

The subset sum problem is a special case of the 0-1 Knapsack problem.

Given a set $S \subseteq \mathbb{N}$ and an integer K , is there a $S' \subseteq S$ for which $\sum_{a \in S'} a = K$?

If we define $I = \{(a, a) \mid a \in S\}$ and $W = K$, then there is such an S' iff $0/1KS(I, W)$ determines that there is a valid $I' \subseteq I$ with total value (and weight) W .

The runtime of this is $O(IW)$, which is pseudo-polynomial (W is a numeric value rather than an input size). Moreover, since the values in I and the value of W are unbounded, this can be much larger than $|I| = n$. Sometimes it's better to use the naive algorithm that just checks every possible subset of S in time $O(2^n n)$.

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 # of subsets sum subsets

There are actually improvements to the naive algorithm which are significantly better. However, it's possible to show this problem is NP-COMPLETE, so any solution is probably exponential.

There are, it should be noted, polynomial time approximations.