

The Master Theorem

Let $a \geq 1$ and $b > 1$ be constants, let $f(n)$ be a function, and let $T(n)$ be defined on the nonnegative integers by the recurrence

$$T(n) = \begin{cases} c & \text{if } n < n_0 \\ aT(n/b) + f(n) & \text{if } n \geq n_0 \end{cases}$$

where we interpret n/b to mean either $\lfloor n/b \rfloor$ or $\lceil n/b \rceil$. Then $T(n)$ can be bounded asymptotically as follows:

1. If $f(n) = O(n^{\log_b a - \epsilon})$ for some constant $\epsilon > 0$, then $T(n) = \Theta(n^{\log_b a})$.
2. If $f(n) = \Theta(n^{\log_b a} \log^k n)$ for some $k \geq 0$, then $T(n) = \Theta(n^{\log_b a} \log_2^{k+1} n)$.
3. If $f(n) = \Omega(n^{\log_b a + \epsilon})$ for some constant $\epsilon > 0$, and $af(n/b) \leq \delta f(n)$ for some $\delta < 1$ and $n \geq n_0$, then $T(n) = \Theta(f(n))$.