Problem 1 (Unfair Bet). Alice and Bob are playing a game. Alice has a special card: both sides are identical card backs. Bob has a regular Ace of Spades (see Figure below). In each round, they put the two cards into a bag, picks one card at random and put it on the table. If the current side they see is not card back, they will restart the round. Otherwise they turn the card to check whether it is Alice’s or Bob’s. If it is Alice’s card Alice gets 1 dollar from Bob, otherwise Bob gets 1 dollar from Alice.

Clarification: Every round will have a winner. If a restart happens it is still in the same round and the round goes on until a winner is decided.

![Image of cards](image_url)

Figure 1: Left to Right: Alice’s card (front, back), Bob’s card (front, back)

(a) (5 points) What is the probability that Alice wins a round? (We assume when they pick up the card and put it on the table, either side of either card has an equal probability of facing them.)

(b) (10 points) Suppose both Alice and Bob have $n$ dollars to begin with, and the game finishes when one of them has got all the $2n$ dollars. What is the probability of Alice winning the game? (Hint: Formalize the game as a Markov Chain, represent the Markov Chain using a weighted undirected graph, finally use resistor network/system of equations to compute the probability of winning.)

Problem 2 (Hearthstone Probabilities II). (15 points) In hearthstone players try to reach higher ranks by winning games. Ranks are represented by number of stars you have. Usually, if you win a
game you get 1 star; if you lose a game you lose 1 star. However there is also a special rule that if you win 3 games in a roll, you get 2 stars for the 3rd win. If you win \( k \) (\( k \geq 3 \)) games consecutively, you get 1 star per game for the first two games, and 2 stars per game for games 3, 4, ..., \( k \) (i.e. you get \( 2(k-2) + 2 \) stars total for these \( k \) games). Also, if you are currently at 0 stars, even if you lose you will not lose any stars (you will still be at 0 stars).

You start from 0 stars, and want to get to at least \( m \) stars. Suppose your probability of winning is \( p \) for every game (\( p \) is given as an input), design an algorithm that computes the expected number of games you need to play before you reach \( m \) stars. The running time of your algorithm should depend only on \( m \), but not on \( p \) (in this problem we assume you can do basic calculations on real numbers in unit time, you do not need to worry about precision of real numbers).

**Problem 3** (Volume Estimation). In this problem we are going to describe an algorithm for estimating the volume of complex object in high dimensions.

Suppose \( X \) is an object in \( \mathbb{R}^d \). Given a point \( x \in \mathbb{R}^d \), we can efficiently decide whether \( x \in X \). Let \( R_0, R_1, \ldots, R_n \) be \( n \) concentric spheres in \( d \) dimensions with the property that \( R_0 \) is completely inside \( X \), and \( X \) is completely inside \( R_n \). The radii of these spheres are \( r_0 < r_1 < \cdots < r_n \) (center and radii of the spheres are known). See the Figure.

![Figure 2: Object X and spheres R0, ..., R3.](image)

Let \( S_i \) be the intersection of \( R_i \) and \( X \), and let \( v_i \) be the volume of \( S_i \). Clearly \( v_0 \) is the volume of \( R_0 \) which we can compute, and \( v_n \) is the volume of \( X \). We will also assume \( v_i/v_{i+1} \geq 0.5 \) for all \( i = 0, 1, \ldots, n-1 \).

(a) (10 points) Suppose we can sample points uniformly at random from \( S_{i+1} \), show that with \( O\left(\frac{\log(1/\eta)}{\epsilon^2}\right) \) samples we can get an estimate \( q_i \) such that \( |q_i - v_i/v_{i+1}| \leq \epsilon \) with probability at least \( 1 - \eta \) (for any \( \eta > 0 \)).

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(b) (5 points) Now suppose the samples of \( S_{i+1} \) actually came from a fast mixing Markov Chain, that can achieve total variational difference \( \beta \) to the uniform distribution in \( S_{i+1} \) in time \( O(\log 1/\beta) \). Show that using such a Markov Chain, we can get an estimate \( q_i \) that satisfies the same condition \( (|q_i - v_i/v_{i+1}| \leq \epsilon \) with probability at least \( 1 - \eta \) with running time \( O((\log(1/\eta))/log(1/\epsilon)) \).

(Hint: Total variational difference being smaller than \( \beta \) means the probability of any event can differ by at most \( \beta \).)

(c) (5 points) Show that if \( |q_i - v_i/v_{i+1}| \leq \epsilon \) for all \( i = 0, 1, 2, ..., n - 1 \), let \( \tilde{v}_n = \frac{v_0}{q_0q_1...q_{n-1}} \), then \( |\tilde{v}_n - v_n| \leq (1 - 2\epsilon)^{-n} - 1 \). (Note that the error is small if \( \epsilon \ll 1/n \).)

(d) (10 points) Show that if we can construct fast mixing Markov Chains as in (b), there is a polynomial time algorithm that can get an estimate \( \hat{v}_n \) such that \( \frac{1}{2}v_n \leq \hat{v}_n \leq \frac{3}{2}v_n \) with probability at least \( 1 - 1/n \).

(Hint: choose the right \( \eta \) and do union bound.)