

Counting Characters in a String

String of unique characters

A neat trick to count the characters in a string of unique characters is to use a 26-bit bitmask to indicate which lower case latin characters are inside the string.

```
mask = 0
for c in word:
    mask |= (1 << (ord(c) - ord('a')))
```

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To determine if two strings have common characters, perform `&` on the two bitmasks. If the result is non-zero, ie. `mask_a & mask_b > 0`, then the two strings have common characters.

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