CISC 3115 TY2
Tail Recursion

Hui Chen

Department of Computer & Information Science

CUNY Brooklyn College

Outline

- Discussed
  - Problem Solving using Recursion
  - Recursive math functions
  - Design solutions to recursive math functions using recursion
  - Recursions and Strings
  - Recursive helper method/function
  - Example problems (sorting, searching, directory size, Tower of Hanoi)
- To discuss
  - Concept of tail recursion

Tail Recursion

- A recursive method is said to be *tail recursive* if there are no pending operations to be performed on return from a recursive call.

- Tail recursions can be realized by complier efficiently.

Tail and Non-tail Recursion: Compute Factorial

Non-tail recursion

```
public static int factorial(int n) {

   if (n == 0) {  // base case

     return 1;

   } else { // recursive call or method invocation

     // non-tail recursion, because we have to
     multiple factorial(n-1) by n, a pending
     operation

     return n * factorial(n - 1);

   }

}
```

Tail recursion

```
public static int factorial(int n) {

   return factorial(n, 1);

}

private static int factorial(int n, int result) {

   if (n == 0) { // base case

     return result;

   } else { // recursive call

     // tail recursion, no pending operation after
     returning from the recursive call

     return factorial(n - 1, n * result);

   }

}
```

Questions

- Concept of tail and non-tail recursions

- Can you identify non-tail/tail-recursive methods in preceding examples?

- Write tail-recursive methods