
Recursion: Five Steps to a Recursive Function

1. **Strategy:** How to reduce the problem?
2. **Header:**
 - What info needed as input and output?
 - Write the function header.
Use a noun phrase for the function name.
3. **Spec:** Write a method specification in terms of the parameters and return value.
Include preconditions.
4. **Base Cases:**
 - When is the answer so simple that we know it without recursing?
 - What is the answer in these base case(s)?
 - Write code for the base case(s).
5. **Recursive Cases:**
 - Describe the answer in the other case(s) in terms of the answer on smaller inputs.
 - Simplify if possible.
 - Write code for the recursive case(s).

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Recursive Scheme Procedures: Sum-N

Parameter: integer $n \geq 0$.

Result: sum of integers from 0 to n .

```
(define (sum-n n)
  (cond (
        )
        (else
         )
        )
  )
)
```

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Recursive Scheme Procedures: Length

```
(define (length x)
```

```
))
```

This is called “cdr-recursion.”

Note: There is a built-in `length` procedure.

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Length (cont.)

```
1 ]=> (trace length)
;No value
1 ]=> (length '(a b c))
[Entering #[compound-procedure 5 length]
  Args: (a b c)]
[Entering #[compound-procedure 5 length]
  Args: (b c)]
[Entering #[compound-procedure 5 length]
  Args: (c)]
[Entering #[compound-procedure 5 length]
  Args: ()]
0 <= #[compound-procedure 5 length]
  Args: ()]
1 <= #[compound-procedure 5 length]
  Args: (c)]
2 <= #[compound-procedure 5 length]
  Args: (b c)]
3 <= #[compound-procedure 5 length]
  Args: (a b c)]
;Value: 3
```

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Recursive Scheme Procedures: Abs-List

- `(abs-list '(1 -2 -3 4 0)) => (1 2 3 4 0)`
- `(abs-list '()) => ()`

```
(define (abs-list lst)
```

```
)
```

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Recursive Scheme Procedures: Append

```
(append '(1 2) '(3 4 5)) => (1 2 3 4 5)
(append '(1 2) '(3 (4) 5)) => (1 2 3 (4) 5)
(append '() '(1 4 5)) => (1 4 5)
(append '(1 4 5) '()) => (1 4 5)
(append '() '()) => ()
```

```
(define (append x y)
```

```
)
```

Note: There is a built-in `append` procedure.

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Lists Revisited

Recall the Cons Cell Representation:

The *pair* or *cons cell* is the most fundamental of Scheme's structured object types.

A **list** is a sequence of **pairs**; each pair's `cdr` is the next pair in the sequence.

The `cdr` of the last pair in a **proper list** is the empty list. Otherwise the sequence of pairs forms an **improper list**. I.e., an empty list is a proper list, and any pair whose `cdr` is a proper list is a proper list.

An improper list is printed in **dotted-pair notation** with a period (`dot`) preceding the final element of the list. A pair whose `cdr` is not a list is often called a **dotted pair**.

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Creating lists

```
quote: '(1 (2 3) ()) => (1 (2 3) ())
or (quote (1 (2 3) ())) => (1 (2 3) ())
```

```
list: (list 1 '(2 3) ()) => (1 (2 3) ())
```

```
cons: Build it, piece by piece.
      (cons 1 (cons (cons 2 (cons 3 ()))
                   (cons () ())))
```

```
append: Appending lists
        (append '(1) '(4 5)) => (1 4 5)
```

cons vs. list: The procedure `cons` actually builds *pairs*, and there is no reason that the `cdr` of a pair must be a list.

The procedure `list` is similar to `cons`, except that it takes an arbitrary number of arguments and always builds a proper list.

E.g., `(list 'a 'b 'c) → (a b c)`

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Testing for Equality

- (eq? a b): Returns #t iff a and b are the same Scheme object. (Don't use eq? with numbers!)
- (= a b): Returns #t iff a and b are numerically equal. Pre: a and b must evaluate to numbers.
- (eqv? a b): Similar to eq?, but works for numbers and characters. More expensive than eq?, however.
- (equal? a b): Returns #t iff a and b have the same structure and contents. Thus, equal? recursively tests for equality. The most expensive equality predicate.

Recommended Reading:

Dybvig §6.1, 2nd ed. (available online), or Dybvig §6.2, 3rd ed.

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Testing for Equality (cont.)

The eq? predicate doesn't work for lists.

Why not?

1. (cons 'a '()) makes a new list
2. (cons 'a '()) makes a(nother) new list
3. eq? checks if its two args are *the same*
4. (eq? (cons 'a '()) (cons 'a '())) evaluates to () (ie, #f)

Lists are stored as pointers to the first element (car) and the rest of the list (cdr).

Symbols are stored uniquely, so eq? works on them.

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Equality Checking for Lists

For lists, need a comparison procedure to check for the same **structure** in two lists. How might you write such a procedure?

```
(define (myequal? x y)
  (or (and (atom? x) (atom? y) (eq? x y))
      (and (not (atom? x)) (not (atom? y))
           (myequal? (car x) (car y))
           (myequal? (cdr x) (cdr y)))))
```

- (equal? 'a 'a) evaluates to #t
- (equal? 'a 'b) evaluates to ()
- (equal? '(a) '(a)) evaluates to #t
- (equal? '((a)) '(a)) evaluates to ()

Does this really work? Hint: atoms are numbers, does this work for numbers? Play around with it and with the built-in predicate procedure equal?.

