# CMSC 330: Organization of Programming Languages

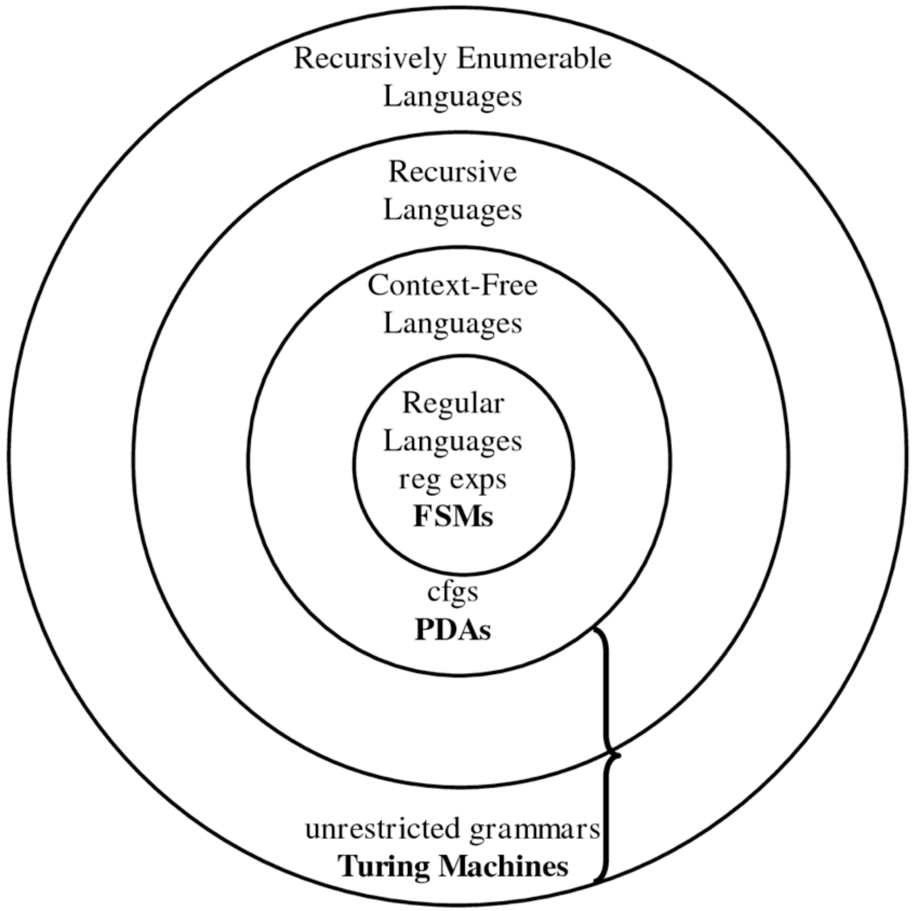
## Regular Expressions and Finite Automata

# How do regular expressions work?

- What we've learned
  - What regular expressions are
  - What they can express, and cannot
  - Programming with them

- What's next: how they work
  - A great computer science result

# Languages and Machines



# A Few Questions About REs

- How are REs implemented?
  - Given an arbitrary RE and a string, how to decide whether the RE matches the string?
- What are the basic components of REs?
  - Can implement some features in terms of others
    - E.g., e+ is the same as ee*
- What does a regular expression represent?
  - Just a set of strings
    - This observation provides insight on how we go about our implementation
- … next comes the math !

# Definition: Alphabet

- An alphabet is a finite set of symbols
  - Usually denoted $\Sigma$
- Example alphabets:
  - Binary: $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$
  - Decimal: $\Sigma = \{0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9\}$
  - Alphanumeric: $\Sigma = \{0\text{-}9,a\text{-}z,A\text{-}Z\}$

# Definition: String

- A string is a finite sequence of symbols from Σ
  - ε is the empty string ("" in Ruby)
  - |s| is the length of string s
    - |Hello| = 5, |ε| = 0
  - Note
    - Ø is the empty set (with 0 elements)
    - Ø ≠ { ε } (and Ø ≠ ε)
- Example strings over alphabet Σ = {0,1} (binary):
  - 0101
  - 0101110
  - ε

# Definition: Language

- A language L is a set of strings over an alphabet
- Example: All strings of length 1 or 2 over alphabet $\Sigma$ = {a, b, c} that begin with a
  - L = { a, aa, ab, ac }
- Example: All strings over $\Sigma$ = {a, b}
  - L = { ε, a, b, aa, bb, ab, ba, aaa, bba, aba, baa, … }
  - Language of all strings written $\Sigma^*$
- Example: All strings of length 0 over alphabet $\Sigma$
  - $L = \{ s \mid s \in \Sigma^* \text{ and } |s| = 0 \}$

  "the set of strings s such that s is from $\Sigma^*$ and has length 0"

  $= \{\varepsilon\} \neq \varnothing$

# Definition: Language (cont.)

- Example: The set of phone numbers over the alphabet $\Sigma = \{0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, (, ), -\}$
  - Give an example element of this language **`(123)456-7890`**
  - Are all strings over the alphabet in the language? **`No`**
  - Is there a Ruby regular expression for this language?

```
/\(\d{3,3}\)\d{3,3}-\d{4,4}/
```

- Example: The set of all valid (runnable) Ruby programs
  - Later we'll see how we can specify this language
  - (Regular expressions are useful, but not sufficient)

# Operations on Languages

- Let $\Sigma$ be an alphabet and let $L$, $L_1$, $L_2$ be languages over $\Sigma$
- Concatenation $L_1L_2$ is defined as
  - $L_1L_2 = \{ xy \mid x \in L_1 \text{ and } y \in L_2\}$
- Union is defined as
  - $L_1 \cup L_2 = \{ x \mid x \in L_1 \text{ or } x \in L_2\}$
- Kleene closure is defined as
  - $L^* = \{ x \mid x = \varepsilon \text{ or } x \in L \text{ or } x \in LL \text{ or } x \in LLL \text{ or } \ldots\}$

# Operations Examples

Let $L_1 = \{ a, b \}$, $L_2 = \{ 1, 2, 3 \}$ (and $\Sigma = \{a,b,1,2,3\}$)

- What is $L_1L_2$ ?
  - { a1, a2, a3, b1, b2, b3 }
- What is $L_1 \cup L_2$ ?
  - { a, b, 1, 2, 3 }
- What is $L_1$* ?
  - { ε, a, b, aa, bb, ab, ba, aaa, aab, bba, bbb, aba, abb, baa, bab, … }

# Quiz 1: Which string is **not** in $L_3$

$L_1 = \{a, ab, c, d, \varepsilon\}$ where $\Sigma = \{a,b,c,d\}$

$L_2 = \{d\}$

$L_3 = L_1 \cup L_2$

A. a
B. abd
C. ε
D. d

# Quiz 1: Which string is **not** in $L_3$

$L_1 = \{a, ab, c, d, \varepsilon\}$ where $\Sigma = \{a,b,c,d\}$

$L_2 = \{d\}$

$L_3 = L_1 \cup L_2$

A. a
B. abd
C. ε
D. d

# Quiz 2: Which string is **not** in $L_3$

$L_1 = \{a, ab, c, d, \varepsilon\}$ where $\Sigma = \{a,b,c,d\}$

$L_2 = \{d\}$

$L_3 = L_1(L_2{}^*)$

A. a
B. abd
C. adad
D. abdd

# Quiz 2: Which string is **not** in $L_3$

$L_1 = \{a, ab, c, d, \varepsilon\}$ where $\Sigma = \{a,b,c,d\}$

$L_2 = \{d\}$

$L_3 = L_1(L_2{}^*)$

A. a
B. abd
C. adad
D. abdd

# Regular Expressions: Grammar

- Similarly to how we expressed Micro-OCaml we can define a grammar for regular expressions $R$

| | |
|---|---|
| $R ::= \varnothing$ | The empty language |
| $\mid\ \varepsilon$ | The empty string |
| $\mid\ \sigma$ | A symbol from alphabet $\Sigma$ |
| $\mid\ R_1 R_2$ | The concatenation of two regexps |
| $\mid\ R_1 \mid R_2$ | The union of two regexps |
| $\mid\ R^*$ | The Kleene closure of a regexp |

# Regular Languages

- Regular expressions denote languages. These are the regular languages
  - *aka* regular sets
- Not all languages are regular
  - Examples (without proof):
    - The set of palindromes over Σ
    - $\{a^n b^n \mid n > 0\}$ ($a^n$ = sequence of *n* a's)
- Almost all programming languages are not regular
  - But aspects of them sometimes are (e.g., identifiers)
  - Regular expressions are commonly used in parsing tools

# Semantics: Regular Expressions (1)

- Given an alphabet $\Sigma$, the regular expressions over $\Sigma$ are defined inductively as follows

**Constants**

| regular expression | denotes language |
|---|---|
| $\emptyset$ | $\emptyset$ |
| $\varepsilon$ | $\{\varepsilon\}$ |
| each symbol $\sigma \in \Sigma$ | $\{\sigma\}$ |

