Perfect hashing.

We consider the following *perfect hashing* problem: Given a set S of n keys from a universe U, build a look-up table T of size $O(n)$ such that a membership query (given $x \in U$, is $x \in S$) can be answered in constant time.

We show that a perfect hash table can be built in linear expected time. The idea is to build a two-level table (see Fig. 1). In the first level, a hash function f partitions the set S into n subsets, denoted as *buckets*, $B_1, B_2, \ldots, B_n$. For a bucket B_i, we denote its size as $b_i = |B_i|$. In the second level, each bucket B_i has a separate memory array whose size is $\Theta(b_i^2)$, and a separate hash function g_i that maps the bucket injectively into that memory array. All the memory arrays are placed in a single table T, and for each bucket B_i we maintain the offset p_i, which gives the position in T where B_i's memory array begins.

A high level description of the algorithm is as follows:

Step 1 Find a function $f : U \to [1..n]$, that partitions S into buckets $B_1, B_2, \ldots, B_n$ such that $\sum_{i=1}^{n} b_i^2 \leq \beta n$, where β is a constant that will be determined later.

Step 2 For each bucket B_i, compute an offset $p_i = \sum_{j}^{i-1} \alpha b_j^2$, and allocate a subarray M_i of size αb_i^2 in array T between positions $p_i + 1$ and p_{i+1} in T, where α is a constant that will be determined later.

Step 3 For each bucket B_i find a function $g_i : u \to [1..\alpha b_i^2]$, such that g_i is injective on B_i. For every key $x \in B_i$, place x in $T[p_i + g_i(x)]$.

In Step 1, the function f is recorded. We use two additional arrays: $P[1..n]$ to record the offsets in Step 2, and $G[1..n]$ to record the functions g_i in Step 3. The table T is of size $\alpha \sum_{i=1}^{n} b_i^2 \leq \alpha\beta \cdot n$, and the total memory required by the data structure is therefore $O(n)$, as required. Given a key $x \in U$, a membership query for x is supported in constant time as follows:

1. Compute $i = f(x)$.
2. Read g_i from $G[i]$ and compute $j = g_i(x)$.
3. If $T[P[i] + j] = x$ then answer "$x \in S$", and otherwise answer "$x \notin S$".

More details and analysis:

In our analysis we will use four basic facts from probability theory, and a property of universal hash functions:

1. *Boole's inequality*: For any sequence of events $A_1, A_2, \ldots, A_m$, $m \geq 1$,
$\mathbf{Pr}(A_1 \cup A_2 \cdots \cup A_m) \leq \mathbf{Pr}(A_1) + \mathbf{Pr}(A_2) + \cdots + \mathbf{Pr}(A_m)$.

2. *Markov inequality*: Let X be a nonnegative random variable, and suppose that $\mathbf{E}(X)$ is well defined. Then for all $t > 0$, $\mathbf{Pr}(X \geq t) \leq \mathbf{E}(X)/t$. Alternatively, for all $\tau > 0$, $\mathbf{Pr}(X \geq \tau\mathbf{E}(X)) \leq 1/\tau$.

3. *Linearity of expectation:* $\mathbf{E}(X+Y) = \mathbf{E}(X) + \mathbf{E}(Y)$; more generally, $\mathbf{E}(\sum_{i=1}^{n} X_i) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \mathbf{E}(X_i)$.

4. *Expectation in geometric-like distribution:* Suppose that we have a sequence of Bernoulli trials, each with a probability $\geq p$ of success and a probability $\leq 1-p$ of failure. Then the expected number of trials needed to obtain a success is at most $1/p$.

5. *Collisions in universal hash functions:* If h is chosen from a universal collection of hash functions and is used to hash N keys into a table of size B, the expected number of collisions involving a particular key x is $(N-1)/B$.

We can now provide more details on Step 1, which consists of the following sub-steps.

Step 1a Select at random a function $f : U \to [1..n]$ from a universal class of hash functions.

Step 1b Compute a hash-table T' with chaining using the hash function f, so that insertion takes constant time.

Step 1c Compute an array $B2$, so that $B2[i] = b_i^2$.

Step 1d If $\sum_{i=1}^{n} b_i^2 > \beta n$ then go to Step 1a; otherwise record the function f.

Analysis Step 1a takes constant time, Step 1b takes $O(n)$ time and $O(n)$ space, Step 1c takes $O(n)$ time using the table T', and Step 1d takes $O(n)$ time, using array $B2$. The time complexity, T_1, of Step 1 is therefore $O(tn)$, where t is the number of iterations, i.e., the number of functions f selected before the condition $\sum_{i=1}^{n} b_i^2 \leq \beta n$ is satisfied. The following claim shows that for $\beta \geq 4$ we have $\mathbf{E}(T_1) = O(n)$.

Claim: If $\beta \geq 4$ then $\mathbf{E}(t) \leq 2$.

Proof. Let C_x be the number of collisions of a key $x \in S$ under f; i.e., the number of $y \in S$, $y \neq x$, for which $f(x) = f(y)$. Due to the collision property of universal hash functions (with $N = B = n$) we have $\mathbf{E}(C_x) < 1$.

