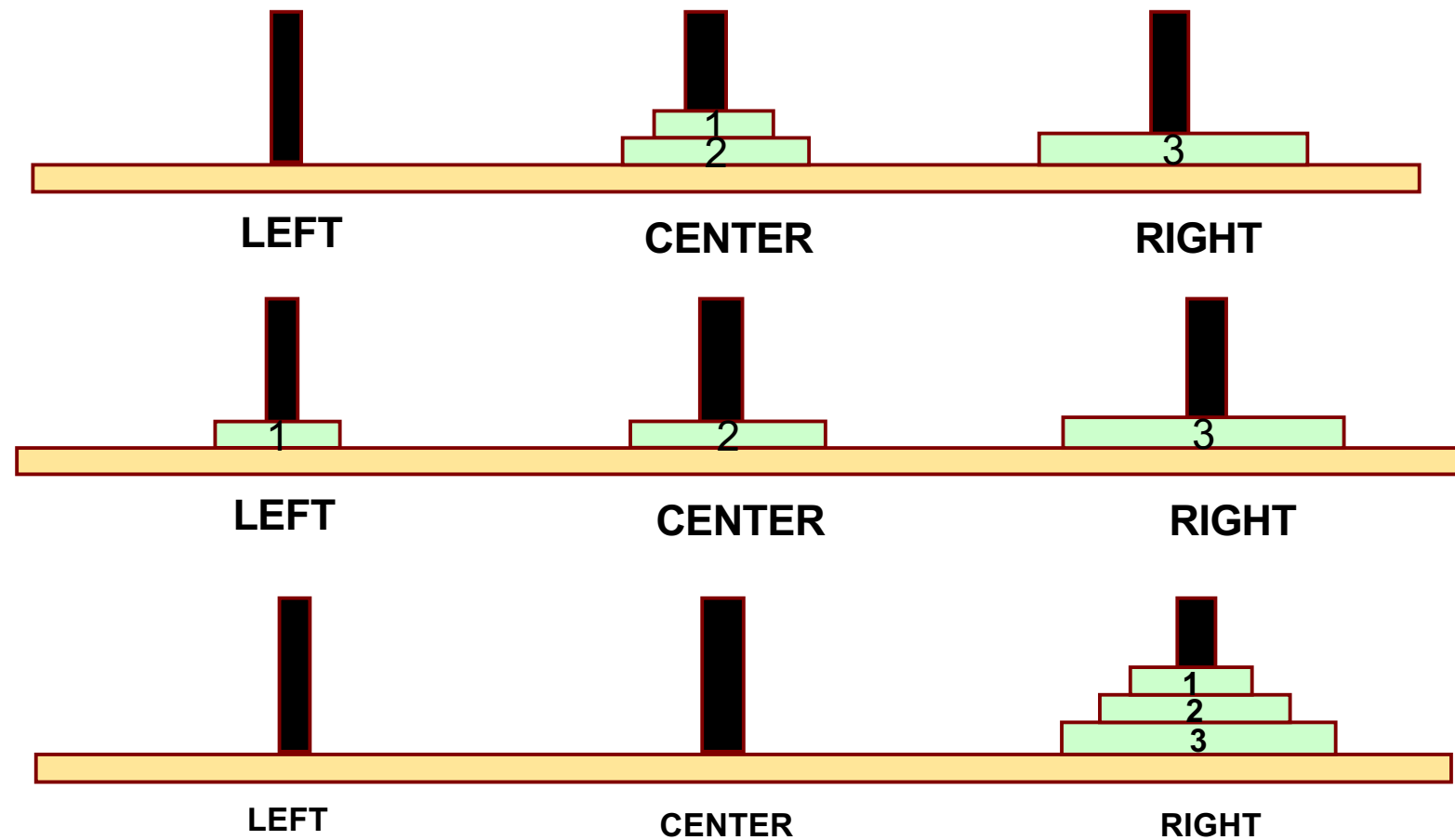
Phase-1: Move top $n - 1$ from LEFT to CENTER



Phase-2: Move the n^{th} disk from LEFT to RIGHT



Phase-3: Move top $n - 1$ from CENTER to RIGHT



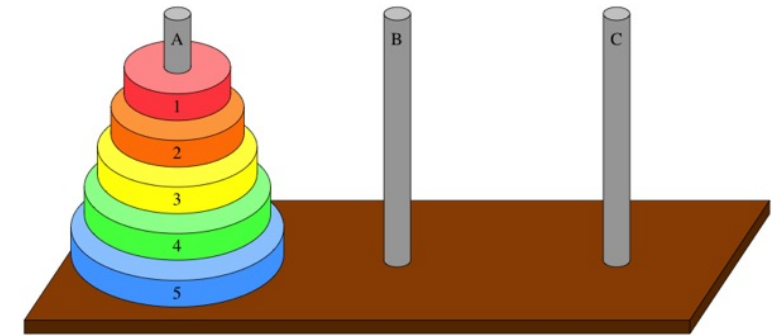
```

#include <stdio.h>
void transfer (int n, char from, char to, char temp);

main( )
{
    int n; /* Number of disks */
    scanf ("%d", &n);
    transfer (n, 'L', 'R', 'C');
}

void transfer (int n, char from, char to, char temp)
{
    if (n > 0) {
        transfer (n-1, from, temp, to);
        printf ("Move disk %d from %c to %c \n", n, from, to);
        transfer (n-1, temp, to, from);
    }
    return;
}