*Ex*: with $\Sigma = \{ a, b \}$, regex a denotes language $\{a\}$
regex b denotes language $\{b\}$

# Semantics: Regular Expressions (2)

- Let $A$ and $B$ be regular expressions denoting languages $L_A$ and $L_B$, respectively. Then:

**Operations**

| regular expression | denotes language |
| --- | --- |
| $AB$ | $L_A L_B$ |
| $A\|B$ | $L_A \cup L_B$ |
| $A^*$ | $L_A^*$ |

- There are no other regular expressions over $\Sigma$

# Terminology etc.

- Regexps apply operations to symbols
  - Generates a set of strings (i.e., a language)
    - (Formal definition shortly)
  - Examples
    - a generates language {a}
    - a|b generates language {a} ∪ {b} = {a, b}
    - a* generates language {ε} ∪ {a} ∪ {aa} ∪ … = {ε, a, aa, … }
- If s ∊ language L generated by a RE r, we say that r accepts, describes, or recognizes string s

# Precedence

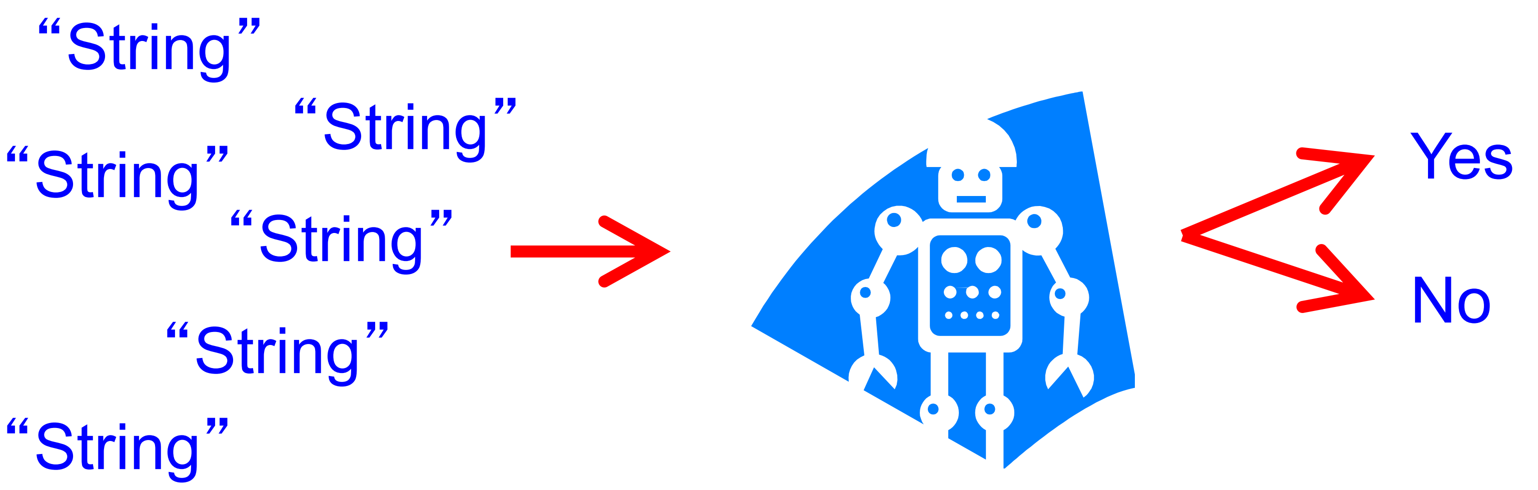
- Order in which operators are applied is:
  - Kleene closure * > concatenation > union |
  - ab|c = ( a b ) | c → {ab, c}
  - ab* = a ( b* ) → {a, ab, abb ...}
  - a|b* = a | ( b* ) → {a, ε, b, bb, bbb ...}
- We use parentheses ( ) to clarify
  - E.g., a(b|c), (ab)*, (a|b)*
  - Using escaped \( if parens are in the alphabet

# Ruby Regular Expressions

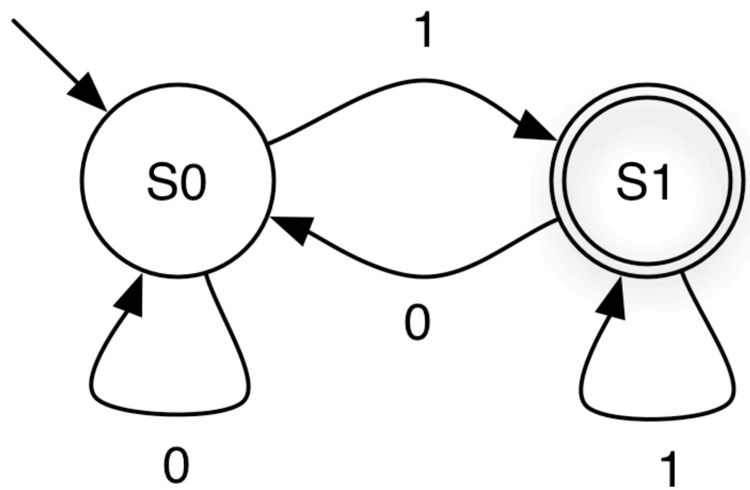
- Almost all of the features we've seen for Ruby REs can be reduced to this formal definition
  - /Ruby/ – concatenation of single-symbol REs
  - /(Ruby|Regular)/ – union
  - /(Ruby)*/ – Kleene closure
  - /(Ruby)+/ – same as (Ruby)(Ruby)*
  - /(Ruby)?/ – same as (ε|(Ruby))
  - /[a-z]/ – same as (a|b|c|...|z)
  - / [^0-9]/ – same as (a|b|c|...) for a,b,c,... ∈ Σ - {0..9}
  - ^, $ – correspond to extra symbols in alphabet
    - Think of every string containing a distinct, hidden symbol at its start and at its end – these are written ^ and $

# Implementing Regular Expressions

- We can implement a regular expression by turning it into a finite automaton
  - A "machine" for recognizing a regular language



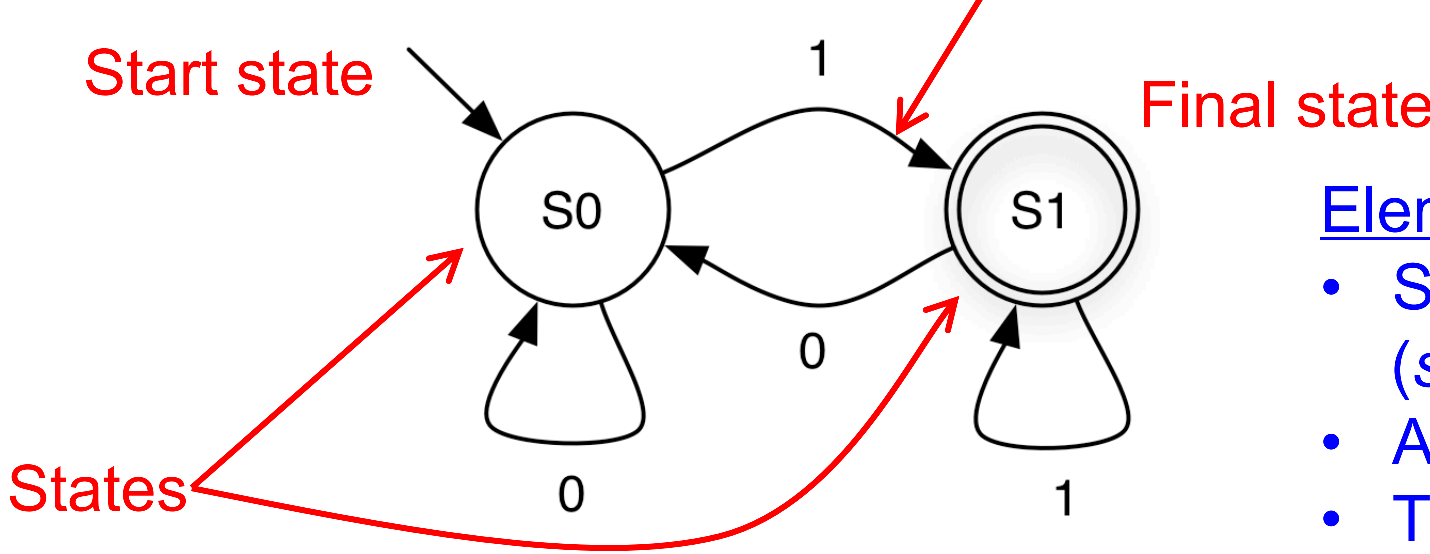
# Finite Automaton




Elements

- States S (*start*, *final*)
- Alphabet Σ
- Transition edges δ

# Finite Automaton



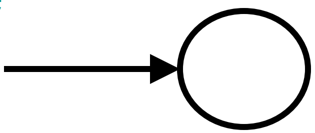

<u>Elements</u>

- States S (*start*, *final*)
- Alphabet Σ
- Transition edges δ

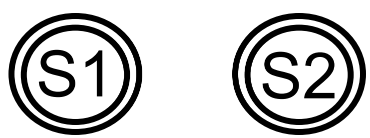
- Machine starts in start or initial state
- Repeat until the end of the string s is reached
  - Scan the next symbol σ ∈ Σ of the string s
  - Take transition edge labeled with σ
- String s is accepted if automaton is in final state when end of string s is reached