We consider the total number of collisions C_S in S. Specifically, let C_S be the number of (ordered) pairs $\langle x, y \rangle$, $x, y \in S$ and $x \neq y$, such that $f(x) = f(y)$. Clearly, $C_S = \sum_{x \in S} C_x$. Therefore, by linearity of expectation,

$$\mathbf{E}(C_S) = \sum_{x \in X} \mathbf{E}(C_x) < |S| \cdot 1 = n \ . \qquad (1)$$

On the other hand, we note that collisions are defined among keys mapped into the same buckets, and can be counted as:

$$C_S = \sum_{i=1}^{n} |\{\langle x,y\rangle\} : x,y \in B_i, x \neq y\}| = \sum_{i=1}^{n} b_i \cdot (b_i - 1) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} b_i^2 - \sum_{i=1}^{n} b_i \ .$$

Therefore, since $\sum_{i=1}^{n} b_i = n$,

$$\sum_{i=1}^{n} b_i^2 = C_S + n \ ,$$

and by Eq (1)

$$\mathbf{E}\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n} b_i^2\right) = \mathbf{E}(C_S) + n < 2n \ .$$

By Markov Inequality, applied to the random variable $X = \sum_{i=1}^{n} b_i^2$,

$$\mathbf{Pr}\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n} b_i^2 \geq 4n\right) \leq 1/2 \ .$$

If $\beta \geq 4$, then for a function f selected at random the condition $\sum_{i=1}^{n} b_i^2 \leq 4n$ is satisfied with probability at least $1/2$. Therefore, the expected number, t, of functions f tried before the condition is satisfied is at most 2. ∎

To compute Step 2, note that $p_i = p_{i-1} + \alpha b_{i-1}^2$ for $i > 1$, and $p_1 = 0$. Therefore, p_i can be computed and recorded in array P by iterating for $i = 1, \ldots, n$. Step 2 takes $T_2 = O(n)$ time.

Finally, Step 3 consists of the following sub-steps, executed for all i, $i = 1, \ldots, n$:

Step 3a Initialize the subarray $T[P[i]+1, \ldots, P[i+1]]$ to *nil*.

Step 3b Select at random a function $g_i : U \to [1..\alpha b_i^2]$ from a universal class of hash functions.

Step 3c For each $x \in B_i$, if $T[P[i] + g_i(x)]$ is not *nil* then go to Step 3a (g_i is not injective on B_i and a new g_i is to be selected); else write x into $T[P[i] + g_i(x)]$.

Step 3d Record g_i in $G[i]$.

Analysis We analyze first Step 3 for bucket B_i. Step 3a takes time $O(b_i^2)$. Step 3b takes constant time. Step 3c can be implemented in $O(b_i)$ time, using the i'th list in the hash table T' computed in Step 1. Step 3d takes constant time. The time complexity of Step 3 for bucket B_i is therefore $t_i = O(\tau_i b_i^2)$, where τ_i is the number of iterations, i.e., the number of functions g_i selected before an injective function is found for B_i.

Comment: We could have each iteration take only $O(b_i)$ time by removing Step 3a, initializing the table T in Step 2, and modify Step 3c as follows:

Step 3c' For each $x \in B_i$, if $T[P[i] + g_i(x)]$ is not *nil* then for all $y \in B_i$ assign *nil* to $T[P[i] + g_i(y)]$ and go to Step 3a; else write x into $T[P[i] + g_i(x)]$.

The following claim shows that for $\alpha \geq 2$ we have $\mathbf{E}(t_i) = O(b_i^2)$.

Claim: If $\alpha \geq 2$ then $\mathbf{E}(\tau_i) \leq 2$.

Proof. Let C_x be the number of collisions of a key x in B_i under g_i; i.e., the number of $y \in B_i$, $y \neq x$, for which $g_i(x) = g_i(y)$. Due to the collision property of universal hash functions (with $N = b_i$ and $B = \alpha b_i^2$) we have

$$\mathbf{E}(C_x) < b_i/(\alpha b_i^2) = 1/\alpha b_i \ .$$

By Markov Inequality,

$$\mathbf{Pr}(C_x \geq 1) \leq \mathbf{E}(C_x) < 1/\alpha b_i \ . \tag{2}$$

Therefore, by Boole's inequality and Eq (2), the probability that there are any collisions in B_i is

$$\mathbf{Pr}(\exists x \in B_i \text{ such that } C_x \geq 1) \leq b_i \cdot (1/\alpha b_i) = 1/\alpha \ .$$

For $\alpha \geq 2$, the function g_i is injective with probability at least $1 - 1/\alpha \geq 1/2$, and the expected number of trials, τ_i, required before an injective function is found is at most 2. ∎

For $\alpha \geq 2$ we have

$$\mathbf{E}(t_i) = O(\mathbf{E}(\tau_i) b_i^2) = O(b_i^2) \ .$$

The total time, T_3, for Step 3 over all buckets is then

$$\mathbf{E}(T_3) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \mathbf{E}(t_i) = O(\sum_{i=1}^{n} b_i^2) = O(\beta n)$$

The running time, T, of the entire algorithm can now be bounded as

$$\mathbf{E}(T) = \mathbf{E}(T_1 + T_2 + T_3) = \mathbf{E}(T_1) + \mathbf{E}(T_2) + \mathbf{E}(T_3) = O(n) \ .$$

Exercises

1. If h is chosen at random from an *almost-universal* collection of hash functions and is used to hash N keys into a table of size B, the collision probability of any two particular keys x and y is at most $2/B$, and the expected number of collisions involving a particular key x is at most $2(N-1)/B$.

   Modify the algorithm above so that almost-universal functions are used instead of universal functions, and such that the expected running time remains $O(n)$.

2. Modify the algorithm above and analyze it, so that the first level function f maps the input set S into $2n$ buckets, instead of n buckets.

3. (*) Generalizing (2), modify the algorithm above and analyze it, so that the first level function f maps the input set S into γn buckets, and select γ that gives favorable complexity (in terms of constants).