Mark-sweep

- Mark-sweep was the first garbage collection algorithm to be developed that is able to reclaim cyclic data structure.
- When using marking-sweep, unreferenced memory blocks are not reclaimed immediately. Instead, garbage is allowed to accumulate until all variable memory has been exhausted.
- Mark-sweep consists of two phases: the mark phase and the sweep phase.
- Instead of a counter, each node has a single boolean that is initially zero, which means unmarked.
- The mark phase starts with each reference in the active symbol table, follow that reference through memory, setting each visited node’s boolean marker to 1.
- Once the reference traversal is complete, run through the entire heap and out any node who’s marker is 0 back to the free list. This is the sweep phase.
- Mark-sweep trace out the memory blocks that are in use. So it is able to correctly identify and collect garbage even in the presence of reference cycles.
- The issue of mark-sweep is that when the algorithm is triggered, the execution of the program is suspended temporarily. Once all unreferenced objects have been reclaimed, the normal execution of the program can resume.

Fragmentation
- Fragmentation is a phenomenon that occurs in a long-running program that has undergone garbage collection several times.
- The problem is that memory blocks tend to become spread out in the heap. Marked nodes end up being separated by many, small unmarked nodes.
- This leads to that it may become impossible to allocate memory for a variable. Although there may be sufficient unused memory, the unused memory is not contiguous. Since variables typically occupy consecutive memory locations, it is impossible to allocate storage.
- The mark-sweep does not address fragmentation. Even after reclaiming the storage, the heap may still be too fragmented to allocate the required amount of space.

Copy Collection
- Copy collection is also called defragment collection.
- When using copy collection, the heap is divided into two separate regions.
- At any point in time, all dynamically allocated blocks reside in only one of the two regions. We call this region active region. the other region is unoccupied, which is called inactive region.
- When the memory in the active region is exhausted, the program is suspended and garbage collection is invoked.
- Copy collection algorithm copies the memory block of all active references from the active region to the inactive region.
- As each memory block is copied, the reference is updated to the new location.
- After the copying is completed, the active and inactive region exchange their roles.
- Since the copy collection algorithm copies only the memory block of active references, the garbage blocks are left behind.
- The memory space occupied by the garbage is reclaimed all at once when the active region becomes inactive.
- As the copy collection algorithm copies blocks from active region to inactive region, it stores these blocks in contiguous memory locations. Therefore, this algorithm automatically defragments the heap.
The copy collection algorithm can detect inaccessible rings of nodes and can defragment. However, if an application program has a large memory footprint, the time required to copy all objects can be quite significant. Besides, it requires twice as much memory as the program actually uses and need to suspend the current running program while execution.