# Finite Automaton: States

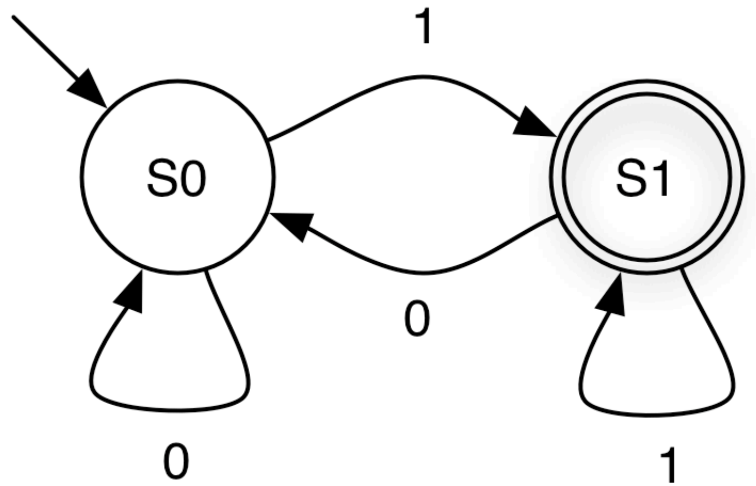
- Start state
  - State with incoming transition from no other state
  - Can have only one start state



- Final states
  - States with double circle
  - Can have zero or more final states
  - Any state, including the start state, can be final



# Finite Automaton: Example 1

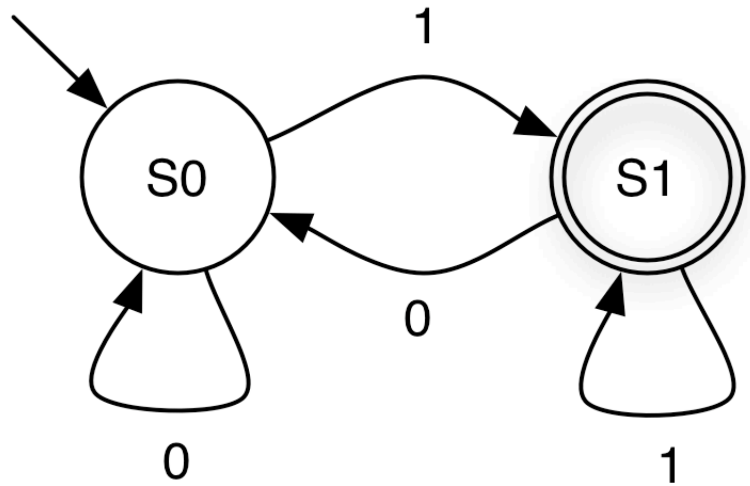



0 0 1 0 1 1

Accepted?

Yes

# Finite Automaton: Example 2

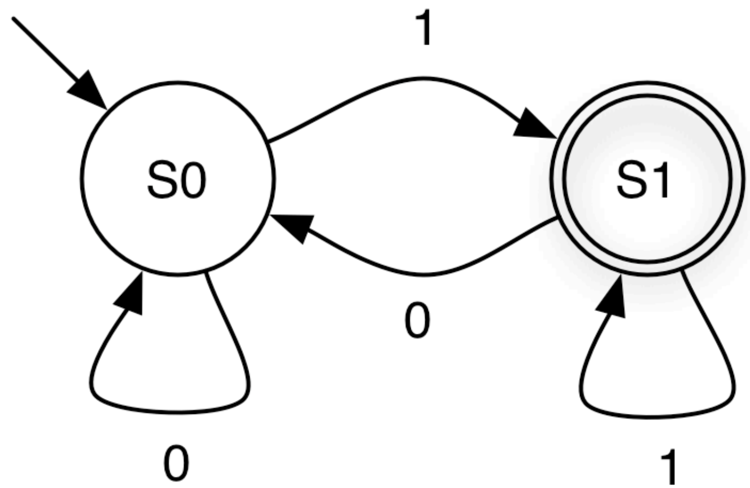



0 0 1 0 1 0

Accepted?

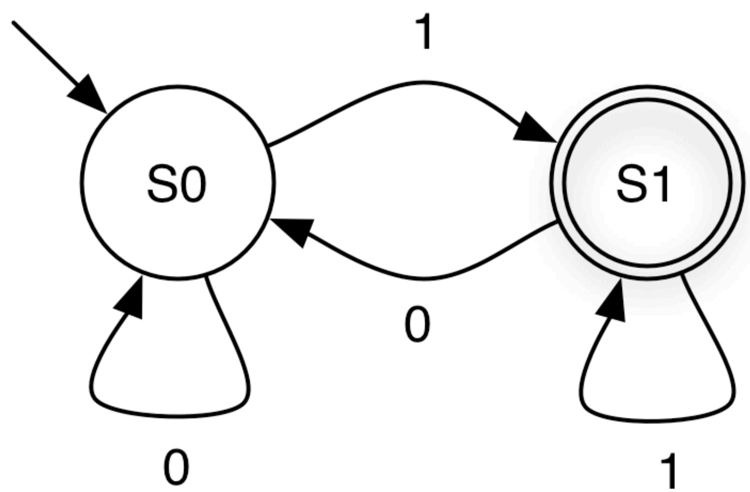
No

# Quiz 3: What Language is This?




A. All strings over {0, 1}
B. All strings over {1}
C. All strings over {0, 1} of length 1
D. All strings over {0, 1} that end in 1

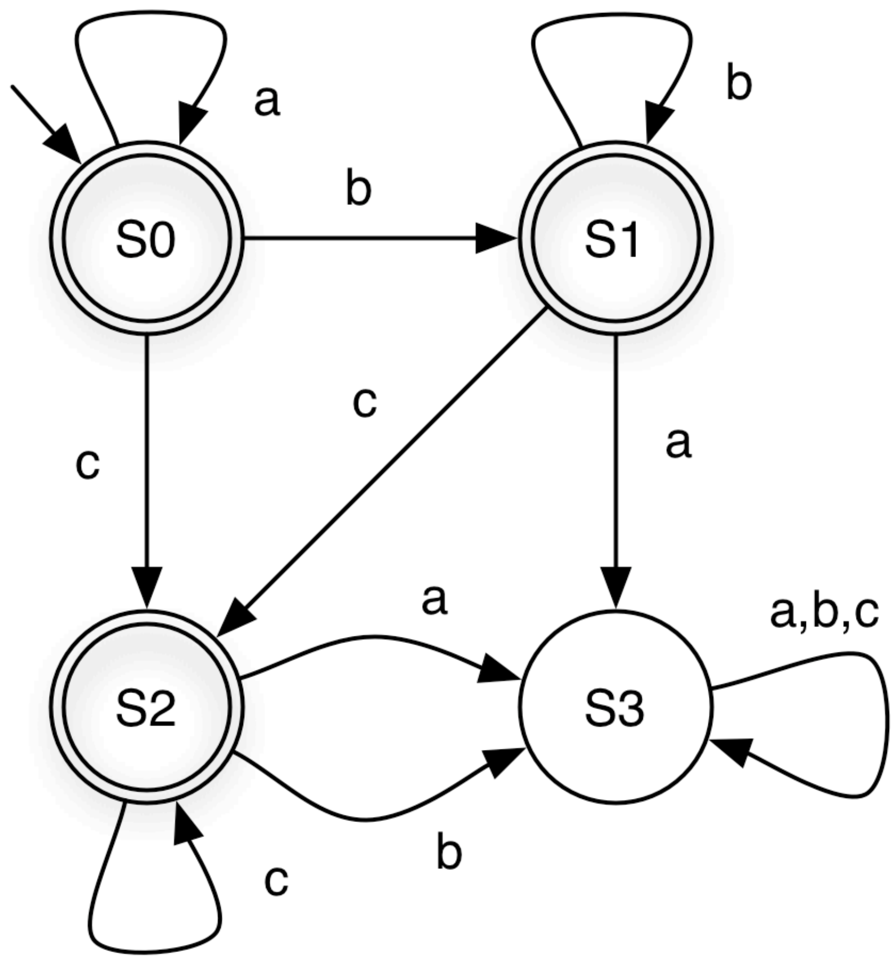
# Quiz 3: What Language is This?




