

# In a nutshell: The bisection method

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Given a continuous real-valued function  $f$  of a real variable defined on the interval  $[a_0, b_0]$  where  $f(a_0)$  and  $f(b_0)$  have opposite signs and neither is zero, the intermediate-value theorem guarantees that there is a root on that interval. This algorithm uses iteration, bracketing and averaging to approximate the root. The intermediate-value theorem is used to guarantee the existence of the root.

Parameters:

$\varepsilon_{\text{step}}$	The maximum error in the value of the root cannot exceed this value.
$\varepsilon_{\text{abs}}$	The value of the function at the approximation of the root cannot exceed this value.
$N$	The maximum number of iterations.

1. Let  $k \leftarrow 0$ .
2. Given that we have constrained the root to  $[a_k, b_k]$ , if  $b_k - a_k < \varepsilon_{\text{step}}$  and  $\min\{|f(a_k)|, |f(b_k)|\} < \varepsilon_{\text{abs}}$ , we are done, and return whichever end-point has the smallest absolute value, returning either in the very unlikely case that  $|f(a_k)| = |f(b_k)|$ .
3. If  $k > N$ , we have iterated  $N$  times, so stop and return signalling a failure to converge.
4. Let  $m_k \leftarrow \frac{a_k + b_k}{2}$ .
  - a. If  $f(m_k) = 0$ , we are done, and return  $m_k$ .
  - b. If  $f(m_k)$  and  $f(a_k)$  have the same sign, let  $a_{k+1} \leftarrow m_k$  and  $b_{k+1} \leftarrow b_k$ ;
  - c. otherwise,  $f(m_k)$  and  $f(b_k)$  must have the same sign, so let  $a_{k+1} \leftarrow a_k$  and  $b_{k+1} \leftarrow m_k$ .
5. Increment  $k$  and return to Step 2.

## Convergence

The maximum error at any step is  $b_k - a_k$ , so with each step, the maximum error is halved. Thus, if  $h$  is the error, the error decreases according to  $O(h)$ .