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Other Useful Predicates

- (null? a): Returns #t iff a is the empty list (or #f, depending on the implementation).
- (pair? a): Returns #t iff a is a pair, i.e., a cons cell.
- (number? a): Returns #t iff a is a number.
- (min list): Returns the minimum of a list of numbers.
- (max list): Returns the maximum of a list of numbers.
- (even? a): Returns #t iff a is even.

Lots more in Dybvig §6.

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Recursive Procedures: Counting

```
(define (atomcount x)
  (cond ((null? x) 0)
        ((atom? x) 1)
        (else (+ (atomcount (car x))
                  (atomcount (cdr x))))))
```

- (atomcount '(1 2)) ⇒ 2
- (atomcount '(1 (2 (3)) (5))) ⇒ 4:

```
(at '(1 (2 (3)) (5)))
(+ (at 1) (at ((2 (3)) (5))))
(+ 1 (+ (at (2 (3))) (at ((5))))))
(+ 1 (+ (+ (at 2) (at ((3)))) (+ (at (5)) (at ())))))
(+ 1 (+ (+ 1 (+ (at (3)) (at ()))) (+ (+ (at 5) (at ())) 0)))
(+ 1 (+ (+ 1 (+ (+ (at 3) (at ())) 0)) (+ (+ 1 0) 0)))
(+ 1 (+ (+ 1 (+ (+ 1 0) 0)) (+ 1 0)))
(+ 1 (+ (+ 1 (+ 1 0)) 1))
(+ 1 (+ (+ 1 1) 1))
(+ 1 (+ 2 1))
(+ 1 3)
4
```

This is called "car-cdr-recursion."

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Efficiency Issues

Problem: Evaluating the same expression twice.

Example:

```
(define (longest-nonzero x y)
  (cond ((and (null? x) (null? y)) -1)
        ((> (length x) (length y))
         (length x))
        (else (length y))))
```

What can you do if there is no assignment statement?

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Efficiency Issues

Solution 1: Bind values to parameters in a helper procedure.

```
(define (maximum x y)
  (cond ((> x y) x)
        (else y)))

(define (longest-nonzero x y)
  (cond ((and (null? x) (null? y)) -1)
        (else
         (maximum (length x) (length y)))))
```

Note: There is a built-in max function.

Note 2: Helper procedures are an important and useful tool!

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Efficiency Issues

Solution 2: Use a let or let* construct, to create local variables and to bind them to expression results. The scope of these variables is limited to the scope of the let statement.

```
(let ((var1 expr1)
      ...
      (varn exprn))
  body)
```

The variables can only be used within the body of the let.

Evaluation: expr1, ... exprn are evaluated in some **undefined order**, saved, and then assigned to var1...varn. In our interpreter, they have the appearance of being evaluated in **parallel**.

```
(let* ((var1 expr1)
      ...
      (varn exprn))
  body)
```

Again, the variables can only be used within the body of let*.

Evaluation: evaluation and binding is **sequential**, i.e., the evaluation of expr1 is bound to var1, the evaluation of expr2 is then bound to var2, etc.

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Let and let* Example

```
(define a 100) (define b 200) (define c 300)
```

```
(let ((a 5)
      (b (+ a a))
      (c (+ a b)))
  (list a b c))
```

What does this return? What are a, b, c bound to now? (Answer: still 100, 200, 300)

```
(let* ((a 5)
       (b (+ a a))
       (c (+ a b)))
  (list a b c))
```

What does this return?

Note that `let*` can be simulated by nested `lets`.

```
(let ((a 5)
      (let ((b (+ a a))
            (let ((c (+ a b)))
              (list a b c)))
      ))
```

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Lambda Expressions

We have often been defining procedures using the shorthand:

```
(define (square x)
  (* x x))
```

But recall that this is just shorthand for binding the variable `square` to the lambda expression `(λ x x)`.

```
(define square
  (lambda (x)
    (* x x)
  ))
```

It is often very useful to define procedures without naming them. These **anonymous procedures** can be passed as arguments, returned as arguments, bound to local variable names using `let`, etc. We will see further applications later when we cover higher-order procedures.

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Lambda Expressions Examples

Establishing a procedure as the value of a local variable.

```
(let ((square-it (lambda (x) (* x x))))
  (list (square-it (+ 1 3))
        (square-it (* 2 5))
        (square-it 7))) => (16 100 49)
```

`square-it` is defined only within the scope of the `let` statement.

Recall that procedures can have multiple arguments, and that we can even have **procedures as arguments** to procedures.

```
(let ((double-any (lambda (f x) (f x x))))
  (list (double-any + 25)
        (double-any cons 'a))) => (100 (a.a))
```

Dybvig §2.5 is a good reference to this material (available online). I **strongly** recommend that you read it. §4.2 may also be useful.

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Lambda Expressions Examples (cont.)

The following examples are taken from Dybvig §2.5:

```
(let ((x 'a))
  (let ((f (lambda (y) (list x y))))
    (f 'b))) returns (a b)
```

Note that `x` is bound in the outer `let`. It is a *free variable* in the lambda expression. A variable that occurs free in a lambda expression should be bound by an enclosing lambda or `let` expression, unless the variable is (like the names of primitive procedures) bound at top level, as we discuss in the following section.

```
(let ((f (let ((x 'a))
           (lambda (y) (cons x y)))))
  (let ((x 'i-am-not-a)
        (f 'b))) (a . b))
```

In both cases, the value of `x` within the procedure named `f` is `a`.

Interestingly, a `let` expression is just an application of a lambda expression to a set of argument expressions. I.e., the following two expressions are equivalent:

```
(let ((x 'a))
  (cons x x))
```

```
((lambda (x) (cons x x))
 'a)
```

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