A. All strings over {0, 1}
B. All strings over {1}
C. All strings over {0, 1} of length 1
D. All strings over {0, 1} that end in 1

**regular expression for this language is (0|1)*1**

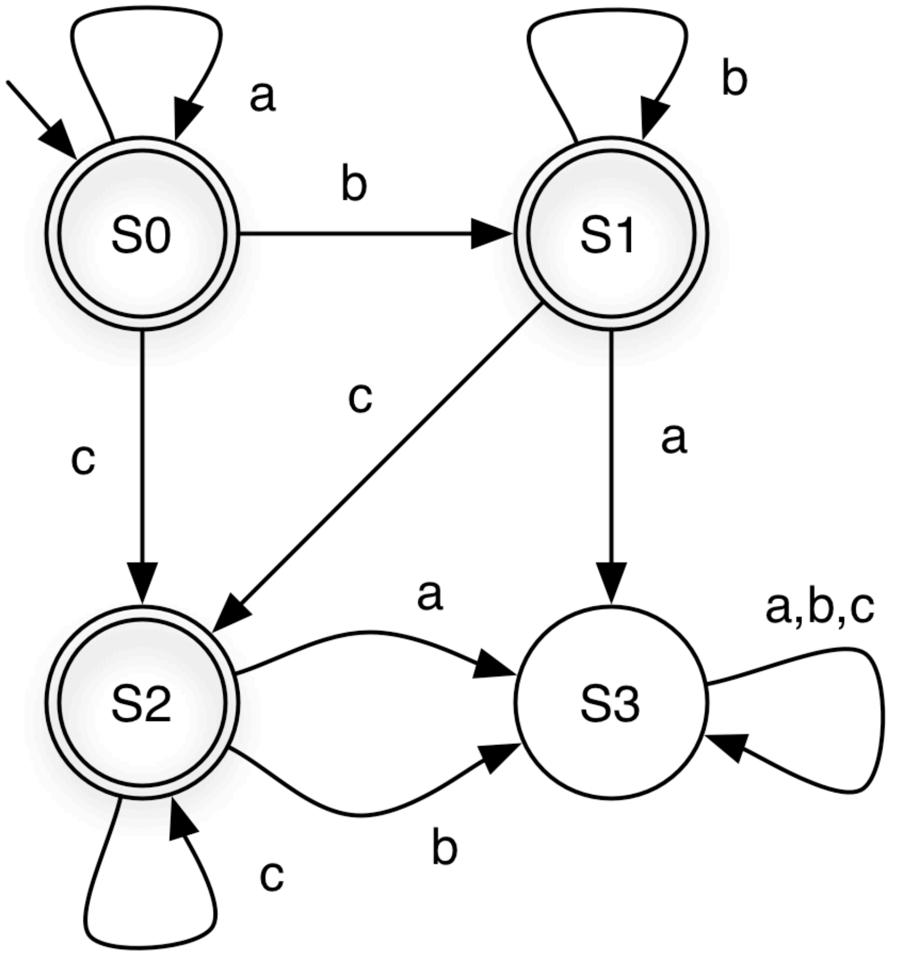
# Finite Automaton: Example 3




| string | state at end | accepts ? |
|---|---|---|
| aabcc | | |

(a,b,c notation shorthand for three self loops)

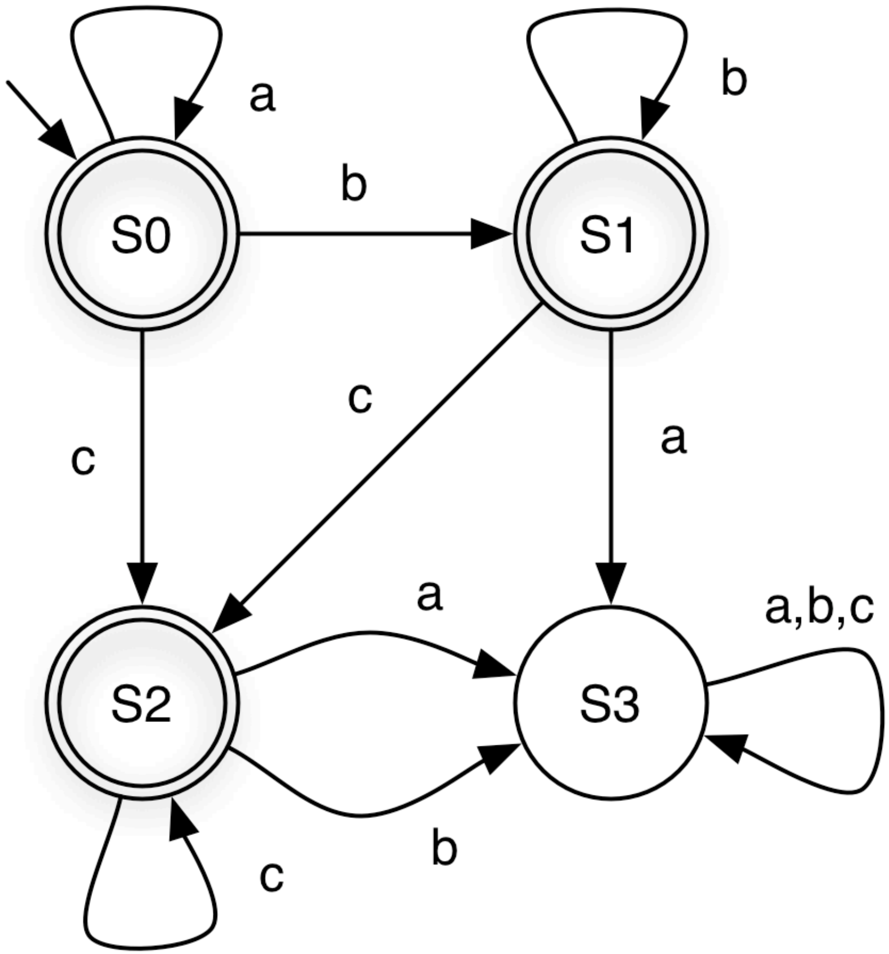
# Finite Automaton: Example 3




| string | state at end | accepts ? |
|---|---|---|
| aabcc | S2 | Y |

(a,b,c notation shorthand for three self loops)

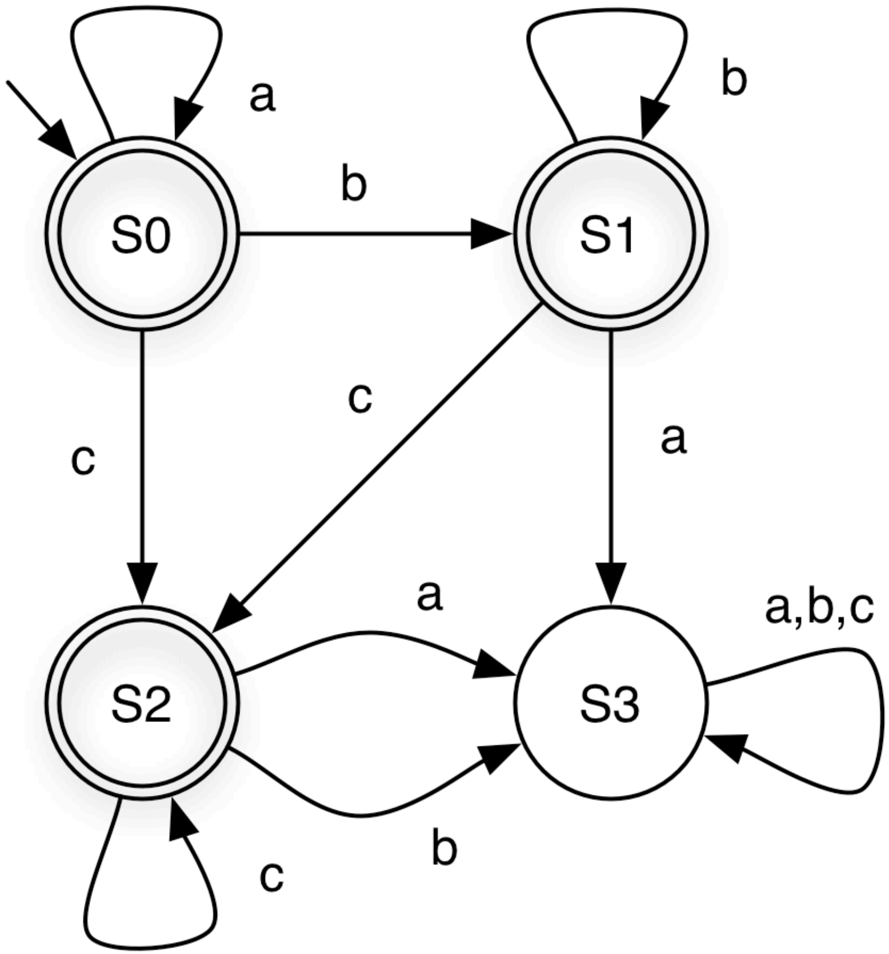
# Finite Automaton: Example 3




| string | state at end | accepts ? |
|---|---|---|
| acca | | |

(a,b,c notation shorthand for three self loops)