```



```
C:\ Telnet 144.16.192.60
3
Move disk 1 from L to R
Move disk 2 from L to C
Move disk 1 from R to C
Move disk 3 from L to R
Move disk 1 from C to L
Move disk 2 from C to R
Move disk 1 from L to R
[isg@facweb temp]$
```

With 3 discs

```
C:\ Telnet 144.16.192.60
4
Move disk 1 from L to C
Move disk 2 from L to R
Move disk 1 from C to R
Move disk 3 from L to C
Move disk 1 from R to L
Move disk 2 from R to C
Move disk 1 from L to C
Move disk 4 from L to R
Move disk 1 from C to R
Move disk 2 from C to L
Move disk 1 from R to L
Move disk 3 from C to R
Move disk 1 from L to C
Move disk 2 from L to R
Move disk 1 from C to R
[isg@facweb temp]$
```

With 4 discs

Recursion versus Iteration

Repetition

- Iteration: explicit loop
- Recursion: repeated nested function calls

Termination

- Iteration: loop condition fails
- Recursion: base case recognized

Both can have infinite loops

Balance

- Choice between performance (iteration) and good software engineering (recursion).

More Examples

What do the following programs print?

```
void foo( int n )
{
    int data;
    if ( n == 0 ) return;
    scanf("%d", &data);
    foo ( n - 1 );
    printf("%d\n", data);
}
main ( )
{   int k = 5;
    foo ( k );
}
```

```
void foo( int n )
{
    int data;
    if ( n == 0 ) return;
    foo ( n - 1 );
    scanf("%d", &data);
    printf("%d\n", data);
}
main ( )
{   int k = 5;
    foo ( k );
}
```

```
void foo( int n )
{
    int data;
    if ( n == 0 ) return;
    scanf("%d", &data);
    printf("%d\n", data);
    foo ( n - 1 );
}
main ( )
{   int k = 5;
    foo ( k );
}
```

Printing cumulative sum -- *will this work?*

```
int foo( int n )
{
    int data, sum ;
    if ( n == 0 ) return 0;
    scanf("%d", &data);
    sum = data + foo ( n - 1 );
    printf("%d\n", sum);
    return sum;
}

main ( ) {
    int k = 5;
    foo ( k );
}
```

Input: 1 2 3 4 5

Output: 5 9 12 14 15

How to rewrite this so that the output is: 1 3 6 10 15 ?

Printing cumulative sum (two ways)

```
int foo( int n )
{
    int data, sum ;
    if ( n == 0 ) return 0;
    sum = foo ( n - 1 );
    scanf("%d", &data);
    sum = sum + data;
    printf("%d\n", sum);
    return sum;
}

main ( ) {
    int k = 5;
    foo ( k );
}
```

Input: 1 2 3 4 5

Output: 1 3 6 10 15

```
void foo( int n, int sum )
{
    int data ;
    if ( n == 0 ) return 0;
    scanf("%d", &data);
    sum = sum + data;
    printf("%d\n", sum);
    foo( k - 1, sum ) ;
}

main ( ) {
    int k = 5;
    foo ( k, 0 );
}
```

Paying with fewest coins

- A country has coins of denomination 3, 5 and 10 respectively.
- We are to write a function `canchange( k )` that returns `-1` if it is not possible to pay a value of `k` using these coins.
 - Otherwise it returns the minimum number of coins needed to make the payment.
- For example, `canchange(7)` will return `-1`.
- On the other hand, `canchange(14)` will return 4 because 14 can be paid as `3+3+3+5` and there is no other way to pay with fewer coins.

Paying with fewest coins

```
int canchange( int k )
{
    int a = -1;
    if (k==0) return 0;
    if ( _____ ) return 1;
    if (k < 3) _____ ;

    a = canchange( _____ ); if (a > 0) return _____ ;
    a = canchange(k - 5); if (a > 0) return _____ ;
    a = canchange( _____ ); if (a > 0) return _____ ;
    return -1;
}
```

Paying with fewest coins

```
int canchange( int k )
{
    int a = -1;
    if (k==0) return 0;
    if ( (k==3) || (k == 5) || (k == 10) ) return 1;
    if (k < 3) return -1 ;

    a = canchange( k - 10 ); if (a > 0) return a+1 ;
    a = canchange( k - 5 ); if (a > 0) return a+1 ;
    a = canchange( k - 3 ); if (a > 0) return a+1 ;
    return -1;
}
```

Practice Problems

1. Write a recursive function to search for an element in an array
2. Write a recursive function to count the digits of a positive integer (do also for sum of digits)
3. Write a recursive function to reverse a null-terminated string
4. Write a recursive function to convert a decimal number to binary
5. Write a recursive function to check if a string is a palindrome or not
6. Write a recursive function to copy one array to another

Note:

- For each of the above, write the main functions to call the recursive function also
- Practice problems are just for practicing recursion, recursion is not necessarily the most efficient way of doing them

Advanced topic

How are recursive calls implemented?

