Recursion

Calling a Function from Within Itself
Recursion: What is it?

Recursive functions are functions which rely on themselves to calculate part of the answer. Recursive functions usually have a base case that causes the recursion to end. Here is an example as a story:

A child couldn’t sleep, so her mother told a story about a little frog, who couldn’t sleep, so the frog’s mother told a story about a little bear, who couldn’t sleep, so the bear’s mother told a story about a little weasel...who fell asleep.
...and the little bear fell asleep;
...and the little frog fell asleep;
...and the child fell asleep.
Recursion: What is it?

Base Case

A child couldn’t sleep, so her mother told a story about a little frog, who couldn’t sleep, so the frog’s mother told a story about a little bear, who couldn’t sleep, so the bear’s mother told a story about a little weasel...

...who fell asleep.

...and the little bear fell asleep;

...and the little frog fell asleep;

...and the child fell asleep.
Recursive Part

A child couldn’t sleep, so her mother told a story about a little frog, who couldn’t sleep, so the frog’s mother told a story about a little bear, who couldn’t sleep, so the bear’s mother told a story about a little weasel...who fell asleep.

...and the little bear fell asleep;
...and the little frog fell asleep;
...and the child fell asleep.
Recursive Functions in Python

Consider the factorial operation.

\[ n! = n \times (n - 1) \times (n - 2) \times \cdots \times 1 \]
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We could define this recursively as:

- **Base case:** \( 0! = 1 \)
- **Recursive part:** \( n! = n(n - 1)! \)
Recursive Functions in Python

Consider the factorial operation.

\[ n! = n \times (n - 1) \times (n - 2) \times \cdots \times 1 \]

We could define this recursively as:

- **Base case:** \( 0! = 1 \)
- **Recursive part:** \( n! = n(n - 1)! \)

To code this as a recursive function in Python, we could do:

```python
def fact(n):
    if n == 0:  # base case
        return 1
    return n*fact(n-1)  # recursive part
```
Recursion in Practicality: Euclid’s GCD

The GCD of $a$ and $b$ is:

- $a$ if $b = 0$
- $\gcd(b, a \mod b)$ otherwise

More info about why this is so can be found at
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More info about why this is so can be found at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euclidean_algorithm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euclidean_algorithm)

Implementation in Python:

```python
def gcd(a, b):
    if b == 0:  # base case
        return a
    return gcd(b, a % b)  # recursive part
```
Practice: Fibonacci Numbers

The $n$-th Fibonacci number, $F(n)$, is:

- $n$ if $n = 0$ or $n = 1$
- $F(n - 1) + F(n - 2)$ otherwise

Try it yourself: Implement a Python function which calculates the $n$-th Fibonacci number recursively.