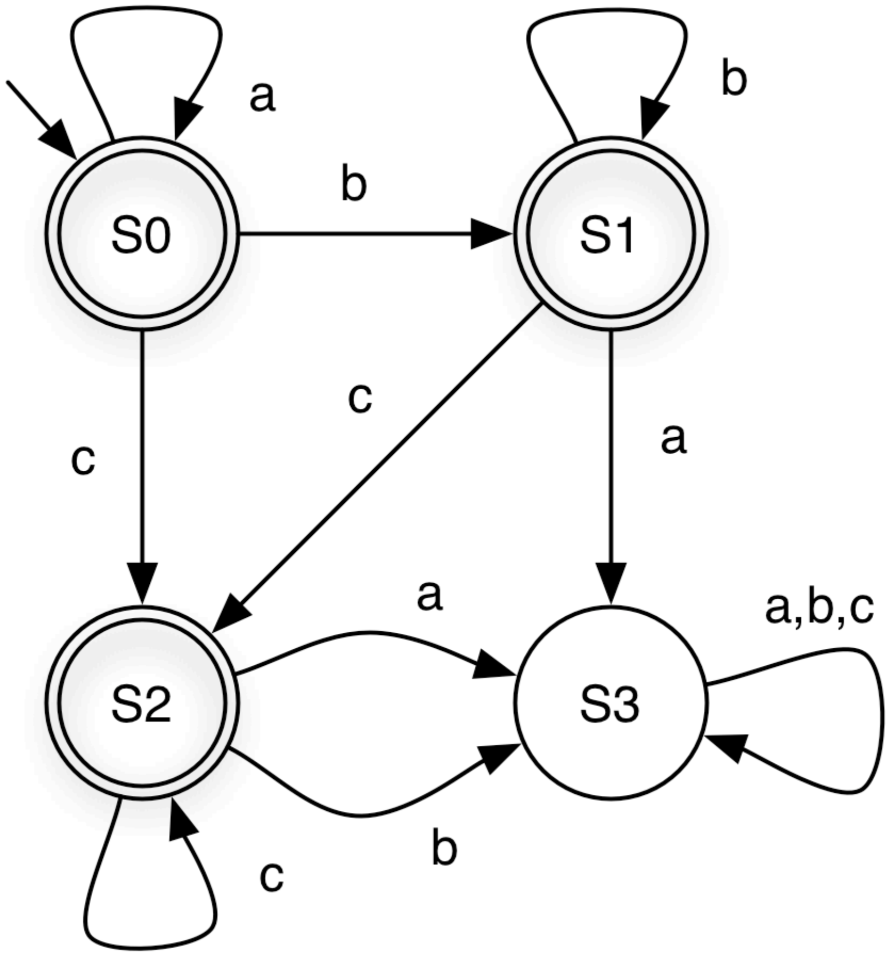
# Finite Automaton: Example 3




| string | state at end | accepts ? |
|---|---|---|
| acca | S3 | N |

(a,b,c notation shorthand for three self loops)

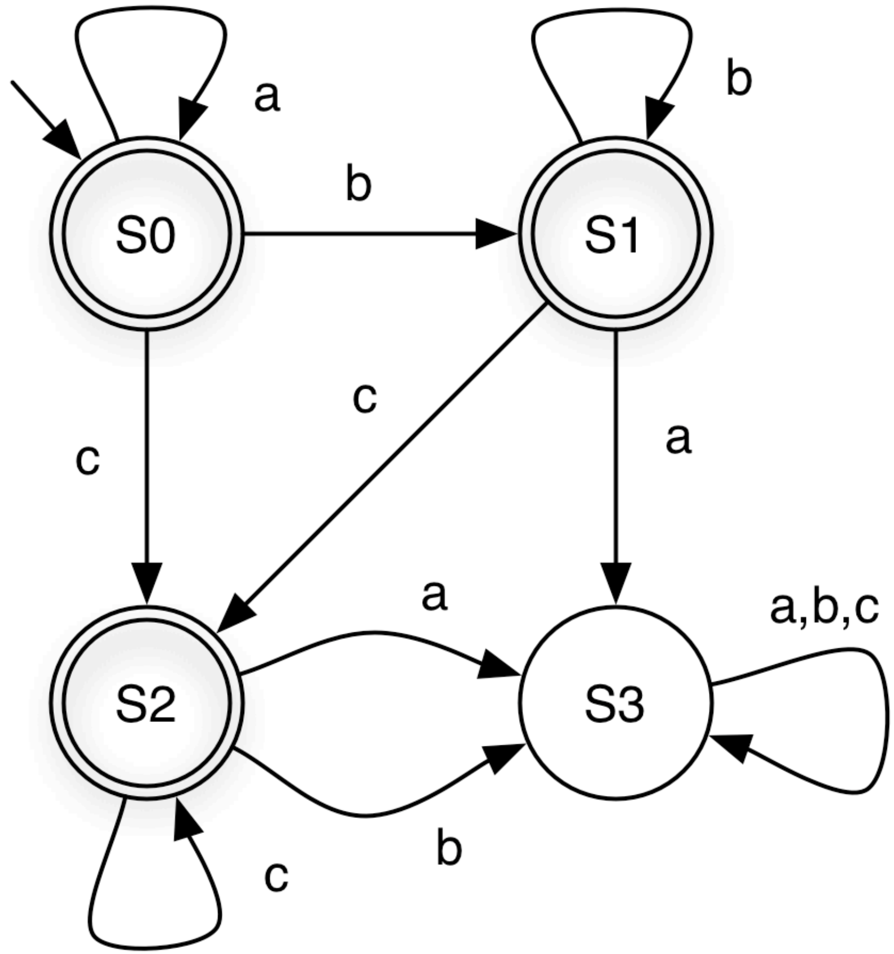
# Finite Automaton: Example 3




| string | state at end | accepts ? |
|---|---|---|
| aacbbb | | |

(a,b,c notation shorthand for three self loops)

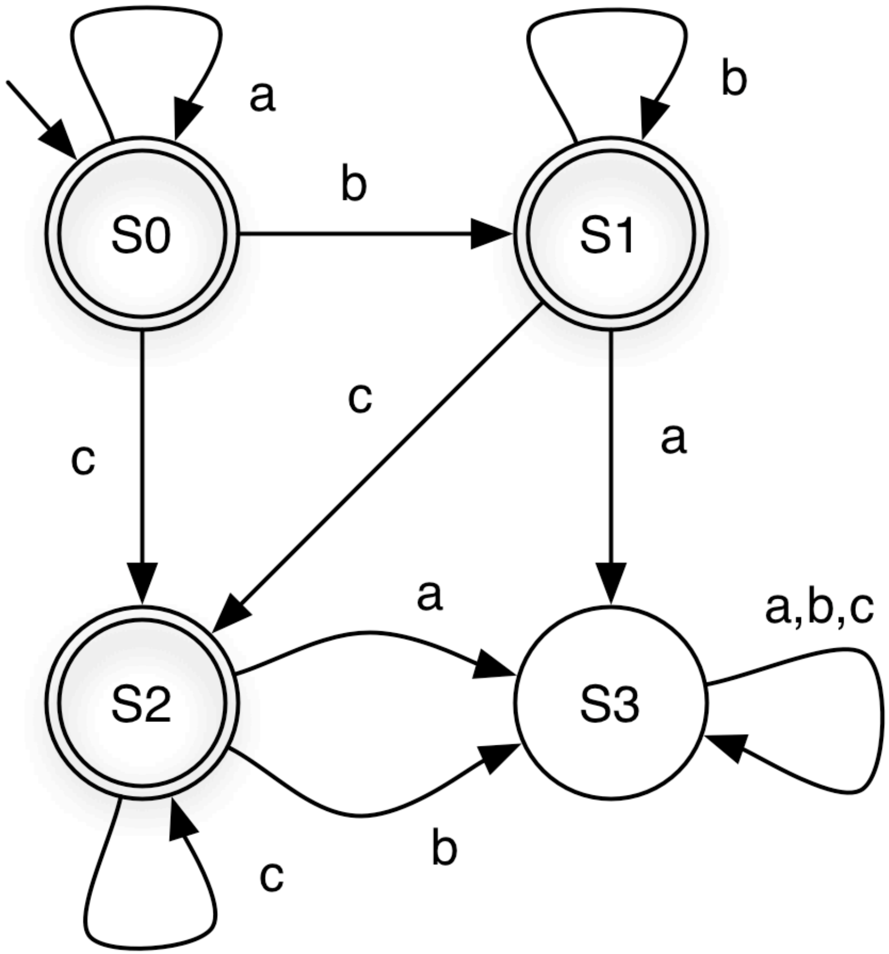
# Finite Automaton: Example 3




| string | state at end | accepts ? |
|---|---|---|
| aacbbb | S3 | N |

(a,b,c notation shorthand for three self loops)