What we have seen

- Activation record gets pushed into the stack when a function call is made.
- Activation record is popped off the stack when the function returns.

In recursion, a function calls itself.

- Several function calls going on, with none of the function calls returning back.
 - Activation records are pushed onto the stack continuously.
 - Large stack space required.

- Activation records keep popping off, when the termination condition of recursion is reached.

We shall illustrate the process by an example of computing factorial.

- Activation record looks like:

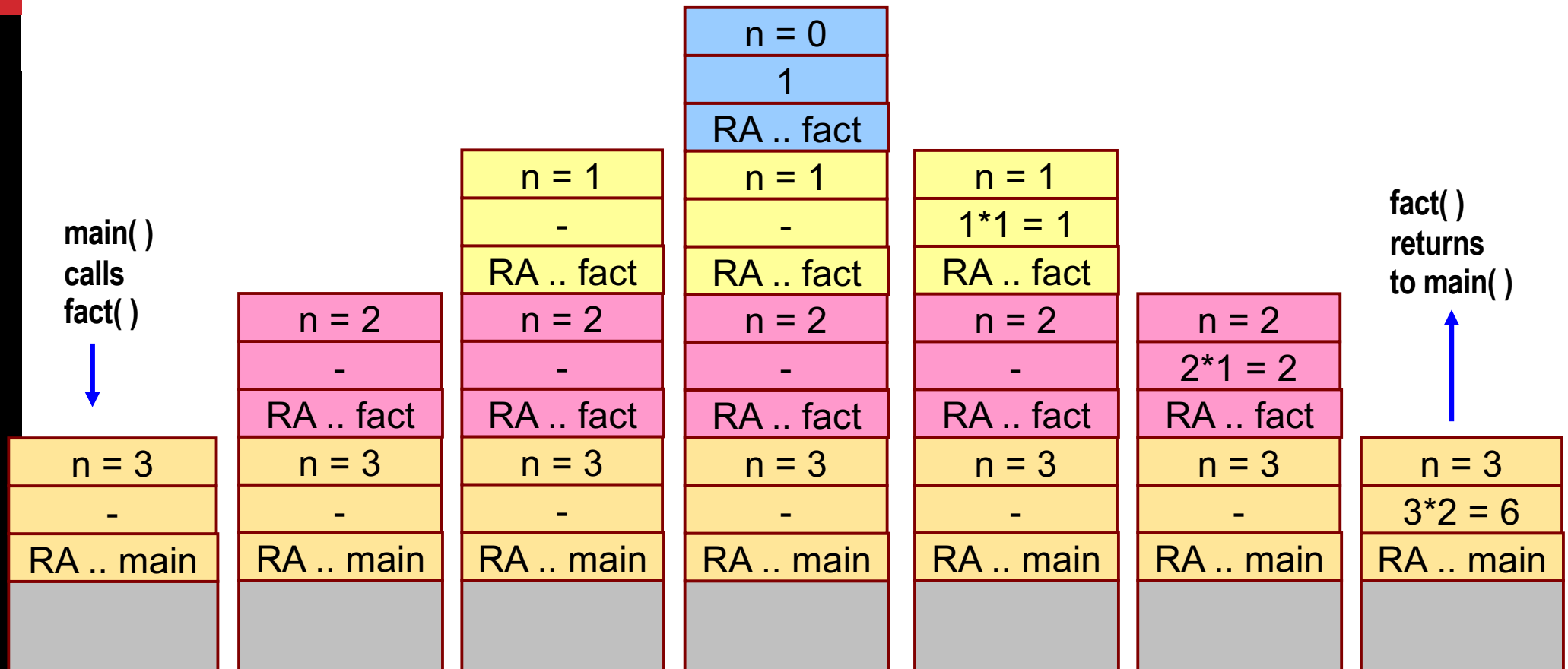
Local Variables
Return Value
Return Addr

Example:: main() calls fact(3)

```
main()
{
    int n;
    n = 3;
    printf ("%d \n", fact(n) );
}
```

```
int fact (n)
int n;
{
    if (n == 0)
        return (1);
    else
        return (n * fact(n-1));
}
```

TRACE OF THE STACK DURING EXECUTION



Do Yourself

Trace the activation records for the following version of Fibonacci sequence.

```
#include <stdio.h>
int f (int n)
{
    int a, b;
    if (n < 2) return (n);
    else {
        a = f(n-1);
        b = f(n-2);
        return (a+b); }
}

main( ) {
    printf("Fib(4) is: %d \n", f(4));
}
```

Local Variables (n, a, b)
Return Value
Return Addr (either main , or X , or Y)