

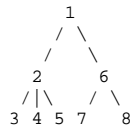
Tree Traversals

A `_traversal_` is a manner of `_visiting_` each node in a tree once. What you do when visiting any particular node depends on the application; for instance, you might print a node's value, or perform some calculation upon it. There are several different traversals, each of which orders the nodes differently.

Many traversals can be defined recursively. In a `_preorder_` traversal, you visit each node before recursively visiting its children, which are visited from left to right. The root is visited first.

```
class SibTreeNode {
  public void preorder() {
    this.visit();
    if (firstChild != null) {
      firstChild.preorder();
    }
    if (nextSibling != null) {
      nextSibling.preorder();
    }
  }
}
```

Suppose your `visit()` method numbers the nodes in the order they're visited. A preorder traversal visits the nodes in the following order.



Each node is visited only once, so a preorder traversal takes $O(n)$ time, where n is the number of nodes in the tree. All the traversals we will consider take $O(n)$ time.

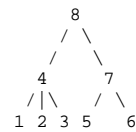
A preorder traversal is a natural way to print a directory's structure:

```
~jrs/61b
  hw
    hw1
    hw2
  index.html
  lab
    lab1
    lab2
  lec
    01
    02
    03
    04
    05
```

In a `_postorder_` traversal, you visit each node's children (in left-to-right order) before the node itself.

```
public void postorder() {
  if (firstChild != null) {
    firstChild.postorder();
  }
  this.visit();
  if (nextSibling != null) {
    nextSibling.postorder();
  }
}
```

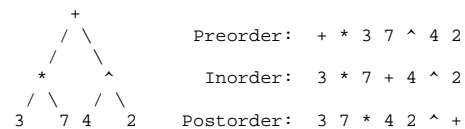
A postorder traversal visits the nodes in the following order.



The `postorder()` code is trickier than it looks. The best way to understand it is to draw a depth-two tree on paper, then pretend you're the computer and execute the algorithm carefully. Trust me on this.

A postorder traversal is the natural way to sum the total disk space used in the root directory and its descendants. In the example above, a postorder traversal would begin by summing the sizes of the files in `hw1/` and `hw2/`; then it would visit `hw/` and sum its two children. The file `index.html` would follow, then the directories `lab1/`, `lab2/`, and `lab/`, and so on.

Binary trees allow for an `_inorder_` traversal: visit a node's left child (left subtree), then the node itself, then the node's right child (right subtree). The preorder, inorder, and postorder traversals of an expression tree will print a prefix, infix, or postfix expression, respectively.



In a `_level_order_` traversal, you visit the root, then all the depth-1 nodes (from left to right), then all the depth-2 nodes, and so forth. The level order traversal of our expression tree is "+ * ^ 3 7 4 2" (which doesn't mean much).

Unlike the three previous traversals, a level order traversal is not straightforward to define recursively. However, a level order traversal can be done in $O(n)$ time. Use a queue, which initially contains only the root. Then repeat the following steps:

- Dequeue a node.
- Visit it.
- Enqueue its children (in order from left to right).

Continue until the queue is empty.

A final thought: if you use a stack instead of a queue, and push each node's children in reverse order--from right to left (so they pop off the stack in order from left to right)--you perform a preorder traversal. Think about why.