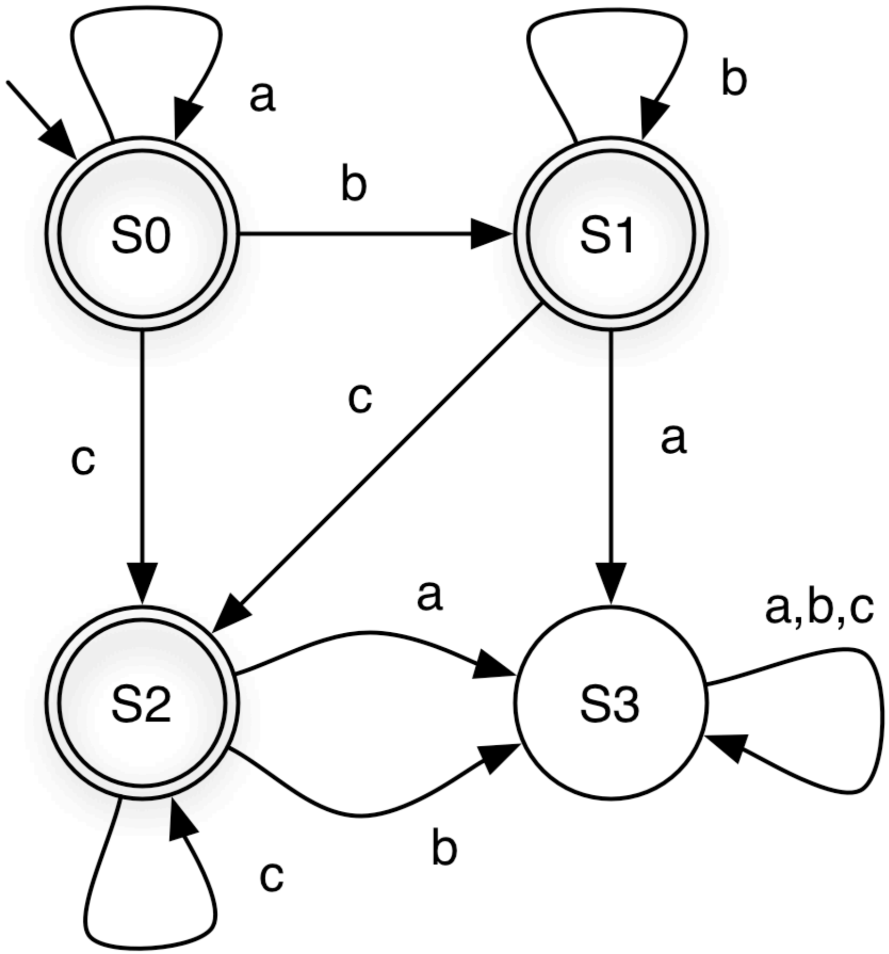
# Quiz 4: Which string is **not** accepted?




A. bcca
B. abbbc
C. ccc
D. ε

(a,b,c notation shorthand for three self loops)

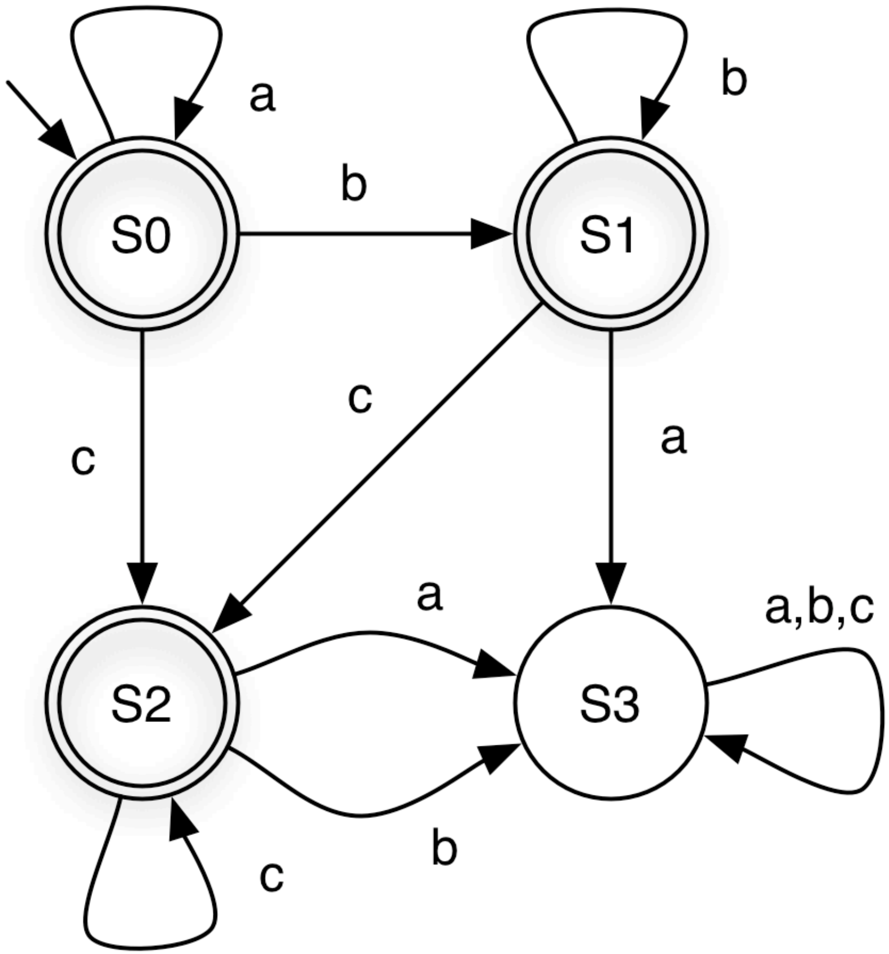
# Quiz 4: Which string is **not** accepted?




A. bcca
B. abbbc
C. ccc
D. ε

(a,b,c notation shorthand for three self loops)

# Finite Automaton: Example 3



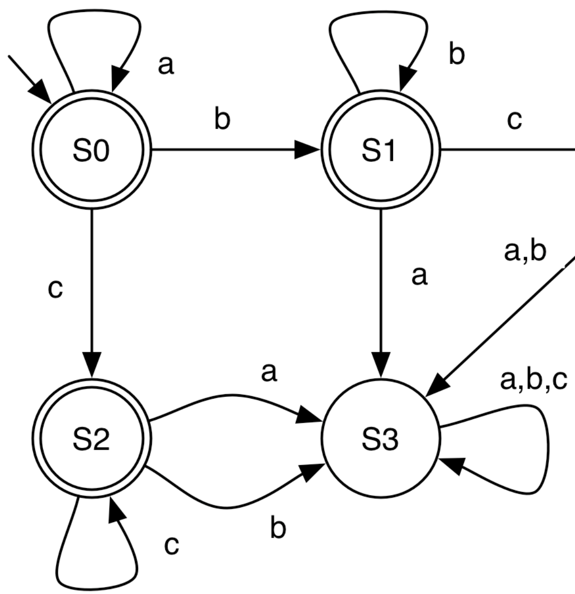

What language does this FA accept?

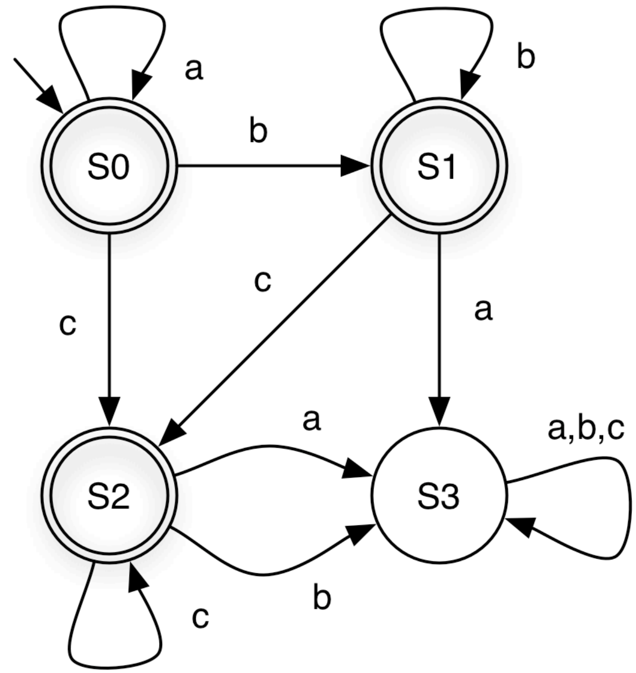
a*b*c*

S3 is a dead state – a nonfinal state with no transition to another state

- *aka* a trap state

# Finite Automaton: Example 4



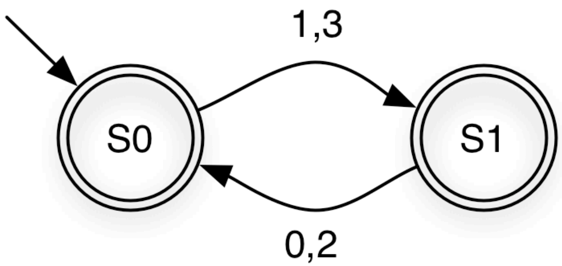




Language?

