

What is an algorithm?

An algorithm is a sequence of steps to solve a particular problem.

or

Algorithm is an ordered set of unambiguous steps that produces a result and terminates in a finite amount of time.

Algorithm has the following characteristics:

- **Input:** An algorithm may or may not require input.
- **Output:** Each algorithm is expected to produce at least one result.
- **Definiteness:** Each instruction must be clear and unambiguous.
- **Finiteness:** If the instructions of an algorithm are executed, the algorithm should terminate after finite number of steps.

The algorithm and flowchart include following three types of control structures:

1. **Sequence:** In the sequence structure, statements are placed one after the other and the execution takes place starting from up to down.
2. **Branching (Selection):** In branch control, there is a condition and according to a condition, a decision of either TRUE or FALSE is achieved. In the case of TRUE, one of the two branches is explored; but in the case of FALSE condition, the other alternative is taken. Generally, the 'IF-THEN' is used to represent branch control.
3. **Loop (Repetition):** The Loop or Repetition allows a statement(s) to be executed repeatedly based on certain loop condition e.g. WHILE, FOR loops.

Advantages of Algorithm:

- It is a step-wise representation of a solution to a given problem, which makes it easy to understand.
- An algorithm uses a definite procedure.
- It is not dependent on any programming language, so it is easy to understand for anyone even without programming knowledge.
- Every step in an algorithm has its own logical sequence so it is easy to debug.

How to write Algorithms:

- Step-1 Define your algorithms input : Many algorithms take in data to be processed, e.g. to calculate the area of rectangle input may be the rectangle height and rectangle width.
- Step-2 Define the variables: Algorithm's variables allow you to use it for more than one place. We can define two variables for rectangle height and rectangle width as HEIGHT and WIDTH (or H & W). We should use meaningful variable name e.g. instead of using H & W use HEIGHT and WIDTH as variable name.
- Step-3 Outline the algorithm's operations: Use input variable for computation purpose, e.g. to find area of rectangle multiply the HEIGHT and WIDTH variable and store the value in new variable (say) AREA. An algorithm's operations can take the form of multiple steps and even branch, depending on the value of the input variables.
- Step-4 Output the results of your algorithm's operations: In case of area of rectangle output will be the value stored in variable AREA. if the input variables described a rectangle with a HEIGHT of 2 and a WIDTH of 3, the algorithm would output the value of 6.





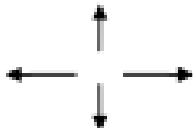





Flowchart:

Unlike an algorithm, Flowchart uses different symbols to design a solution to a problem. It is another commonly used programming tool. By looking at a Flowchart one can understand the operations and sequence of operations performed in a system. Flowchart is often considered as a blueprint of a design used for solving a specific problem.

Advantages of flowchart:

- Flowchart is an excellent way of communicating the logic of a program.
- Easy and efficient to analyze problem using flowchart.
- During program development cycle, the flowchart plays the role of a blueprint, which makes program development process easier.
- After successful development of a program, it needs continuous timely maintenance during the course of its operation. The flowchart makes program or system maintenance easier.
- It is easy to convert the flowchart into any programming language code.

To draw a flowchart following standard symbols are used

Symbol Name	Symbol	function
Oval		Used to represent start and end of flowchart
Parallelogram		Used for input and output operation
Rectangle		Processing: Used for arithmetic operations and data-manipulations
Diamond		Decision making. Used to represent the operation in which there are two/three alternatives, true and false etc
Arrows		Flow line Used to indicate the flow of logic by connecting symbols
Circle		Page Connector
		Off Page Connector
		Predefined Process /Function Used to represent a group of statements performing one processing task.
		Preprocessor
		Comments

