

Topological sorting: pseudocode and analysis

CSCI 382, Algorithms

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Definition 1 A topological ordering (topological order, topological sort, topsort) of a directed graph is an ordering of nodes v_1, \dots, v_n such that for every $(v_i, v_j) \in E$, we have $i < j$.

In class we proved that a directed graph G has a topological ordering if and only if G is acyclic. Our proof was “by algorithm”, but the algorithm was somewhat naïve: at each step, do a $\Theta(V)$ search to find a vertex with indegree 0, add it to the ordering, and delete it from the graph. This algorithm has a worst-case running time of $\Theta(V^2)$ overall.

However, we can do better, especially if there are fewer than $\Theta(V^2)$ edges. The idea is to keep track of the current set of vertices with indegree 0 so we don’t have to search for one at each iteration. We can create this set initially with some precomputation, and then keep it updated efficiently during the algorithm. In order to keep it updated efficiently, we also have to keep track of the current indegree of each vertex.

Require: G is a directed acyclic graph (DAG)

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1: function TOPSORT( $G$ )
2:    $T \leftarrow$  empty list                                ▷  $T$  stores the topsort
3:    $Z \leftarrow$  empty queue/stack/whatever              ▷  $Z$  stores vertices with indegree 0
4:    $in \leftarrow$  dictionary mapping all vertices to 0    ▷  $in$  stores current indegree of each vertex
5:   for each  $v \in V$  do                                  ▷ initialize  $in$ 
6:     for each  $u$  adjacent to  $v$  do
7:       increment  $in[u]$ 
8:   for each  $v \in V$  do                                  ▷ initialize  $Z$ 
9:     if  $in[v] = 0$  then
10:      add  $v$  to  $Z$ 
11:   while  $Z$  is not empty do                            ▷ main loop
12:      $v \leftarrow Z.remove$ 
13:     append  $v$  to  $T$                                      ▷ get next vertex for the topsort
14:     for each  $u$  adjacent to  $v$  do                       ▷ update  $in$  and  $Z$ 
15:       decrement  $in[u]$ 
16:       if  $in[u] = 0$  then
17:         add  $u$  to  $Z$ 
return  $T$ 
```

Figure 1: TOPSORT(G)

Pseudocode is shown on the next page. How long does this take?

- Lines 2–4 each take $\Theta(1)$.
- Initializing in (lines 5–7) takes $\Theta(V + E)$ since we loop over all vertices and then look at every edge once.
- Initializing Z (lines 8–10) takes $\Theta(V)$, assuming we can add to Z in $\Theta(1)$ time.
- The main loop will execute $\Theta(V)$ times; in each loop we do some $\Theta(1)$ operations (remove from Z , append to T), and do $\Theta(1)$ work for each of several edges. Again, we will look at each edge once in total, so this main loop takes $\Theta(V + E)$ time.

Overall, then, this algorithm is $\Theta(1) + \Theta(V + E) + \Theta(V) + \Theta(V + E) = \Theta(V + E)$.