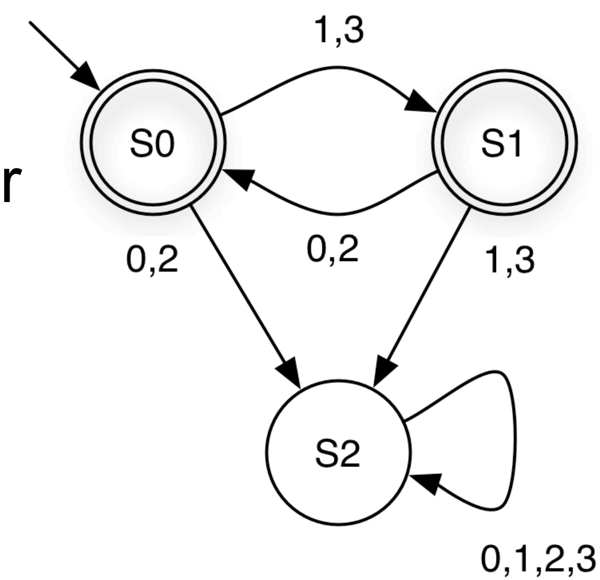
a*b*c* again, so FAs are not unique

# Dead State: Shorthand Notation

- If a transition is omitted, assume it goes to a dead state that is not shown

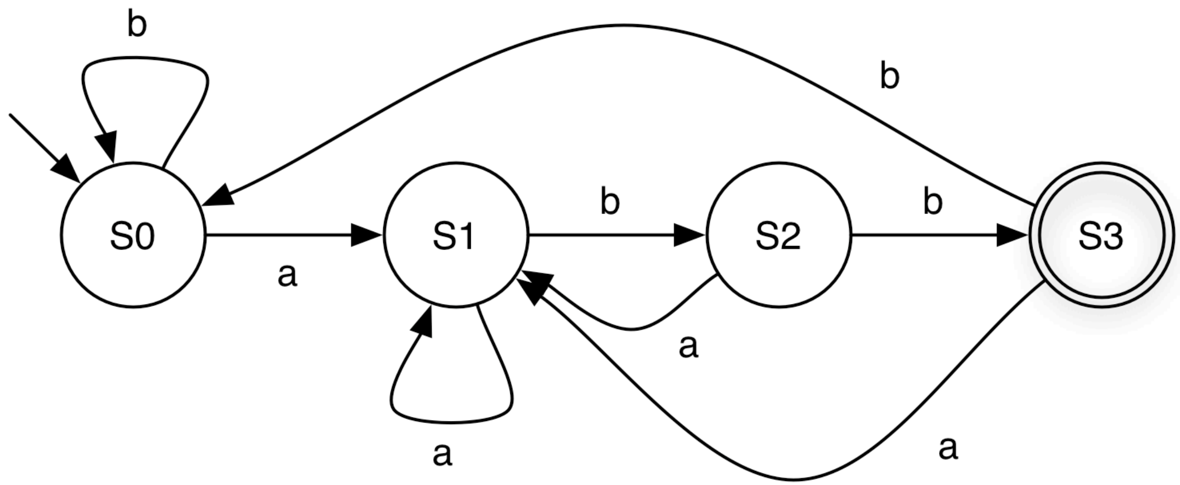



is short for



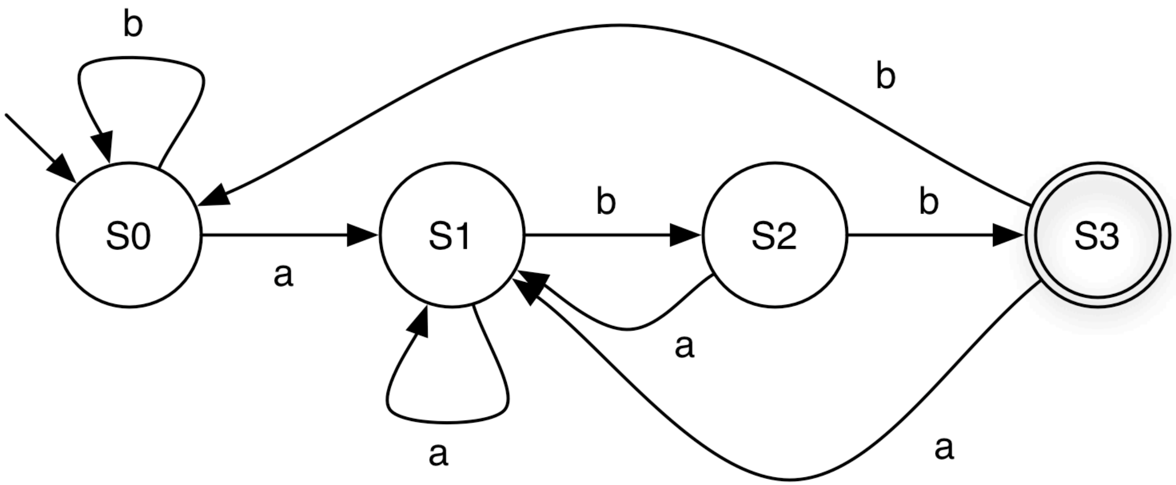

- Language?
  - Strings over {0,1,2,3} with alternating even and odd digits, beginning with odd digit

# Finite Automaton: Example 5



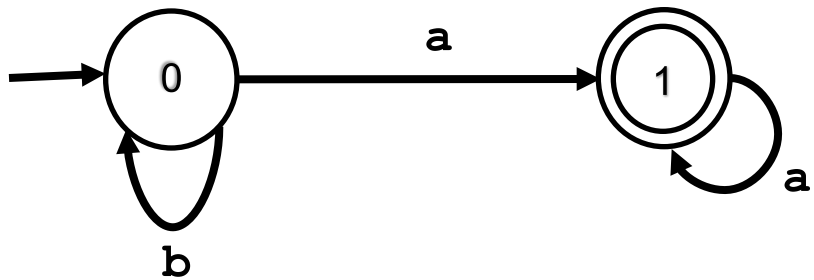

- Description for each state
  - S0 = "Haven't seen anything yet" *OR* "Last symbol seen was a b"
  - S1 = "Last symbol seen was an a"
  - S2 = "Last two symbols seen were ab"
  - S3 = "Last three symbols seen were abb"

# Finite Automaton: Example 5




- Language as a regular expression?
  - (a|b)*abb

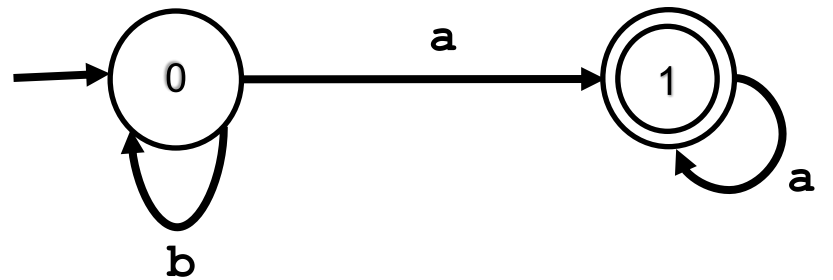
# Quiz 5




Over Σ={a,b}, this FA accepts only:

A. A string that contains a single a.
B. Any string in {a,b}.
C. A string that starts with b followed by a's.
D. Zero or more b's, followed by one or more a's.

# Quiz 5

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A. A string that contains a single a.
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# Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

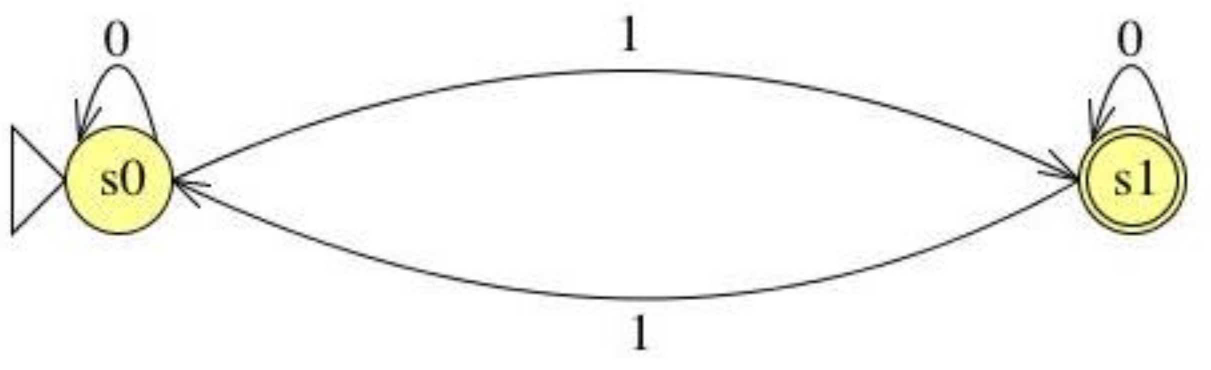
- That accepts strings containing two consecutive 0s followed by two consecutive 1s
- That accepts strings with an odd number of 1s
- That accepts strings containing an even number of 0s and any number of 1s
- That accepts strings containing an odd number of 0s and odd number of 1s
- That accepts strings that DO NOT contain odd number of 0s and an odd number of 1s

# Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

- That accepts strings with an odd number of 1s

# Exercises: Define an FA over Σ = {0,1}

- That accepts strings with an odd number of 1s



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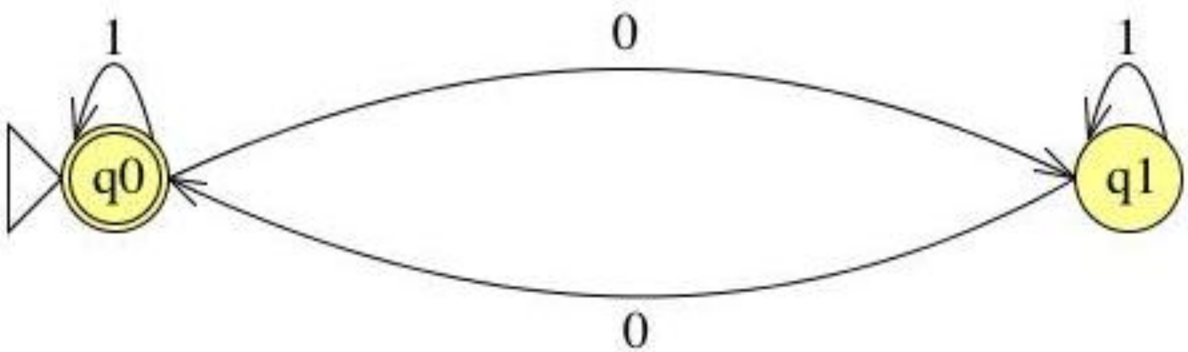
- That accepts strings containing an even number of 0s and any number of 1s

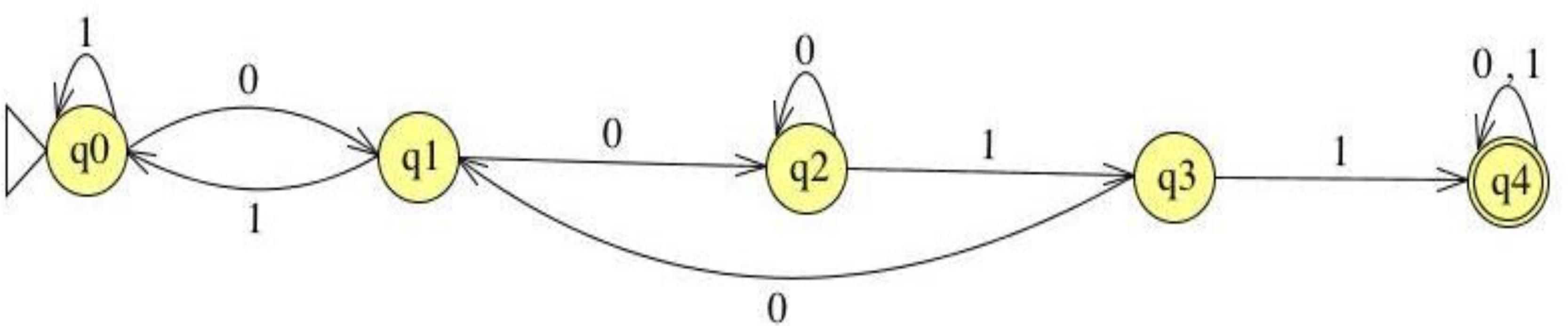


# Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

- That accepts strings containing two consecutive 0s followed by two consecutive 1s

# Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

- That accepts strings containing two consecutive 0s very immediately (right after, no other things in between) followed by two consecutive 1s

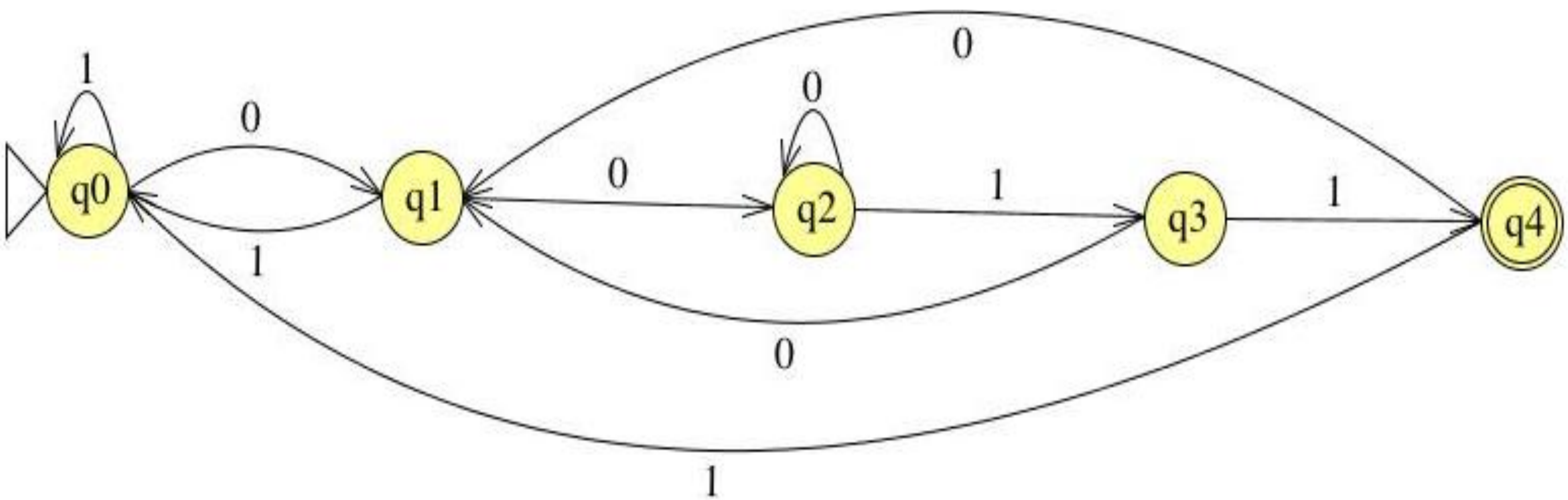


# Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

- That accepts strings end with two consecutive 0s followed by two consecutive 1s

# Exercises: Define an FA over Σ = {0,1}

- That accepts strings end with two consecutive 0s followed by two consecutive 1s



# Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

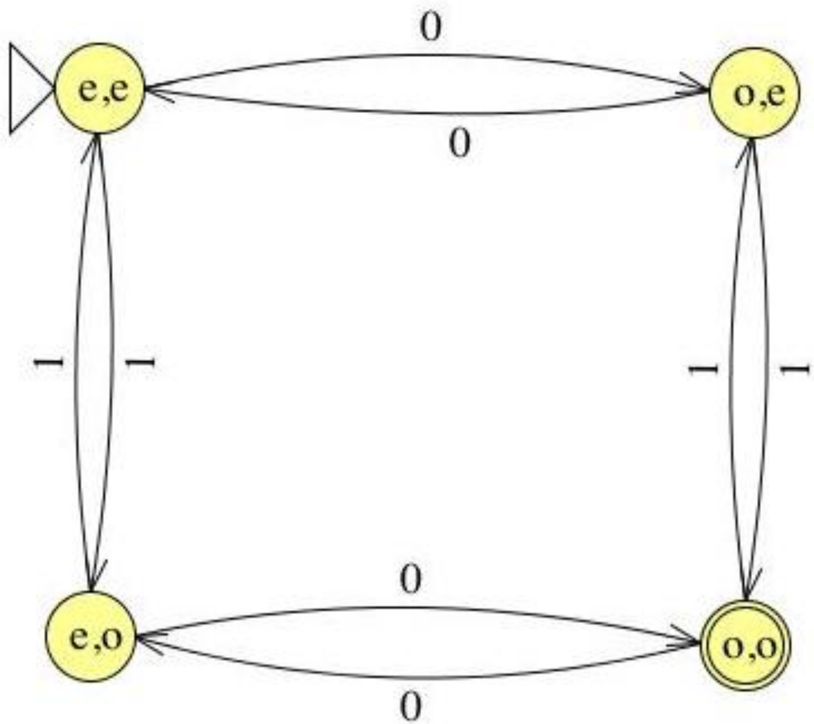
- That accepts strings containing an odd number of 0s and odd number of 1s

# Exercises: Define an FA over Σ = {0,1}

- That accepts strings containing an odd number of 0s and odd number of 1s

4 states:

0s 1s
e e
o e
e o
o o



# Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

- That accepts strings that DO NOT contain odd number of 0s and an odd number of 1s

# Exercises: Define an FA over Σ = {0,1}

- That accepts strings that DO NOT contain odd number of 0s and an odd number of 1s

Flip each state